

**INVESTIGATING THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN IN THE FLOWER
FARMS IN THIKA SUB-COUNTY IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA**

BY

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has never been presented for examination in any other university.

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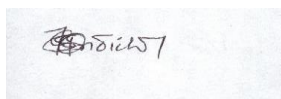


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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my family. To my husband, Edward Muriuki, who with utmost love and dedication vehemently supported me in all aspects, graciously took up all my ascribed roles that would otherwise have distracted my focus on completion of my studies, and continuously encouraged me to look at the bigger picture.

To our daughter, Dr. Glory Joy Gatwiri (PhD), for continuously cheering me on, academic guidance, knowledge sharing and intellectual generosity; our son Kelvin Roy Mugendi for the unwavering support and encouragement and our little daughter, Claire Fiona Gacheri for keeping me on toes and regularly checking on my progress.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------|---|
| AAK | Anthropological Association of Kenya |
| CDU | Crop Development Unit |
| COTU | Central Organization of Trade Unions |
| DfID | Department for International Development |
| ETI | Ethical Trading Initiatives |
| FGDs | Focus Group Discussions |
| FIDA | Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya |
| FPEAK | Fresh Produce Export Association of Kenya |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GOK | Government of Kenya |
| HCD | Horticultural Crop Development |
| HEBI | Horticultural Ethical Business Initiative |
| HRW | Human Rights Watch |
| IDIs | In-depth Interviews |
| KIIs | Key Informants Interviews |
| KNBS | Kenya National Bureau of Statistics |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organization |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for Social Sciences |
| WWW | Women Working Worldwide |

ABSTRACT

Kenya's flower industry is one of the largest in the world and is a leading source of foreign exchange earnings and employment for female workers. It is estimated that females constitute more than three quarters of the workers in the flower farms in the country. However, recently, the sector has been criticised for inequitable and poor working conditions especially for female workers. The aim of this research project was to examine the working conditions of female workers in the flower farms in Thika, Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. Specifically, the study explored the working conditions of women in the flower farms, the challenges women workers face in the flower farms and their coping strategies. A qualitative study involving 40 purposely selected female workers in four flower farms was undertaken in the month of September 2021. The two factor Herzberg's theory was used as a lens to understand how the working conditions of women in the flower farms impact on their motivation and dissatisfaction, the challenges female workers encounter in the flower farms and how they cope with them. The primary method of data collection at the study site was In-depth interviews complemented by Case narratives, Key Informant Interviews and analysis of secondary information from various published sources.

The findings reveal that the female workers constitute a large majority of the workers in the flower farms and that they work under deplorable conditions characterised by poor physical work environment and terms of employment, inadequate supply of physical protective equipment (PPEs) and working tools and long working shifts. The study also established female workers in the flower farms face several challenges including sexual harassment, lack of training, long hours of hours of work without adequate compensation, inadequate supply of safety equipment and sanitation and hygiene facilities such as washrooms and rest areas, delayed and low wages/salaries, health hazards caused by chemicals and pesticides, inadequate physical protections, job insecurity, and denial of right to join a trade union. The study further indicated that female workers adopted diverse strategies to cope with the poor terms of work in the flower farms. These included starting their own micro-enterprises, labouring, joining women's group either to facilitate saving or to enable them to borrow from micro-enterprise fund, working for others, temporary seasonal relocation to places where they can find alternative work and reliance on cash remittances from friends and relatives.

The study suggests that for female workers in the flower farms to benefit and increase productivity there is an urgent need for social justice issues such as equal pay for equal work, occupational health, and safety issues, better working environment and terms of service, training, and right to join trade unions, to be addressed. It is thus important to encourage the establishment of trade unions and for stakeholders such as Civil Society Organizations to play their complementary roles to government when it comes to the implementation of advocacy around issues that are likely to complicate female workers suffering because of poor working conditions in the flower farms

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 Background to the Study

The flower industry is recognized as one of the biggest and quickest growing economic sectors in the world today. The flower sector is also one of the higher industries in many developing and underdeveloped countries, where it makes important contributions to economic growth by generating employment opportunities in rural areas, attracting foreign investments, improving local infrastructures and technology, poverty reduction, and sustainable rural development. According to the Horticultural Crop Directorate, the industry has recorded continuous growth both in value and volume from \$ 11 billion in 1985 to 44 billion in 2000. In 2019, the global flower industry was valued at \$150billion and the sector is projected to grow by 6.3% in the 2021-2025 periods. Based on the latest floriculture statistics, it is forecast that by 2024, the value of the global floral market will reach circa \$57,480 million. This implies that the flower sector is a major economic force in the world.

In Kenya, floriculture is the second highest foreign exchange earner in the agricultural sector after tea. According to the Kenya Flower Council, Kenya is one of the three top exporters of cut-flowers in the world. It accounts for approximately 1.1% of GDP, 2% of total wage employment, 27% of foreign exchange, 19.2% of export earnings, and roughly 70% of the earnings from horticultural exports (KNBS, 2020). In 2019, the flower sub-sector earned the country US\$ 971 billion. In Kenya, flowers are mainly grown around Naivasha, Athi River, Thika, and Kiambu and approximately 77% of the 1800 flower farms, covering some 2,600 hectares of land, are owned by Kenyan Indians, Europeans, and multinational firms, and the rest by state bureaucrats. These farms offer direct employment to approximately 100, 000 people and indirectly to 500,000 people in the supply chain, and impact livelihoods of over 2 million people (Kenya Economic Survey, 2018).

While the statistics are compelling, the Kenyan flower farms have in the last few years been exposed by various media outlets and academic researchers for their cruel working conditions, widespread environmental, and human rights abuses (Bruno, 2010). For example, Ogodo & Vidal (2007) report that workers in the flower farms are paid an average of 23 sterling pounds a month as salary, which is hardly enough to cater for the living expenses of the employees. The Ethical Trading Initiative 1 (2005) provides a comprehensive list of the problems facing workers in the flower farms in Kenya. These include excessive overtime, poor housing, unjustified pay deductions and sackings. This is further validated by research carried out by Working Women Worldwide (WWW) focusing on specific abuses against women (Muthoka, 2007). The study reported rampant sexual harassment and discrimination of female workers; unacceptably high number of casual workers and unsafe working conditions, lack of freedom of association including in trade unions, poor health and safety conditions, and extremely low wages which cannot afford employees a decent life.

According to Mlynska, A., Wass, and Amoging (2015), the flower industry in Kenya employs a significant number of women (65-75%) and deals with a variety of gender-related difficulties. These include, but are not limited to, low pay, long hours, sexual harassment, unstable employment, and a lack of services.

While men typically work in positions of management and supervision, women are disproportionately underpaid and confined in lower-paying jobs like harvesting, sorting, grading, caring for flowers, and cleaning flower beds. They tend to be exposed to subpar working conditions and extraordinarily long hours as a result of their concentration at the lower ends of value chains, along with the female responsibility for domestic work and child care. Global outsourcing frequently results in very erratic and informal labor, endangering the job security of women in the sector. Studies have also shown that female employees are fired when they become pregnant or want maternity leave.

Women working in the field may have meager pay, unpaid leave, or even no access to maternity leave due to a lack of competent service provision. Some ILO agreements' obligations, like as giving pregnant workers more work to do or transferring them to less dangerous jobs, are still not being adequately followed in the sector. Farms frequently allow very little time for

breastfeeding, and some women have complained that if they arrived late for work, they were fired and not paid for the day.

Due to their repetitive tasks, women in the industry also have health and safety risks at work, such as developing arthritis from regularly tending flowers, cutting themselves on tools, having trouble wearing protective gear or not having any, and being exposed to toxins. Particularly women who are pregnant or nursing are thought to be more at risk than men when working. Additionally, women are underrepresented in the numerous committees in the lower sector, where there is a lack of gender balance in the power dynamics with employers.

Even though societal norms frequently result in women having less decision-making authority than males, many women who work on farms are single mothers with a lot on the risk if they stand up for their rights and end up losing their jobs.

Sexual harassment is one of the largest problems women in the industry face, and it may be a chronic problem because it isn't always recognized when it happens. Due to the lack of knowledge about what constitutes harassment, employees and supervisors might not view it as a violation of their rights.

According to the War on Want study from 2007, practically all flower farms have pervasive male supervisory sexual harassment of their female employees. Not only has sexual harassment been deemed difficult to describe or recognize, but it may also be a sensitive subject that makes people uncomfortable and humiliated to bring it up in the workplace. This may lead to a lack of official data on the issue's prevalence in the workplace. The fact that women frequently work in remote locations, such as massive greenhouses with people placed far apart and no one around to hear or see what is happening, might make sexual harassment worse. Furthermore, some farms are hard to reach since they are tucked away in remote locations, especially when there isn't housing there.

Because of the distances they must travel to get to work, they become lonely and more exposed to sexual predators. Although laws are frequently passed to criminalize or prohibit sexual harassment, a lack of procedural infrastructure might make it difficult to put these regulations into action. Even the authorities themselves may harass or degrade women who report

harassment. The prevalence of sexual harassment may be increased further by a lack of representation. The results of the study show that union leaders' awareness of sexual harassment is lacking, and some of those questioned believed that harassment was caused by women's own actions, such as not wearing modestly. More recurring areas of worry surfaced in addition to the lack of experience brought on by employee turnover, notably because not all union leaders regarded the importance of sexual harassment actions.

Female workers are the cornerstone of the floriculture industry, and the overrepresentation of women in the early stages of flower production, make their welfare issues urgent (Muthoka, 2007). According to the Federation of Women Lawyers-Kenya (FIDA-Kenya) the feminization of labour in the floriculture sector is not only deeply entrenched but also the labour rights of female workers lag from the globally acceptable standards. Most of these female workers are young, have low levels of education and training, and because of that they are concentrated in lowly paid unskilled jobs, face negative cultural stereotypes, and gender bias.

Previous studies in Kenya report a wide range of cross-cutting problems among all flower farm workers. These problems include the precarity of employment, poor working conditions, unfavourable employment terms, compulsory overtimes, gender discrimination, oppression, and authoritarian types of supervision, Fair Trade Initiatives reports that these female workers are not allowed to join trade unions and those who dare join face discrimination by being demoted. Furthermore, many of them are employed as casual workers which make it difficult for them to join trade unions or to agitate for improved working conditions. The situation is much worse for female workers hired on casual terms compared to those of permanent workers in terms of material wealth, pay, housing and medical care.

In 2000, Human Rights organizations, Civil Societies, NGOs, and Trade Unions both in Europe and Kenya became aware of the poor working conditions and the precarity of female workers in the local flower farms. The issues singled out included violations of occupational health and safety regulations, recruitment of women on casual terms and renewable temporary contracts, and endemic sexual harassment by the male supervisors. Consequently, they jointly launched a campaign to help improve the working conditions of female workers in Kenya's flower farms.

The campaigns resulted in a raft of changes across the flower farms and indeed, the whole of the flower industry. Some of these changes included the establishment of sound gendered guidelines on recruitment, training, promotion, workers' rights, and complaint resolution procedures. In addition, a social auditing program involving local Trade Unions, Human Rights organizations, and NGOs was launched to help identify and document and monitor the working conditions and deal with issues affecting female workers in specific farms. In recent years, the major importers of Kenyan flowers in the west have been pressuring flower producers to embrace ethical business practises and credible accreditation regimes. As part of this push by the consumers of Kenya's flowers, there have been concerted efforts to improve the terms and conditions of work in the floriculture sector in Kenya.

The government working in close collaboration with local and international stakeholders has instituted a raft of policy measures across the flower sector aimed at addressing the thorny issues especially with regard the human rights and environmental abuses. The impact of these changes however remains largely unknown. Some research has been conducted to try and identify the problems female workers face in the flower farms in Kenya. Unfortunately, they are limited in time and space. On the one hand, researchers have focused much of their attention on the effects of gender stereotypes and bias on female workers' career advancement in the flower sector, not least because of patriarchal social structures which not only put women in a subordinate position but also undervalue their contribution in society. Advocates of women's rights in Kenya notably FIDA on the other hand, have also joined the fray to demand for better working conditions for women. However, information on the impact of policy reforms on the conditions of work for female workers in the flower farms in Kenya is scanty. This means that relatively little is known about the current working conditions for women workers in Kenya's flower farms. The aim of this research project therefore is to explore the working conditions for women workers in the flower farms in Thika sub-county, which is also the case study site for this research project. This study will hopefully yield useful insights into the working conditions for women workers in the floriculture industry and influence the likelihood of policy interventions.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Flower farms are a leading employer for female workers in Kenya. It is estimated that slightly more than 75% of the workers in Kenya's flower farms are female. While employment has opened opportunities for economic empowerment for females with low levels of education and experience, they also face significant challenges related to health and safety in the flower farms. Some of the challenges female workers face in the flower farms include long working hours, insecure employment, gender discrimination, pervasive sexual harassment, oppressive and paternalistic supervision, low wages, pathetic working conditions, employment of females on temporary contracts which are renewed at the whims of the supervisors, discriminative hiring and promotion practices, high job demands, violations of work-related health and safety procedures and standards in the greenhouses, poor terms of service, excessive forced overtime, limited opportunities for upward mobility and training, high job demands, lack of adequate social services including housing, lack of health benefits, and amenities (Opondo, 2006; Gibbon & Riigaard, 2014). Some of these issues have been highlighted by local and international media outlets. While issues such as rape and sexual harassment have received some research attention, relatively little research has been undertaken on this subject especially with the context of Kenya. This is a little surprising because females constitute a disproportionate number of the workers in most flower farms in Kenya. There is therefore an urgent need for an empirical study to investigate and document the working conditions of female employees in the flower farms.

Previous studies on floriculture have focused on different aspects. Some have focused on gender inequalities and women participation in the sector. They fall short of clearly spelling out the true situation female workers experience in the farms. Other studies have dwelt on the problems faced by the flower farmers and female workers in the floriculture industry in general terms. Yet others have focus on sexual harassment. Most of the available studies have focused mainly on the big flower farms in Naivasha. By contrast no empirical research has examined the working conditions of female employees in small and medium scale farms such as those in Thika sub-county whose social and economic circumstances, and therefore working conditions, may be different in major ways. Nonetheless, anecdotal evidence suggests that despite contributing to flower production at par with their male counterparts, female workers remain a marginalised and subjugated group. They do not receive the same treatment as their male counterparts making their rights, welfare, and safety in the flower farms a particularly pressing issue.

The overall goal of this research project was to assess and document the working conditions of women employees in the flower farms in Thika Sub- County. The study sought to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the current working conditions of women workers in the flower farms in Thika sub-county?
- ii. What challenges do women workers face in the flower farms in Thika sub-county?
- iii. How do women workers cope with the challenges they face in the flower farms in Thika sub-county?

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

The broad goal of this study was to investigate and document the working conditions of women employees in the flower farms in Thika sub-county, Kenya.

1.3.2 The specific objectives are:

- i. To establish the current working conditions of women employees in the flower farms in Thika sub-county.
- ii. To find out the challenges women employees face in the flower farms in Thika sub-county.
- iii. To examine the coping strategies for women workers in the flower farms in Thika sub-county.

1.4 Assumptions of the Study

- i. The current working conditions of women in the flower farms in Thika haven't improved much despite the measures put in place to improve the general working conditions in flower farms.
- ii. The women employees face a myriad of untold challenges in the flower farms.
- iii. The women employees have devised their own coping mechanisms to deal with the challenges that they face in the flower farms.

1.5 Justification of the Study

The purpose of this project was to appraise the working conditions of women employees in the flower farms. While the problems faced by women in the flower farms have been identified and studied in previous research (FIDA, 2015), there is lack of knowledge about their current and general working conditions. The broad topic of poor working conditions in the flower farms in Kenya has received attention from government, NGOs, Trade Unions, Civil Society, and Human Rights Organizations, but there has been no research focusing on women employees' perspective on their working conditions in the flower farms. By bringing out and capturing and amplifying the women's perspectives and voices, this study will have, in effect, addressed an important gap in the literature about the women's perspective of their working conditions in Kenya's flower farms. This will therefore add to existing empirical data that will not only add to the relevant body of knowledge but also fill the gaps in our knowledge on this important, yet under researched topic. In addition, the study will also provide a useful reference material for scholars, students, and policy makers whose work and activities relate to flower farming and policy influencing in employees and culture in the horticultural industry.

The findings will be disseminated through publications and policy briefs which have the potential to raise the level of public awareness about the pathetic working conditions of women employees in the flower farms. The findings will inform prospective women employees about the challenges that they should anticipate should they decide to work in the flower farms. This will enable them to make informed decisions. The significance of the study will lie in its capacity to provide new empirical baseline information that can be used to advocate for and lobby flower farm managers to improve the terms and conditions of work for female workers. In addition, the

information could shed light on initiatives that can help to improve the working conditions for women in the flower farms. It is hoped that this will encourage flower farms elsewhere with similar challenges to develop similar strategies to help them better the working conditions of women.

As society faces increased threats from the COVID-19 pandemic, the working conditions for many people have changed over the past one and half years. Years ago, people would not believe that people could work remotely from home, but for female workers in the flower farms this is unthinkable. The results of this project will therefore provide useful insights into women employees' perceptions of safe working in the flower farms. With changes in the work environments, understanding women's perceptions of their current working conditions is beneficial because of its potential to highlight their plight and lead to improvement in their working conditions. The present study will be of great value both to the government and non-governmental organizations whose efforts are directed towards improving the terms and conditions of work for female workers in the flower farms. The study will also generate recommendations on the best approaches to improve the working conditions of women in the flower farms. Additionally, the findings will fill the gaps in the available literature and form a basis for potential research on related issues. Such information might also help both the national and county governments to formulate plans and policies aimed at improving the working conditions in the flower farms.

1.6 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study's goal was to evaluate the workplace standards for female personnel currently employed in flower farms in Thika Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The key aspects that the study investigated include general working conditions such as working environment, recruitment, training and promotion policies, work safety practices, and other issues that have a significant impact upon the welfare and wellbeing of the women. The study also examined the challenges women employees face and their coping strategies, and the proposed solutions to the problems. The study utilised a qualitative study design. The main method of data collection was case narratives, Key Informant Interviews, and supplemented by the available literature.

Specifically, the project focused on 20 women who have worked in the selected flower farm for a minimum of three years.

A major limitation to the study is that the findings cannot be generalisable to female workers in all the flower farms in Kenya because of the small and unrepresentative sample size. However, the findings are valid and applicable to female workers in other flower farms. The convenience sampling, to some extent, might affect the results because of sample bias.

1.7 Chapter Summary

The introductory chapter, presents background to the study starting with an introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, study objectives, justification of the study as well as scope and limitations of the study. The following few paragraphs describe the project report's other chapters and their content.

1.8 Dissertation organization

This dissertation is divided into five chapters.

Chapter 1, the introductory chapter, presents background to the study starting with an introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, study objectives, justification of the study as well as scope and limitations of the study. The following few paragraphs describe the project report's other chapters and their content.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature and theoretical framework that informed this study. The chapter highlights the flower industry in the world and in Kenya and reviews the general literature on the working conditions in the flower farms in different countries. It also includes a discussion of my chosen theoretical framework informed by Herzberg's two factor theory of Motivation and conceptual framework is presented.

Chapter 3 explains the research methodology and methods of data collection and analysis, as well as ethical considerations relevant to this study. The problems encountered and information on how they were dealt with is also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study starting with the characteristics of the respondents and then followed with the results of the study that answered the research questions that were posed in this study.

Chapter 5, the last chapter, presents a summary of the major findings, highlights the contributions the study makes, and ends with the main conclusions drawn from this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Singh (2016) points out that flowers are an integral part of social fabric in the human society. The many tonnes of roses, carnations and other cut flowers exported to Europe on daily basis form a large foreign exchange earner for the country. This provides new employment opportunities especially for women who comprise of over 75% of employees in the industry. However, this has presented unfavourable working conditions for the women, ranging from long working hours to jobs insecurities. The impact of the poor labour practices is felt more by women due to their predominance in the labour intensive areas of production. We use flowers in different occasions and rituals in our lives. This chapter presents an empirical review of studies based on the themes identified in the study. It begins by looking at the women's working conditions in the floriculture industry and proceeds to review studies on the problems faced by women in the industry.

2.2 Flower Industry in the World

The global floriculture industry is one of the greatest and quickest growing sectors of the world's political economy. The flower industry has since the early 1980s undergone rapid expansion and it has also recorded a steady increase both in volume and value. Flower farms now occupy more than 200,000 hectares of land in the world, with chrysanthemums, carnations, and roses being the most popular and sought-after varieties (ITC 2001). For decades, the Netherlands has been the leading floral market in terms of flower production and trading, accounting for nearly 68% of the annual flower production. Recently, developing countries including Kenya, Ecuador, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, and Colombia have also become major producers and exporters of flowers in the global market.

Many studies suggest that the flower industry provides employment opportunities to many people who possess limited experience and no education in developing countries, and females

represent a disproportionate number of workers in the flower industry (Aquilar et al, 2009). Owing to the flower industry's potential contribution to job creation and socio-economic development, many international development organisations including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Bank (WB) now support the extension of flower farming into the developing countries.

The world's greatest importers and consumers of cut flowers include the USA, and countries in Europe and Asia which together account for over 90% of the world market (ITC, 2012).

Recently, demand has rapidly grown in China, India, Eastern Europe and East Asia where emerging new markets have seen an increasing number of people now have additional disposable income. As a result, many developing in East Africa, Middle East, and South America have increasingly started to invest in flower farming and become key producers and exporters of cut flowers (ITC, 2012). However, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent worldwide lockdown and mobility restrictions by governments across the world has had devastating effects on the global flower industry. The demand for flowers has plummeted due to the massive cancellations of weddings, events, and celebrations. Flower farming companies and individual investors in floriculture have recently recorded huge losses due to the suspension of international flights, reduced demand, and low volume of fresh-cut flowers exports. However, demand remains high and considerable efforts are being made to revive the industry after the pandemic.

2.3 Kenya Flower Industry: Growth and Trends

With 38% of the cut flower imports to Europe, Kenya has one of the most prominent and prosperous cut flower industries in all of Africa. From a small-scale sector in the 1950s and 1960s, the industry has progressively increased in value and volume to become agriculture's second-highest source of foreign exchange profits, behind tea. It has been praised as a key driver of growth in the horticulture, a vital sub-sector providing roughly 70% of the entire value of horticulture exports, and provides roughly 1.45% to Gross Domestic Product. It is not just one of the oldest and most promising sectors of the national economy (GDP). In 2020, the sector posted a record Ksh. 107, 508 billion in export earnings. These revenues are attributed to 203.9 metric

tons of cut flower exports. The industry has registered continuous growth in value and volume and shown in Table 1 below.

Table 2.1 : Kenya Flower Exports (Value and Volume): 2011-2020

| YEAR | VOLUME (000 Metric Tons) | VALUE (Kenya shilling millions) |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 2011 | 117.2 | 58,835.0 |
| 2012 | 165.3 | 64,962.6 |
| 2013 | 151.3 | 55,975.7 |
| 2014 | 146.3 | 59,893.1 |
| 2015 | 148.9 | 62,937.5 |
| 2016 | 133.7 | 70,829.5 |
| 2017 | 160.0 | 82,248.9 |
| 2018 | 187.7 | 113,165.2 |
| 2019 | 173.7 | 104,141.8 |
| 2020 | 146.0 | 107,507.6 |

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (different years 2010-2020)

In contrast to the 1970s and 1980s when only one or two firms produced the bulk of cut flowers exported from Kenya, there has been an exponential growth and today there are over 500 companies and individual producers growing cut flowers in Kenya. The acreage of land dedicated to cut flower production has increased to over 2, 600 hectares of land. In the same vein, the varieties of cut flowers produced for the export market have increased to over 110 different types. Production for export market is mainly concentrated on roughly 60, medium to large scale flower farms. However, over 65% of total exports come from twenty-five large scale producers. The large-scale flower farms range in size from 20 to over 100 hectares with their workforce ranging from 250 to 6000. The large-scale growers are supplemented by roughly 50 medium scale commercial growers and an approximated 500 small scale growers. Slightly more

than 77% of the approximately 180 medium and large scale farms are owned by Kenyans of Indian or European descent and the remainder by local political elites and state bureaucrats. Most flower farms in Kenya are scattered throughout the country.

However, the main production areas are in Eastern Kenya, Uasin Gishu, Nakuru, Nairobi, Kericho, Nanyuki, Kiambu, Thika, Athi River, Nyandarua, Mount Kenya, Kitale and Lake Naivasha. The farmers utilize a wide range of technologies in flower production. These include greenhouse ventilation, fertigation systems, drip irrigation, net shading, pre-cooling, cold storage facilities, grading, wetlands for waste water treatment, fertilizer recycling systems to prevent wastage, artificial lighting to increase day length, grading and packing shades, and refrigerated transportation tracks. These work environments pose significant health and safety challenges to the workers in the flower farms. Furthermore, working conditions have the greatest impact on the workers.

More than 70% of Kenya's cut flowers are exported to the European Union, with a market share of approximately 38%. The most popular flowers are carnations, leaf cuttings, roses, decorative plants, and lilies. More than 50% of Kenya's flower exports to the European Union are sold through flower auctions in the Netherlands, even though direct sales are also growing. Kenyan flowers re-exported through Dutch auctions are often distributed through different wholesale and retail outlets, however, in many European countries' supermarkets are the main selling points for the cut flower trade. The other leading importers of Kenya flowers are the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and Germany. Belgium, the Russian Federation, Israel, and Peru are also becoming very important and the fastest growing import markets. Despite the increasing demand for Kenyan flowers, recently public attention has been focused on several media exposes and academic research documenting extensive human rights and environmental abuses and poor working conditions. However, the true extent of this issue may not be accurately known because there has been no major empirical research to unearth and document them.

The outbreak of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which forced many governments to impose an array of containment measures including worldwide lockdown, and restrictions on international and internal travel has affected the production of flowers and market of Kenya's floriculture industry in serious ways. The demand for cut flowers has declined due to

postponements of ceremonies, weddings, and events. Flower farmers in Kenya like elsewhere in the world have experienced enormous losses due to the suspension of flights, decline in demand, and low volume of fresh-cut flower exports. To reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their flower companies, growers have not only halted the production of some varieties of flowers till demand increases but also have forced to deduct the salaries of their permanent staff while the number of casual staff has been drastically reduced. Most of the casual workers who have lost their jobs are female and for those who remain their hours have been reduced and as a result, their earnings have dwindled, and their livelihoods critically affected. The disruption of employment and income during the pandemic has served to exacerbate the challenges female workers face in the flower farms.

2.4 Impact of Floriculture Industry on the Kenyan Economy

Floriculture is currently a flourishing industry and by no means a key part of the Kenyan economy. In this sector, the participation of people of different sexes is not the same but it is also different depending on the context whether rural or urban. Nevertheless, majority of the workforce are women despite being either unskilled or semi-skilled. Again, this leads them to “work on a casual basis or on short contracts” (FPEAK, 2011 quoted by Mutua, 2014). As a matter of fact, the flower farmers need to fulfil several codes of conducts developed by leaders. Dolan, Opondo, and Smith (2004) pointed out that local multi-stakeholder initiatives and participatory social auditing are fundamental in implementing the codes. They argue that workers are affected by the nature of their employment contracts. As a fact, those employed on a permanent basis enjoy more security, good prospects, and better remunerations than their counterparts employed on casual workers. Despite all efforts made, women participation is not felt mainly at the large scale where growth indicators are determined.

Mutua (2014) conducted a study which looked at what gender does to the development of the export horticulture industry in Yatta constituency. She pointed out that the horticulture industry and in a special way the export sub sector contributes significantly to the remarkable growth in the agriculture sector. The preferred methodology for the study was a descriptive research design. Fifty-nine (59) women were randomly selected from the population to fill out the questionnaire. Apart from these, key informants who included the leaders and staff at the

Ministry of Agriculture were also interviewed. The resultant qualitative data were subjected to content and thematic analysis while quantitative data were analysed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 21). According to Mutua data were presented in the form of descriptive statistics featuring percentages, means, standard deviation and frequency tables. The study found out, on the one hand, that women entrepreneurs recognize achievement as the ability to control their own destinies and on the other that the male saw achievement in terms of attaining goals and monetary gain. Similarly, this study found out that among other things gender social network (referred here as work, family and organized social life of the Kenyan women) influence their infrastructure investment which affects the performance of their enterprise while “informal networks and associations play multiple roles in providing services and being avenues for mobilizing social finance which influence growth of enterprise.” The recommendations of the study include the need to develop and equip the sector to meet the demands of current times through modernizations and venturing in skill acquisition.

Wright and Annes (2014) examined how women working in the farm represent ruralism and farming within the framework of farm tourism. They subjected their data to a qualitative mode of analysis. In their study they found that women epitomize rurality and farming in several and apparently diverse ways. In some instances, they would depict a rural setting lifestyle with clear masculine-feminine binaries connected with custom and traditional heritage while in other instances they would paint a picture of modernity and urban set-up. The result is a multifaceted mixture of farming and rurality that led the investigators to argue for prospects of representation and how it can enable farm women to have influence in farming. Beer (2018) studied gender and inequality in large-scale capitalist projects in the Markham Valley in Papua New Guinea. This study analyses three interrelated memoirs of women in a postcolonial context to demonstrate how upbringing intermingles with settings that worsen social inequalities. Beer argues that support from others in their networks, upbringing and position in life contributes to the way women negotiate through life and fight for their rightful positions.

Although there are efforts made to ensure meaningful participation of women in all sectors, gender disparities continue, and women are largely unseen as important players in steering economic development particularly at the macro level as mentioned earlier. This is largely the case where women are viewed as a weaker sex. Sarker and Chakrabarti (2013) sought to

establish “the empowerment of women employed in the flower crop trade in West Bengal, India.” Despite women being the majority in the workforce, the study found out that there are differences between women working “as housewives and those who act as marketing agents in the domestic flower trading market as well as those who are paid higher income.”

Similarly, Manzanera-Ruiz et al (2016) conducted an ethnographic study in Tanzania. The focus of their study was on issues which include gender inequality, the ways through which adaptation is achieved and women indigenous enterprises in cash crop production. Analysing the issue of shifting gender relations and the male-controlled checks to shared achievement under a liberalised market for cash crops, they found out that the move to a market economy influenced the relations of production hence exacerbating gender inequalities. Nevertheless, in such situations some women have worked their way out of the disadvantaged position using their collective action groups and networks. Even though two studies in India and Tanzania seek to demonstrate the gender inequalities and women’s participation cash crop production, they fall short of clearly spelling out the true situation women are experiencing as a workforce in the sector. The current study seeks to achieve this endeavour with empirical evidence.

2.5 Female Workers in the Floriculture Industry in Kenya

The nascent flower industry in Kenya has opened both direct and indirect employment opportunities for both male and female workers. However, females compared to their male counterparts have been the greatest beneficiaries of the growing flower industry. According to various estimates, women account for up to 75% of the labor in the floriculture industry in Kenya, as well as other nations in the region. While on the one hand, females either with any form of formal education or with low levels of education have been able to secure employment in the flower farms, emerging evidence suggests that they face systemic inequalities which render them vulnerable workers. These included poor working and labour conditions, sexual harassment, breach of occupational health and safety rules and low wages and diminished avenues for upward mobility.

According to a study done by Women@Work Campaign (2020), majority of workers in the flower industry who are in the lowest paid jobs are women. The Kenya Plantation and

Agricultural Workers Union (KPAWU), affirms that majority of the farms are dominated by women because they are likely to accept low paying jobs as compared to men.

The Workers' Rights Alert (WRA) report (2000), exemplified the efforts of Women Working Worldwide (WWW) and Kenya Women Workers Organization (KEWWO) in their campaign advocate for improvement of working conditions of women in the agricultural sector. They mobilised the civil societies, human rights organizations, NGOs, and trade union organizations in Europe and Kenya to campaign against the poor working conditions for female workers. Barrientos, Dolan and Tallontire (2001) discussed some of the issues highlighted as: female workers on constantly casual employment or renewable temporary contracts, rampant sexual harassment by male supervisors, and abuses of health and safety rules in greenhouses. In addition, there were frequent unplanned overtime either because of last-minute orders by buying companies or because of unfulfilled targets especially during the harvest season. This causes childcare and other family related problems as well as increases the risks of sexual harassment during long hours of work and night time treks to and from work. These campaigns resulted in a raft of changes across the sector. As a result, sound gender policies revolving around training, promotion, workers' rights, and complaint procedures were launched across the sector. Additionally, programs for social auditing by trade unions, local NGOs, and human rights organizations were initiated to help identify the problems facing female workers on the flower farms.

In response to these initiatives, many flower growers made changes, especially switching from temporary to permanent contracts. Some even established gender-specific policies on female workers' rights and dispute resolution mechanisms, as well as undertook to improve the working conditions in the sector (Dolan, Opondo and Smith, 2003). This meant that female workers were free to join trade unions, thus providing them with another major avenue for dispute resolution and remedy. The UK Ethical Trading Initiative, a coalition of businesses, trade unions, and NGOs that supports respect for workers' rights worldwide, received complaints regarding supermarket sourcing as well. Investigations on this situation necessitated trips to Kenya. Leading flower farms underwent numerous adjustments, which had a significant impact on the working conditions for women. On farms, gender committees were set up to give female workers

a platform to air their complaints. Some shops offered extended delivery lead times to help with childcare obligations and lessen the chance of sexual harassment after dark.

In 2007, changes to Kenya's employment law also contributed to raising national labor standards. Over time, there was a considerable decrease in the reporting of sexual harassment and labor abuse, and more women entered management and supervisory roles. There are now processes in place for reporting issues and fixing them. The reforms' business advantages also became apparent. Enhancing the rights of a workforce that is primarily female has resulted in lower labor turnover, more devoted skilled workers, higher productivity, and higher-quality output. However, there is still a long way to go. In their campaign for a decent wage and other rights, workers are collaborating with trade unions and civil society organizations. However, new information suggests that some of these admirable measures and modifications may have been dropped, and the situation has once more gotten worse. This emphasizes the importance of doing research to assess and record the current working conditions of female employees in Kenyan flower fields.

Yoganandan (2020) argues that “flowers have always been an integral part of Indian culture and society.” Flower farming is now done for commercial purposes in India and due to globalization and free trade it has gained incredible impetus and achieved industrial status. In conducting a qualitative study on the challenges faced by farmers in Salem district, Yoganandan (2020) selected a sample of ten flower farmers using the snowball technique. The study established that flower farmers were faced by a myriad of problems particularly around marketing. While acknowledging the role played by middlemen in the marketing of the flowers, it was found out that they (middlemen) exploited the farmers in not only pricing but also assessing the quality and weighing.

Despite the fact that the floriculture industry is thriving, and women seem to form a significant number of the workforce in the sector that is becoming one of the highest export earners in several countries, there is a sense in which this population suffers a number of challenges.

Dolan et al (2004) conducted a study titled ‘*gender, rights & participation in the Kenya cut flower industry*’ between 2002 and 2004. The two-year study was funded by the United Kingdom (UK) Department for International Development (DFID) sought to examine how the

various codes of conduct the flower growers are intended to comply with and respond to employment situations in the industry. In a special way to find out how they address the experiences of women who form a significant part of the workforce, the researchers noted that the gender dimensions of codes are also related to other variables such as age, marital status, and place of origin. The concerns of women were seen to be different from those of their male counterparts when it comes to issues to do with employment security, overtime, incomes, discrimination, and sexual harassment. Other problems faced include opportunities for promotion, health and safety, pregnancy, and maternity leave among other.

This study depended on the utilized focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews (SSIs) to collect data from the workers. The one hundred female workers who participated in this study were selected using stratified random sampling. The sample was selected based on a wide array of variables including gender and employment status (casual, seasonal, permanent) as well as work site (pack house, greenhouse, and Crop Development Unit (CDU)). The study also conducted 13 FGDs involving 85 workers ranging from five to eight members per group. Twenty-five (25) key informant interviews were also interviewed. KIIS included people with expert knowledge from government, trade unions and associations, and NGOs. Among other things the study recommended the establishment of a gender sensitive work environment which caters for the needs of women in general but also pregnant and breast-feeding mothers.

Women constantly suffer sexual harassment both at home and in the workplace. Handy (2006) conducted a qualitative study to document women's experiences of sexual harassment in three organizations which included a meat-processing plant, a retail store, and a local bank in a small town in New Zealand. The study found out that sexual harassment manifested itself in diverse ways. It was interpreted and reacted to differently in the different organizations. Those who worked in the meat-processing plant were often isolated from their women colleagues hence would not support one another as they experienced verbal and physical harassment from their male counterparts. However, those who worked at the store had coping tactics learnt from colleagues that they applied to counter the advances from male colleagues and customers. For them harassment was just regarded as a nuisance rather than a threat. In the bank the situation was better because of the customer service norms as well as the various collective coping

strategies. This is further reiterated through a study carried out by Women Working Worldwide, (2008) in *'Promoting Women Workers' Rights in African Horticulture'*,

Kenya boasts as the largest and perhaps most profitable cut flower industry in Africa. Majority of the workforce as has been pointed out already is women. It has also been noted that the sector is riddled with immense sexual harassment and gender discrimination. Lowthers (2018) examined the institutionalized sexual economies. During the study Lowthers collected ethnographic and migration stories from the female participants. The study revealed that there were “gendered and unequal labour continuum of sexual commerce that exists at Naivasha’s flower farms.” Female labour migrants who form the bulk of the workforce are forced to offer sex in return for employment at the farms. The study further revealed that sexual harassment and exploitation included transactional sex in which women used sex to gain favours from flower farm managers and in some cases for money. Some of the women also supplemented their income by working as commercial sex workers when they are not on duty or when they have no work shifts such as when contracts are not renewed on time. This finding is a pointer to the precarious working conditions of women in the flower farm. Sexual harassment is a problem that has been also reported oft times in the floriculture industry. In conducting the current study there will be a need to explore the extent to which the local environment, organizational structure and women networks help in combating the vice at the place of work.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

A theory describes a specific realm of knowledge and explains how it works (Chemack, 2013). According to (Kivunja, 2018), a theory usually makes assertions based on deductive and inductive analysis of the data. A theory is therefore important as it guides the study to its logical end. This section will therefore describe the theory that informed this study.

This study was guided by Herzberg's Two-factor theory of Motivation whose proponent is Herzberg (1959). This theory suggests dual job factors in motivation whose products promote satisfaction and those that prevent dissatisfaction. These factors, according to Herzberg, work individually and do not influence one another in the workplace. The opposites in this theory are “Satisfaction” vis-à-vis “No satisfaction” as well as “Dissatisfaction” vis-à-vis “No Dissatisfaction.”

To pick out the satisfiers and dissatisfiers as conceived by women at the flower farm, the post-colonial feminist approach which highlights the oppressive tactics of women by the social economic systems and patriarchy. This approach posits that women are oppressed in a dual way by male dominance and imperialism (Darlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). For women to liberate themselves from the yoke of oppression, they should actively resist subjugation and engage in the process of self-representation, by telling their own stories in their own words and regaining control over their own lives.

The goal of this approach is to give voice to unacknowledged voices to women emerging from years of silenced unmotivated women workforce. This approach is deemed to be an important explanatory lens for this study as it advocates for the improvement of the life conditions of the marginalized groups in society especially women. It helped us to understand women's experiences in the flower farms from their own viewpoints and as narrated by women themselves. Flower farms represent one layer of women's oppression and subjugation in the economic development trajectory, which perpetuates the status. It examines how gendered social and economic trajectories continue to affect the status of women in the workplace today. To address the problems women face in the flower farms, it is imperative to listen to their stories and experiences narrated in their own words. This research sought to challenge the silence and subordination imposed on women by the managers and owners of the flower farms. Changing the working conditions of women in the farms must start by defining the problem in a way that gives meaning from a gendered lens.

This approach was relevant to this study as it helped bring out women's voices and knowledge of the oppression and injustices; they face daily in the flower farms. Women in the farms have been silenced for long and suffering must be brought to the limelight through research that unmask the hidden and unheard voices. This approach sought to understand how words that people use to describe situations, themselves and others, influence actions and how some groups categorize and represent others, and how these representations and constructions impact women's responses and worldviews.

According to the theory, motivators (achievement, recognition, the satisfaction of the work itself, responsibility, and opportunities for advancement and growth) make up the majority of factors that affect job satisfaction, while hygiene factors make up the majority of factors that influence job dissatisfaction (company policy, general working conditions). There are workplace variables that affect both job satisfaction and discontent, one of which operates independently of the other. The study sought to understand how the motivating and hygiene elements influence the working conditions of women in the flower farms.

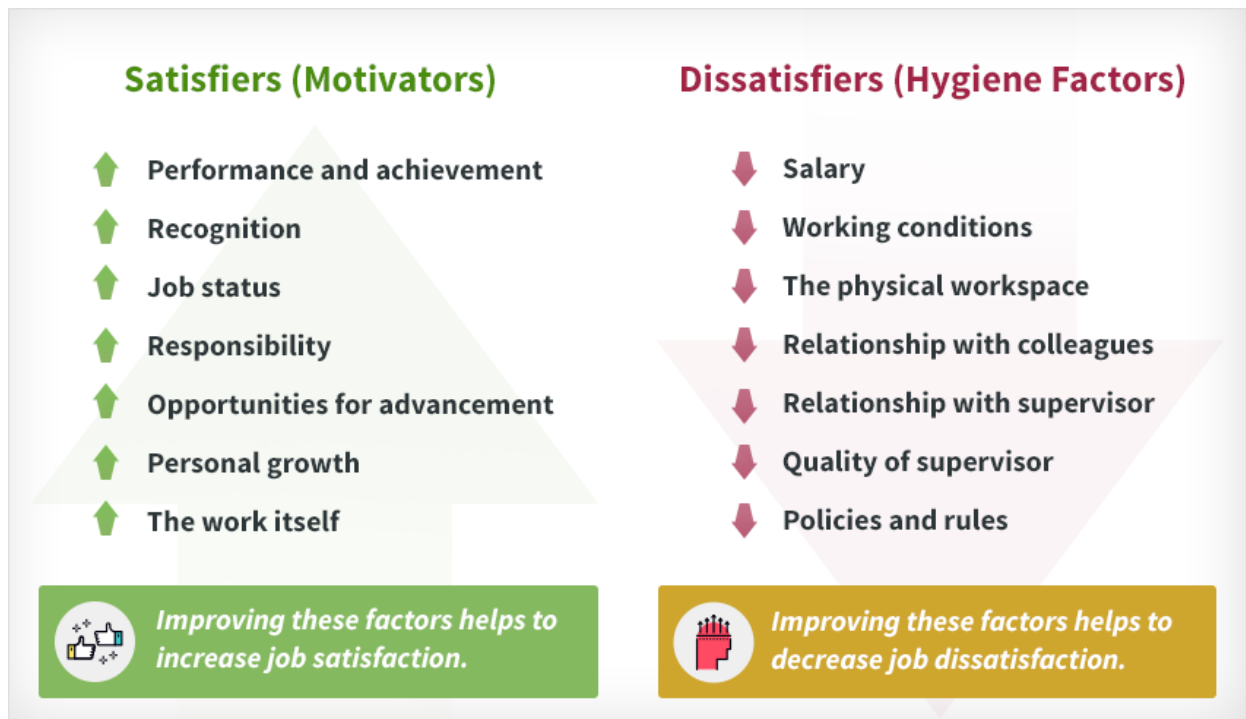


Figure 2.1: Herzberg's view of satisfaction and dissatisfaction

According to Herzberg there are indicators and environmental motivators that lead to job satisfaction while others lead to job dissatisfaction. These are categorized into motivators and hygiene factors. The motivators include recognition, additional responsibilities, increased satisfaction but hygiene factors do not give satisfaction yet if they are not taken into account, they are likely to affect job dissatisfaction. Job security, salary and employee benefits are examples of hygiene factors.

Hygiene factors also known as dissatisfiers or maintenance factors according to Herzberg are essential to motivate workers and thus contribute to long-term positive outcomes. The factors

that lead to positive outcomes include good pay, management and company policies, interpersonal relations, fringe benefits, job security, and working conditions. Lack of motivating factors can lead to dissatisfaction which will in turn affect job performance and output.

This theory stands out for this study because it gives an opportunity for the women workers to voice out the dissatisfiers in the work environment that impede negatively on their productivity and their personal wellbeing. Through this theory, organizations can emphasise the difficulties of staff and create a more conducive environment for women at the workplace.

In this theory money is not regarded as the primary focal point because there are other factors that are responsible for the motivation of employees other than money. They include promotions at work, being recognized, and interpersonal relationships among others, which are selectively given especially to women employees.

The negative aspect of the theory is the fact that there is a lot of subjectivity with the theory in the sense that different people attach different meanings to job satisfaction. Nevertheless, the theory also ignores external factors which can be a dangerous thing to do especially where those factors are more visible.

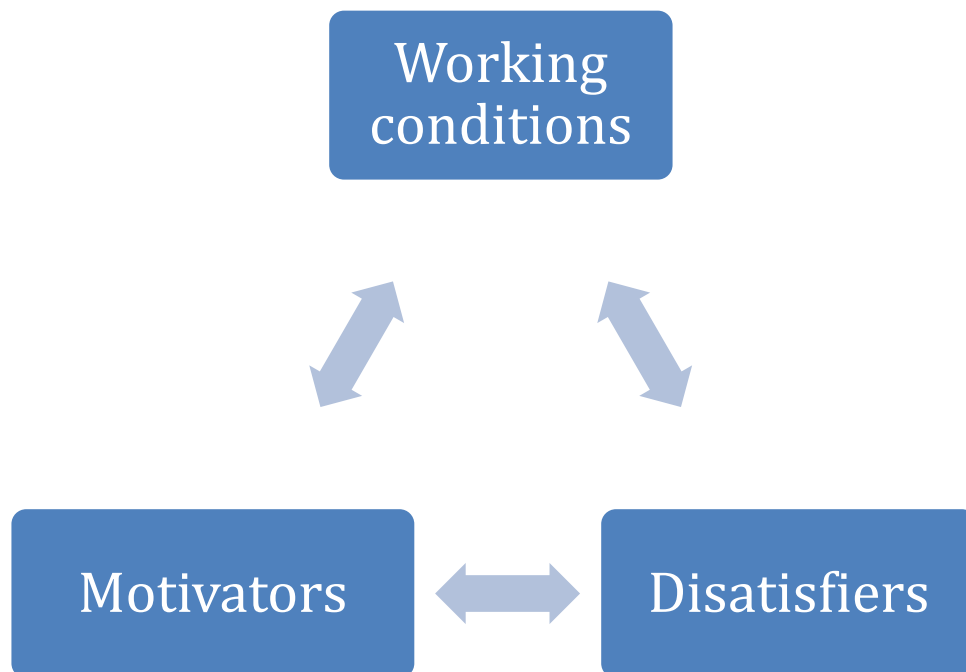
Despite the weaknesses of this theory, it was preferred because the variables of the study interact well with the variables of this theory. Literature from the floriculture industry suggests that the working conditions of women are bad. Despite forming the majority of the workforce, they experience several problems which the two-factor theory of Herzberg tends to address. A very high percentage of the women employed in the floriculture industry are either working on part-time basis or are casual labourers. This affects the motivation of the women because there is no employment security and there is poor working conditions/environment. These conditions affect women differently because of their unique strategic and practical needs.

The working conditions in the flower farms directly impact on the motivation and dissatisfaction of women employees, and therefore impact on the overall productivity of the organization and the women employees' wellbeing.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a diagrammatic representation linking the key concepts underpinning a study to one another. It is the researcher's own constructed model used to show the relationships that exist between the independent and dependent variables in the study (Mensah et al, 2020)

The working conditions as felt and perceived by women are dependent on the varying levels of the motivating and dissatisfaction factors. To correctly identify the working conditions, challenges and coping mechanism of women in the flower farms, the motivating and dissatisfying factors in the farms will be interrogated since they directly influence the outcome of the working conditions and challenges.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a description of the overall methodology that was utilised in this study. It covers a brief description of the study site, the overall research design, target population and unit of analysis, sampling technique and sample size. The chapter also provides a detailed description of the methods of data collection used in the process of data analysis, and ethical issues pertaining to this qualitative study. The problems encountered in the field are also presented.

3.2 Research site

The study was carried out in the flower farms in Thika Sub-County of Kiambu County in Kenya. Thika Sub-County, located 40 kilometres northeast of the city of Nairobi in Kenya, covers a total surface area of some 217.60 sq. km. It lies between latitudes 0°75' and 1° 20' South of Equator and longitudes 36° 54' and 36° 85' east and is bordered by Murang'a County to the North and Machakos County to the east. According to the 2019 National Population Census Report, there were 279, 429 living in the sub-county. A large majority of the inhabitants belong to the Agikuyu community, people indigenous to the areas (KNBS, 2019). However, there are also large pockets of people from other ethnic communities, many of them recent migrants who have bought land or settled in the sub-county. There is an increasing influx of peoples from other ethnic groups living in the sub-county, many of them working either in Nairobi and Thika town or in the factories, pineapple, coffee, tea, and flower farms in the sub-county. Most people are small scale mixed farmers and supply their produce both in Thika town and the city of Nairobi. The other main economic activities include large scale pineapple, coffee, and tea farming.

There are 39 flower farms in Thika Sub-county where this study was carried out. Because of time and resource constraints the study target four medium sized flower farms with between 50 and 100 employees, majority of whom are female. The aim of the study was to examine the working conditions of female employees in these flower farms, representing the state of floriculture in Kenya. For logistical reasons the case study of the four flower farms was situated

within walking distance from each other and were in a peri-urban environment. The women workers in these flower farms who took part in the individual interviews were purposively sampled to represent a diversity of characteristics including age, marital status, social economic status, educational levels, and roles. This was to ensure that many and varied opinions and viewpoints on the main issues were obtained, and thereby lead to inference of conclusions.

Thika sub-county is one of the most important flower farming areas in Kenya with excellent transport networks and access to markets. Recently, the sub-county recorded a rapid expansion in the acreage of land used for flower farming. As is the case elsewhere in Kenya, female workers are overrepresented in the workforce in these flower farms. The working conditions for both female and male workers in these flower farms have been described by different media outlets as pathetic and hence need to be studied to inform the design of evidence-based interventions. This study site is a typical case from which the study findings and recommended interventions could also be replicated in other flower farms in the country where women face similar working conditions. The sub-county was selected as the study location due to its advantageous location, accessibility, long history of flower growing, and significant female labor force participation.

3.3 Research Design

An overall strategy or framework for how the research question(s) will be addressed is referred to as the research design. A qualitative descriptive research design was used for this study. A qualitative descriptive design, according to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), is a research strategy used to respond to queries such who, what, when, and where. It is difficult to find the answers to these issues through first-hand observations. The researcher therefore questioned those who are knowledgeable about the issues at hand, in this example, the female employees of the four flower farms. This particular research design was thought to be appropriate for this specific investigation because it enables the researcher to get in-depth and extensive information regarding the study participants' experiences, in this case, the working circumstances of female employees in flower farms. The final product of this study is based on first-hand accounts of female workers in the flower farms about their working conditions, the problems they encounter, and how they cope with them.

3.4 Sampling Universe and Unit of Analysis

The target population for the study included all female workers in the four case study flower farms in Thika sub-county. The individual female worker in a flower farm was the unit of analysis for this study. Female workers were selected because the focus of the study was on women's working conditions in the flower farms and the working conditions are felt at the individual level before extending to the entire workforce. The female workers who participated in this study yielded rich and valuable empirical information that has been used to answer the research questions posed in this study.

3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Four flower farms were purposely selected out of the 39 flower farms in Thika sub-county for this study. The four selected farms were in proximity to each other however they exhibited different characteristics in terms of size, ownership, and management structures. Convenience sampling (also known as opportunity sampling or accidental sampling or grab sampling) is a non-probability sampling method used to select the participants for this study. This allowed the researcher to pick any cases that come to hand from the target population. Forty female respondents, who had worked for more than one year in the four sampled flower farms, were selected for personalized interviews. One year was considered long enough for these women to be able to confidently and authoritatively narrate stories about their experiences of the working conditions in the flower farms. This sample size was considered sufficient for this study due to COVID-19 restrictions, time, and resources constraints. While the findings may not be generalisable to all female workers in the flower farms, the data generated is not only valid and reliable but also reflective of working conditions of female workers in other flower farms in Kenya.

3.6 Data Collection

Data collection for this study was conducted over a two-week period in the month of September 2021 with 40 conveniently selected female workers in four flower farms in Thika Sub-County. The main aim of the study was to assess the working conditions of women workers in the flower farms. Combinations of primary and secondary data were gathered to meet both the objectives of

and answer the research questions posed in this study. Primary qualitative data was collected through In-depth Interviews (IDIs), Oral Narratives, and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). To complement data obtained from these primary sources, secondary data was also collected and used to confirm or disconfirm the findings and fill any gaps left by the field data.

3.6.1 In-depth Interviews

The main method for gathering primary data was in-depth interviews. IDIs are a qualitative method of data collection that entails intensive personalised interviewing of a small number of respondents to obtain their opinions about a specific situation, idea, or program (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). In this study semi-structured face to face in-depth interviews were conducted with 40 conveniently selected female workers in four flower farms neighbouring each other. They were interviewed on their knowledge and relevant opinion about their experiences on the working conditions and problems they were facing in the flower farms and their coping mechanisms. Probes were used to clarify issues that were not clearly explained and to obtain more detailed information on new and emerging ideas.

The study participants were purposively selected from among the female workers who had worked in a flower farm for more than one year. Potential participants were contacted at the gate to their respective flower farm in the evenings when coming out of work and requested to participate in this study. At the gate the researcher chanced on women coming out of work and greeted them and then introduced herself before briefing the-could-be respondent about the purpose of her visit. The potential participant was then asked if she was keen to take part in the study. Those who consented to take part in the study were asked to decide the place and time for the interview. This was meant to ensure that they felt safe and comfortable to talk freely about their experiences with working conditions in the flower farms. In a few cases, women accepted to be interviewed immediately in their place of residence and in other cases, appointments were fixed for their case narratives to be taken later at a mutually agreed upon venue and time. All the in-depth interviews were conducted in Kiswahili and were both tapes recorded, and a researcher also jotted down the main points. Each interview took on average one hour.

3.6.2 Oral narratives

The other method of data collection for this study was oral narratives, which is a spoken story. Oral narratives are basically stories people tell about their lives and experiences. The oral narrative technique was deemed suitable because it gives the investigator an opportunity to gather detailed information from a few participants through more intense questioning and probing of issues under investigation. Simultaneously, the method also presents respondents with greater flexibility and freedom to narrate their experiences and to add any information they deem important. A total of 8 case narratives were taken from two female workers in each of the case study flower farms. A narrative guide (Appendix 3) was used in the collection of qualitative data at this level. Most interviews were conducted in the Kiswahili language however one or two were conducted in English. On average, the oral narrative interviews took between one to two hours and were tape recorded. The researcher also took some notes during the oral narrative sessions.

3.6.3 Key Informant Interviews

To complement the information collected from IDIs and oral narratives, six KIIs were conducted to gain in-depth understanding of the key issues under investigation. Key Informant Interviews were conducted with a government officer in the local Ministry of Agriculture office, a representative of NGOs whose work involved flower farming, Civil Society official, trade union representative, person from the local Labour Office, and a representative of the Kenya Flower Council in Kiambu County. These KIs were purposively selected on account of their expert knowledge of the issues under investigation and taking into consideration the relevance of their organizations work that impacted on flower farming in Kenya. A key informant interview guide (Appendix 4) has been developed to guide KIIs. The purpose of the KIIs was to obtain the viewpoints of these people with expert knowledge on the current working situation of women in the flower farms, the challenges they face and efforts to address those challenges. Such information was considered important in confirming or disconfirming the data obtain from the case narratives.

3.6.4 Secondary sources

Secondary data were collected from a multiplicity of sources and used to fill the gaps left by the primary data. As Veal (1997 aptly observes, secondary data is particularly useful in providing contextual and background information that form the basis for any research project. Secondary sources of data included books, websites, online databases, newspapers, journal articles, research reports, internet sources, unpublished theses, policy statements, individual flower farm annual reports and strategic plans, progress reports and information held by stakeholders in the study area. These sources were utilised in all the stages of this study to obtain contextual and other relevant information that was used to verify and confirm findings of this study.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

The data generated from this study were purely qualitative deriving from IDIs, Oral Narratives and KIIs which were tape recorded. Data were analysed on a continuing basis, right from the start of the data collection phase. Data gathered from direct observations that were subjected to content analysis. This involved review and a reflection at the end of every interview and day. Tape recorded data were transcribed and translated into the English language. The transcribed notes were read several times to check for clarity and completeness. Thereafter data were sorted out according to the relevant theme emerging sub-themes, and then cross-checked (verified), and triangulated. Thematic and content analysis were used. Recurring themes were identified, and classified, and summaries were developed. Data from KIIs were interpreted iteratively. This enabled the author to develop a good grasp of the issues under investigation and to represent the voices and views of a wide variety of participants in the final report. Verbatim quotes are used throughout the final report to amplify the voices of the participants in this study.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

There are several ethical issues to be considered in a qualitative study like this one, where women were invited to divulge potentially sensitive, and sometimes, distressing information about their working conditions. Before commencing any interview session, the objectives of the study were clearly explained to the potential participants. They were also given an opportunity to ask any questions on any issue regarding the study that was not clear to them. Once all their

concerns were addressed, they were asked for their informed consent and only those who gave oral consent participated in the study. All the ethical principles of social research were strictly adhered to throughout all the stages of this study. First and foremost, potential respondents were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary. They were also informed that they were at liberty to stop the data collection at any point. Secondly, the researcher took several steps to ensure that interviews were conducted in an environment where the respondents felt safe and comfortable to talk by allowing participants to choose the venue and time for the interview to take place that was suitable to them. Thirdly, the interviews were conducted in private space and participants were also assured that the data collected would be handled confidentially, that their privacy was guaranteed, and their identity could be kept anonymous in the final report. All the requisite ethical guides were strictly adhered to and observed throughout the research process and in the report writing/dissemination of findings.

3.9 Challenges Encountered in the Field

The researcher encountered some problems which are worth mentioning. One of the problems encountered was that some participants withdrew from the study abruptly because they saw someone senior from the flower farm pass by for fear that he might face them and ask what they were doing. Secondly, some respondents demanded to be paid arguing that there is nothing for free nowadays and that they were sparing their time to give valuable information. Time and resource constraints as well as the COVID-19 restrictions were a major challenge as they made it technically impossible to interview a representative sample of female workers in the flower farms in Thika sub-county. Many managers in the flower farms were not willing to let the researcher talk to their staff arguing that it would disrupt their work. That is why I decided to scope potential participants at the gates when checking out of work. However, every attempt was taken to interview female employees who represented a range of social and age-related viewpoints inside the flower farms. Hopefully, the study's results will make up for these flaws.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study whose broad goal was to investigate and document the working conditions of female employees in the flower farms in Thika sub-county, Kenya. The findings will illuminate the difficult working conditions in the flower farms, the challenges female workers face and the strategies they have adopted to cope with these challenges. The chapter is divided into four main sections. Section one presents a brief description of the characteristics of the study participants followed by a detailed description of the working conditions in the flower farms in section two. The third section responds to the second research question which sought to identify the problems female workers face in the flower farms. The fourth section answers the third research question on the coping strategies adopted by female workers to cope with the challenges they face in the flower farms.

4.2 Characteristics of the respondents

This section presents a description of the characteristics of the female workers who participated in this study. The characteristics of respondents constitute an integral part of any study because they have a bearing on the findings. The characteristics of female workers presented here are based on data obtained from the study participants.

4.2.1 Age

Table 4.1 lists the ages of the female employees who took part in the in-depth interviews. More than half of the respondents fell between the ages of 27 and 38. The respondents' age range were divided into ten-year age groups. None of the female employees was under the age of 18. This shows that female workers in their early twenties were attracted to flower fields. Given that the tasks given to female workers in flower farms frequently change as they become older, age was regarded to be a relevant variable in this study. It also helps to have a thorough idea of the working circumstances and difficulties faced by female employees in the floral forms from many

perspectives. Thus, age might be an important determinant of the experiences of female workers and thus may influence their responses.

Table 4.1: Age of the respondents

| Age | frequency | % |
|----------------|------------------|------------|
| Below 18years | 0 | 0 |
| 18yrs-27yrs | 8 | 20 |
| 28yrs-37yrs | 20 | 50 |
| 38yrs-47yrs | 10 | 25 |
| Above 48 years | 2 | 5 |
| Total | 40 | 100 |

The above findings show that the female workers that were interviewed represent different ages and each of them was conversant with the prevailing work conditions in their respective flower farms. Previous studies (KHRC, 2012; Staelens et. al., 2014; Odhong and Omollo, 2014) have reported that the workers in flower farm industry are predominantly within the age bracket of 20-25 years old, with the mean age around 24.1 years. In this study, the mean age was a bit higher. However, these findings should be viewed with caution because the study employed a convenient sampling procedure and involved female workers from only four farms. Perhaps if the sample was representative of all the female workers the composition and mean age of the respondents could have been different.

4.2.2 Marital Status

The study participants were asked to state their current marital status. The responses to that question are presented in Table 4.2. Overall, 65% of the women in the sample were single. All the married women stated that they got married by men they met at the flower farms or with whom they work with at their respective flower farms. In addition, a sizable number of unmarried, divorced, separated, and widowed women indicated that they lived either on their own or with their children or shared accommodation with other female workers to cut down on expenses. These findings contrast with those of Odhong and Omolo (2014) who reported a large majority of the female workers in Kenya's cut flower industry (74.5%) were married women.

Table 4.2: Respondents' Marital Status

| | f | % |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Married | 2 | 5 |
| Widowed | 5 | 12.5 |
| Divorced/Separated | 7 | 17.5 |
| Single | 26 | 65 |
| Total | 40 | 100 |

4.2.3 Level of Education

Table 4.3 details the educational levels of the study participants. The findings of this study show that 50%, 7%, and 5% of the respondents had attained primary, secondary, college level education, respectively. Only 25.2% had not completed primary education. This reflects that most female workers at the flower farms have low levels of education and therefore do not compare favourably with those in other sectors of the economy. Overall, most female workers had low levels of formal education which might explain why the flower farms management prefer to hire them because the pay is correspondingly low. This finding confirms Beyene's (2014) assertion that workers in the flower farms industry have low levels partly because most of the positions they occupy are unskilled or semi-skilled. As one Key informant aptly stated:

.... Many of the female workers in the flower farms dropped out of school either at primary or secondary levels and have no other training. They join the sector either to raise college fees or to make ends meet. The failure to attain good grades in school and poverty bar many of them from continuing with education to higher levels (KKI, 2).

Table 4.3: Educational Level of the respondents

| Age | f | % |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Primary dropout | 10 | 25.5 |
| Primary completed | 20 | 50 |
| Secondary dropout | 5 | 12.5 |
| Secondary completed | 3 | 7 |
| College dropout | 0 | 0 |
| College Completed | 2 | 5 |
| Total | 40 | 100 |

4.2.4 Number of Years Worked at the Flower Farm

The respondents' employment history in their different flower farms is shown in detail in Table 4.4. The interviewees were questioned about how long they had worked in the flower farms. Overall, the study found that 50% of the female workers in the sample had worked for less than one year and another 50% had worked for between one and two years. This finding suggests a high turnover which could be attributed to poor working conditions and terms of service in the flower farms. Similar findings have been reported by Bolo (2006) and Beyene (2014) who attribute the high job turnover due to the seasonal nature of the work in the flower industry and bad working conditions. This finding contradicts Perry (2012) assertion that most flower farms employ a high number of female workers with little or no skills and experience and as a result, they tend to stay for longer duration in a specific farm.

Table 4.4: Number of Years worked

| Age | f | % |
|------------------|----|-----|
| Below 1 year | 20 | 50 |
| 1-2 years | 20 | 50 |
| 3-4 years | 0 | 0 |
| 5 Years and more | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 20 | 100 |

4.2.5 Sections of Work

Table 4.5 shows the sections in which the sampled female workers were stationed. Interviews with the female workers revealed that the daily work in the flower farms is divided into six sections namely crop protection (spraying and irrigation), store persons, supervisors, greenhouse, packing, supervision. The main work activities in the flower farms include weeding, pruning, chemical spraying, cleaning, harvesting, and storage in the refrigerator room. Most of the respondents were in the green house where they did a diversity of work activities including packing, weeding, harvesting, and storing. However, none of the respondents in the sample was involved in activities such as chemical spraying, supervision, and irrigation which they indicated were performed largely by male employees.

Table 4.5: Type of Work in the Flower Farm

| Sections | f | % |
|------------------|-----------|------------|
| Supervisor | 0 | 0 |
| Irrigation | 0 | 0 |
| Chemical Sprayer | 0 | 0 |
| Pack House | 15 | 37.5 |
| Green House | 22 | 55 |
| Store | 3 | 7.5 |
| Total | 40 | 100 |

4.2.6 Job Experience of the Respondents.

All the respondents in this study indicate that they did not have any previous work experience and that this was their first wage employment. There were two female workers who had finished college, however the skills they had were in fields which were not related to their current work in the flower farms. This implies that jobs in the flower farms are open to people without any job experience and skills. This partly helps to explain the high rates of job turnover.

4.2.7 Terms of Employment.

Table 4.6 reveals that more than three quarters of the study participants were engaged in the flower farms on a casual basis. This resonates with previous assumptions that a disproportionate number of female workers in the flower farms are engaged as seasonal casual workers. However, these findings should be viewed with caution because of the small sample size and the timing of the study (done during COVID-19 restrictions and low flower season).

Table 4.6: Terms of Employment in the Flower Farm

| Type of work | f | % |
|------------------|-----------|------------|
| Casual | 30 | 75 |
| Casual Permanent | 5 | 12.5 |
| Permanent | 0 | 0 |
| Pensionable | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 5 | 12.5 |
| Total | 20 | 100 |

4.3 Working Conditions in the Flower Farms

This section seeks to answer the first research question “What are the current working conditions of female employees in the flower farms in Thika sub-county?” The findings presented below focus on the physical work environment, physical protective equipment (PPEs), terms of employment, working tools and working duration as the key indicators of the working conditions of women in the flower farms.

4.3.1 Physical Work Environment

It is challenging to effectively represent the physical work environment in the flower fields in a small qualitative study report like the one presented here. It covers things like dust, gases, chemical exposure, ventilation, work hours, transportation, hazard warning alarms, noise, lighting, workload for the musculoskeletal system, and physical protective equipment, for instance (PPE). To guarantee the occupational health and safety of all employees in the flower farms, regardless of gender, there has traditionally been a significant focus on fundamental and practical physical work settings.

Studies in Kenya have reported that the flower industry is characterized by the feminization of the workforce and contract or seasonal/casual labour (Riddselius, 2011; Opondo, 2002). The study respondents were asked to state what their current terms of employment were. Not surprisingly, most of the respondents in this study stated that they were either on contract or casual terms of employment. Such findings contradict those of Odhong and Omolo (2014) and Riisgaard and Gibbon (2014) who reported that most of the workers in the flower farms they studied were on permanent terms of employment at 85% and 78%, respectively. However, our findings should be treated with caution because of limitations in the sample size and qualitative nature of the study. During the interviews, the study participants explained that being either on permanent and pensionable or contract terms did not always mean job security. They narrated stories and provided examples of cases where female workers were either fired, or had their contracts terminated without following the due process and in contravention of labour laws.

The majority of respondents said they typically work eight hours each day, which is in accordance with Kenyan labor rules that set an 8-hour daily work limit. Even though they are not paid overtime wages as required by labor rules, these hours may grow to nearly 16 per day during the peak season. According to the information gathered from the interviews, several flower farms had relatively difficult working conditions. Loneliness, excessive heat in the greenhouses, and cold in the storage rooms are a few of the problems reported. Additionally, a Key Informant who works for the county government described the work environment in greenhouses and cold rooms as a health threat, referencing an ergonomics situation where people must work in a small area with extreme temperatures that is likely to have an impact on the worker's health and productivity. Working for eight hours in such a setting could not be ideal, especially for female employees, she argued. The fact that rest time is used in the same working environment makes the situation worse. The respondents claim that the terms of engagement and work environment are more of a problem than the working hours.

4.3.2 Occupational & Health conditions

This study revealed that nearly half of the female workers who participated in this study have suffered from different minor forms of work-related illness, including respiratory problems due to working in the greenhouses and refrigerated environments (cold rooms); back-related injuries; migraines; tonsillitis; allergies; gastritis; stress, and muscle aches resulting from long hours of work in awkward positions. In addition, many respondents stated that they have been involved in different types of accidents while at work in their respective flower farms. The most common mentioned accidents were poisoning and burns from chemical substances, falls, and cuts. While some of the respondents suggested that they were satisfied with the medical care and support offered for accidents at work and described the PPEs and tools supplied as adequate, the majority stated they were not satisfied with PPEs and tools supplied, and medical care offered after accidents. This issue off PPE was mentioned by virtually all the respondents. One respondent who had worked in a flower farm for over two years stated:

Our farm does not supply us enough gloves, protective clothing, and other safety equipment. We only have one pair of protective uniforms which includes waterproof wear, face mask, gumboot, eye goggle, and hand gloves. We work for long hours in the green house spraying, which exposes us to harmful chemicals that put our health at a potential risk (Female Employee, 2 Farm 1).

Previous studies show that flower farms have a particularly high prevalence of injuries and illness in the flower farms. This was due to the highly repetitive nature of the duties in flower production, the demanding and constrained work environment, and individual strict production quotas that workers must meet over set periods of time. However, data from KIIs paints a different picture with three of them stating that both female and male workers in the flower farms are supplied with the adequate tools and PPEs based on their work requirements. As one KII stated:

Greenhouses are considered as high-risk work environments because of contact with toxic agrichemicals and because of that worker are supplied with appropriate PPEs and are closely supervised to ensure proper use of the right PPE (KII, 4).

Virtually all Key Informants stated that the welfare and safety of workers was prioritised when it comes to the provision and appropriate use of PPEs and medical care to staff including the treatment of work-related injuries. “In fact, most of the big flower farms have a clinic on site to cater for the needs of their workers” stated one Key Informant. Another Key Informant explained that sometimes occupational health and safety challenges occur when workers misuse PPEs or fail to follow or read instructions on their use. This indicates that female workers are at higher risk in the green houses because of their inability to read and comprehend basic instructions and of lack of awareness on health and safety issues in the greenhouses. This shows that a low level of attention is given to the health and safety of female workers in the flower farms. However, it is noted that safety is a broad and critical research area associated with both men and women’s physical work environment and is, for practical reasons, crucial for sustainable flower farming.

4.3.3 Job Security

Most of the female workers in this study had an indefinite, permanent work contract with the flower company, while a few were on casual terms. However, this general finding should be viewed in the context of our small sample size. In the opinion of all the female workers interviewed, a lot has changed in the flower farms over the past decade about hiring and firing of flower farm workers. For example, despite working for four years in a flower farm, a 28-year-old female worker explained that previously almost all female workers were appointed on a casual basis. She explained further that over the last few years an increasing number of female workers are being engaged on contract terms. However, according to one Key Informant hiring on casual terms is the norm especially in the small and new flower farms. It is therefore not surprising to find that, just as most of the workers are hired on casual terms, they are less likely to work for one flower farm for a longer period if the conditions of work are not good. Indeed, there was a high job turnover in the flower farms. According to a few Key Informants, job stability was a major problem especially in the smaller flower farms in Thika sub-county. They attributed this situation to poor implementation and adherence to labour laws by the owners of the flower farms. For example, many employees are hired by word of mouth either as casual employees or day labourers which makes it quite easy for them to be summarily dismissed at the whims of the flower farm managers. In conclusion, security of employment is an issue of concern in the flower farms, especially in Thika.

4.3.4 Right to Collective Bargaining and Freedom of Association

Study participants were asked if they belonged to a trade union or any organization that advocates for their rights at work. The consensus was that most flower farms did not allow their staff to join trade unions implying that they did not have freedom of association. Asked if they could join a trade union and to state the benefits of trade unions at their farm and in flower industry in general, most of our interviewees indicated that they would join a union if one existed at their flower farm. They gave the following as the reasons why they would join a trade union: expectation that it negotiates for better working conditions, union could help them resolve work-related disputes (such as sick leave and fringe benefits, etc.) and that it promote unity among workers, advocate on their behalf for better salaries, working schedules and shifts, and could force farms to adhere to the labour laws. The study participants stated that the management of

the flower farms was scared that if workers join trade unions, they demand for higher salaries which will have a negative effect on their profitability. They also stated that workers in flower farms were not united enough to pressure the owners to allow them start trade unions. Other reasons mentioned include lack of strong leaders and interest from employees in creating unions. Surprisingly, a fewer respondents stated that they would not join a union if one existed at their farm, due to several reasons, including the stigma attached to unions and fear of being fired.

4.4 Challenges Female Workers Face in the Flower Farms

This section attempts to answer the second research question “what challenges do women go through in the flower farms in Thika sub-county, Kenya? According to Mena & Silvia, (2005) a hostile work environment creates safety and health concerns on several levels, ranging from a lack of training and safety information to physical assault. Distractions while working can lead to taking improper safety precautions, resulting in on-the-job injuries. The effects of poor working conditions can be reflected in acute as well as chronic stress reactions.

4.4.1 Sexual Harassment

All the respondents in this study stated that they often faced sexual harassment from their male colleagues and supervisors. One female respondent explained that while sexual harassment is illegal and not tolerated in the flower farms it was a rampant problem. When asked if they had experienced it at a personal level half of the women said ‘No’. However, they were hasty to add that they always encounter sexual advances from their male colleagues and supervisors. Even though the number of respondents who had been sexually harassed in the flower farms was not extremely large, the problem is rampant in most flower farms. This is triangulated by study findings done previously that suggested that most women workers did not view some actions as sexual harassment, while others feared stigmatization. In fact, it is worth noting here that our sample size was relatively small and therefore hard to give us a clear indication of the true magnitude of the problem. Information obtained from the case narratives made it apparently clear that most female workers in the flower farms face sexual harassment in one way or another. The most common forms of harassment female workers faced in the flower farms were physical,

sexual, and verbal abuses. Out of the forty respondents, many claimed to have faced verbal harassment perpetrated by their immediate supervisors and only a few admitted that they met physical and sexual harassment. It was explained that the problem of sexual harassment affected all female workers irrespective of their age and marital status. Sexual harassment is one variant of gender-based violence that female workers encounter in their everyday life both at work and home. However, for reasons of fear many of the female victims often tell no-one, hence they continue to suffer silently. These findings are in confirmation previous studies which suggest that sexual harassment is an endemic but is often a hidden problem that is prevalent in all human organizations. However, it is often trivialised and ordained as a minor problem which does not require any pre-emptive action. Even though sexual harassment in the flower farms is a hidden problem, the reality is that it is a serious problem that that requires needs urgent action.

Sexual harassment is about power and control and is therefore a tool that the male supervisors use to suppress and oppress women in the flower farms. It is frequently utilized as something that reminds women of their inferior status and vulnerability. This male domination is often manifested in unwelcome sexual advances, innuendos, and other act of physical intimacy like touching, grabbing, pinching, and brushing. However, female workers have different understandings and interpretations of sexual harassment which means that there are some acts that are not considered even by women as harassment. The study revealed that female workers in the greenhouses who have male supervisors are especially at a higher risk of sexual harassment. However, it was not possible to determine the number of male supervisors in the four farms because of logistical problems. One key informant said:

The level of sexual harassment in Thika is lower because most flower farms are small and often people work in groups in the green house, and some have female supervisors, so there is little room for female workers to be sexually harassed by their colleagues and supervisors.

This study argues that even though the flower farms are small and have fewer workers and female supervisors, this cannot protect female workers from sexual harassment as the male supervisors often demand that they meet elsewhere after work, but harassment can also occur during break time when workers scatter everywhere under the greenhouse. Thus, there are still possibilities of verbally and sexually harassment. It is apparently clear that sexual harassment

was not only limited to the greenhouses as male supervisor often auction promotions and small benefits for sexual favours from junior and vulnerable female workers. The study participants also stated that sometimes, their male counterparts joke and laugh on the dress code and sexual conduct of the female workers in a manner that is embarrassing or humiliating. Further it was explained that sometimes, male colleagues make unpleasant comments and inquiries into the private sexual life of the female workers, or continually invite them out even when they have already declined, which the respondents said was nagging and makes them uncomfortable. This finding is confirmed by previous studies which suggest that female workers in the flower farms are victims of different forms of sexual harassment and gender violence, which helps to explain female workers low job satisfaction, lack of motivation, high turnover as well as physical injuries and mental health problems in the flower farms.

4.4.2 Lack of Training

The respondents stated that the other challenge they faced in the flower farms was lack of adequate training. It was explained that apart from the induction offered on the first day which basically involves a short explanation of the assigned duties, most of the study participants indicated that they have not received any training to enhance their skills. This may have a devastating effect on the female workers' performance in their roles in the flower farms and exposes them to different risks including injuries that could potentially affect their whole life. Consequently, lack of education and training, and insufficient information especially about the relevant occupational health and safety issues in the flower farms was identified as an issue of great concern to virtually all female workers in the flower farms. The attitudes and institutional culture of the managers, supervisors, and workers in the flower farms concerning occupational health and safety training often ignore unsafe and risk work practises. This is basically because the one-off short training new workers are given at the time of employment are inadequate.

According to data gathered from case studies and in-depth interviews, new recruits in flower farms frequently receive no training, information, or demonstrations on how to work safely. They are also not given the chance to learn, practice, and become proficient in the necessary safety measures before they begin work. This is particularly true for female employees, according to the respondents, who said they had ample time to pick up or practice the new

abilities. Female workers do not benefit from the formal training available to their male counterparts because of their low levels of schooling. The respondents stated that the management often justifies these discriminatory practices on the grounds that men are given the formal training due to the nature of the work they are directly contacted with chemicals. Majority of the interviewees and KIIs stated that jobs in the flower farms would be secure if the female workers had prior experience and received training at the beginning of their employment. As one female interviewee said,

I was not given any training when I was employed in the farm. The supervisor in the greenhouse took about 30 minutes to show and explain to the five of us who were hired on the same day how to harvest and bend flowers then we were told to start doing what we had been shown. I think it could be a great thing to offer proper training to new employees and clear information on how we can protect ourselves from harmful chemicals and how to carry out the different duties in the farm (IDI, 4).

Training, capacity building, and personal development education in the flower farms is a very important not only for increasing productivity but also ensuring the health and safety of the workers. On-job hands-on training is also vital especially for female workers whose ability to read manuals and instructions is limited. The nature of on the job training may vary from one farm to the other but first and foremost focus and emphasis should be on the occupational health and safety of all workers in the flower farms as it is a mandatory legal requirement and every worker has a right to be informed about the potential risks at the workplace. The right of female workers to receive training is stated specifically articulated in CEDAW article II (sub article c) "Women also have the right to all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training." However, as this study revealed that the provisions of this article are often not adhered to as on-the-job skill-based training in most flower farms is typically based on observation, rather than by demonstration and direct instruction. The current training approaches are not only inadequate but also unsuitable for the workers, especially the female workers.

While the study respondents stated that they had received some form of induction and on-the-job training on flower harvesting, bending, packing and storage, they had not been told anything about chemicals and pesticides. This finding openly demonstrates that the management in the flower farms does not pay much attention to training their workers, especially female workers

about pesticides and chemicals. Since the flower farms make use of different types of pesticides and chemicals, workers are exposed to varying degrees of risks. Female workers in the farms under the study were therefore disadvantaged as the training was often offered to their male counterparts.

The lack of knowledge and training on dangerous chemicals and pesticides is a major challenge that has undesirable impacts on the life of female workers in the flower farms. Facilitating training to protect both male and female workers from any hazards in the farms is not a privilege but an obligation for the management. The management of the flower farms should therefore take appropriate actions to safeguard the health and safety of their workers by providing them with sufficient information regarding potential risks associated with the different chemicals and pesticides. Such information is imperative because it will not only alert workers of the potential hazards but also enable them to take appropriate precautions to avoid accidents and potential injury to health. The study participants were also asked if they have been trained on safe use of personal protective equipment (PPE). The respondents stated that often they are forced by circumstances to work in the greenhouses without gloves and gowns. This was mainly because they had not been adequately trained how to appropriately use PPE and their significance in their day-to-day work in the flower farms. Similarly, many key informants who were interviewed stated that workers in the flower farms face a myriad of challenges due to inadequate knowledge on the appropriate use of PPE. Lack of awareness not only exposes many female workers to the risks posed by the different chemicals and pesticides used in the flower farms but also to different eye problems, skin, and other health conditions they had not experienced before.

4.4.3 Long Hours of Work and Break Time

The other challenge identified by the study participants was that during the high season they are forced to work for very long hours with any break in between including on weekends. The Key Informants explained that flower farming is by and large a seasonal activity and because of its perishable nature the amount of work increases during the harvest season. This particularly affected workers in the harvesting and packing sections, which are dominated by female workers. When asked how many hours you work in a day during the high season, many respondents said they are compelled to work in shifts lasting up to 16 hours which contravenes

the labour laws. Many respondents explained that their shifts were often extended at short notice, and they did not receive any extra pay, instead they were given days off which also was communicated at short notice which not only disrupts their social and religious life but also family and community life. Key Informants averred that every worker in the flower farms is legally entitled to a weekend off weekly, but this often is not adhered due the exigencies of work during the high season. One Key Informant further explained that many female workers are often employed as casuals and as a result, are counted as daily labourers. In this respect, many female workers are often not eligible for a weekend off as this is a benefit for permanent and pensionable workers only. This renders female workers vulnerable to hostile working conditions as they do not have any bargaining power. They are therefore forced to accept the terms and conditions of work set by the management or have their jobs terminated.

4.4.4 Lack of Labour Association

According to research done in Kenya, many personnel in floral plantations are not allowed to join any trade unions. This study found that the lack of a trade union to protect the rights of female laborers in flower fields is a major cause of the difficulties they face. Consequently, the majority of the casual female workers do not have any avenue to voice their concerns and grievances. Previous studies have reported that lack of trade union to articulate issues on their behalf of female workers in the flower farms renders them vulnerable to poor working conditions. All the participants in this study reported that there was no trade union in their respective flower farms. As the respondent noted, “we do not qualify to join a trade union because we are casual employees and management does not permit workers to form unions or those who attempt are dismissed immediately”. Another respondent said “I am not aware of trade unions in our farm, and I have heard that our bosses do not like a trade union. Anybody talking of a trade union on our farm is fired immediately. Many people fear losing their jobs and therefore continue to suffer without any representation” This was contradicted one KI who claimed that the reason for the nonexistence of a trade union in the flower farms is due to worker’ lack of interest and ignorance about how the process of starting one. Nonetheless, all the study participants agreed that having a trade union was beneficial to because it can advocate on their behalf for improved working conditions.

4.4.5 Lack of Safety Equipment and Facilities

Another issue that female personnel in all four of the flower fields under study encounter is a lack of suitable social amenities and restrooms, as well as cafeterias and health clinics. Even though many employees believe that restrooms are necessary in their various flower farms, one of the respondents noted that no one has ever tried to request the administration to build suitable restroom facilities because they are afraid to ask. In addition to the inadequate availability of toilets, respondents unanimously stated that toilets are often dirty or are some distance from the workstation, which means female workers must walk a distance to use the toilet. Majority of the respondents stated this is a challenge because supervisors are often not happy to allow them to go to the washroom. As a result, the workers are forced to stay for a long period of time before visiting a washroom which causes kidney problems especially for the majority of female workers in the greenhouses. One of them said:

"There are two toilets in our farm, one is near to the greenhouse pack house and the other far at the front. One of them was closed about a month ago and all of us both male and female, are forced to share one toilet, which is too far for workers in the pack house. Most of us prefer to urinate at lunchtime."

The study respondents told me that the toilets often have no toilet paper or sanitary napkins and running water for hand washing. This is a major challenge for female workers who have a more regular need for washing because of menstrual hygiene. In virtually all the case study flower farms there was no bathroom however in one farm there was a bathroom for spray group only which was dominated by male workers. One Key Informant claimed that showers are available in most flower farms all workers use. However, the reality is that the bathrooms are often open during working hours which makes it technically impossible for most female workers to use. The other point made by one respondent and later agreed by all the others was that female workers also suffer due to lack of change rooms i.e., where they can change to work clothes and store their clothes and bags and other personal items which including mobile phones which they are not allowed to have during working time. So, female workers routinely store their bags and clothes in the greenhouse or around their workstation. One of those interviewed said:

We did not have a place where to put our personal belongings but there are few free spaces in the green house where we store our clothes..... Often we eat and take rest on the floor of the pack house we prefer to eat outside in the open spaces because the greenhouse is very hot during the day.

4.4.6 Health associated challenges

Health and safety concerns are, according to the study's respondents, a critical challenge they see among employees of flower farms. In the flower farms, there are worries about the workers' health and safety. There are specific health and safety risks that are specific to female agricultural workers in the flower farms, notwithstanding the general health and safety risks experienced by all workers. However, it was apparently clear from the respondents that health and safety problems in flower farms do not bar female workers from entering and remaining in employment in the sector, but they were emphatic that they could like a change in the work environment in which these health and safety challenges continue to occur. Despite the different chemicals used in the flower farms playing a vital role in the production of high quality and healthy flowers, they often contaminate the environment and cause damage to the health of workers. Since many of the flower farm workers are female, they are rendered vulnerable to different types of infections triggered by the contaminated environment. The most common health complications that female workers in the flower farms face include dizziness, nausea, diarrhoea, headache, kidney problems, congenital malformations, fainting, miscarriage, defective birth, premature birth, respiratory problems, reduced fecund ability, back pain, skin irritation, eye problems, and headaches to mention but a few (Brassel and Rangel cited in Tigist, 2007).

Most employees in the flower farms are forced to work for long hour while standing. Consequently, they suffer from different health conditions including various types of pains such as back pain and other related health conditions. Health related challenges are exacerbated by the insufficient supply of PPE such as gloves, warm clothes, and boots for workers in the cold-rooms. According to Ezana (2007) flower farm workers operate in a very challenging environment, which exposes them to extreme heat or cold in greenhouses and refrigerated rooms respectively. The environment in the greenhouses is not well ventilated hence workers do not get fresh air while those in the refrigerated room endure cold related diseases such as tonsillitis, bronchitis, tuberculosis, and others. The study established that except for workers in the spray group (only men), all other workers do not have regular medical check-ups which would easily

detect some of these health conditions and have them addressed before they escalated to chronic levels.

4.4.7 Salaries and Wages Condition

The other challenge that featured in almost all in depth interviews revolved around salaries. Most respondents lamented about low wages, delayed and/or underpayment of wages/salaries or unfair deductions, and unfair dismissals, long working hours without overtime wages, and hostile working environment. Salaries have direct bearing on the quality of life for the personnel. It worth noting, salaries determine consumption preferences and decisions regarding investments for all salaried people, which will in turn lead to improved standards of living for the workers and their families as well as bring economic growth for the country. In this study low wages were cited as the main cause of high turnover of workers. Additionally, financial, and social challenges were cited as the cause of immoral behaviours in the flower farms. This arises from feelings of loneliness and vulnerability to abuse push women into illicit sexual relationship for social and economic protection.

4.5 The Coping Mechanisms for the Challenges

The third study question, "How do female employees deal with the difficulties they encounter at the flower fields in Thika sub-county? " is addressed in this part. The purpose of the study was to determine whether the respondents had other paying jobs in addition to their work at flower farms. By asking the female employees what else they did to make additional money to get by, the variable was operationalized. The study found that female workers in the flower plantations in the Thika sub-county used a variety of techniques to deal with the difficulties brought on by unfavorable working conditions. One of the strategies employed by female workers in the flower industry in Kenya to supplement their wages was through engagement in small subsistence agriculture and income generating activities such as vegetable vending, hawking, small retail shops, selling food, and embroidery or informal money lending. One of the respondents said:

“Some female workers sell vegetables (sukuma wiki), run retail shops, hawk foodstuffs, embroidery and sell food particularly tea and coffee, and braiding hair on other women.” Yet another stated, *“Female workers when out of work in the flower farms they wash clothes for other people in return for a small fee, do tailoring, and some even engage in commercial sex work to make ends meet.”*

Some female workers had the options of overcoming or coping with the challenges they faced in the flower farms, doing nothing even when their rights were abused. The respondents in this study indicated that they have invented alternative ways to agitate for better terms of work and earning a decent living wage through building a savings culture. The savings were done through the establishing organized women groups (Chamas) where each month they put a fixed amount of money which was either banked or reinvested in small businesses or borrowed out at some interest. They also sought aid from non-state entities like civil right groups and NGOs to lobby for their wellbeing in flower farms. Some approached KPAWU, which also serves the concerns of Kenyan flower industry employees, asking for assistance in advancing a number of issues on their behalf. Riisgaard and Gibbon (2014) assert that Trade unions play a very important role in dealing with labour related issues such as voicing out the concerns of workers with management. These third party organizations play a very important role in establishing a conducive working environment for their members through raising complaints with employers thus helping to safeguard their interests, rights of workers and safe working environment for all workers, especially female workers.

Many female workers in the flower farms have also formed different groupings which are now registered with micro-enterprises which enable them to borrow some cash for investment in their small-scale businesses. In addition, they do manual jobs for other people after work or whenever they are off duty to earn extra income to make ends meet. For example, many respondents said they sell different products when off duty, but also work for other businesses, particularly those that sell consumer goods. From the case narratives it was explained that the study participants were often employed as shop attendants, cleaners, vegetable vendors, and gardeners for an agreed amount of money. This occurred mainly during the low season, when many female workers suggested that they become engaged in individual businesses, as they did not earn enough from employment in the flower farms to enable them to cater for their needs and those of their families.

The other coping strategy that was mentioned by many respondents was temporary relocation away from the flower farms. This was the case especially for female workers on casual and labouring terms of employment. The interviewees suggested that their counterparts who were on permanent and pensionable terms of employment remained at the flower farms throughout the year with some taking their paid annual leave during the low season. However, the number of female workers on permanent and pensionable terms was much smaller compared to those on labouring and casual terms who returned to their native homes or moved in the interim to places where they can get temporal work. Although temporal relocation was adopted by many female workers on casual and labouring terms as a strategy for coping with difficult working conditions in the flower farms, respondents indicated that they spent some time away from the flower farms during the low season outside the flower farms. This study further found that a significant of female workers had technical skills such as braiding, nail polishing, cooking and embroidery which were not relevant to their work in the flower farms. It was explained that some of the female workers with such skills took up employment in the flower farms to earn income which they could invest in small scale businesses related to their area of expertise. Some respondents stated that many females were forced by the COVID-19 lockdown to take up the limited jobs in the flower farms and as a response to the high rate of unemployment prevailing in the country.

It is worth noting here that temporary movement from the flower farms formed an important tactic in guaranteeing uninterrupted stream of income to the female workers. Thus, the scale down in flower production during the COVID-19 crisis was thus treated as any low season – albeit an extended one. Migration from the flower farms due to reduced flower production was deemed a viable option since many female workers had very limited saving owing to poor remuneration. Thus, switching to business and casual work or labouring in other sectors employment in other sectors was basically a survival strategy to cope with the difficult times. Some female workers were forced by economic hardship to move in with their boyfriends, engage in come we stay relationships and in illicit sexual encounters in return for money and other favours as a survival strategy. Some female workers switched their livelihoods altogether from flower farm-based ones to business and farming on leased land. The main reason for embracing these coping strategies was because the new livelihood activities did not require

much capital investments, utilized pre-existing skills, and therefore low barriers to entry. The change in livelihoods guaranteed a more stable income flow to the female workers.

Other coping strategies mentioned include reliance on cash remittances from family and friends in the diaspora or working in other areas, foregoing consumption; shift from working in the flower farms to employment in other sectors, economizing household expenditure especially by doing away with non-essential basic needs items, liquidating assets such as household items like dining table, sofa set, and beds to cushion themselves and their families from various risks, sending out children to hawk foodstuffs such as peanuts and mandazi in the market centres. Most female workers combined a broad range of activities and coping strategies to meet their changing needs at different times. The use of multiple coping mechanisms was effective especially for older female workers who also supported their extended families. Thus, multiple coping strategies not only provided an alternative stream of income even though less than their salaries. These strategies were also seen as beneficial as they provided the female workers with an opportunity to do something rather than idle around as they waited to resume work at the flower farms. It is notable from the case narratives that the female workers who engaged in a multiplicity of activities reported an increase in their incomes while those who did not embrace any coping strategy suffered a drop in their income as some opted out of employment, while others experienced low productivity.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Based on the three study objectives, the key findings are summarized in this last chapter. This study's main goal was to look into and record the work environment for women in Kenya's Thika Sub County and Kiambu County's flower fields. The study's precise goals were to: a) ascertain the working circumstances that exist for women in flower farms; b) identify the difficulties that women workers encounter there; and c) ascertain how female workers deal with these difficulties. This chapter is divided into four main sections. Section one expounds on the contributions of this research project to the body of knowledge on the flower farming in Kenya workers followed a summary of the key findings in section two. The third and fourth sections present the conclusion and recommendations of the study, respectively.

5.2 Contributions of the Study to Knowledge

This investigation has advanced the field of gender and development studies by creating a new body of knowledge about the present-day working circumstances for female employees in Kenyan flower fields. In present times, women are grappling with a shift from the traditional ways of living in which they are dependent on men (fathers and husbands) to cater for all their needs and survival to a capitalist economy which dictates that they must take up jobs outside the home. It also adds depth and richness to the literature on the working conditions, the challenges they encounter and coping mechanisms, and the coping mechanisms of female workers in the flower farms. The survey is distinct unlike previous ones as it relied purely on qualitative approach featuring in-depth interviews and case narratives thus vividly capturing female perspectives on the working conditions, challenges and coping mechanisms of female workers in the flower farms in a way no other study has done before.

The strengths and drawbacks of both quantitative and qualitative research methods were taken into account while deciding on the best research approach for this study, and a qualitative descriptive research design was adopted. Triangulation of different primary and secondary qualitative methods with a focus on four purposely selected flower farms has permitted the researcher to clearly highlight the working conditions, challenges, and coping mechanisms of female workers in the flower farms in Kenya. Interviewing female workers themselves has enabled the researcher to gain first-hand information and a situated understanding of the labour environment conditions of female staff in different flower farms. Additionally, it has made it possible for the researcher to compile a variety of viewpoints from a small but diverse sample of female employees. As a result, the study offers a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the gender differences in the working conditions in the flower farms—something that would have been challenging to do with quantitative methods of data gathering. Through verbatim statements in the final report, the study has given female flower farm employees the ability to speak for themselves. In other words, this study expands on the growing body of studies on gender disparities in the flower industry by adding a female perspective and voice.

In terms of the working conditions in the flower farms, gender issues don't appear to have received much academic focus. The studies and publications that are now available on the working conditions of female employees in flower farms frequently concentrate on both male and female employees, mainly in large-scale farms. However, there is a dearth of gender-specific data regarding the terms of employment for female employees in small to medium-sized flower farms. This study addresses this issue and adds to a growing body of empirical data to close the knowledge and comprehension gaps about the working conditions of female employees in flower farms.

This study has significant implications for all parties involved in the horticultural sector, particularly policymakers, human rights advocates, and anyone else interested in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the cut flower sector. This includes financiers, farm owners, employees, and other participants in the supply chain. Scholars that have prioritized research on the gendered effects of flower growing will also greatly benefit from this study. The study has highlighted a number of issue areas and coping mechanisms employed by female farmworkers to handle the difficulties they face. The majority of the problems are in need

of rapid action. The study suggests that the more attentive policy planners and stakeholders in the floriculture industry are to the concerns of female workers, the more motivated their workforce is likely to become and thus lead to increased productivity. Investors in the floriculture sector must also endeavour to improve the working conditions of female workers and to address the challenges female workers face the flower industry so as to increase their profitability.

5.3 Summary of Findings

This study endeavoured to canvas the views of female workers in the flower farms in Thika Sub-County of Kiambu County in Kenya. Knowledge of research participants in any study is important because their background characteristics will tell us why they respond/act in certain ways and understand how their circumstances influence their responses. The study involved 40 purposefully selected respondents drawn from four flower farms. The four farms lie at the intersection between urban and rural settings and the study participants represent a great diversity in terms of the socio-economic characteristics.

The following were the main conclusions regarding the socio-demographic traits of the 40 female workers who took part in this study. One is that a significant portion of the respondents were under 40, indicating that the majority of the female workers in the flower farms are young and active and represent a demographic group that is in desperate need of employment and income to make ends meet and either start families or care for their young families. The majority of respondents had low levels of education, no formal training, and were either single, divorced, separated, widowed, or unmarried. This contrasts with Odhong and Omolo's (2014) findings which revealed that a large majority of female workers in the flower industry were married. More than a half of female workers had some basic education (both primary and secondary education) however they did not have any training before being recruited to work in the flower farms. This finding is consonant to those reported by Omosa et. al, (2006:22) which found that most of the female workers in the cut flower industry had some basic education but no formal training prior to joining the workforce in the sector. This finding suggests that flower farms are attracting female workers with some form of education unlike previous assertions that most female workers in the sector had no formal education. It can therefore be concluded that since the female workers have some form of formal education, they are not only able to make a clear

judgment of their working conditions and challenges they face in the flower farms but also capable of making informed decisions on issues affecting their welfare.

This study established that more than three quarters of the female workers in our sample were employed as casuals and/or daily labourers. This finding is confirmed by Riddselius (2011) who in his study of the cut flower industry in Kenya found that more than 65% of the workers in the flower farms were seasonally employed on temporary terms. This finding suggests that the employment status of female workers in the flower farms is not improving but rather is worsening as most female workers are now engaged on casual terms. This high level of casual employment is undesirable and falls short of the international and local labour requirements which stipulate that at least 70% of their workforce in the flower farms should be on permanent and pensionable terms (Omosa et. al, 2006). The study has further highlighted many labour rights related challenges that female workers routinely face in the flower farms. These include low wages and delayed payment, long working hours, discriminatory dismissal practices, poor health and safety conditions, lack of freedom of association, overtime with no pay, sexual harassment, and abusive by male supervisors.

The study has also established the following as cross-cutting challenges for women workers in the case study flower farms health hazards caused chemicals and pesticides, inadequate physical protections, job insecurity, low pay, lack of training, labour and human rights violations including denial of right to join a union, sexual harassment, and discrimination. While these challenges are gender neutral, they affect female workers more than male workers. Finally, this study discovered a high rate of job turnover of female workers in the flower farms. The study revealed that the majority of female workers had worked in their respective farms less than two years and as part of their coping strategies they moved out to seek employment elsewhere during the low season and returning during the high flower season. The high turnover was attributed to the seasonal nature of the jobs and non-renewal of contracts especially during the low seasons in the flower farms, poor working conditions including poor health and sanitation conditions, low pay, sexual harassment by male supervisors, and lack of protective equipment. This finding is confirmed by Beyene (2014) who reported that low salaries and poor terms of service were major causes of high job turnover in the flower farms.

The study found that through multiplier effects, job creation, and raising female participation in the workforce, the flower farms in Thika Sub County play a critical role in supporting the regional and national economies. For those in need of alternative jobs and money, flower farms are a significant source. Numerous women struggle with high rates of unemployment and a lack of viable career options. However, the data from the case studies show that the economic situations of the female flower farm workers are extremely precarious and many of them live in challenging socioeconomic conditions, and they utilize a variety of coping mechanisms to survive. This findings, along with those of Tanya and Olga (2007) and Leipold and Morgante (2013), points to the fact that most employees in flower farms do not make enough money to support themselves and their families.

The findings from this study suggest that most female workers are allocated to tasks without being provided with adequate orientation or training. In this regard, it can be concluded that most farms do not provide regular information about potential health and safety risks hence workers often do not follow safety measures such as the proper use of appropriate PPE and follow protective precautions when handling hazardous chemicals. The supply and use of low-quality safety equipment, improper use of protective clothes and chemicals, and lack of understanding of the dangers posed by direct or indirect contact with hazardous substances put female workers' safety and health at risk. Female workers are forced to operate in unhealthy working conditions without adequate safety equipment, according to the report, due to a lack of consistent compliance inspections. Ute (2013) found comparable situations, showing a lack of resources and capacity in flower farms and reluctance by most government agencies to monitor compliance and enforce the basic labour enshrined in the labour laws. The establishment of trade unions in most flower farms is not allowed and as a result, workers' concerns, and grievances are often trivialized and not adequately addressed.

Data obtained from the key informant's interviews suggests that there are policies and laws to protect both male and female workers from unfair treatment by their employers, but compliance was low. This was because government agencies charged with the responsibility of ensuring compliance often do not enforce the law. The workers are negatively affected due to failure of these agencies to implement policies and labour laws that protect the employees from exploitation. The policies and laws that are not implemented address issues such as working

conditions, equal pay for equal work, and safety and health issues (KHRC, 2012). Rikken (2011) observes that implementation of policies and labour laws in the flower farms are critically necessary as they compel employers to provide a better working environment.

5.4 Conclusion and Recommendations

First, the study has shown that women generally have inadequate working conditions in the case study flower fields. The physical working conditions in greenhouses are unpleasant, women are paid less than men, and there have been instances of paychecks not being paid on time. It also established that, despite stakeholders' long-term, consistent efforts, there has been no progress. Slowly but surely, the European markets' introduction of the Fairtrade Initiative is reaching the producers. Every flower farm's management should allow workers—including women—to form trade unions or join those that already exist in accordance with Kenya's labor laws for the purposes of engaging in collective bargaining. Research has shown that, among other farm-specific structures, trade unions and their activities in the horticulture sector may be the most effective means of enhancing working conditions.

Second, it has been established that the flower farms do not effectively uphold the labor laws, norms, and criteria. The administration of flower farms appears to have been left to self-govern, and those that violate the labor rules are not subject to sanctions from the government. Therefore, it has been advised that the working conditions, particularly for women, in flower farms be examined and that the necessary interventions be made essential and made explicit in the form of a plan for simple implementation.

Third, the study suggests that only working personnel at flower the farms or their accredited labour movement should have the legitimate mandate to request their hiring managers enhance their labour environment, despite the fact that it is crucial for civil society actors to press for the right interventions and better working conditions on behalf of the employees. Civil society actors who do not have this legal position should not be allowed to demand improved working conditions from their employers. This would be appropriate and beneficial because, under the current labor laws of the country, only labor rights claims made by employees on behalf of the employers of their separate places of employment can be enforced. In this regard, the study also

recommended that staff try to achieve their goals of better working conditions through use of their allied labour unions or their concerted collective efforts through collective bargaining procedures with their employers in cases of power imbalances that may make some workplace labourers unable to fight for their labor rights while discouraging the unreasonable and unrealistic demands that may be detrimental to the company's bottom line.

The study's overall conclusion is reached by creating the following policy recommendations based on the aforementioned observations: The government should do a better job of enforcing the horticultural sector's current laws and regulations by enhancing its labor and farm inspection operations. CSOs should exercise decisiveness in their support of government efforts (i.e., CSOs should be focused in formulating their work objectives that should help achieve the balanced results out of their complementary roles). They should be completing their supportive role by using well-defined strategies, enlisting government technical officials, and carrying out empowerment activities in the communities to inform the communities on both the positive and negative aspects of the fight for better working conditions so that the negative effects, which are typically not adequately covered by the CSOs, should also be adequately covered to allow concerned citizens, including employees, to voice their concerns.

Nevertheless, people who are interested in performing further research in the area under discussion can use this work as a starting point. Notably, it will aid in improving the researcher's familiarity with current concepts and theories as well as research methodologies. Additionally, it is intended that it would help stakeholders better understand the methods used by flower farms. The study focused on the working conditions and related issues on flower farms, and additional analysis is vital in understanding the complexity of the issues in this sector. Additionally, it might help government agencies and authorities implement occupational health and safety standards and enforcement practices at flower farms and other businesses.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTION LETTER

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN M.A. RESEARCH PROJECT

I'm pursuing a Master of Arts in Gender and Development Studies at the University of Nairobi. I have to conduct a research study and write a paper as part of my coursework. I'm here today to gather information for a study I'm conducting on the working conditions of women employed by flower farms in Thika Sub-County, Kiambu County - Kenya.

I humbly ask for your involvement in an in-depth interview in order to accomplish this goal. I guarantee you that the data you supply will be used solely for academic reasons and will be kept in utmost confidentiality. A copy of the research project's findings would be available in the University of Nairobi library if it could be of interest to you.

Yours faithfully,

Scholastica Kanyua Kaaria

N69/19275/2019

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

Investigating the working conditions of female workers in the flower farms in Thika Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Participants age.....

Level of education.....

Type of employment.....

Please carefully read and fill out this form. Circle the right responses if you are ready to take part in the survey, and then at the conclusion, sign and date the attestation. Please ask for clarification if you have any questions or would like more information.

- The researcher has satisfactorily communicated the research to me in writing and/or verbally. **YES / NO**
- I am aware that a one-on-one interview with recording, either at the beginning or throughout, will be a part of the study. **YES / NO**
- I am cognizant that I am free to terminate this research whenever I want without having to give a reason. **YES / NO**
- I am certain that any details referring to me will be held in the strictest confidentiality and that my identity won't appear in any published materials resulting from this study. **YES / NO**
- I am conscious that any audio recordings of me will only be used for study and will be deleted after your work is done. **YES / NO**
- I am informed that the academic supervisor and examiners at The University of Nairobi will be informed of the status of this research. **YES / NO**

I voluntarily agree to take part in this research project, and I have been issued a copy of this permission form for my records.

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 3: CASE NARRATIVE GUIDE

- What is the name of the flower farm you work?
- How long have you worked here and in which section or sections have you worked?
- What was the reason coming to work here??
- What qualifications were you required to have to be employed and what are your terms of employment?
- What was your first experience in this farm?
- What problems have you encountered in this farm?
- Have you ever encountered any problems in this farm?
- Did you seek any form of intervention to solve them?
- How do you cope with the working conditions in this farm?
- If you get another job elsewhere, will you continue to work here?
- What do you think about the management of this farm?
- Can you briefly describe how the management solves problems that occur here?
- What sort of help do you get from management when you get a problem such as bereavement?
- Does the management take staff welfare and safety seriously?
- What do you think needs to be done to improve the working conditions in this farm?
- Is there any other thing that you would wish to say about the working conditions in this farm that we have not covered?

APPENDIX 4: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

- How big is flower farming in Thika sub-county?
- What are working conditions in the flower farms in Thika sub-county?
- What are the gender issues affecting workers in the flower farms in Thika?
- What support programs are in place to support workers in the flower farms?
- In your opinion, are female workers more than male workers in the farms here?
- What are most common problems that women encounter in the farms here?
- What is the trade union representation for flower farm workers? Probe what unions have done to address the plight of flower farm workers.
- What do you think makes others not to report to your office?
- When they report to your office, what happens to follow-up on their cases? (Probe: Investigation/Arrest perpetrators/Mediation/Refer victims to other authorities)
- In your opinion what things need to be improved in the flower farms?
- Are there any policies protecting the rights of flower farm workers?
- Are you aware of instances where women in the flower farms have publicly complained and demanded better working conditions?
- Do you think flower farm managers and owners are sensitive to the plight of their workers?
- Based on your experience, what do managers of the flower farms need to do to improve the work conditions of their staff?
- Do you know any **other** ways of solving grievances in the flower farms?
- Do you think through these **other** ways the interests of both gender are take care of??
- Is there any other thing that you would wish to say about the working conditions in the flower farms that we have not covered?

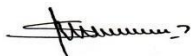
APPENDIX 5: WORK PLAN

| Activity | 1 st Month | 1 st Month | 2 nd Month | 3 rd Month | 4 th Month | 5 th Month | 6 th Month |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Formulation of Proposal | | | | | | | |
| Preparation, drafting & Conclusion | | | | | | | |
| Editing and Approval by Supervisor | | | | | | | |
| Data Collection | | | | | | | |
| Data Analysis | | | | | | | |
| Presentation of findings, writing the final report and submission of Research Project to Supervisor. | | | | | | | |

Name: Scholastica Kanyua Kaaria

Reg. No: N69/19275/2019.

SIGNATURE:



INVESTIGATING THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN IN THE FLOWER FARMS IN THIKA SUB-COUNTY IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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