

WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF COVID-19 CHALLENGES: A CASE STUDY OF  
SAFARI COURT HOTEL'S RETRENCHED EMPLOYEES, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

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## **ABSTRACT**

The repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic were felt not just as a worldwide health issue, but also in Namibia's economy and employment rates. Various industries suffered economically as a result of lockdown measures put in place to slow the spread of the virus. The Namibian hospitality industry was one of the most impacted since it relies heavily on foreign tourists; as a result, many workers in the hotel industry were laid off or had their salary reduced. The study aimed to investigate and analyse the issues faced by workers retrenched from the Safari Court hotel as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as how their livelihoods altered as a result. Data was acquired through semi-structured interviews with twenty individuals (15 retrenched workers and 5 relatives/friends of the retrenched workers) using the qualitative research approach. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. Based on the findings of the survey, all workers had difficulties as a result of retrenchment. Financial issues, health (including mental health), and employment challenges were among the most significant challenges faced by workers. Finally, the study recommends that the government and many companies should build effective pandemic preparation strategies for the future.

**Key words:** COVID-19, pandemic, retrenchments, hotel industry, workers, employment.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>BIG</b>	Basic Income Grant
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>KII</b>	Key informant interview schedules
<b>METF</b>	Ministry Environment Trade and Forestry
<b>MHSS</b>	Ministry of Health and Social Services
<b>MLIREC</b>	Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment
<b>MTC</b>	Mobile Telecommunications Company
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>NIMT</b>	National Institute of Mining and Technology
<b>NTA</b>	Namibia Tourism Board
<b>SSI</b>	Semi-structured interview guides
<b>UBI</b>	Universal Basic Income grant
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to myself, Mirjam N.P Tuvadimbwa, as a symbol of my perseverance and dedication throughout this academic journey. It serves as a reminder of the challenges I've overcome, the knowledge I've gained, and the unwavering commitment I've shown to my own personal and intellectual growth.

## DECLARATIONS

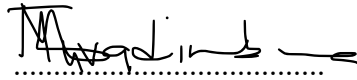
I, Mirjam N.P Tuvadimbwa, do hereby declare that the work in this study is solely mine.

I further declare that this research has not been previously submitted at any other university and that all referencing from other works has been acknowledged.

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April 2025

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) indicated that there was an outbreak of coronavirus in Wuhan city, China, December 2019 (WHO, 2020). Due to the increase in the spread of this virus, on March 11, 2020, the WHO characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic. On March 14, 2020, Namibia recorded its first two COVID-19 cases, however the number of cases increased as a result of community transmission (Nakale, 2020). To this effect, Namibia implemented lock down measures to slowdown the spread of the virus. This led to widespread closures of non-essential businesses and a partial lockdown of the Khomas and Erongo region (Republic of Namibia, 2020).

The state of emergency lockdown measures resulted in the closure of the country's boarders, and movements within the country from one town to another were also restricted (Office of the President, 2020). This had negative economic impacts, particularly, on employment in the tourism sector. Bartik (2020) stipulated that the closing down of borders due to COVID-19 regulations had a negative impact on business operations as the tourism industry that depended on tourists.

Safari Court Hotel, now known as Mercure Hotel, is one of the many tourism establishments in Namibia, that were most affected by COVID-19. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, Safari Court Hotel was a well-established four-star hotel, with the largest conferencing facility in Namibia, and offered other products and services such as accommodation, food and beverage, banqueting, spa and wellness as well as shuttle services. The hotel did not only depend on international clients, but it also depended on

local universities to host graduation ceremonies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was utilized as a quarantine facility. According to Ngatjiheue (2020), the hotel had 219 employees with salary payments estimated at N\$1.9 million monthly. Their clientele consisted of both local and international guests, and they are also known for hosting graduation ceremonies for local universities, however that all changed due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To counter the fiscal effects of the pandemic on business operations, and the government regulations that prevented the dismissal of employees during the pandemic. The Namibian Employers Federation approached the court to declare this very regulation illegal. This was addressed in the *Namibian Employers' Federation and Others v President of Republic of Namibia and Others (2020)*. The landmark case declared that employers to counter the losses be allowed to

Reduce salaries by 50% and retrench non-essential staff as the business' operations were negatively affected by the lockdown regulations and therefore job losses were unavoidable (Ngatjiheue, 2020). This applied to Safari Court Hotel, as the hotel implemented salary cuts and the retrenchment of non-essential workers (Ngatjiheue 2020). Posel (2021) stated that individuals experience job losses differently. The loss of livelihood can result in alcohol abuse, mental health issues and physical ailments.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The problem at the core of this study is the substantial challenges that the workforce in Namibia's hospitality industry are facing, a sector that has been significantly impacted by the impacts of COVID-19 regulations. This issue is especially prominent given the

country's enduring struggle with high unemployment rates. According to recent data from the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA), Namibia's unemployment rate reached 33.4% in the second quarter of 2021, reflecting a disheartening reality for many Namibians seeking gainful employment in an already job-scarce environment.

Namibia has long suffered with unemployment, a challenge that has strained the country's economic and social fabric. The hospitality industry, worth an estimated N\$24.4 billion in 2020, contributed 11.7% to the GDP while employing around 123,000 people, was a significant source of income and economic stability for many households (Pinehas, 2018). However, the government's imposition of lockdown measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a chain reaction of negative repercussions. These laws unwittingly caused a major decrease in tourism activities, thereby harming income and job possibilities in the industry (Hashange, 2020). The financial limits imposed by the pandemic intensify the challenges faced by the workers in the hospitality industry. With tourist-related income falling, tourism businesses were finding it difficult to satisfy their financial responsibilities. In reaction, several companies reduced salaries, while others were forced to retrench workers (Kurmann et al., 2020). The consequences of these retrenchments extend beyond immediate financial difficulties. The pandemic created a ripple effect across the larger labour market, affecting Namibia's employment future.

Unemployment and retrenchments are significant issues that affect individuals' livelihoods, financial security, and sense of purpose. These challenges extend beyond economic indicators, unemployment can be defined as a human issue as it only impacts the statistics but also individuals' sense of purpose and well-being, highlighting the urgent

need for long-term solutions. Issues pertaining to retrenchment and unemployment in Namibia remains a pressing issue that requires comprehensive policies and interventions to address the immediate needs of those affected and consider the broader socioeconomic implications. Understanding the human experiences and struggles of retrenched workers is crucial to comprehend the challenges faced by them and their families. Solutions should not only alleviate hardships but also contribute to a more equitable and resilient labour market in Namibia.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The objectives of the study are:

1.3.1 to analyse how employees experienced the COVID-19 challenges;

1.3.2 to analyse ways in which employees have adapted to the hardships emanating from COVID-19;

1.3.3 to evaluate how employees' livelihoods changed due to retrenchments.

### **1.4 Significance of the study**

This study may be of importance to employers in the tourism sector to be innovative and create strategic plans to combat income losses during financial crises. It may further assist the Namibia Tourism Board (NTA) to encourage businesses in the tourism sector to have packages that cater to local and African consumers. Finally, it may add to the body of knowledge in Namibia, as it may serve as a point of future references on how people dealt with unforeseen circumstances, such as pandemics. This study may hold significant importance for workers in the hospitality industry as it sheds light on potential strategies and innovations that can be implemented to protect their job security, improve working

conditions, and boost their resilience during financial crises and unforeseen circumstances such as pandemics.

### **1.5 Limitations of the study**

The researcher experienced several limitations. Firstly, the researcher initially aimed on interviewing both the retrenched workers and those that are still currently employed at Safari Court Hotel, however, the establishment does not allow any form of research to be conducted in their hotel. To counter this, the researcher only conducted interviews with retrenched employees. Another setback encountered in the study was the tracking down of retrenched workers, as most of them changed their numbers, relocated to villages and towns or found new jobs. In this case, the researcher resolved this by getting referrals from the retrenched workers interviewed.

Another limitation arose when some participants declined to participate in the study. To overcome this challenge, the researcher had to look for alternative participants who were willing to partake in the study even though this required extra time. However, the researcher successfully met the target in terms of the required number of participants to fulfil the study's objectives. Some participants were not willing to meet in person for the interview, thus the researcher scheduled telephonic interviews.

Time constraints was also a limitation, as some participants would agree to a certain time and only make it for the interview an hour or two later then the agreed time, some

participants on the other hand would agree to a certain date and time, only to tell the researcher at the scheduled interview time that they wouldn't make it on that specific day. Some participants were a bit hesitant to freely express themselves, because of the fear that the researcher was a reporter or a journalist, and in cases like this, the researcher reassured the participants about the research ethics again.

### **1.6 Delimitations of the study**

Research study was conducted in Windhoek, Khomas region, and the participants were solely retrenched workers from Safari Court Hotel and relatives and friends of those participants, thus the results may not be generalised to the entire tourism accommodation industry in Namibia.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe, its effect was not only experienced as a global health problem, but it also affected the economy and employment rates in Namibia, sub-Saharan Africa and the high-income countries in the global north. The COVID-19 regulations that were imposed by the government impacted the working class negatively and resulted in high retrenchment rates across the country. This study aimed to cover the research gap on how retrenched workers from the hotel industry in Namibia experienced the COVID-19 regulations and how it affected their lifestyles. The pandemic negatively impacted the world, and with lockdown measures put in place, this resulted into a collapse of the tourism sector, as a result, many lost their jobs, and some had their salaries cut. In this chapter, various literature will be reviewed on the topic of COVID-19 and how the challenges that came with the pandemic affected employment in the hotel industry.

#### **2.2 Theoretical framework**

This study views the impact of COVID-19 through the lens of Karl Marx's ideas on crises and leans heavily on Klein's shock doctrine theory. Clarke et al. (1994) as cited in Cutterham (2020) narrated how capitalism thrives on crises and uses them to accumulate wealth for the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, Clarke et al. (1994) stated that economic crises were frequently blamed on human activities rather than the underlying defects of the capitalism system throughout history. This narrative arose as a result of capitalism ideology emphasising market-driven economy and individuality. These concepts

impacted public perception throughout time, hiding structural difficulties and protecting the capitalist system from criticism. Clarke et al. (1994) emphasized the need of recognising the role of the capitalism system in producing and prolonging economic crises by disclosing these historical roots and processes.

While Naomi Klein's body of work is consistent with numerous fundamental themes found in Marxist thinking, such as criticising capitalism systems and advocating for social and economic fairness, it is important to emphasise that her viewpoint does not exactly conform with classical Marxist philosophy. Humans have lived through several decades of frontier capitalism, a condition characterised by an unending cycle of crises (Klein, 2007). As soon as rules and laws catch up to solve one crisis, the capitalism system advances to meet other challenges, resulting in a never-ending cycle of crisis-response-adaptation. This dynamic nature of capitalism, characterised by a never-ending sequence of crises, represents an ever-expanding frontier where the system's borders are always shifting. In capitalism, Marx (1867) made the argument that capitalists thrive on exploiting labour and that whenever there is a crisis, the bourgeoisie attempt to restraint workers through neoliberal doctrines. This includes limiting labour demands and maintaining capital interests' domination over the working class through economic policies and ideology that prioritise deregulation, privatisation, and minimising labour safeguards. Neoliberal doctrines were characterised by reducing the states involvement in the economy and to create a free market, where prices of goods and services are determined by supply and demand (Clarke, 1994). It is critical to understand, however, that a free market does not entail freedom from pandemics or poverty. While the free-market permits

market forces to set pricing and economic decisions, tackling larger social challenges such as pandemics and poverty necessitates coordinated government measures and targeted policies that go beyond the reach of the free market's processes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Namibia faced fiscal restrictions as a result of reduced revenue from economic operations and increased state spending on health and social measures. As a result, the government's capacity to engage in substantial economic interventions was limited, leading to a decline in state involvement. Hence, why capitalism was heavily critiqued by Karl Marx, who thought that capitalism never solves socio-economic issues, rather it shifts them from one geographically region to another (Marx, 1867). Karl Marx criticised capitalism for prolonging socioeconomic problems such as labour exploitation, income inequality, poverty, unemployment, social inequities, and environmental degradation. To solve these issues and construct a more equitable and just society, he recommended a transition to socialism or communism with community ownership and control of the means of production. Mattick (2020) contends that wherever capitalism is practised, there will always be a crisis. This is consistent with Karl Marx's criticism of capitalism, in which he argued that capitalist economies are intrinsically prone to repeating crises owing to their core nature of profit, wealth accumulation, and labour exploitation. Mattick's assertion suggests that the cyclical character of crises is a property of capitalism systems that persists even now, more than a century after Karl Marx's original discoveries.

Marxist theory argues that retrenchments are a strategy for capitalism to exploit workers and advance its agenda. During crises, some capitalists seize the opportunity to cut costs by retrenching workers, leading to increased profits. Harvey (2010) discusses the capitalist

agenda, which has been accused of influencing government policies to favour large corporations over SMEs, potentially exacerbating income inequality and stifling smaller businesses. The contention lies in whether capitalism itself is responsible for crises, as Marxists argue that the capitalist system inherently generates and perpetuates them, while proponents might attribute crises to external factors or market fluctuations. The COVID-19 pandemic led to companies engaging in retrenchments to maintain financial stability. Marxists saw capitalists profiting from the crisis, while critics argued government policies favoured large corporations, potentially widening economic disparities. The debate revolves around capitalism's inherent tendencies and how the system responds to economic challenges.

This research encompasses Naomi Klein's "shock doctrine," which focuses on capitalising on national crises. The idea is similar to crisis theory (Klein, 2007). According to Klein (2007), the shock doctrine is a strategy for implementing neoliberalism, an economic and political philosophy that advocates for less government participation in the economy and the creation of a free market in which pricing and economic choices are dictated by market forces. Neoliberal policies promote limited government interference and dependence on private industry by emphasising deregulation, privatisation, and individual freedom. Historically, Dr. Ewan, a psychiatrist employed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States of America, literally practised this notion. Dr. Ewan used shock treatment to remove Marxism from people's minds and transform them to capitalists (Harrington, 2010). The perils of capitalism on the free market were explained using Klein's work as stated in Friedman (2016). Friedman (2016) was a supporter of

popularised free economies and monetarist ideas (Krugman, 2007). Dr. Ewan's shock therapy is symbolic of how neoliberalism uses crises to erase alternative ideologies. In the case of COVID-19, neoliberalism exploited the pandemic to push free-market policies, such as labour cost-cutting and privatization. Just as Dr. Ewan sought to reprogram individuals, the crisis was used to reshape economies in favour of capitalism, often at the expense of workers. The study utilizes this theoretical framework to critically analyse the challenges faced by hospitality workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the interconnectedness of economic policies, crises, and real-world experiences in the hotel industry.

Opportunistic actions frequently develop during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Klein (2007) showed how neoliberal policies favoured by the rich elite were implemented and pushed opportunistically during such crises. According to Bark (2009), these measures rewarded corporate elites while pushed the underprivileged deeper into poverty. Crises provide opportunity for desperate people to hand over authority to anybody providing rapid solutions, whether the crisis entails financial meltdowns or, as the Bush administration proved, terrorist strikes (Klein, 2007). According to Kornbluh (2020), emergency measures taken during times of shock or crisis tend to become permanent solutions. This observation describes how organisations used the COVID-19 pandemic to force workers to work longer hours for less compensation. Finally, Bark (2009) emphasised the risky nature of neoliberal policies, claiming that violence is frequently used to preserve and promote them. The COVID-19 crisis in Namibia severely impacted the hospitality industry, leading to workers being retrenched. Employers

exploited this opportunity to cut labour costs, causing some employees to work longer hours for less pay. This negatively impacted job security and financial well-being, highlighting the exploitative nature of crises and leaving vulnerable workers in a precarious position (Kornbluh 2020).

This conceptual framework, based on Marxist theoretical viewpoints, aims to comprehend how the capitalist mode of production combines with pandemic-induced retrenchments, resulting in negative implications for the hotel workers. This approach tries to shed light on the complexities of the workers' dilemma and offer viable routes for addressing their struggles by studying the fundamental tensions and structural challenges inside capitalism. The capitalist system, driven by the quest of profit and accumulation, is prone to cyclical crises. Over the years, Namibia's hotel industry has been vulnerable to various crises, which are generally caused by variations in tourism demand, economic downturns, and speculative activity. The COVID-19 pandemic worked as a catalyst, intensifying the hotel industry's underlying capitalist tensions. Hotel businesses suffered financial hardship as demand for hospitality services fell, forcing them to retrench as a cost-cutting strategy.

The intersection of capitalist challenges and pandemic-induced retrenchments has had serious consequences for hotel workers in Namibia. Employees who were laid off suffered unexpected unemployment and the loss of vital income sources, making them economically exposed during an already difficult time (Jauch, 2021). According to Marxist beliefs, this circumstance exemplifies the capitalist system's exploitative nature, since workers bear the brunt of economic downturns while company owners fight to

safeguard profits and financial interests. During the job loss process, the retrenched hotel staff from Namibia faced an extensive number of challenges. Financial hardship, restricted access to social safety nets, and little state support exacerbated the problems these employees faced (Jauch, (2021)). Furthermore, retrenched persons' inability to pursue alternative income-generation prospects in the informal sector was hampered by a lack of formal business experience, exacerbating their vulnerability.

This framework demonstrates how crises such as COVID-19 enable capitalists to protect profits at the expense of workers. In the hotel industry, corporations such as Safari Court retrenched employees to cut costs, resulting in unexpected unemployment and financial difficulty for many. This reflects capitalism's predisposition to prioritise profit over people, as Naomi Klein's shock doctrine explains how crises are used to impose such harsh measures. The retrenched workers struggled to meet their basic needs, highlighting capitalism's exploitative nature during times of crises.

### **2.3 Work in Africa and the World: Historical perspective and COVID-19 impact**

To understand the serious ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry's workers who faced layoffs, a historical perspective on labour in Africa and beyond is required. This historical framework illustrates the factors and trends that have moulded the workforce and set the stage for the pandemic's exceptional difficulties. According to Lucassen (2014), the medieval textile towns in Europe played a significant role in the introduction of wage labour, contributing to the development of economic and social history, as well as the history of work and labour. However, it is critical to recognise

that the study of work and labour history involves a larger perspective that extends beyond medieval textile towns and includes diverse historical periods and places. Prior to colonization in Africa, the labour force was mostly concentrated in agriculture, which was aimed at direct consumption (Britwum et al., 2012). However, in addition to agriculture, several precolonial nations had large textile, mining, and smelting industries. These industries contributed to textile production, mineral extraction, and metal smelting, demonstrating the range of economic activity that occurred across the continent. Britwum et al. (2012), further stated that hunting and gathering, subsistence farming, pastoralism, and commerce were the primary modes of production. The African economy, on the other hand, was not isolated; trading occurred via the Northern African route, where Africans engaged in the exchange of valuable commodities such as gold, salt, and textiles (Britwumn et al, 2012). This type of commerce demonstrated the need for labour in sectors including, weaving and manufacturing of industrial tools. The colonial era ushered in the age of coerced work and the labour contract system. Britwum et al. (2012) asserted that colonial control modified Ghana's predominantly unwaged work patterns by introducing formal sector employment. This notion holds true for other African states under colonial rule, where wages were earned through various activities such as providing colonial civil services, participating in building and rail transportation, working in retail shops, engaging in extractive mining businesses, and labouring on plantation agriculture. These economic developments marked the rise of capitalism in the region, leading to the subsequent exploitation of workers.

In the context of the historical perspective on work in Africa, it is essential to acknowledge how ancient African communities employed various strategies to manage pandemics.

Indigenous knowledge systems guided these practices, as demonstrated by Chirikure (2020), who highlighted the use of disinfectant measures such as burning settlements before reoccupation or shifting homesteads. Such practices were established ways of managing diseases within these communities.

Furthermore, Chirikure (2020) pointed out that settlement layouts in countries like Zimbabwe and Mozambique were carefully planned to promote social coherence and social distancing during pandemics. Dispersed settlements, housing only one or two families, allowed for daily care, support, and cooperation while minimizing the risk of disease transmission. Additionally, these communities prepared for unpredictable outbreaks by diversifying their diets to include fruits and roots, aiming to strengthen the immune system. This holistic approach to health and well-being demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of ancient African communities in the face of health challenges. While ancient African societies displayed resilience in the face of pandemics via strategic planning, the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges to the contemporary workforce, including retrenchments in areas like as the hotel business. This juxtaposition illustrates the changing nature of pandemic employment implications, emphasising the importance of addressing both past lessons and modern realities in worker management and assistance.

Finally, historical practices in managing pandemics offer insights into the connection between work and daily life, public health measures, and community organization. This understanding can reveal coping mechanisms used by workers during uncertain times and their evolution over time. Connecting historical pandemic management to the COVID-19

pandemic can provide valuable lessons for workers in the hospitality industry in Namibia. Studying ancient African strategies can appreciate the resourcefulness of individuals and societies in crisis and inspire effective measures to address the challenges faced by workers in the hospitality sector.

### **2.3.1 Analysing labour challenges from a Marxist perspective**

Karl Marx believed that work must be enjoyable and not a source of exploitation. According to Marx (1867), exploitation occurs when there is an unfair exchange of labour for work. Marx condemned capitalism as he believed it to be a system that alienates the masses. His reasoning was based on the fact that despite workers producing products for the market, market forces, and not workers were in control of things. Thus, the masses were required to work for capitalists, who control the means of production and power in the workplace. As a result, it makes work to be degrading and tedious. A situation that is not suitable for human beings. Marx, believed that such a situation, with no concern over human wellbeing and sense of worth creates an inhumane society which is bent towards the exploitation of workers. Hence the labour theory of value (Prychitko, 1988). In essence, Karl Marx's insights on labour exploitation and alienation serve as a theoretical framework for comprehending the difficulties faced by hotel workers during COVID-19 retrenchments, as this research investigates the real-world impact of these issues on employees' lives and livelihoods.

According to Marx, exploitation of workers is based on the premise that the value that is created by workers is appropriated by capitalists. The labour theory of value claims that “the value of a commodity can be objectively measured by the average number of labour

hours required to produce that commodity” (Prychitko, 1988, p. 2). Thus, the value of a commodity is based on the value that workers sell to capitalists in exchange for wages, this commodity is referred to labour power (Prychitko, 1988). According to Marx (1897) as cited in Prychitko (1988), labour power is the capacity of a worker to produce goods and services. The value of labour power is said to depend on the number of labour hours it takes to provide food, clothing and housing to a worker. In order for such a worker to have the capacity to produce goods and services. However, Marx (1897) argues that the goods and services produced by workers do not reflect their true value, hence capitalist make massive profits. This is what Marx (1897) believed to have led to the exploitation of workers (Prychitko, 1988). Marx's concept of labour exploitation and the theory of value highlight the importance of investigating how the hotel industry, as a sector within a capitalist system, may impact the fair exchange of labour and wages in the context of this study on the challenges faced by hotel workers as a result of COVID-19 retrenchments. This knowledge serves as a vital foundation for analysing the economic and employment problems confronting hotel workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **2.3.2 Work in Namibia: A historical perspective and its encounter with COVID-19**

Colonialism played a significant role in shaping the nature of work in colonialized Namibia. Between the 1920s and 1971, Namibians living in northern Namibia were subjected to an exploitative contract labour system. A paper by Likuwa and Shiweda (2017) described the contract labour system as a system in which young and able-bodied young men were recruited for work in central and southern parts of Namibia. The system was regarded as exploitative as the workers had no legal right to decide on the type of

employment they would like or to negotiate the salary. It was believed that the contract labour system was fueled by famine, Rinderpest outbreaks that led to food shortages, impoverishment and colonial labour policies in the late 19th and early 20th century. This historical account of exploitative labour practices in Namibia during colonialism highlights the ongoing importance of fair employment conditions as well as the need to examine how contemporary challenges faced by hotel workers, such as COVID-19 retrenchments, intersect with broader labour rights and social justice issues.

Despite the contract labour system undergoing a major facelift, widespread labour exploitation and the apartheid policy of colonial South Africa remained a stumbling block for black Namibians (Jauch, 2018). Black Namibians were deprived of opportunities to advance in the labour market and were predominantly confined to low-paying wage labour. Excluded from the majority of managerial, professional, and administrative occupations, and with incomes below the poverty line, black Namibians found it difficult to rise beyond the poverty line. Race, class and gender played a big role in employment. Jauch (2018) further states that at the time of independence, more than 50% of black working population were involved in subsistence agriculture in communal homelands. Roughly a quarter constituted of low-wage migrant workers, 14% were low-wage domestic workers, while the remainder were either jobless or involved in a range of informal economic sector activities. Permanent jobs, subsidized housing, health care, and education - all of which were severely racially stratified - were available to the white population as a whole. Wherever black women could find work, it was in the form of domestic work or menial work as cleaners and janitors at businesses, however in many

cases they would only depend on their husbands' remittances. These historical struggles highlight the ongoing importance of tackling labour inequities and social injustices, giving useful insights into the current issues faced by hotel workers as a result of COVID-19 retrenchments.

After independence, two-thirds of the Namibian population are believed to be living in absolute poverty (Jauch, 2018). Currently, Namibia has high poverty rates, as most of the citizens live below the poverty line. The country continues to have very high unemployment rates. The 5% increase in unemployment between 2014 and 2016 remains a serious source of concern (Jauch, 2018). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment rates have always been high in Namibia, however, with the pandemic the unemployment levels increased even more. The Namibian Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (MLIREC) (2021), disclosed data revealing that between January 1 and December 15, 2020, 896 employers laid off 12,198 individuals, of which 8,803 workers were laid off for economic reasons, while 2,842 were laid off for COVID-19-related reasons. The historical perspective on work in Namibia highlights the long-lasting impact of colonialism on the labour landscape, particularly in sectors like hospitality. The exploitative contract labour system, apartheid policies, and socio-economic disparities have exacerbated the vulnerability of black Namibians. Understanding the historical context of work in Namibia helps formulate targeted policies and interventions to address workers' needs and foster a more resilient and equitable labour environment. This allows policymakers and stakeholders to develop tailored strategies and initiatives that directly address the unique challenges faced by hotel workers

affected by COVID-19 retrenchments, ultimately fostering a more adaptive, just, and responsive labour environment.

#### **2.4 COVID-19's impact on decent work and precarious employment in Namibia's hospitality industry**

According to Anker et al. (2003) decent employment is an aspirational statement about the kind of work that should be available to all individuals who wish to work across the world. The worldwide notion of decent work can be traced back to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which stated the importance of labour as an inherent component of human rights (Blustein et al., 2016). Blustein et al. (2016), further stated that, labour that is productive and pays a fair wage, job security and social support for families, greater potential for personal growth, and social integration were all examples of decent work.

Decent work has to do with promoting employment through long-term institutional and economic frameworks, as well as defining, developing, and enriching social protection for employees, which includes social security and labour protection. It also aims at affirming, developing, and realizing the fundamental rights that characterize a dignified and just workplace (Blustein et al., 2016). This in simplest words means that decent work is fair, equitable labour that ensures fundamental worker rights, safe, secure working conditions, proper salary and benefits.

As much as everyone desires decent work, not everyone has access to it. According to Kantamneni (2020), inequities in access to decent work and in experiencing discrimination have been highlighted by COVID-19 and the changes that have resulted in

society as a result of social distancing measures. As a result, many vulnerable populations in the United States, such as racial/ethnic minorities, people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and women have experienced a much more severe impact on work-related and economic factors. Kantamneni, (2020) further revealed that the workers most likely to experience unemployment as a result of COVID-19 had lower levels of education, fewer financial resources, and less liquid assets. In a nutshell, these were Americans who were most likely to lose their jobs and their money. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed significant barriers to decent work for many employees worldwide, particularly frontline workers, many of whom were employed in low-wage or precarious positions. While employees in critical services, such as grocery shops, were provided with the appropriate safety equipment to keep them safe from the virus, they still faced job insecurity and other risks, leading to a continued state of precarity (Kantamneni, 2020).

The perception of decent work conditions before COVID-19 depends on factors like industry, location, and labour protections. While some regions had fair treatment, job security, and social benefits, others faced challenges like informal employment, low wages, and inadequate safeguards, eroded the notion of decent work even before the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has however highlighted the fragility of work conditions and exacerbated existing disparities, such as job insecurity, income inequality, and lack of social safety nets. According to United Nations Global Compact (2022), the COVID-19 crisis has shown huge decent work gaps in 2020, emphasising the vulnerability of millions of employees and the inadequacy of social protection coverage, while small firms confront precarious conditions and inadequate global supply networks. The

pandemic has amplified labour market vulnerabilities, making it crucial to examine the immediate effects of retrenchments and their implications for the wellbeing of workers in the hotel industry.

Precarity has been defined as a condition of vulnerability and uncertainty (Matanzima & Nhiwatiwa, 2022). Similarly, Matilla-Santander et al. (2021) defined precarious employment as jobs with various poor employment quality characteristics, such as job instability (for example; contractual temporariness, contractual relation insecurity, underemployment, and multiple job holding), insufficient income, and restricted rights and protection (for example; lack of unionization, social security, regulatory support, and workplace rights). Blustein (2019) associated mental and physical illness to precarious employment and indicated that there is a relationship between these variables. Precarious work, on the other hand, is defined as work with job insecurity, low wages, and unsafe or limited workplace protections (Kantamneni 2020).

Young people, especially those in the hospitality industry were highly affected by the pandemic due to the nature of their jobs (Cook et al., 2021). COVID-19 was not only a health crisis, but a crisis of precarious work too. Buckle (2021) indicated that the pandemic exacerbated the inequality between race, gender, sexuality, and migrants. People with precarious employment were affected negatively as they either got retrenched or got salary cuts and yet were still expected to make timely payments on rent or home mortgages. A study by Matanzima and Nhiwatiwa (2022) on the precarity in the tourism industry in Zimbabwe indicates that the conditions of COVID-19 created uncertainty in the tourism

industry. Subsequently, leading to businesses closing down or scaling down operations, this resulted in the redundancy and vulnerability of the workers.

Matilla-Santander et al. (2021) also made the following arguments on precarious employment, those whose jobs were unstable before the pandemic risk having them become much more unstable. Such workers will be more prone to unjust treatment, abuse, and exploitation if they have less negotiating power. Many precarious employment workers may not qualify for unemployment benefits since they may experience unemployment without being formally laid off. Examples include not having contracts extended or having their working hours reduced to zero. Allan and Blustein (2022) reported that having precarious employment in March 2020 meant having high chances of losing employment. Mathekga (2021) argued that since multi-national organisations benefitted largely from the pandemic, they should do away with contracted employees and provide benefits to its employees. Especially considering, in the case of grocery store workers, who were considered essential workers but remained contract workers, with no additional benefits.

According to the International Labour Organization (2020), obligatory or recommended workplace closures affected 94% of the worldwide workforce as of September 2020, with millions of employees facing layoffs and reduced working hours. The pandemic did not only affect those with permanent employment, people with precarious employment were also affected. The ILO (2020) indicated that historically marginalized people have a high rate of being employed in precarious work.

## **2.5 The laws of retrenchment and layoffs**

Retrenchments, often known as layoffs or redundancies, are a method for businesses to reduce the size of their personnel in response to a variety of conditions, such as cost-cutting initiatives, greater automation, or the need to respond to market changes (De Klerk, 2018). These steps are intended to increase efficiency, retain competitiveness, or handle financial issues. According to Starke (2020), retrenchments refer to a political decision aimed at reducing the level of social protection guaranteed by the state. In essence, it is a conscious policy choice to scale back cash benefits and services that are guaranteed, though not necessarily directly provided, by the state, focusing on individual social rights or entitlements rather than aggregate spending. Layoffs and workforce reductions have been a pre-existing phenomenon, predating the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic, on the other hand, has dramatically increased the incidence of retrenchments. Namibia, for example, witnessed multiple cases of company layoffs prior to the pandemic. According to De Klerk (2018), the National Institute of Mining and Technology (NIMT) retrenched staff in September 2018. Furthermore, following its shutdown, Air Namibia resorted out a huge layoff, laying off all of its employees. These incidents demonstrate that retrenchments have been a regular occurrence in the country, with the COVID-19 pandemic compounding their frequency.

Changing economic circumstances, new capital, as well as changing ownerships are some of the things that can result into reorganization and restructuring within a company. Job losses are not uncommon, and in many cases, they may be the only solution in order for a company to thrive and move forward (Ahmed et al., 2016). Ahmed et al. (2016) defines

retrenchment as the termination of an employee's contract of service as a result of a redundancy scenario caused by a variety of circumstances such as restructuring, production reduction, mergers, technical advances, company takeover, economic downturn, and others. The rate of layoffs is closely attributed to unemployment, which may lead to an economic downturn in both the organization and the country (Ahmed et al., 2016). Because COVID-19 forced the closure of whole businesses like as travel, hospitality, sports, and entertainment, tens of millions of individuals in the United States alone filed fresh jobless claims in early 2020 (Kniffin et al., 2021).

There are countries who have strict anti-retrenchment laws and regulations. The likes of India, France and Zimbabwe. According to Basu et al. (2009), in India a company that has 50 or more workers needs to compensate any worker they retrench, and a company that has more than 100 workers, first needs to seek permission from the government prior to retrenching workers, with three months' notice. Regarding closures, companies who employ more than 100 workers, should first seek permission from the government before closure, this permission can however either be granted or denied, even if the company is in no position to continue operating (Basu et al., 2009). These legislations were put in place to protect the labour welfare, but they also negatively influenced the economy as companies could not make suitable adjustments when they encounter adverse business conditions. Long-run demand for employees declined by 25.2 percent and 17.5 percent, respectively, as rules were toughened, making it more difficult to lay off a worker (Basu et al., 2009).

### **2.5.1 Retrenchment in Namibia**

In Namibia, if an employer plans on laying off their employees, due to economic or technological reasons, restructuring, or unforeseen circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic, they firstly have to contact the relevant trade unions and in cases where there are no trade unions, elected workplace union representatives, not less than one month before the termination (The Labour Act of 2007). Workers' representatives should have the chance to negotiate on their behalf the conditions and circumstances of the dismissals, with the goal of reducing or avoiding any negative consequences. Failure to comply with these standards by an employer may result in a N\$4 000 fine, or 12 months' imprisonment, or both. According to the Namibian Labour Act, when terminating employment contracts, there are certain procedures to follow. Firstly, the number of days to give a notice depends on how long an employer or employee have been providing services. For example, if either of them has been providing services for less than four weeks, they'll only put it a day notice, more than four weeks but less than a year of service, they'll need to put in one-week notice, more than one year of service, will need to put in one-month notice. All notices to terminate an employment contract should be in writing, with an exception of illiterate workers. However, there are calls for the reform of the Namibian Labour Act of 2007 (No. 27 of 2007) to close the loopholes which employers tend to use to exploit their employees. One such common practice is the use of temporary contracts for workers as a means of increasing the profitability of the company against the wellbeing of the workers. The use of temporary contracts for periods longer than one (1) year is not well regulated by the labour laws, hence the exploitation. A paper by Aleksynska and Muller (2015) wrote that temporary contracts can be described as

exploitative as they offer employees little to no protection, most especially in regards to termination and dismissal. In addition, temporary workers do not have access to trade unions who the act accorded bargaining powers during negotiations with employers on matters pertaining to improving the wellbeing of workers. Hence, workers employed on temporary contracts for long periods are characterized by job instability and reduces staff morale. According to Hussien, Sadek and Elkadi (2022), the use of temporary contacts is highly prevalent in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Through the lens of Marx (1897), he would have thought of retrenchment as freedom from exploitation by capitalists. However, a study by Chinedu (2010) found that retrenchments only benefit the capitalists. The benefits include, reduced staff, hence improved cash flow; reduction of redundancy and overcrowding; workers become more disciplined and efficient to avoid a similar fate and lastly enhanced performance. According to Ochurub et al. (2022), retrenchment leaves the remaining workers feeling demotivated and demoralised. They also experience burn-out as their workload has increased. The effects of retrenchments, as seen in Chinedu's study (2010) benefiting capitalists while leaving workers demotivated and burdened, exemplify the consequences of crises of capitalism and the pandemic on the labour landscape. These economic decisions highlight the exploitation and hardships faced by workers, necessitating a critical analysis of the broader implications of retrenchments amidst the crises of capitalism and the ongoing pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only highlighted weaknesses in global supply chains, but it also caused a worldwide rise of retrenchments. As businesses struggled to cope with decreased demand and financial uncertainty, many turned to employee layoffs to save money and preserve their survival (Shafi, Liu, & Ren, 2020). The subsequent mass layoffs and retrenchments increased both community and individual economic difficulties. The convergence of supply chain disruptions and greater retrenchment demonstrated the interdependence of numerous economic factors during a crisis.

As governments and industries coped with the pandemic's aftermath, the significance of establishing more adaptable and socially responsible economic models became clear, addressing both supply chain resilience and labour well-being. This simultaneous problem provided a chance to rethink capitalism assumptions and investigate alternative ways that prioritize sustainable growth, social equality, and crisis readiness in the event of unanticipated crises.

## **2.6 Robotisation of work and its impact on retrenchments in the hospitality industry**

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the integration of robots into the workforce, with its potential to change employment patterns, takes on new significance. The pandemic has heightened debates on the role of automation and its implications for the labour sector. Robots perform work nowadays, and employment wise it is quite scary because it might replace human labour (Osawa et al., 2017). The influence of robots on employment and commerce is a hotly debated issue among academics and the general public. It is believed that automation may endanger jobs in developing nations due to the erosion of the labour cost advantage. According to Carbonero et al. (2020), robots have a

statistically significant negative impact on global employment. Developing countries are more affected by this. Robots have a negative impact on global job growth that is more than eleven times greater in developing economies than in established nations. While it is minor in wealthy nations, it amounts to -14% in emerging economies between 2005 and 2014 (Carbonero et al., 2020). The increasing use of robots in the present Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) revolution has created a heated discussion regarding the possible threat that robots pose to human labour. According to Chang and Huynh (2016), these transformative technologies including predictive analytics, artificial intelligence, additive printing, the Internet of Things, nanotechnology, automation, and robotics are not solely improving, but also combining. Cost reductions and increased accessibility promise future prosperity and the development of new employment. Over the next decade or two, technology is expected to displace around 56% of all jobs in the ASEAN-5 (Chang & Huynh, 2016).

Some sectors are more likely to be taken over by automation than others. Hotels and restaurants, wholesale and retail commerce, and construction and manufacturing are significant businesses with substantial automation potential, while sectors like education and training, as well as human health and social work, have minimal automation risk (Chang & Huynh, 2016). In addition, Chang and Huynh (2016), further stated that certain countries, prominent vocations face severe dangers of automation. For example, women are more likely than men to work in an occupation that is at high risk of automation. Furthermore, less educated workers and those earning lesser incomes are more vulnerable to automation.

According to Spencer et al. (2021), numerous analysts analysed that the Second Machine Age or Fourth Industrial Revolution that civilizations are currently entering will result in a substantially different world, which may possibly be a world without labour. Spence et al. (2021) further explains that the COVID-19 pandemic is accelerating digital automation by increasing incentives for enterprises to automate in order to continue output amid social alienation. However, by producing enormous pools of inexpensive labour, it also offers the possibility for corporations to stockpile labour and avoid costly technological advances. When employees work remotely, technology may be utilized to monitor them, thereby affecting their job quality (Ho et al., 2022). It is too soon to predict how these forces will interact, but it is apparent that the current crisis will influence what technology is created and how it is used. Finally, it might be argued that a post-crisis economy must embrace technology in order to improve people's freedom, health, and well-being. The fast pace of digital automation in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak emphasises the need and difficulty of responding to a shifting labour landscape. As we manage the developing link between technology and employment, it becomes evident that properly leveraging technology may both improve human well-being and promote economic success in a post-crisis environment.

Until recently, industrial robots dominated the history of robotics. However, an increasing number of robots are being employed for professional and personal services. Cleaning, laboratory, medical, underwater, logistics, construction, and demolition applications are examples of professional service applications, as are mobile robot platforms and field

robots for forestry, mining, agriculture, search and rescue, entertainment, games such as soccer playing robots, hazardous area repairs, defence, security, and battlefields applications (Sirinterlikci et al., 2011). Education, vacuuming, lawnmowers, entertainment and leisure robots, and other cleaning tasks are examples of personal service applications. In 2006, the global robot population was expected to be 4.49 million, with 3.54 million (78.84%) being service robots and the remaining 0.95 million (21.16%) being industrial. The overall population is predicted to rise to 8.37 million, up from 7.2 million and 1.17 million in 2010, (Sirinterlikci et al., 2011).

Companies employ automation for diverse purposes, such as increasing labour productivity, lowering labour costs, dealing with the effects of labour shortages, reducing or eliminating routine manual tasks, improving worker safety, improving product quality, reducing manufacturing lead time, automating processes that cannot be done manually, making production and resource planning more consistent, and making processes and systems flexible and agile for changing designs due to deregulation applications (Sirinterlikci et al., 2011). Fixed automation, programmable automation, and flexible automation are the three basic forms of industrial automation. Fixed automation, also known as hard automation, is used when the production volume is very high (10,000 or more) and the product variation is limited to one kind (Sirinterlikci et al., 2011). This sort of automation, which is based on mechanization and accompanying fixtures, is best shown by integrated transfer lines performing sequential machining operations on automobile components. Programmable automation is effective when the manufacturing volume is relatively low (ranging from a few to a thousand) in an environment with a wide range of

goods. This category includes robots and other controller-based technologies. A welding robot with an automatic positioner is an excellent example. Lastly, different goods can be manufactured and assembled at the same time using flexible automation. In comparison to the preceding two examples, this method is best suited for mid-variety and mid-volume applications (Sirinterlikci et al., 2011).

### **2.6.1 Robotisation and employment in the hospitality industry**

In general, a discussion of robotics addresses the subject of employment, namely whether robots would eliminate jobs. There are certain occupations in specific areas where this may be a concern, however robots may also be a catalyst for the development of new employment and industries, as well as a push to enhance some sorts of professions. Much of South Africa's robotics work is presently focused on automation, notably in the automobile industry (Utete et al., 2013). In Namibia for example, automation is used in production industries, like the machinery used for mass production such as beer brewing. Robots are seen to be more reliable than humans in many instances, thus in some parts of the globe they are used more. According to Millington (2017), robots and machines do not pay social security or income tax. The financial consequences of robot deployment must be examined. Robot-based production cannot provide the fiscal revenues required to sustain both social transfers, which help people rendered redundant by robots, and minimum wages, which prevent a decrease in the living standards of low and medium-skilled workers (Millington, 2017). The rise of automation and robotics in the hotel industry raises questions about its impact on workers affected by COVID-19

retrenchments. Understanding the role of automation and robots offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities within the workforce.

The robotisation of the Namibian tourism and hospitality industry will mostly likely result in several job losses and gains. According to a paper by Millington (2017), jobs that are likely to be lost include concierge services, room service and housekeeping duties. However, jobs that require human interactions i.e. reception, and culinary services are less likely to be lost due to the constant need for human connection. However, robotisation is anticipated to be more likely to create employment opportunities in the areas of asset management, analytics, remote diagnostics, field services, and robotic maintenance. It will further create opportunities for the education sector to create opportunities for individuals to up-skill and create new training programs to this effect (Millington, 2017).

Furthermore, Ivanov (2020) narrated how automation will eliminate the number of some jobs, change the tasks and the nature of work for others, while create new job positions. In the tourism industry, the following employment positions would most likely be automated; information processing, standardised communications and other repetitive tasks. These tasks are anticipated to be automated using a variety of technologies such as computer programmes, mobile applications, kiosks, chatbots, and robots, amongst other automation technologies. Tasks that require social skills and emotional intelligence (for example, receptionists, sales agents, cooks, waiters, and cleaners) would be difficult to automate. However, a decrease in the creation of such entry-level positions is expected. This will prove difficult for persons with little to no education (Ivanov, 2020). However, automation allows for the creation of new employment positions within the tourism sector. There will be an even greater need for specialists in automation process planning and

control, big data analytics, kiosks maintenance and repair, and robot maintenance and repair (Ivanov, 2020). This further requires persons to have qualification in the following fields of study, engineering, data science, and software development. Alternatively, such services could be outsourced instead of hiring specialists, who are more likely to be expensive (Ivanov, 2020).

Algocracy is a new style of management, known as the algorithmic rule (Lorenz et al., 2021). It differs from its industrial predecessor primarily in two ways; first, control is becoming less and less diffused through intricate worker systems rather than via hierarchies, it is more impacted through information and software systems that organize the many types of work behaviour. Second, there is algocratic Governance appears to modify some of the early subject-object connections when a superior must keep an eye on the work of a subordinate. The American workplace has changed dramatically in recent years (Lorenz et al., 2021). The post-war "Fordist" mass-production systems, with massive bureaucratic hierarchies, standardization, and routinization that deprived employees of decision-making and power while allowing for high productivity and steady positions are giving way to what is commonly known as a post-Fordist regime of flexibility, personalization, and specialization. This shift appears to have several ramifications. On the negative side, there are frequent layoffs, temporization of employment, and worker displacement as permanent jobs are progressively replaced by temporary and part-time labour, with an increase in the number of persons transitioning from regular to contingent roles. With algocracy, the professional bureaucracy is automated (Aneesh, 2016). Advanced technologies permit greater extension of technology

into areas of human decision-making in the algocracy by standardizing skills rather than standardizing jobs. The algorithmic system's data analysis results in skill standardization (Lorenz & Schuppan, 2021).

## **2.7 The sociology of organisations and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry**

A subfield of sociology that focuses on organizations is called organizational sociology. Understanding social structures is a major focus of sociology, and organizational sociology pays close attention to both the internal structures of companies, like the administrative hierarchy, and the exterior structures that link them, like strategic alliances (Ahmady et al., 2016). Ahmady et al. (2016), defines organizational structure as the framework of relationships between occupations, systems, operational processes, people, and groups working to achieve goals. An organizational structure is a collection of mechanisms for delegating and coordinating tasks. Although it is fundamentally equally concerned with for-profit and other forms of organizations, organizational sociology tends to concentrate on work organizations (Ahmady et al., 2016). As a result, it has specific connections to other sociological theories that also focus on work contexts. The huge body of literature on organizational sociology is a distorted history of the study of bureaucracy. Meyer (1987) as cited in Yeatman (2020) states that the term of bureaucracy refers to organizing concepts that are meant to provide control and coordination of work in huge companies.

In every business, organizational success is the most important element in reducing employee retrenchment. This means that if an organization is effective and successful, there won't be a need for retrenchments. Continuous performance is the primary goal of every organization since it is the only way for the organization to develop and flourish. A culture of continuous improvement has been found to increase employee engagement, as employees that actively contribute to the company's improvement feel a feeling of satisfaction and success. As a result, employees have a stronger sense of belonging and have less reasons to quit the firm. Thus, organizational performance is one of the most essential elements in accomplishing organizational objectives, particularly in terms of human capital management, which includes concerns such as recruiting and retrenchment (Ahmed et al., 2016). With the COVID-19 pandemic compelling millions of workers at all hierarchical levels to work from home, it is heartening to learn that leadership can also function effectively from a distance (Kniffin et al., 2021). Leading from a distance can contribute to effective communication and although leaders are not physically present, the subordinates still get the job done, with the help of virtual communication.

Max Weber is one of the founders of organizational sociology. According to Weber (2009), legitimate power is essential to the bureaucratic style of government. Weber (2009) defines a bureaucracy as an organizational structure that includes full-time employees who are grouped in a hierarchy of subordination and whose work is controlled by rules and documents as well as function-specific specialization. According to Donaldson (n.d), a bureaucracy is a social organization with full-time administrators who are arranged in a hierarchy, have well defined responsibilities, and adhere to norms. In

comparison to other organizational styles, bureaucracy is better able to maintain control over employees and force them to put work demands ahead of personal preferences, which promotes productive labour. Efficiency and regularity of work are benefits of bureaucracy.

Organizational sociology offers valuable insights into company structures and dynamics, emphasizing the importance of success in mitigating employee retrenchments. The hospitality industry in Namibia, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, must adopt principles of continuous improvement, efficient human capital management, and effective leadership. These concepts can help retain skilled workers, foster employee engagement, and navigate challenges, ultimately contributing to a resilient and prosperous future for the hospitality sector.

## **2.8 COVID-19 impact on hospitality industry and calls for degrowth and post capitalism**

COVID-19 emerged in late 2019 and the situation quickly escalated into a global pandemic in March 2020 (Lone & Ahmad, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a global health catastrophe with serious economic, social, and psychological ramifications. Even though there have been several crises in recent years, including natural disasters, economic crises, and even epidemics, the coronavirus pandemic is the first in 100 years to have a global impact (Maison et al., 2021). COVID-19 resulted in so many different challenges. This section expands to discuss the impact of COVID-19 of hospitality industry and subsequently its effect on employment and retrenchment of workers.

For a better understanding of hospitality industry and how it was impacted by COVID-19, one needs to understand the tourism sector. The tourism sector was one of the first to be negatively impacted by the imposed measures, which required hotels to close and all airplanes to be grounded. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2020), COVID-19 had unprecedented impacts on the sector. More than 100 million jobs (direct and indirect) were lost (some temporarily), governments lost more than US\$ 100 billion in export earnings and 7% of global trade that was fuelled by the sector was lost. Ndlovu et al. (2010) further asserts that because the tourism industry is not affected by tariffs and quota barriers, many developing countries rely on it heavily. Hence, the impact on the tourism sectors of developing nations was more severe. Pre-COVID-19, the World Travel and Tourism Council reported that in 2015, the industry was estimated to have contributed to 15% of GDP, 17.1% to employment creation and captured 10.8% of foreign expenditure. The tourism sector not only creates jobs domestically; it is also seen as one of the sectors with the most jobs worldwide (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2016). Baporikar (2016), years before COVID-19 expressed the potential of the tourism sector to generate 3.8 million jobs, and an additional 2.4 million indirect jobs, in Sub-Saharan Africa over the next decade.

However, the fall of the hotel industry within the tourism sector had some advantages for the natural environment according to Rume and Islam (2020). For starters, there has been a massive improvement in the air quality and reduced Green House Emissions (GHGs), which according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2020) a third of GHGs were caused by the tourism sector. Furthermore, a massive reduction in water and noise pollution was detected. The reduction in the pressure on the tourist

destinations, also played a role in the restoration of the ecological system (Rume & Islam, 2020). This led to increasing calls for a tourism degrowth and tourism postgrowth (see Fletcher et al., 2020; Volger, 2022 and Hall & Seyfi, 2020). The difference was highlighted by Savini (2022:1), as “post-growth is an approach, degrowth is an agenda”. The term degrowth was described in a paper by Butcher (2021:1), as “a distinctive political and philosophical approach to development that emphasizes a smaller economy, localism and anti-consumerism as a radical corrective to the putative environmental and cultural problems afflicting modern society”. Degrowth calls for industries to downsize in an effort to protect the environment and maintain the culture in communities. While detaching the sector from capitalism, which according to Fletcher et al. (2019:1750) is threatening the very existence of the sector, “the capitalist system as a whole sustains itself in the face of fundamental contradictions that threaten its long-term survival”. According to Fletcher et al. (2019), the aim of tourism degrowth is to kill over-tourism and promote sustainable tourism in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Another concept that is closely related to degrowth is that of postgrowth. Postgrowth was described as an agenda that advocates for a “an overall reduction in production and consumption though maintaining growth in the world’s least developed societies to facilitate global equality”, according to Sharpley (2021:3). Postgrowth advocates for the implementation of processes and policies, which will shift the values of people from materialistic and consumption-oriented to community-focused (Sharpley, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the hospitality industry, causing job losses and retrenchments. The decline in tourism has sparked discussions about degrowth and postgrowth as potential solutions (Fletcher, Murray Mas, Blanco-Romero, &

Blázquez-Salom, 2019). Degrowth advocates for downsizing industries and moving away from a capitalist system, which may exacerbate challenges faced by workers. Postgrowth advocates for reducing production and consumption while maintaining growth in underdeveloped societies, offering a more equitable approach to economic development. Implementing these concepts must carefully consider the impact on workers' employment and well-being, balancing sustainable practices with safeguarding livelihoods for a just transition in the post-COVID era.

Calls for degrowth, postgrowth and the crises of over tourism, have raised an important question. Is the tourism sector at the brink of entering the post-capitalism stage? The term first coined by Marx (1897) as cited in Beech (2019) has been described post capitalism as a stage where the politics of work is no longer viewed through a racial and gender lens. Post capitalism extends and other “dimensions of difference”, it extends the agency of exploitation from capitalists to other representatives of social systems and discourses. In a post capitalist world, workers have confronted capitalists, in a bid to take charge of the challenges affecting them as workers. As a means of addressing issues related to tourism development, there have been calls (see Tzanelli, 2021) for the sector to shed its capitalist skin, basically opt towards post capitalism. Fletcher et al. (2021) has described the ways in which post capitalism in the tourism sector can be achieved. Firstly, all forms of production must not be based on the private appropriation of surplus value, basically profit must not be regarded as the value of production. Secondly, the production of goods and services in exchange of wages must not be based on the accumulation of surplus capital. Thirdly, the costs of production involving the environment and society must be internalized instead of viewed as a commodity (Fletcher et al., 2019). In a nutshell, the

objectives of the tourism sector must be to foster and promote the wellbeing of people, and personal development (Fletcher et al., 2021).

In addition to post capitalism, there have been calls for the socialization of the hospitality industry, which is “community-centred tourism framework that redefines and reorients tourism based on the rights and interests of local communities and local peoples” (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, p. 610). However, Fletcher et al., (2021) acknowledged that such a drastic shift requires high level political intervention to succeed. Finally, post capitalism, as a viable alternative to the present capitalist system, provides opportunities for resolving the issues experienced by hotel workers during COVID-19. It prioritises people's well-being and personal growth, particularly employees, over profit-driven goals. To achieve this shift, however, major political involvement and institutional adjustments are required, which may be difficult in the aftermath of a global catastrophe. Workers may encounter uncertainty and changes as the hospitality industry transitions to fairer and community-cantered practises. It is critical to strike a balance between postcapitalist principles and tackling present pandemic concerns in order to ensure a fair and sustainable future for tourist sector employees.

The notion of a post-industrial society came as a result of frustration stemming from large corporations and/or industries destroying the natural environment and employing corrupt practices to increase profits. Large corporations and industries would rather put the wellbeing of workers on the backseat in an effort to increase their profits. The concept of post-industrialization and de-industrialization was revolutionized by Bell (1973), who argued that these processes were driven more by political agendas aimed at increasing

profits than by a genuine effort to improve the lives of workers. De-industrialization is defined as the decline in manufacturing activity within an economy (Pike, 2020). The state of deindustrialization is associated with stagnant earnings, widening income disparity, and high unemployment. On the upside, it is associated with favourable effects on standards of living and employment (Rowthorn & Ramaswamy, 1997).

Deindustrialisation is an effect of a huge competition for resources that are scarce (Orsini & Pletikosa, 2019). A paper by Copeland (1991), described how this occurs in the tourism sector. According to Copeland (1991) a tourist boom will similarly prompt a reallocation of resources towards non-tradable goods and services, these are meals at restaurants or accommodation in hotels. Similarly, tourists consume abstract goods, which cannot be priced, these are scenery and natural attractions. As a result, the spending effect occurs both directly, through domestic purchasing power and indirectly, through competition between tourists and locals for non-tradable goods and services. According to Orsini and Pletikosa (2019), this an inefficient way of receiving payment from natural amenities, as such the benefits for the economy from a boom in tourism, falls short. Hence, the notion that massive tourism growth will eventually lead to deindustrialization. However, there is a need for concern for policy makers. The benefits of deindustrialisation would be skewed towards certain groups of people or a specific geographical location. A paper by Jennet and Scheiring (2022), highlighted the implications deindustrialization, which include job losses; increased risk of workers being exploited due to an increase in workload and/or precarity; an increase in social inequality towards a specific income group or race and lastly, community services may be disrupted (Jennet & Scheiring, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted Namibia's hospitality industry, causing a decline in tourism activities and affecting hotels, restaurants, and other establishments. This has led to potential deindustrialization, where reduced demand and revenue may result in resource reallocation away from traditional manufacturing and supporting industries. The hospitality industry is nearing deindustrialization, causing job losses, reduced working hours, and increased precarity for workers. Financial constraints increase the risk of exploitation, reduced benefits, and challenging conditions. Reliance on mainly a single industry for economic growth and employment can exacerbate workers' vulnerabilities during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. To tackle challenges in the hospitality industry, a comprehensive approach is needed. Policy interventions promoting economic diversification, skill development, and social protection are crucial. Enhancing domestic tourism and exploring alternative revenue streams can improve the sector's resilience and provide stable employment opportunities. These strategies help Namibia navigate the post-pandemic era while safeguarding the rights and livelihoods of its hospitality workforce.

## **2.9 Impact of COVID-19 adaptation and mitigation measures on employment and retrenchment in Africa and the world**

Like Namibia, many countries in Africa and the world, imposed measures to slow the spread of COVID-19. Despite, Africa having recorded the lowest cases of COVID-19 in the world, African countries still imposed lockdowns, similar to upper-income countries. A group of scholars across Africa conducted a study to investigate lockdown measures of

nine countries, they listed three types of lockdowns, namely, geographic containment, home confinement and closure of establishments (Haider et al., 2020). Geographic containment was associated with China's decision to limit movement in and out of Wuhan city, home confinement is when people are only allowed to move at certain times, commonly referred to as curfew. Lastly, closure of establishments limits gathering of people at businesses, schools, and churches (Haider et al., 2020). Some countries imposed all three lockdowns, for example Namibia.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a global social and economic disaster on an extensive level. To combat the virus's spread, governments throughout the world enforced lockdown policies that limited the mobility of people and products, stifling economic flows at the local, regional, and international levels. One of the consequences of these lockdown tactics has been a disturbance in the supply chain, resulting in a negative supply shock. Border closures and international travel restrictions have hampered global trade by raising trade costs and delaying or prohibiting border clearance (Lashitew & Socrates, 2021). The strict lockdown measures taken by many countries in the first half of 2020 to curb the rise in infections have significantly slowed down most economic and social activities (ILO-OECD, 2020). As much as lockdowns helped in reducing the spread of coronavirus, it had a great social and economic disruption. Lockdowns resulted in business closures and a reduction in economic activity, resulting in widespread unemployment and a decrease in demand for globally traded products, notably durables. The closure of borders meant that the hospitality industry, which primarily relied on international clients, was unable to receive tourists. Simultaneously, restrictions on internal mobility also

prevented local clients from visiting the establishments, posing double challenges for the industry.

This led to the belief that workers may have experienced exploitation during the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of the implemented measures. According to Zuk and Zuk (2022), workers were exploited due to the following measures: social isolation made it difficult for workers to maintain social solidarity; the conditions were not suitable for organising social and political protests; and the media and public attention directed towards the threat of the disease and not on the issues of inequality and unconducive working environments. In addition, most countries banned mass demonstration and imposed curfews and travel bans. Neoliberal policies were implemented under the pretence of protecting law and order. Rather, authoritarian laws, which had nothing to do with the economy or the environment were implemented instead. Public funds were used to protect the market, instead of protecting workers from the economic downfall caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Public funds were used to provide financial support to companies, while employees were told to tighten their belts and brace for the future (Zuk & Zuk, 2022).

### **2.9.1 Impact of COVID-19 on employment in the hospitality industry of the United States of America and Europe**

Globally, the United States of America (USA) lockdown measures included limiting the movement of people and social distancing. However, movement was allowed between different states, and it was highly recommended for people to self-isolate (Houvèssou et al., 2021). On the other hand, Italy imposed a total lockdown on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March. The total

lockdown shutdown schools, businesses and all economic activities came to a halt (Houvèssou et al., 2021). According to Antipova (2021), the unemployment rate increased to 14.7% at the start of the pandemic from 3.5%, pre-COVID-19. This translated into a loss of 20.5 million jobs (Kozicki & Gornikiewicz, 2020). The hardest-hit industries included the tourism sector. However, some industries flourished, hence stabilising the unemployment rate. According to Shabbir et al. (2022), businesses such as food shops and pharmacies stayed open to serve clients during the pandemic (Shabbir et al., 2022). Companies in the communication sector, specifically those offering video conferencing and internet services made massive profits (Maison et al., 2021). Maison et al. (2021) additionally explain that Amazon, Microsoft, apple, as well as social media apps like Facebook, were some of the companies that made great profits during the COVID-19 pandemic. In European countries, the situation was different, as the unemployment rate was lower than individuals who were available to work but not actively seeking employment. According Kurmann et al. (2020) employment in the leisure and retail trade declined by 60% between mid-February and end of April 2020 in European countries. Furthermore, the weekly hours of workers who were still employed were reduced by approximately 10% (Kurmann et al., 2020).

A study by Sun et al. (2022) on the impact of COVID-19 on employment found that workers in Upper middle countries experienced the highest rate of retrenchments, the lowest was recorded in lower middle-income countries. The study also analysed the level of government support to workers who lost their jobs, to which the study found that countries in high income bracket received support in the form of a 50% salary

replacement. Sun et al. (2022), has acknowledged the challenges experienced by workers as a result of COVID-19. Which include difficulty seeking reemployment due to the extension of COVID-19 measures that made it impossible to conduct tourism safely. Workers that were older, were no longer ideal candidates for reemployment, despite their skills and experience. Women and persons of colour were at greater risk of not being reemployed. This was due to existing structural inequalities and discrimination in the labour market (Sun et al. (2022)).

### **2.9.2 Impact of COVID-19 on employment in the hospitality industry of Sub-Saharan Africa**

Tanzania, though she implemented closures and travel bans, did not implement a lockdown. However, due to travel bans in other countries, the tourism industry suffered from a 75% decline in international tourists during the pandemic. To this effect the Tanzanian government encouraged lower entry fees to tourist attractions, hence a shift to increase domestic tourism (Tchouamou Njoya, 2021). A paper by Tchouamou Njoya, (2021) found that Tanzania had experienced job losses, with workers sinking deeper into poverty. Economic growth in Tanzania dropped from 6.8% to 2.1% in 2020 due to COVID-19 (Jilenga & Selevan, 2022) In comparison, Uganda had closed off airports with exception to cargo, prohibited non-essential businesses from operating, restricted gatherings to 10 people and lastly, imposed a home confinement from March till June 2020 (Haider et al., 2020).

South Africa's lockdown measures were very similar to those implemented in Namibia. International and internal travels were restricted, gatherings of more than a hundred people were not allowed, and non-essential businesses were closed including parks and gyms. Lastly, the whole country was put on home confinement and movement was not allowed after 17:00 (Haider et al., 2020). Another African country with similar restrictions was Zimbabwe, whereby borders were closed by the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, large gatherings were prohibited, and home confinement was implemented on the 30<sup>th</sup> March (Haider et al., 2020). As a result of lockdowns, many employers in the tourism industry decided to let go some of their workers. South African Airways offered incentives to employees who chose voluntary retirement, while Comair retrenched 400 employees. Additionally, the hotel Sun African in Zimbabwe retrenched 300 employees (Nyaruwata & Mbasera, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an unprecedented fall in employment across different economies. In 2020, tourism in Africa had reduced with -74% compared to 2019 (UNWTO, 2022). Jobs in the tourism industry were on an upward trajectory pre COVID-19. Lone and Ahmad (2020) indicated that the pandemic destroyed economies in Africa, especially of developed countries and those with low to medium incomes severely. Problems such as inflation rising due to borders closing and the tourism sectors declining due to travel bans are expected to occur (Lone & Ahmed, 2020).

### **2.9.3 Impact of COVID-19 on employment in the hospitality industry of Namibia**

As COVID-19 cases increased in Windhoek, His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob, the President of the Republic of Namibia exercised his constitutional powers to declare a State

of Emergency in terms of Article 26 of the Namibian Constitution and section 30 of the Disaster Risk Management Act No. 10 of 2012. To prevent community transmission of COVID-19, the President enacted a number of regulations, including lockdowns and suspending specific legislative provisions of the Labour Act No. 11 of 2007, that prohibit employers from dismissing employees and the termination of employees' contracts, in addition, employers could not force employees to take unpaid leave or annual leave, nor can they reduce the remuneration of employees unilaterally (International Labour Organization, 2020).

A paper by Marenga and Amupanda (2021) summarised the lockdown regulations which started on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020. Only essential workers from critical sectors were allowed to circumvent the regulations while carrying out their duties. However, due to socioeconomic challenges faced by the citizens, the measures were relaxed to allow informal sellers to resume operations. These lockdown measures greatly affected the Namibian employment rate and saw an increase in unemployment and retrenchments (Julius et al., 2020). The lockdown measures and closures of businesses led to salary cuts and, even worse, retrenchments. Despite the enacted regulations, the socioeconomic impact led to significant salary cuts and retrenchments. This change was brought as a result of the landmark case of *Namibia Employers Federation President of the Republic of Namibia*. In the case, the Namibian Employers Federation challenged the legality of aspects of lockdown measures that were taken by the government as a response to increasing positive COVID-19 cases. The court found that the President has the legal mandate to act as per the constitution and the rule of law. Hence, individual rights and

freedoms are deemed essential and cannot be overlooked as a result of a health emergency. An analysis of the judgment by Mutandwa (2020) expressed an oversight of the court. The court did not take cognizant of the rights of workers and the economic impact of COVID-19 on them. Meaning the court took the side of the employers, without consideration for the workers.

The Namibian tourism sector was not spared from the devastation that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Tervo-Kankare et al. (2017), tourism is one of Namibia's largest employer, not excluding the billions in earnings that is pumped into the economy. The tourism industry is made up of different subsectors, namely, transport, hospitality, accommodation, food, recreation, and travel (Westcott, 2019). As a result, the Namibian economy was deemed overly dependent on the tourism sector for its economic and employment growth. However, recently the vulnerability of the Namibian tourism sector was exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which was its total dependence on foreign actors. As a result, analysts predicted a growth output of -2.9% in 2020, which the Namibia Tourism Board anticipated would translate into a decline of N\$ 2 billion in GDP (Erastus & Amukeshe, 2020). Lendelvo et al. (2020) further stated that the Namibian economy lost an estimated N\$55.3 million in 2020 due to the travel ban. It can be concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an economy that was already in the midst of a recession since 2017 (Mazarire, 2020).

According to The Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC) (2020), in 2020 Namibia experienced massive wave of retrenchments over the

past three years, of which a total of 5 748 employees were made redundant by 388 employers. Of these employees, 1816 were terminated for reasons related to COVID-19, while 3 932 were terminated for other reasons. Additionally, the Ministry dealt with 405 unfair dismissals, of which 13 were COVID-19 related. In 2022, a total of 15 422 were retrenched by 1278 employers Petersen (2022). This translated into a 63% increase in recorded retrenchments. Petersen (2022) reported that according to the report by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment the tourism industry was the most affected with 4 349 losing their jobs. According to Ngatjiheue (2020), 177 of 219 employees from Safari Court Hotel were retrenched and salaries were cut by 50%. In addition, Hilton Hotel Namibia retrenched 100 workers, due to the collapse of the tourism sector, as the result of national lockdown on 27 March 2020 (Brandt, 2020). The Chief Executive Officer of the Hospitality Association of Namibia (HAN) Gitta Paetzold, stated that the tourism sector has been hit by COVID-19, and further explained that the industry faced a difficult economic situation in 2020 (Brandt, 2020).

To combat the impacts of COVID-19 on employees, the government of Namibia had imposed a mandatory no retrenchment policy for three months (Hulke et al., 2022). After the ban lapsed, companies in the tourism industry not only retrenched seasonal employees to save on expenditures and keep businesses running, salaries of low earners were also cut by 50% (Lendelvo et al., 2020). Lendelvo et al. (2020) further illustrated the devastation caused by the reduction in salary for employees who are already in the low earning bracket. This action has a subsequent socio-economic impact, as people were forced to conduct illegal activities in order to survive economic hardships. Rapuleng (2020)

conducted a study in Namibia to investigate whether contract employees that were retrenched due to operational requirements were entitled to severance package. Rapuleng (2020) found that despite the Labour Act of 2007, stating that employees were entitled to remuneration after retrenchment, only a few of the employers complied with this law. An article by Brandt (2020) narrated the dissatisfaction of Hilton Hotel workers with management, who were yet to pay out their severance packages. Another article by Ngutjinazo and Wolf (2020) narrated the same issue, but this time of employees of Avani Windhoek Hotel and Casino.

#### **2.9.4 Challenges of workers as a result of COVID-19**

In addition to economic challenges experienced as a result of COVID-19, the International Labour Organisation (2021) also recognized the impact on the mental health of workers. Employees have undoubtedly been tested emotionally and faced several difficulties to their mental health and well-being throughout this pandemic (International Labour Organisation, 2021). Some workers, their families, and company owners have all dealt and are still dealing with escalating mental health issues as a result of this pandemic. Psychosocial factors such as work-life balance, isolation, anxiety, and stress from work overload combined and job-related uncertainties such as; possible business closure and the threat to employment security, return to the workplace, and employer-employee issues are key risk factors that could lead to depression and other mental illnesses (International Labour Organisation, 2020). Other highlighted challenges include that stem from the COVID-19, especially the lockdowns include restrictions on movement

and travel; changes in active lifestyle; boredom and monotony, and ultimately, uncertainty about the future (Maison et al., 2021),

According to Deligiannis (2022), financial concerns are at the top of the list of contemporary mental health difficulties, cited by 40% of professionals as the greatest threat to their mental health and wellbeing, followed by concerns about physical health (Deligiannis, 2022). The uncertainty of whether you will have a job tomorrow or not, to survive or make a living is one of the factors that resulted into mental health challenges. Deligiannis (2022), further explains that returning to work with anxiousness was indeed another challenge that employees have encountered, as professionals who have been working remotely have been affected by re-entry anxiety. This is because working remotely can sometimes lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Workers have also experienced challenges such as sickness, deaths of colleagues and loved ones, as well as occupational health and safety challenges such as compulsory weekly or monthly testing for Coronavirus and in some organisations getting vaccinated was mandatory.

The termination of employment has resulted in workers experiencing not only a deprivation of their financial earnings but also a significant loss of social connections. Prior to being retrenched, employees often cultivated meaningful relationships with their colleagues (Husin e al., 2022). However, the retrenchment process has destroyed these social relationships, leaving impacted individuals without the vital support and companionship they formerly had at work. This circumstance emphasizes the deeper implications of job loss, which go beyond simple financial consequences to include

substantial social ramifications that can have a negative influence on the overall well-being of retrenched people.

According to Deepa et al. (2023), a lack of social connection prevents employees from having opportunities for sharing knowledge and learning from one another, creating relationships, stress alleviation, and emotional well-being. Workers who are laid off not only lose their source of income, but they also lose the social bonds they had with their co-workers. This can have a negative impact on their general well-being, particularly in terms of missing opportunities for sharing knowledge and creative thinking. Furthermore, a lack of social support can compound the stress and emotional toll of leaving a job, emphasizing the need of building social ties at work.

Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that social interaction has a substantial beneficial impact on job effectiveness (Deepa et al., 2023). Employees that participate in frequent social exchanges with their colleagues have more possibilities to cooperate, share expertise, and problem-solve jointly, which leads to increased productivity and work performance. Social relationships among colleagues generate a supporting network that leads to a sense of belonging and dedication to the organization. As a result, the loss of social bonds caused by retrenchment impacts workers not just personally, but also has serious repercussions for workplace productivity and efficiency.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a tremendous influence on economies throughout the world, causing a rise in retrenchments in various industries owing to lockdowns, decreased

consumer spending, and supply chain disruptions. While the pandemic increased the volume and frequency of layoffs at some times, the practice of workforce reduction existed long before the outbreak. The informal sector, which includes a variety of unregulated economic activity, appears to be a viable option for job recovery. Particularly in rural areas where formal employment opportunities are few, participation in the informal sector may provide a feasible source of immediate income and livelihood sustainability (ILO, 2013). Nonetheless, this analysis notes that an informal sector presents challenges for laid-off employees. One major source of concern is a lack of business understanding among persons looking to work in the informal sector. The lack of formal business training may jeopardize the success and long-term profitability of informal businesses. Furthermore, acquiring such knowledge through courses or training programmes may be financially costly for retrenched individuals with restricted access to resources during times of crisis. Understanding the dynamics of informal sector participation and its potential to alleviate the sufferings of retrenchment in rural settings, therefore, demands a thorough study of existing literature.

## **2.10 Contribution of COVID-19 to the Great resignation**

Great resignation has to do with employees resigning in big numbers. It became a prevalent phenomenon only after the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Tessema et al. (2022), COVID-19 sparked the Great Resignation of 2021, in which a record number of staffs willingly resigned in the USA. In 2021, the United States witnessed the Great Resignation, whereby 4.4 million American workers resigned, marking the highest employee resignation rate on record. Tessema, et al. (2022) further states that the COVID-19 pandemic is the primary cause of mass resignations, which has

had a significant impact on companies and their workforce in the United States. This is because the pandemic gave employees more time to think about their careers, it created fear of being infected by the COVID-19 virus, it contributed to employee stress, it also led to mandatory vaccination or weekly testing. With all of these stress, fear, and uncertainty, employees were able to sit, reflect and reevaluate their careers. Employees felt safe throughout the pandemic and opted not to leave their employment due to the uncertainties of their economic future. However, amid the pandemic's recovery in 2021, they felt empowered to resign and seek better chances. Employees either quit the workforce or looked for jobs that provided them with complete independence.

The "Great Resignation" and retrenchments are two contrasting trends in the labour market, reflecting discussions about the future of work and post-capitalist economic structures. The Great Resignation refers to workers leaving their jobs voluntarily due to factors like the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the desire for more meaningful, flexible, and socially responsible work. This trend aligns with discussions about post-capitalist economic models that prioritize well-being, work-life balance, and employee agency. Retrenchments, on the other hand, involve employers reducing their workforce due to financial challenges or changes in management, reflecting the instability within the current capitalist system. These trends highlight the vulnerabilities of the traditional industrial model and the need for alternative economic systems that prioritize sustainability, social equity, and meaningful work. The "Great Reset" envisions a reimagining of economic systems to address societal challenges such as inequality and climate change.

During the first year of the pandemic, employees worldwide were able to examine the extent to which their employment was enjoyable and hunt for a position that would allow them to earn more money. The pandemic encouraged some employees to reconsider their employment, experiment with entrepreneurship, and save more money, through reduced spending during the lockdown. Tessema et al. (2022) additionally emphasized that, many employees discovered that their occupations were unsatisfactory and as a result, when many employees opted to use their time differently than before the pandemic, and their perceptions of the danger of resignation changed. This is due to the fear and uncertainty that came with the pandemic, and some employees were afraid that they might die without enjoying their pension benefits. The Great resignation phenomenon is not new, it has been going on for some time now. According to Fuller and Kerr (2022), we are not only experiencing short-term turmoil as a result of the pandemic, instead, it is a continuation of an increasing quit rate trend that began more than a decade ago. Recent worker surveys and historical data on resignations demonstrate that the Great Resignation is not as exceptional as one may expect. During the post-war period's rapid recovery, waves of resignation were widespread (Hobijn, 2022). Over 47 million Americans willingly resigned from their employment in 2021, resulting in an unprecedented mass exodus from the labour, fuelled by COVID-19, which is now popularly referred as the Great Resignation (Fuller & Kerr, 2022). COVID-19 greatly contributed to the Great Resignation, in such a way that there are worker shortages almost everywhere, for example in the tourism industry there were so many layoffs and resignations, that a job that used to be done by five people, is now done by one person. According to reports, the Great Resignation has upended the relationship between workers and the labour market

(Fuller & Kerr 2022). They further assert that in September 2021, 4.4 million American workers resigned, the highest employee resignation rate on record.

The pandemic exposed employees to a lethal virus, a game changer that risked their lives as they often worked in hazardous settings. The COVID-19 pandemic had multiple infection outbreak waves such as the Delta and Omicron variants. Due to the waves, COVID-19 related infections and deaths increased rapidly, and as a result fear was created in many people. They missed their typical social engagements, which had a negative impact on their physical and emotional wellbeing (Tessema et al., 2022). Due to the labour shortage, employees' responsibilities and working hours rose, they were made to wear masks as part of COVID-19 protocols and take vaccinations. Furthermore, employees had difficulty accessing daycare services since child-care agencies were not operating at full capacity (Tessema et al., 2022). Many employees have found it difficult to manage job and personal life and have had to live physically far from their loved ones (e.g., friends, family, and co-workers). As a result, these variables accelerated the rate at which employees felt stressed, which influenced their decision to leave.

Additionally, according to the Legal Assistance Centre (2021), the Namibian Government has stated that it currently has no plans to introduce legislation that would mandate COVID-19 vaccinations. However, despite this lack of compulsory vaccination laws, individuals who choose not to get vaccinated may still face repercussions, such as employment challenges or limitations on participating in certain activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic in Namibia, some companies implemented mandatory vaccination

policies for their employees, except for those with critical illnesses. Consequently, some workers decided to resign from their positions as they were not willing to comply with the vaccination requirement. The Great Resignation highlighted the delicate balance between public health measures and individual rights, posing significant challenges for businesses losing valuable and skilled workers during an already difficult period.

Following a transitory rise in layoffs, such as during the pandemic, firms advertise a large number of job openings to meet the recovery in demand for their goods and services (Hobijn, 2022). This explains the extremely high job vacancies rate, which has coincided with a record quit rate. These openings do not just attract jobless people, they also workers seeking better opportunities. Workers who obtain a better offer will either leave their existing job for a higher-paying position or renegotiate their compensation, perks, and working conditions with their current employer.

The phenomenon of the Great Resignation is not as prevalent in Africa as it is in other parts of the world. This is due to high unemployment rates in Africa. In South Africa, for example, the phenomenon of the Great Resignation is observed primarily among professional and specialized fields that require unique market skills. According to Richter (2022), staff turnover increased to 18% in 2020, up from the South African average of 10%, however this was mostly due to retrenchments and job losses as enterprises downsized, closed, or dissolved.

The fact is that employees who participate in The Great Resignation aren't always leaving their jobs completely (Follmer et al., 2018). Instead, they're looking for vocations and

employment that will make them happy and give a better work-life balance, and this is where Great Reset comes in. The COVID-19 threat is impacting every aspect of people's life throughout the planet. However, tragedy does not have to be its sole legacy. On the contrary, the pandemic provides a rare but limited chance to contemplate, reinvent, and reset our world in order to create a healthier, more egalitarian, and prosperous future.

The Great Reset plan would consist of three major components. The first would guide the market toward more equitable results. Governments should increase coordination, update trade agreements, and establish the circumstances for a "stakeholder economy" to achieve this goal. Governments have a strong motivation to seek such action in an era of shrinking revenue bases and increasing public debt. Furthermore, governments should carry out long-overdue changes that promote more egalitarian results. These may include adjustments to wealth taxation, the elimination of fossil-fuel subsidies, and new regulations regulating intellectual property, commerce, and competition, depending on the country. The second aspect of a Great Reset agenda would be to guarantee that investments achieve common values like equality and sustainability. The third and final goal of a Great Reset agenda is to use the Fourth Industrial Revolution breakthroughs to benefit the public good, particularly by tackling health and social concerns (Schwab & Malleret, 2020). This simply means that Schwab and Malleret (2020) saw the COVID-19 pandemic as a window of opportunity for a new and better future.

The hope for a positive reset stem from the belief that the pandemic has served as a stunning wake-up call to the general population about the gravity of the hazards associated

with environmental degradation and climate change (Schwab & Malleret, 2020). However, hope must be tempered by the fact that more coordination and cooperation within and across countries is an important condition for an effective reset.

High unemployment and a reduction in smaller business activity have already prompted governments to give financial assistance to their citizens that is unconnected to labour. This is expected to result in new fiscal and monetary policy missions aimed at providing residents with economic and social security. For instance, in Namibia, during the COVID-19 pandemic the government gave an emergency income grant of N\$750.00 to people who lost their jobs and those who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Namandje, & Sheefeni, 2023). This led to further calls for a Universal Basic Income (UBI) grant or a Basic Income Grant (BIG). According to the Desk for Social Development (2005), a BIG is a monthly cash grant that is paid to every Namibian by the state to reduce poverty and inequality. Such calls have been receiving support from civil society, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and church organizations. The grant caters for persons between the ages of 0 to 60 years, regardless of their employment status, income, or assets (Kearney & Mogstad, 2019). A presentation by Haarmann and Haarmann (2020), found that an income grant during COVID-19 supported the survival strategies implemented by vulnerable to adapt to the impacts of COVID-19 in Namibia. The grant proved useful in supporting income generating activities; support efforts to conduct subsistence farming and reduced the waste of food that is common with food distribution efforts. On a social aspect, Haarmann and Haarmann (2020) revealed decreased child malnutrition, increased school attendance and a decrease social crime.

## **2.11 The Post-COVID-19 future of work**

The future of work refers to an informed perspective on what businesses and organizations need to know about how work could shift in the face of digitization and other relevant trends. The term also includes how workforces and workplaces can prepare for those changes (McKinsey & Company, 2023). According to Beno (2019), future of work is affected by a number of factors, namely: demographic, social and environmental changes; globalisation and glocalization; labour flexibility and technological progress, IT platforms, the sharing and knowledge economy. A paper by Malhotra (2021) described the characteristics of future of work, of which it was found that businesses and organizations must be prepared for knowledge work to be performed on a virtual basis. The progress to working virtually at home was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, paying less attention to the need for offices, as workers can simply work while at home. However, Malhotra (2021) noticed a challenge, which is that of the way in which to maintain a culture in non-traditional setting. Malhotra (2021) also picked up on an increase in collaborative work and having individuals reporting to multiple people, hence a matrix organization. Lastly, there is likely to be an increase in people doing freelance work (Malhotra, 2022).

### **2.11.1 Future of work in the hospitality industry**

How is the hotel industry going to be affected by future of work? According to the ILO (2022), with an increase in the use of technology, there will be greater interaction between consumers and tourism business using digital platforms. By doing business on a digital platform, it allows business to provide better services to their clients in real time.

Moreover, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data in tourism, will allow for consumers to receive personalized experiences of tourism, based on personal preferences in terms of the where to sleep, where to eat and what to experience. The use of service robots and passenger assistance robots can assist in reducing waiting times for assistance by clients. The future of work may also involve the use of virtual reality. According to the ILO (2022), virtual reality enhances the way in which clients experience tourism, by giving online tour guides of tourist destinations or even their hotel room.

Though a lot of focus is placed on automation, there is still room for a human touch. Hence, it remains important for workers in the tourism sector to have the necessary skills in providing excellent service to clients. Moreover, addressing the skill gap requires a holistic and comprehensive approach, which must involve all stakeholders (the workers, employers and government). This is to ensure that the sector does not experience a skills shortage, nor does it struggle to attract or retain skilled personnel (ILO, 2022).

The future of work in the hospitality industry, as projected by the ILO (2022), will be shaped by technological advancements like automation, Artificial Intelligence, big data, and virtual reality. These innovations will enhance consumer experiences by providing personalized services and efficient interactions. However, it is crucial to maintain a human touch in the industry to deliver excellent customer service. To bridge the skill gap, a comprehensive approach involving workers, employers, and the government is necessary to ensure a skilled and adaptable workforce. As the hospitality industry in Namibia

addresses the challenges brought on by COVID-19 retrenchments, preparing for the future of work becomes paramount for sustaining a thriving and resilient hospitality sector.

## **2.12 Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on many aspects of life, including the social, cultural, public health, and economic aspects in the lives of workers. The workers in the hospitality industry suffered a great loss in the past three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, not only in Namibia but globally. In the process, many lost their jobs and salaries were cut. Like many tourism establishments in Namibia, the Safari Court Hotel was one of the hard-hit establishments, hence they retrenched more than 50% of their workers due to the pandemic. Working under conditions of human dignity, justice, security, and freedom is what is meant by decent employment. However, it is under threat by robotisation and automation, trends that were accelerated as a result of the pandemic. Despite governments worldwide implementing measures to curb the spread of the virus, it had a negative impact on the rights and working conditions of workers. This chapter provided a review of existing and relevant literature on the impact that COVID-19 had on workers in the tourism sector. The chapter further looked at it from the lens of Karl Marx, while looking at the relevance of his work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The next chapter presents the research methodology that was employed to collect data as per research objectives. The study aims to give new insight into the challenges experienced by employees in Namibia's hotel industry during the COVID-19 pandemic, with an emphasis on the effects of retrenchments and the prospective risks to decent employment posed by robotisation and automation. This study tries to shed light on how capitalism systems interact with

crises and the repercussions for workers in the 21st century by analysing the situation through the prism of Karl Marx's theories. Finally, the study adds to a better understanding of the complex dynamics between the pandemic, capitalism, and worker well-being in Namibia's hospitality industry.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Research methodology outlines the systematic procedures used in realising the overall objectives of the study. This chapter, therefore, provides a detailed description of the research methodology and design implemented in the study. It further covers on the study population, sampling, data collection, data analysis, validity, and reliability, including ethical codes which were complied with. This study used a post-positivist approach to analyse the challenges faced by workers from Safari Court Hotel due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Ryan (2006), post-positivist research emphasizes exploring meanings, generating new knowledge, and aligning with social movements for positive change and social justice, embracing subjectivity and holistic understanding. It balances objectivity with interpretation, drawing from empirical evidence and interpreting human experiences (Ryan, 2006). The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the hospitality industry's challenges while preserving the human essence of the experiences. It includes qualitative data narratives, ensuring a well-rounded exploration of the subject matter. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by the retrenched hotel workers.

#### **3.2 Research design**

The study used a qualitative research methodology because it provides detailed description of participants' opinions and experiences, interprets their behaviour and gives in-depth information (Rahman, 2016). Case study design was also used in the study, as

this helped the researcher to generate in-depth knowledge on the challenges experienced by workers from Safari Court Hotel, due to COVID-19 retrenchments.

### **3.3 Population**

The target population of the study comprised of individuals that met the criteria of being a) men and women, b) between the ages of 18 and 65 years, c) must have been retrenched from Safari Court Hotel due to COVID-19. The study further included key informants, who had to be, a) men and women, b) between the ages of 18 and 70 years, and c) were close friends and relatives of the affected employees. The target population were deemed suitable to understand the worker's experiences in terms of livelihoods after employment.

### **3.3 Sample**

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants, whereby participants were selected based on characteristics of a population of interest (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). This allowed the researcher to obtain rich data. A total sample of 20 participants was drawn from the target population, based on the set criteria. Of which, 15 of the participants were retrenched employees of Safari Court Hotel, while the remaining 5 were key informants, comprised of close friends and family members of the affected employees.

### **3.4 Research instruments**

The researcher developed a suitable data collection instrument which was used to collect the qualitative data. The researcher used semi-structured interview guides (SSI) (Appendix 4) and key informant interview schedules (KII) (Appendix 5) in order to gain

in depth knowledge from participants. These research instruments were deemed applicable as they allowed the researcher to be focused while giving participants the freedom to explore topics that the researcher has not initially conceptualized as part of the research, therefore its able to provide qualitative in-depth knowledge (Kumar, 2011).

### **3.5 Procedure**

Research instruments were prepared prior to the interviews. Each interview lasted thirty minutes (30 minutes). Additionally, research participants were allowed to choose the venue that's appropriate and conducive for the interviews to be conducted. The interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder and in cases where the participants were not comfortable with the voice recorder, notes were taken. Several participants that were not able to make it for face-to-face interviews due to personal reasons, were interviewed over the telephone. The researcher first interviewed the retrenched workers, this helped the researcher to attain first hand and in-depth knowledge. Secondly the researcher interviewed the key informant participants, in order to attain various experiences of the retrenched workers.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Qualitative data analysis through thematic analysis was used in the study to analyse data. Thematic analysis is defined as the identification of themes and patterns in text data and how these themes will help answer the research objectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The researcher analysed the raw data using thematic analyses, whereby the transcribed interviews were analysed via coding by creating themes, categories and patterns for the

data. The transcription was thorough, including accurate transcription, time stamping, and pseudonymization for confidentiality. Coding entailed locating codes within the data, categorising them into themes and sub-themes, and interpreting their significance. The method intended to get in-depth insights into the data while also ensuring its credibility through member verification.

### **3.7. Research ethics**

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University of Namibia's Decentralised Ethics Committee before conducting the research (Appendix 1). Permission to conduct the research was similarly issued by postgraduate research support services (Appendix 2). Additionally, a written consent form, which explains what the study is about, and the issues of confidentiality was issued to participants to ensure voluntary participation (Appendix 3). Confidentiality and anonymity of participants was achieved by using pseudo names. No participants were forced to partake in the study, and they were granted the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without facing any detrimental consequences.

The researcher is trained and obtained a double major Honours degree in Sociology and Industrial Psychology, thus they were able to monitor the participants' emotional reactions by taking breaks in between or discontinue the interview to minimize stress, and performance anxiety, since it is a sensitive issue. According to Wilson and Neville (2009), research participants from populations identified as vulnerable should feel that their voice is heard, that they are respected, and that the research process feels safe. The researcher

ensured this by being transparent and respectful towards the participants as well as giving participants space when they needed it and stopping the interview at any given point, when they felt like they could not continue. The information will not be used for any other purpose but solely for the proposed study. Upon the completion of the research study, the data will be safely stored on the researcher's email, in an encrypt storage for three years, and then destroyed.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The focus of this thesis is the challenges experienced by workers who were retrenched due to COVID-19 and the different experiences they went through. Relevant and extensive literature regarding challenges emanating from COVID-19 related job losses were examined and served as a background for the current study. The previous chapter highlighted the methodology that was used. In this chapter, the findings of the study were presented based on the final major themes identified as categories with supporting literature, and the results will be discussed.

#### **4.2 Demographic information of the participants**

The demographic data of the participants interviewed was gathered during the data collection process. This data included their sex, age, and highest qualifications obtained. The sample for the study consisted of males and females, between 18 and 60 years of age. This is because both males and females were retrenched due to COVID-19, and the participants were in the age category of 18-60 years, because that is the legal age for employment.

##### **4.2.1 Sex**

Sex composition is an important component of the demographic information in this study, which was achieved by a purposeful sampling process. The sex of participants comprised

of nine (9) females and eleven (11) were male. The sex of the participants in this study was determined by the sampling method. This method ensures that the selection process is in line with the study objectives, allowing for an in-depth investigation of gender-specific viewpoints and insights. This study aims to completely analyse and explain the distinctive contributions of both female and male participants to the research area by including gender as a significant demographic variable.

#### **4.2.2 Age**

According to the demographic data, the age range of the participants was between 18 and 60 years. The demographic information indicates that the majority of the participants fell within the 30-39 age groups.

#### **4.2.3 Education**

The educational backgrounds of the participants can be categorized as follows: two (2) participants have obtained diplomas or higher qualifications, three (3) of the participants possess certificates in various fields, ten (10) participants have completed their Grade 12 (Matric) qualification, and the remaining five (5) participants completed Grade 10 level.

### **4.3 Presentation and discussion of findings**

A qualitative approach was used in the research study to investigate the phenomenon under study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews were held with questions derived from the semi-structured interview schedules for both participants and key informant. Thematic analysis was used to meticulously scrutinize the gathered data,

revealing main themes and sub-themes to structure the results. To gain a deeper understanding, the themes were discussed in combination with existing literature relevant to the topic. This helped the researcher to easily interpret the findings in a more comprehensive way. To substantiate these themes, direct quotations from the participants have been incorporated into the findings. This approach allowed for a more comprehensive interpretation of the findings and emphasized the connection between the emerged themes and earlier research findings. A total of four (4) themes emerged from the study findings as a result of thematic analysis (Table 4.1).

**Table 4. 3 Presentation of themes and sub-themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
1. Workers experience	1.1 Fear/ anxiety 1.2 Vulnerability 1.3 Eye opener
2. Challenges	2.1 Employment related challenges 2.2 Financial Challenges 2.3 Social challenges 2.4 Psychological and health challenges 2.5 Political and legal challenges
3. Changes in livelihood	3.1 Expenditure reduction 3.2 Seek for affordable accommodation 3.3 Urban-rural migration

4. Adaptation mechanisms	4.1 Start business  4.2 Seek for employment in other  sectors
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### **4.3.1 Workers experiences with COVID-19**

In the aftermath of the mass layoffs triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, it became evident that workers' experiences during this period were marked by considerable diversity. Despite the variations in their circumstances, a common thread woven through their narratives was the pervasive struggle and immense challenges they faced while attempting to navigate through the pandemic-induced upheaval. The description provided by one participant, who likened their experience to a "hurricane," encapsulates the magnitude of the disruption and chaos they encountered. This vivid metaphor underscores the overwhelming nature of the crisis and the impact it had on individuals' lives. Moreover, multiple participants emphasized the severity of their experiences, using words like "tough" to convey the harsh realities they endured. The psychological toll of sudden job loss, coupled with the uncertainty of the future, inflicted significant emotional distress on these workers. They grappled with feelings of anxiety, vulnerability, and a loss of control over their professional trajectories.

For some participants the experience they had with COVID-19 was not only hard, but it was also an eye opener. Additionally, the findings revealed how many were too comfortable before the pandemic, some took life for granted and some did not take their finances seriously. All of these changed because of the pandemic as some people started appreciating life more, and implemented several changes to their lives. Including an improvement in saving habits which led to the opening of saving accounts and prudent spending habits. Other mechanisms included the application of creativity and innovation in creating unique businesses as a means of earning an income and pass the time. One

participant stated that he started a barbershop at home in order to make a living. Below are some of the responses from the participants when asked how they would describe their experiences with COVID-19. The participants narrated their experiences as flows,

*“It was very hard and tough. Just the feeling of being home every day instead of being at work, and the inability to afford things like groceries. It was something a person would not want to experience again.”* (Participant 5)

*“It was tough, really tough. Whether it was directly involved with me and my family’s health or the economic disadvantages that we suffered from it.”* (Participant 12)

*“I would say it was an eye-opener. You know, I was too much in my comfort zone, and with COVID-19 coming in, it is where I got to realize a lot of things that I have taken for granted.”* (Participant 15)

*“It was quite an experience. It’s something I have never experienced in my life, and at the same time never want to experience. It was bad.”* (Participant 18)

Although the experiences varied amongst participants, the study findings do indicate that the majority of the experiences can be described as being of a negative nature. Due to sudden job loss many faced the subsequent financial strain, leading to increased stress and anxiety. Some had difficulty finding new employment due to the economic downturn and limited job opportunities in their industry. Others had to learn new skills to remain employable. The study also revealed that retrenched workers experienced feelings of uncertainty, loss, and a sense of identity crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered existential reflections and reshaped participants' relationships with their everyday lives, which can be best explained using Bourdieu's theory of practice. Bourdieu's theory comprised of three (3) key elements of habitus, field,

and capital. Bourdieu's demonstrated that dispositions and behaviours of individuals are acquired through their interactions with society, which shape the choices that they make. This essentially means that the choices made by the participants differed during employment and subsequently changed as they lost their jobs or sense of identity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence changes in spending and saving behaviours. However, the workers being retrenched placed them back on the labour market, where they are competing with other unemployed persons. The findings seeming demonstrated that the participants engaged in several activities that would be able to provide them with much needed economic and social resources (Keating, 2010). The theory of practice further illustrates how employment serves the role of providing an income but also the formation of habit and socialization which allows humans to thrive (Keating, 2010).

Participants also discussed health concerns, economic setbacks, transformative nature of crisis, and the permanence of indelible moments that shape one's existence. These narratives highlight the transformative nature of crisis and the importance of understanding the interconnectedness of personal well-being and socio-economic dimensions. The challenges that workers experienced due to retrenchments, reflect how dominating economic systems may impose constraints and hardships on individuals in their daily lives, limiting their agency and contributing to the battle against oppressive establishments. Additionally, Workers typically faced a disappointing reality in the aftermath of COVID-19-induced retrenchments in the hospitality industry. Job loss can rob individuals of their identity, leaving them financially insecure, socially isolated, and reliant on others. They may face exploitative working circumstances while battling

restricted re-employment prospects, illustrating how prevailing economic forces may severely reduce their agency and well-being in their daily lives.

In summary, the experiences of hotel workers following COVID-19-induced retrenchments were predominantly negative, characterized by immense difficulty, hardship, and emotional distress. These narratives underscore the profound impact of the pandemic on individuals' lives, emphasizing the necessity of providing appropriate assistance and resources to aid in their recovery.

#### **4.3.2 Challenges experienced by workers due to COVID-19**

COVID-19 pandemic has been proven to be very destructive. It has deteriorated the hospitality and tourism sector around the globe (Gauterm, 2021). In addition, the pandemic has caused havoc in the economy thus causing social and financial disruptions (Gauterm, 2021). The research study conducted revealed a multitude of difficulties encountered by the retrenched workers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While these challenges differed among individuals, several common issues were identified. Additionally, the impacts of the pandemic were not restricted to work-related obstacles but also affected their personal lives.

##### **4.3.2.1 Employment challenges**

The COVID-19 pandemic came with many challenges. Retrenchment is one of many serious employment challenges faced globally during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ke et al., 2022). The tourism sector was one of the hardest-hit sectors and as a result many people lost their jobs. The findings of the study state that initially the shifts of the employees were

adjusted from working full time to one day in and one day off, which eventually resulted into retrenchment. This is in line with a study by Schott et al. (2021) which reported that the COVID-19 pandemic measures had a lasting impact not only on job loss and unemployment, but also on the working hours and earnings of workers. In addition, a study by Guek et al. (2022) also revealed that during the pandemic businesses of all sizes, and in all sectors have make use of a variety of approaches to survive through the subsequent economic crisis which include downsizing their workforce. Retrenchment was the common response approach used to reduce costs, to alleviate declining performance, reduce complexity by focusing on existing activities, and ultimately restore profitability. All participants indicated that they got retrenched in 2020, without any notice period or any severance package. This is an indication that the COVID-19 crisis has surfaced very inhumane realities, where business owners have been confronted with the terribly hard decision of retrenching workers that had become very close after many years of employment or keeping them in the payroll at a potentially high, and often unsustainable financial cost. This was supported by Participant 2 who narrated that,

*“I did not anticipate this; I had plans on how to spend my salary for the next three (3) months which include throwing a party for my last born. Waking up to such news has disappointed me very much.”*

The pandemic, and subsequent containment measures have decimated international travel and tourism activity around the world. The study revealed that as the government enforces ways of reducing and controlling the spread of coronavirus, lockdown measures were put in place, as a result, borders were closed thus prohibiting foreigners’ entry into the country as no one was allowed to travel in or out of the country. The regulations have also

limited domestic travel and shut down hotels and restaurants for a period of time. For a sector and businesses that are dependent on attracting visitors and tourists, the economic impact has been catastrophic.

Safari Court Hotel depended primarily on the influx of international tourists, the clientele dropped, and this had an impact on the hotel revenues due to a decrease in hotel room occupancy rate. According to Gauterm (2021) there is a significant influence of hotel occupancy rate on hotel employees meaning the lower the level of hotel occupancy rates the less the number of workers to be employed. As a result, with the sudden stop in foreigner arrivals the hotel had to let go of some workers because there was no work and on the other hand, they could not afford to pay people. This was the position of Participant 5, *“We didn’t have guests, so there was no work to do, besides cleaning.”*

Participant 8 added:

*“Since the outbreak of COVID-19 the government ensured movement restrictions and border closures. As a result, our hotel was deprived of both domestic and foreign clientele and this has turn had a significant effect on the number of visitors we book in.”*

In addition, restrictions such as social distancing resulted in closure of conference facilities at the hotel because such facilities considered to create crowds which aggravating the spread of the virus according to the health protocols. To support these findings, Ministry Environment Trade and Forestry (METF) (2020) reported that during the second and third quarters of 2020, statistics showed a year-on-year drop of over 80% in hotel, and other short-stay occupancy rates and, a reduction in international tourist arrivals given the restrictions imposed. According to the METF (2020), an estimated 97% of the tourism

businesses in Namibia reported either a moderate or significant decline in the number of visitors since the advent of COVID-19. As a result, a considerable 25% of businesses that surveyed reported their occupancy rate at 0% while around 70% of the businesses evaluated their occupancy rate below 20%.

The study revealed that following their retrenchment, the participants identified diverse outcomes for workers in terms of securing subsequent employment. While some workers were fortunate enough to find new job opportunities relatively quickly, others experienced prolonged struggles before eventually obtaining employment, and unfortunately, some participants remained unemployed to date. The research findings align with the study conducted by Sun et al. (2022) and Husin et al (2021), who both described the challenges that retrenched workers faced in their efforts to secure new employment opportunities as a result of the prolonged implementation of COVID-19 measures. This is because in the labour market, other job seekers with similar skills and work experience flood the market, and businesses are not at the stage of recruiting new workers but rather attempting to reduce operating, recruiting, and training costs.

One participant expressed their fortunate circumstance of securing a job within a month after being retrenched.

Conversely, Participant 10, highlighted the immense difficulty she encountered during her job search, to the extent that she eventually relinquished her efforts. These contrasting experiences exemplify the wide range of outcomes individuals encountered during their endeavours to find new employment following the loss of their previous jobs due to retrenchment. This concurs with a study by Giuntoli et al. (2015) that emphasized that the

unsuccessful search of employment and the lack of control over the employment search often leads to feelings of despair and frustration.

On the other hand, Barros and Moreira (2015) emphasized that being jobless is unbearable, describing that it feels like a failure, resulting in frustration, financial issues, and low social standards, among other things. According to Demir, Dalgic, and Ergen (2021), the reduced demand for hospitality services and ongoing travel restrictions made it difficult for people in hospitality to find new employment opportunities. The study revealed that many retrenched workers found it hard to get gain other employment opportunities in different industries because they had dedicated their careers to the hospitality industry and possessed specialized skills and knowledge specific to hotel operations. Transitioning to other industries may require reskilling or retraining, which could be time-consuming and challenging, particularly during a pandemic when access to resources and training opportunities might be limited. In concurrence, a study by Husin et al. (2021) revealed that there is negative impact on the periodic amount on the number of days between getting laid off and finding new employment and even if such workers are to get a different line of work, they were more likely to earn lower- than-average wages.

#### **4.3.2.2 Financial challenges**

Labour earnings were by far the most important source of household income prior to the pandemic therefore job loss is one of the worst financial shocks employees faced, making it extremely difficult to make ends meet. The spread of COVID-19 around the world led to workplaces closure. Consequently, millions of workers lost part or all of their incomes.

Those who were still working had to accept shorter hours and/or wage cuts in different industries such as airlines, retail and accommodation, food services, or the textile and garment sectors, which are highly feminized sectors (Mohamed, 2021)

According to Social Policy Institute (2020), households that experienced a COVID-19-related job or income loss are three times more likely to experience economic hardship comparing to those that did not experience a loss. The findings of the research study indicated that workers who were retrenched encountered significant financial difficulties. Retrenched workers faced immediate financial hardships as they lost their primary source of income. The sudden loss of employment made it challenging for them to cover their daily expenses, bills, and financial obligations. This situation was exacerbated by the economic uncertainties and limited job opportunities in the tourism industry. According to Participant 3,

*“I am struggling financially, and it is visible all over me. I was retrenched without any notice and I am finding it difficult to deal with this income loss.”*

The participant indicated the difficulties she incurred staying financially afloat in the absence of alternative sources of income or opportunities to supplement her savings to cover living expenses. To support these findings, Ogbechie (2015) revealed in her study that after retrenchment, workers struggle to meet even essential household necessities, leading to the gradual depletion of their existing savings. Some participants stated how they were not able to afford essentials like cosmetics, some on the other hand could not provide for their families any longer. This was supported by Participant 11, who mentioned *“COVID-19 has made difficult for me to afford food and pay rent for my family. I was evicted due to retrenchment.”*

Some participants further revealed that they had to take loans to pay loans, in order to feed their families. This was confirmed by some participants' family members, who were also interviewed. Participant 16 explained, *“it hurt to see my brother blame himself for his unemployment, because he would constantly take loans to feed us, as well as take loans to repay loans, it was just so sad.”*

Additionally, due to unemployment, many workers were trapped in debt. The study findings found that retrenched workers were forced to take out informal loans or borrow money at various places in order to make ends meet. However, the retrenched workers remained hopeful that they will obtain gainful employment. The hopeful attitude was, however, short-lived as many did not manage to get jobs as soon as anticipated. To support these findings, Ogbechie's (2015) study unveiled that retrenched workers who remain unemployed encounter a surge in indebtedness and heightened financial distress. On the contrary, a study by Husin et al. (2021) indicated that retrenched workers admitted that they had yet to make payments on their mortgage or car loans. However, they chose not to borrow money out of fear of not being able to repay. Different participants experienced different financial challenges differently. Participants with major savings did not incur severe financial difficulties in comparison to those with little to no savings. Similarly, those who managed to get another job after retrenchment, did not suffer financial challenges as those who were still actively looking for work. However, with another job found such workers, and their families may have to alter to their standard of living if the new job includes lower pay and fewer benefits.

A participant revealed that, financial wise, being unemployed is draining. The findings indicated that workers had to cut back on spending in order to meet the needs of the temporary period of unemployment. This came in the form of reductions in immediate consumption, termination of insurance contracts, and selling or holding assets. According to the study findings, the retrenched workers, particularly those with children, experienced significant disruptions in their family's future prospects as various study policies for their children had to be discontinued or temporarily suspended. This situation placed their children's educational advancement at risk. Additionally, some of the workers had taken out life insurance policies and funeral cover to ensure the financial security of themselves and their loved ones. However, the loss of their jobs compelled them to cancel or defer these essential policies, leaving their families exposed to unforeseen financial burdens in the event of an unfortunate incident. According to Participant 9,

*“I have cancelled all my insurance policies because I cannot afford to allow their monthly contribution to be deducted from a little, I have saved otherwise I will end up not having money to spend on immediate needs.”*

Furthermore, a subset of the retrenched workers had obtained vehicles through credit arrangements with banks. Unfortunately, because of their job loss, the banks were forced to repossess these vehicles, further exacerbating the financial setbacks experienced by these individuals. These findings underscore the wide-ranging economic implications that retrenchments have on individuals' ability to maintain critical insurance coverage, study policies for their children, and personal assets. The following were the supporting sentiments:

*“Our car was repossessed because we (me and my husband) both got retrenched and our savings together is unable to pay it off. This is sad.”* (Participant 6)

*“I was repaying a home loan. I don’t know how to continue but I do not want loose this property because my kids will become homeless.”* (Participant 13)

According to the study, the retrenched workers faced severe financial constraints resulting from their job losses. Therefore, some individuals were compelled to abandon their investments and resort to selling personal belongings in order to obtain necessary funds. This unfortunate situation highlights the detrimental impact of retrenchments on individuals' financial stability, forcing them to make difficult decisions that negatively affect their personal assets and long-term financial plans. This is in line with the findings of Cheng and Beresford (2012), who reported that the hardship caused by retrenchment in China's textile metropolis has led some laid-off workers into different illicit activities in order to preserve household finances and pay for quickly growing tuition fees and medical bills. The financial constraints faced by retrenched workers, leading them to sell personal belongings and engage in illicit activities, exemplify the adverse consequences of job losses on individuals' lives.

*“I had a lot of kitchen utensils because I was planning to establish a catering company. When I got retrenched, I sold all of them since I realized that my dream is shattered, and I have no guarantee if I will get another job for me to execute my plan.”* (Participant 3).

This study highlighted the distressing nature of job loss, as it is often not a voluntary choice and can lead to financial instability and uncertainty. The inability to afford necessities, such as food and groceries, is a practical difficulty faced by those affected. The emotional toll of involuntary job loss cannot be understated. The hotel's decision to

retrench its employees was a response to the financial constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced difficult decisions in the hospitality industry. Companies worldwide were forced to take similar steps, reflecting the harsh economic realities of the pandemic. While the retrenchment was distressing for workers, it may have been a necessary response given the dire financial circumstances faced by the hotel and other businesses during this period.

#### **4.3.2.3 Psychological and health challenges**

Retrenchment can be de-motivating and very disappointing therefore dealing with retrenchment can cause a great deal of physical and mental stress. According to Parker et al. (2016) unemployment has devastating effects on one's well-being. Losing one's job can have significant emotional and psychological effects. The research study found that retrenched workers often experienced feelings of shock, anxiety, stress, and a loss of identity tied to their previous roles. The uncertainty surrounding future employment and financial stability further added to the emotional toll. This is in line with Ogbechie (2015), who alluded that the termination of workers' employment exacerbated various psychosocial issues, including diminished self-esteem, heightened irritability, gastric ulcers, depressive symptoms, hypertension, cardiovascular ailments, financial deterioration, and an inclination towards engaging in unlawful activities.

This study further found that many workers were emotionally and mentally drained during the pandemic, and it came as a result of the challenges experienced because of COVID-19. According to some key informants, some workers were so stressed that they locked themselves up in their rooms for days and refused to eat, as narrated:

*“Retrenchment has brought me shame, depression and frustration. I spend a lot of time in my room not knowing of any solution to this problem.”* (Participant 4)

*“I did not like to be asked about my employment status because it always brought the worst feeling in me.”* (Participant 2)

The study findings further alluded to the use of alcohol as a coping mechanism against the stress associated with being retrenched. The aforementioned results align with research conducted by Zhou et al. (2019) which revealed that unemployment is linked to numerous negative physical and psychological consequences such as increased alcohol consumption, depression, and heart disease. It further leads to a low self-esteem, an increase in the prevalence of mental health issues and a general low psychological well-being. Including a negative relationship when it comes to life satisfaction and happiness. Additionally, the study findings indicated that the negative emotions of retrenchment and unemployment also extends to the close friends and relatives. The study reported that close friends and family felt helpless, as they had no means to improve the emotional, mental and psychological wellbeing of the retrenched employee. In addition, the retrenched workers also expressed fear of the unknown, which took a negative toll on their mental wellbeing. According to Participant 1, *“When I heard that we will be sent home (retrenched) I panicked when I thought of job uncertainty and the future in general.”*

The study findings align with research carried out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2021), which demonstrated that employees have experienced significant emotional strain and encountered numerous challenges to their mental health and overall well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the findings, the participants all dealt with mental issues differently. The type of personality a person has also played a role in dealing with mental breakdowns. Participant 1, who is an introvert alluded that they used that alone time to reflect and re-evaluate their life during the difficult times, as well as use exercise as an escape mechanism. Similar to Participant 6 who narrated that,

*“I wasn’t in a good space mentally, but I took that time to reflect and readjust my life. It was not easy to accept but to all uncertainty presented by the pandemic one has anticipated losing their jobs.”*

This study further found that by the time of data collection, most participants were in a good space mentally. They have accepted the situation, took it one day at a time, and moved on with life. Several of the participants had already found new employment, although many were still struggling to make ends meet. Although several of the retrenched workers had accepted their reality, they still held resentment over the little accordance they received from the hotel. Including not being provided with a notice or even a severance package. According to the participants

*“I have no choice but to accept the situation however the company knew better and supposed to give an early notice, so we search for alternative ways of earning an income.”*

(Participant 15)

*“If the company could have provided us with a severance package, I could have opened a tuck-shop at home in order to make a little income.”* (Participant 9)

In addition to encountering emotional hardships, the individuals who were laid off from their jobs also faced detrimental health consequences as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study revealed that health wise, all the participants were negatively

affected. The participants described how they were worried about contracting the virus. As a result, a vast majority had severed contact with family members who were frontline workers and those with chronic health issues who were at higher risk of infected with COVID-19. Furthermore, those that weren't directly affected, were indirectly affected, for example those who had their children or spouses tested positive for COVID-19, putting their own health at risk. One participant narrated how they contracted COVID-19 three times. While another participant described how their entire household contracted COVID-19, except for them. The findings also state that many participants lost people due to COVID-19, which caused emotional breakdown, which was further exacerbated by the inability to attend their funerals due to the imposed travelling and gatherings prohibitions. Hence, the individuals expressed being overwhelmed by negative implications caused and associated with the pandemic.

The study further revealed that there was a significant decline in access to adequate healthcare services, as the loss of employment led to the inability to sustain medical aid coverage. Consequently, these individuals and their children encountered substantial challenges in affording health services that met established standards. The absence of comprehensive medical coverage not only hindered their ability to seek timely and appropriate medical attention but also exacerbated their vulnerability to various health issues. Similarly, Ogbechie (2015), indicated that the healthcare expenses and medical bills incurred by retrenched workers who were unemployed have experienced a notable increase. Due to their limited financial means, these individuals resorted to cost-effective alternatives such as traditional therapies, herbal remedies, and alternative medicine in

order to manage their health issues. The ramifications of this financial strain extended beyond the immediate health concerns of the affected individuals, permeating their family dynamics and intensifying the health challenges faced by their children. This was supported by Participant 19 who highlighted that *“I could not afford immune boosters because I lost my medical aid benefit when I got retrenched.”*

The findings of this study under this subtheme are in line with the views of the Latent deprivation Model. According to Jahoda (1982) the Latent deprivation model illustrates that employment is the core provider of five sub-constructs of experience, namely time structure, social contact, collective purpose, status, and activity. These experiences strongly link to individual mental health. This study has revealed how lack of benefits of work associated with unemployment, leads to job insecurity, mental and psychological distress. In addition, the psychological health issues experienced by the retrenched workers can be better explained by this model as it illustrated that being employed assists in the accomplishment of essential human needs such as the ability of afford important resources for continued survival, the opportunity to experience self-determination and, the ability to access social support, and make real-world connections. In relation to this study, retrenched hotel workers experienced psychological distress, anxiety, depression and psychosomatic symptoms, low self-esteem and lack of confidence following the loss of employment. All these issues resulted from the loss of manifest functions (i.e financial income) and latent functions (i.e social status). In addition, employment provided them with a purpose, personal identity and self-worth and on a contrary; it is evident that unemployment brought about a feeling of helplessness, worthlessness and isolation.

#### **4.3.2.4 Social challenges**

Job loss can lead to social isolation as individuals may experience a decrease in social interactions and a sense of disconnection. The workplace often serves as a social network, providing social connections, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for socializing (Peterson, 1967). Losing this social support system can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. The research study revealed that because of experiencing retrenchments, a significant number of retrenched workers exhibited signs of social disconnection, leading to feelings of loneliness. This essentially means that the loss of employment and associated changes in social circumstances can contribute to the development of loneliness among affected individuals. Additionally, the study found that in the process many lost friends, and not only did they lose friends, but some relationships were also broken, in such a way that some families fell apart. The participants stated,

*“I was the only one who lost my job due to Covid-19 amongst my friends, and I must say, there was a change of scenery, and behaviour.”* (Participant 3)

*“In the beginning it was just so hard. A lot was going on, I could not even socialize or keep in touch with my friends and relatives. All I wanted was to be alone.”* (Participant 4)

Another participant in the research study described facing the challenge of losing friends because of their personal transformation following retrenchment. The process of re-evaluating their goals and aspirations led to a significant disconnect from their social circle, including friends and loved ones. Furthermore, in the study, it was found that certain participants expressed a desire to disconnect from their friends and loved ones as a means of coping with the challenges they faced after experiencing unemployment. These

individuals felt the need to create distance in their relationships, possibly to shield themselves from negative emotions or to protect their self-esteem. Furthermore, the research findings revealed that some participants experienced insecurities arising from their unemployment status, which contributed to their decision to disconnect from their loved ones. The study findings are consistent with the study findings of Ogbechie (2015), which revealed that the financial hardships resulting from job displacement result in a decline in confidence, self-esteem, and credibility. This highlighted the psychological impact of job loss, as individuals may perceive their unemployment as a source of vulnerability or feel a sense of shame that affects their interactions with close relationships.

Furthermore, the findings of this study demonstrated that the stress and uncertainty stemming from the loss of employment had a profound impact on personal relationships. The ramifications of financial difficulties, disruptions in daily routines, and emotional distress manifested in heightened tension, conflicts, and strained interactions with family members, friends, or partners. Consequently, these strained relationships engendered feelings of isolation and distress among individuals affected by the pandemic-induced job loss. The interconnected nature of these challenges highlights the complex interplay between personal and social dimensions, underscoring the need for comprehensive support systems to address the multifaceted consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals' well-being.

The study's findings revealed that a significant number of households experienced disruptions in their harmony and tranquillity as a result of retrenchments. Consequently, individuals within these households resorted to alcohol consumption as a coping mechanism, while others went to the extent of physically leaving their homes. This suggests that the adverse effects of job loss extends beyond the individual level and permeated into the dynamics of households, leading to increased tension, and distress. Including the use of maladaptive coping behaviours including excessive alcohol consumption and seeking alternative living arrangements. These findings that emanated from the study underscored the profound impact of retrenchments on the overall well-being and stability of households, highlighting the need for comprehensive support systems to address the multifaceted challenges arising from unemployment.

COVID-19 came with many fears, of which the ability to go out and socializing was one of them. As a result, many had anxiety when it came to socializing. This research study found that several individuals who used to socialize before the pandemic, experienced anxiety when it comes socializing after the pandemic ended. This was attributed to the effects of the pandemic and the financial challenges that they were going through due to job losses. Due to retrenchments, many workers had to re-evaluate their finances. This research study revealed that many workers had to reassess their financial situations due to widespread layoffs, leading them to curtail their participation in social activities. According to Participant 3, *"I have developed low self-esteem now I avoid socializing and attending events."*

On the other hand, the study participants pointed out that the lockdown, curfew, and social distance measures introduced to curb the spread of COVID-19 has also resulted in reduction in social activities. The study revealed that even if people were not working, they had limited time to socialize because they had to abide to curfew hours in order to comply with the regulations. Events such weddings and funerals were only permitted to be attended by a limited number of people mostly close family members. In addition, the participant indicated that they felt disconnected from the real world as there have been restrictions on movement, and the country was divided in zones, and they could not travel out of their zone to attend their family events in other regions as they were confined to the Khomas region even if they were no longer going to work. The study further revealed that they resorted to online communication, and social media platforms to virtually attend events in the case that they were being live streamed. However, despite embracing the internet and its avenues, it failed to cater for the need for physical connection. In addition, using internet-based communication was not always feasible as most their relatives resided in rural areas with little to no internet or mobile phone network coverage.

#### **4.3.2.5 Political and legal challenges**

The research findings revealed that workers faced significant political and legal impediments during the process. The study participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the inadequate amount of time provided for them to prepare, as they felt that the notice period of approximately one month was insufficient. According to Participant 8 “*I personally feel like we were not given enough time to prepare ourselves.*” Additionally,

this study discovered that employees did not receive any form of severance package; instead, they only received their regular monthly salary.

A vast majority of the study participants perceived this lack of compensation as unjust, considering the circumstances, and believed that they should have been entitled to some form of package. The study findings found variability in severance pay provision among retrenched workers, with some participants reporting receiving packages while others reported not receiving a severance package at all. This uncertainty raised questions about the consistency of compensation practices and the lack of compliance with national labour laws and regulations. Further investigation and clarification may be needed to determine the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the severance pay distribution within the study population. This is in clear contravention of the Labour Act of 2007 (No.11 of 2007) under Section 35, which clearly states that all retrenched employees who were employed for a period longer than 12 months are entitled to a severance package. The act further states that the amount of the severance package must be equal to one week remuneration for each year of continuous service with the employer. In addition, the same act stipulates upon termination the employer has a responsibility to remunerate the employee all unused annual leave days and due transport allowance.

The study findings further indicated that the retrenchment of employees was based on political influences and favouritism rather than individual performance. The study participants expressed their lack of knowledge regarding the selection criteria used to determine which workers would be retained and which ones would be let go. According

to section 34 of the Labour Act of 2007 (No.11 of 2007), in the event that an employer deems it necessary to terminate the employment contracts of employees on the basis of reducing the workforce due to unfavourable economic conditions. The employer must notify the Labour Commissioner and the representative trade union within four (4) weeks. Upon which, employees must be accorded a four (4) week notice of their intention to terminate the employment contract of the employees. In addition, before resorting to retrenchment, acting in good faith the employer ought to engage in negotiations with the trade union to deliberate amongst other, alternatives; criteria of selecting employees to be retrenched; the conditions upon which the dismissal will occur and the mechanisms required to reduce the negative effects that dismissal will have on the employees.

The labour laws were enacted with the main aim of safeguarding the rights of all workers in Namibia, while ensuring that retrenchments are carried out fairly and for valid reasons. However, the retrenchments that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic were clearly not conducted as per the regulating laws. According to the study findings, most of the participants saw the retrenchments as being particularly unjust because they were not given enough time to prepare for the layoffs. Furthermore, several participants believed that labour rules did not effectively safeguard their interests. It is notable that in circumstances where a company's financial issues are directly connected to external events like the COVID-19 outbreak, labour unions and the labour act may be limited in their ability to prevent layoffs. Due to the extraordinary circumstances posed by the pandemic, employees' and unions' options may be constrained in such cases.

Namibia has made significant progress in improving workers' conditions and rights since the colonial era. Labour laws and regulations have strengthened legal protection, covering minimum wages, working hours, and safety standards. Labour unions have given workers a voice for better working conditions and fair wages. Access to education and vocational training has expanded, enhancing employability. Namibia's economic growth has created employment opportunities in various sectors. However, income inequality remains a significant concern, with informal employment prevalent. Addressing income inequality, expanding access to formal employment, and improving working conditions are crucial steps to ensure equal benefits for all workers in Namibia. This further speaks to the legal impediments of Social Security Act of 1994 (No. 34 of 1994), which must be reformed to include clauses pertaining to an unemployment insurance fund, which will act as a buffer against poverty by providing retrenched individuals with a source of income until they acquire other work (Olivier et al., 2015).

#### **4.4 Changes in livelihoods due to job losses**

The study by Mohamed et al. (2018) revealed that workers had to rationalize spending to meet the needs of the interim period of unemployment. This came in the form of reductions in immediate consumption, termination of insurance contracts, not to mention selling or holding assets. Even when they secure alternative employment, employees and their families may have to accept lower living standards if the new job includes reduced wages and benefits.

According to this research study, the repercussions of retrenchments were found to necessitate substantial adjustments across various domains of individuals' lives. These adjustments encompassed not only social and family spheres but also entailed significant modifications in lifestyle.

#### **4.4.1 Expenditure reduction**

Loss of income during COVID-19 has left many families struggling to meet their basic needs such as housing, utilities, food, and medical care (Karpman et al., 2020). In order to cope with the financial constraints imposed by job losses, individuals were compelled to adopt strategies aimed at reducing expenditures. This was mostly implementation of cost-cutting measures. This shift towards cost-cutting demonstrates the practical choices individuals had to make to adapt to their new livelihoods. This study highlighted how retrenchments had a wide-ranging impact, leading individuals to re-evaluate their priorities and make intentional changes in their lifestyles to navigate the financial challenges they faced. Similarly, Ogbechie (2015) pointed out that retrenched workers often faced financial difficulties in their pursuit to maintain their previous lifestyles after being dismissed from their jobs. They had to cut costs in all ways possible in order to survive. The participants revealed that they had to reduce food expenses, however they had indicated that making such a decision has been difficult because the pandemic has presented food insecurity, and people were being encouraged to stock up food in order to limit movements to the grocery stores. To achieve food security during such difficult times, some participants indicated that they have been relying on food transfers from families in rural areas. According to Participant 9, *“My family at the northern part of the*

*country came to my rescue by sending us traditional food because cutting spending on food could have exposed my kids to hunger.”* In addition, the participants indicated that they have also reduced spending on education. As the schools closed due to COVID-19, learners were required to attend online classes however some parents decided stop paying for internet connectivity and diverted the money to essential needs. Participant 13 narrated, *“I do not enjoy seeing my kids missing out on their school activities, but I have no choices I have no money.”*

Furthermore, some participants pointed out that they had to reduce on the amount of water they use in the household as a result the amount use to be spent on water also went down. For those that reside in informal settlement and were using cards to purchase water, they had indicated that the amount they usually recharged to use per month has now been stretched to accommodate for two months. This further resulted in the reduction in the number of laundry done. This further translated in skipping taking baths. On the other hand, phone bills were not spared from the cut. All participants indicated that when they were in employment, they would register Aweh every week. Aweh is a voice and data bundle package offered by the Mobile Telecommunications Company (MTC) (MTC, 2024). However, after retrenchment they could only afford to top up airtime to call in case of emergency or alternatively use text messages as a way of communicating. Participant 9 elaborated, *“I do not know how it feels to make long calls anymore. My calls are now about stating the main point.”*

The study also revealed that participants also reduced electricity expenses. Majority of the participants mentioned that they started to use firewood as a means of cooking and used electricity only for light. According to Participant 15,

*“Since we reside in the informal settlement my kids go out every day to collect firewood in the riverbed and we supplement them with charcoal. This is much cheaper comparing to purchasing electricity.”*

Furthermore, the research findings revealed that a considerable number of workers were compelled to adjust their standard of living as a direct result of the loss of employment. Female participants narrated that the cost-cutting measures were even extended to personal aspects such as toiletries and self-indulgence practices. Notably, a participant specifically cited that they curtailed indulgences like manicures and pedicures as a means of adapting to the challenging circumstances. This exemplifies the necessity for individuals to make difficult choices and forego luxury treatments in order to accommodate the financial limitations imposed by job losses. The findings highlight the far-reaching impact of employment disruptions on individuals' ability to sustain their desired lifestyle and engage in self-care practices. The study further revealed that even if there was reduction on expenditures, the participants still utilized their savings for purchases, and some have increased debts due to lack of salaries.

#### **4.4.2 Seek for affordable housing**

Following the retrenchments due to COVID-19, a considerable number of participants encountered financial difficulties, which made it unfeasible for them to continue affording their current rental expenses. Consequently, they were compelled to explore alternative

housing arrangements that would better align with their constrained budgets. This situation led to diverse strategies, with some individuals opting to relocate to more affordable dwellings, while others chose to return to the familiar comforts of their parental homes. Additionally, a notable portion of the affected participants sought temporary refuge by moving in with close relatives or friends, seeking a support network during these challenging times.

The experiences of the participants were described below,

*“Times were very tough, that I could not even afford rent, so I moved in with my cousin.”*

(Participant 13)

*“I was renting a two-bedroom flat in Khomasdal, but because of finances, I had to settle for a one-bedroom backyard flat in Katutura because it is cheaper.”* (Participant 2)

The repercussions of the retrenchments were undeniably felt in the housing choices of these participants, as they navigated through the strain of their changed financial circumstances. Additionally, Participant 4 explained, *“I decided to give up my private flat and instead rent a place to stay with a friend in order to split living expenses.”* Based on the study's findings, a significant number of participants were forced to reduce their rental expenses. Approximately half of the respondents chose to relocate to more affordable housing options in order to achieve cost savings. This involved some individuals moving in with relatives, while others opted to reside in rural areas where rental fees were not a requirement.

#### 4.4.3 Urban-rural migration

Notably, a few participants specifically mentioned escaping the high costs associated with urban living as their primary motive for moving to the rural areas. Although the specific reasons for migration varied, the common underlying motivation across all cases was the imperative to cut costs, as rural areas generally offer a less expensive standard of living compared to urban settings. According to Participant 3, *“Things were so bad, that I decided to pack my bags and go to the village. The fact that money was just going out and nothing was coming in, really made it hard for me.”*

Considering the prevailing trend of rural-to-urban migration driven by prospects of better opportunities, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent retrenchments instigated a notable reversal in migration patterns. As workers faced job losses and financial hardships in urban areas, many sought cost-cutting measures, prompting a substantial shift towards rural areas. This migration was driven by the workers' pursuit of more affordable living conditions and a potential retreat to familiar social support networks. Consequently, the pandemic-induced retrenchments acted as a catalyst for altering migration dynamics, with urban-to-rural migration becoming a prominent response to the changing economic landscape.

This research study found that some participants could not afford to cater to their children's needs due to unemployment and as a result, they sent their children to the grandparents at the villages. With these results, it is an indication that livelihood of the retrenched workers changed, however changes differ from worker to worker. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the shift towards online education in schools presented challenges for retrenched workers, who predominantly belonged to low-income brackets. The

financial constraints they faced rendered them unable to afford internet connectivity for their children to participate in online classes, consequently leading to missed lessons. Moreover, the study highlighted that some individuals relocated with their children to rural areas, where access to reliable internet connection was limited or non-existent. As a result, these children experienced further disruptions in their education as they were unable to attend certain classes.

In conclusion, as much as workers were negatively affected by the retrenchments, and their livelihoods were damagingly affected, very few workers were optimistic about the situation, hence they took it as an opportunity to reassess their work-life balance. Additionally, it allowed them to spend more time with family, pursue personal interests, or engage in activities they previously had limited time for. Some of the participants disclosed how staying at home helped them make financial adjustments and adapt to new routines.

#### **4.5 Adaptation mechanism**

Due to retrenchments, workers found themselves forced to seek avenues for adaptation. This adjustment process proved to be a challenging endeavour, with varying degrees of success and differing rates of acceptance among the participants. While some swiftly embraced and implemented adaptive measures, others struggled, requiring more time to navigate through the changes imposed upon them. Additionally, some of the participants remains resistant to acknowledging the reality of the circumstances, lingering in a state of denial. As observed, the paths to adaptation have been diverse, yielding both fruitful outcomes and instances of less successful adaptation among the affected workers.

#### **4.5.1 Start business**

According to the study, several participants indicated that they chose to start small businesses after losing their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These projects covered a wide range of businesses, demonstrating the adaptability and versatility of the impacted labour. However, a considerable proportion of these newly founded small businesses encountered major challenges and, in many cases, proved to be short-lived. According to Participant 10, *“I moved to village with an intention to start farming however, I failed due to lack of knowledge and resources.”* One of the primary reasons for the failure of these businesses was the impact of lockdown measures, which severely restricted their operations. The mandated closures, reduced foot traffic, and supply chain disruptions posed significant obstacles to the sustained growth and profitability of these enterprises. Consequently, a considerable number of participants were compelled to cease their entrepreneurial endeavours prematurely.

A lack of entrepreneurial expertise and experience was also highlighted as a key contributing factor to business failures in the study. Many individuals entered entrepreneurship out of need, without appropriate preparation or awareness of basic business practices. This lack of experience resulted in poor decision-making, financial mismanagement, and an inability to react to changing market conditions, ultimately leading to the failure of their businesses. According to Participant 2 who recounted their post-retrenchment journey,

*“I went back to my village with the modest savings I had managed to accumulate. I decided to establish a small tuck shop at my residence to secure a livelihood. I have skills*

*in hairstyling, so I also ventured into offering barber services as an additional income stream. However, the imposition of lockdown measures pushed me to close down both the barbershop and tuck shop, as the prohibition of gatherings and non-essential business operations severely impacted my ability to sustain these ventures.”*

#### **4.5.2 Seek for employment in other sectors**

This research study further revealed that, in response to the challenges posed by retrenchments, some of the displaced workers sought new employment opportunities in different sectors. However, the outcomes varied significantly among the participants, with only a minority securing jobs successfully. The majority encountered considerable difficulties in their job search, particularly those individuals whose skill sets were primarily confined to the hotel industry. One participant narrated how they managed to acquire a job in a completely unrelated sector, which they attributed to their administrative background. The relatively swift reemployment was attributed to the transferability of administrative skills across industries, mitigating her struggle to a considerable extent. However, this is a stark difference from the experiences of Participant 9, with more than 10 years' experience in the tourism and hospitality industry. Due to her limited experience, they remained unemployed for an extended period as a result of a lack of employment opportunities in the industry. The dilemma of Participant 9 was aggravated by the tourism industry's severe impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, which lowered demand for workers and made it difficult for her to locate alternative career options.

Participant 1 narrated,

*“Unemployment has always been high in Namibia, and because of the pandemic it even became worse. This was my first job, so I only had experience in hospitality, which then made it very difficult for me to get a stable job after retrenchment.”*

Overall, the study sheds light on the differing employment outcomes among retrenched workers, with some successfully adapting by securing jobs in diverse sectors, while others faced considerable obstacles, especially those whose skills were closely tied to a heavily impacted industry like tourism. These findings emphasize the importance of equipping workers with versatile skills and offering support during times of economic upheaval to facilitate smoother transitions to new employment prospects.

#### **4.6 Summary**

This chapter presented and discussed the findings on workers experiences and the challenges they encountered as a result of job losses due to COVID-19, in Safari Court Hotel, Windhoek. The demographic information of the participants was presented in the first section of this chapter, followed by the main findings supported by relevant literature. The research study revealed that retrenched workers experienced significant hardship across various domains, including employment, finances, psychological well-being, and physical health. Moreover, the impacts of retrenchment necessitated substantial adjustments to their livelihoods and lifestyles. The succeeding chapter provides a comprehensive summary and offers recommendations based on the findings and analysis conducted in this study.

This study explores the challenges faced by individuals in the hotel industry during COVID-19-driven retrenchments, offering insights across various theoretical perspectives. Marxist perspectives highlight the exacerbation of class divisions during crises, highlighting the exploitative nature of capitalist frameworks. The expansion of the reserve labour pool further erodes workers' collective bargaining power. Naomi Klein's theories highlight the intersection of disaster capitalism and pandemic-induced layoffs, revealing how economic elites exploit disruptions for their own interests. *Sociology of Industry and Work* highlights structural frailties within the hotel sector, highlighting a lack of labour safeguards and employment stability. This prompts the need for fortified labour unions and rigorous regulatory mechanisms to protect workers from systemic vulnerabilities. Overall, these multi-faceted perspectives highlight the socioeconomic inequities highlighted by the pandemic and call for reforms to ensure the equitable treatment and welfare of the workforce.

The resurgence of the pandemic raises questions about the treatment of workers in the hospitality industry, particularly in terms of job security, wages, and healthcare access. Marxist analysis would examine whether class divisions and power dynamics in the industry exacerbated these inequalities. It would also examine worker agency and representation in decision-making processes, highlighting the need for workers to have a voice in shaping their employment conditions.

Furthermore, Naomi Klein's ideas on the potential return of the pandemic raise questions about whether governments or corporations exploited the crisis for disaster capitalism. This involves examining whether policies prioritized corporate interests over workers'

rights and well-being. The concept of the "shock doctrine" suggests that emergencies often lead to policies that would face opposition under normal circumstances. Analysing from Klein's perspective, it's essential to assess whether workers' rights and protections were further eroded during the crisis. This comprehensive analysis considers workers' well-being, socio-economic, and political dynamics that may impact their experiences. The findings of this study seemed to agree with the position of Marxist theory, in the notion that the pandemic did create the perfect conditions for businesses to protect and maintain their profits over the wellbeing of the workers. In addition, the findings supported the element of the theory that government policies at times favour the capitalists over their own people.

This study highlights the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on hotel workers via the lens of diverse theoretical frameworks, including Marxist viewpoints, Naomi Klein's ideas, and Sociology of Industry and Work. The research emphasises the aggravation of class differences, exploitation within capitalism frameworks, and economic elites' potential exploitation of crises. Furthermore, it focuses light on structural flaws within the industry, emphasising the importance of stronger labour unions and powerful regulatory procedures. These findings correspond with broader discussions about the future of work, where issues of job security, worker rights, and equal treatment are prominent. As the pandemic continues to raise concerns about the treatment of workers in the hospitality industry, the ramifications necessitate a re-evaluation of labour rules and practises in order to safeguard the well-being and rights of the workforce in a shifting work landscape.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter explored the analysis of data derived from the data analysis, which were categorized into themes and subthemes, as previously outlined. This chapter is devoted to presenting the conclusions drawn from the results and offering recommendations for future research and potential policy development.

The research study had 3 primary objectives:

- To understand how employees experienced the COVID-19 challenges;
- To analyse ways in which employees have adapted to the hardships emanating from COVID-19;
- To investigate how employees' livelihoods changed due to salary cuts/ retrenchments.

#### **5.2 Conclusions**

In light of the identified themes in the study, the following conclusions have been drawn. Due to the findings, the study concludes that COVID-19 negatively impacted the world, and not only economically, but also health wise. As the spread of the coronavirus was increasing, countries put down lockdown measures as a way of reducing and containing the virus. Due to this the hotel industry suffered a great loss, and as a result many workers from the tourism sector were retrenched. The participants were able to share their experiences on the challenges they encountered due to COVID-19 related retrenchments.

The study found that participants have been faced with challenges that involve, financial, psychological and wellbeing, social, legal and political challenges, as well as employment challenges. Furthermore, due to retrenchments, many struggled to gain meaningful employment, and that resulted into financial challenges, these then led to participants cutting on costs, from housing, to basic needs such as food and cosmetics.

In conclusion, this study explored the experiences of retrenched workers from Safari Court Hotel who faced challenges resulting from COVID-19-related retrenchment. The findings revealed that the retrenchment process was overwhelmingly described as negative, with participants facing tough and unprecedented circumstances. Financial hardships, job hunting struggles, psychological and health issues, social challenges, and mental well-being concerns were prominent themes in their accounts. The retrenched workers encountered significant financial difficulties due to the sudden loss of income, leading to economic uncertainty. Job hunting became a pressing concern, requiring them to navigate a highly competitive job market. The emotional toll of the retrenchment was evident, with feelings of anxiety, depression, and helplessness prevalent among the participants.

Social problems had a significant influence in the retrenched workers' experiences, reaching beyond their job environment. Many individuals mentioned feeling disconnected from their social lives outside of work owing to budgetary restrictions. Because they couldn't afford the same activities and experiences as previously, they felt excluded from

their friends' social groups. As a result, they felt isolated and had a drop-in self-esteem, which aggravated the overall impact of the retrenchment and exacerbated their troubles.

Despite the adversity faced, a few of the participants described the retrenchment as an eye-opening experience, indicating opportunities for personal growth amidst the difficulties. This study underscores the importance of implementing supportive measures and resources for retrenched workers to mitigate the long-term effects of such challenges. Policymakers, business leaders, and stakeholders in the hospitality industry should draw lessons from these experiences to develop more robust safety nets and policies that promote resilience among the workforces.

Moving forward, collective efforts are necessary to create a more equitable and resilient future, where workers are better equipped to cope with unforeseen challenges like those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. By acknowledging the resilience exhibited by these individuals, we gain insights into the potential for growth and renewal in the face of adversity.

Considering the challenges faced due to COVID-19 retrenchments, this study explored how workers adapted to the overwhelming circumstances they encountered. The findings indicated that the workers used a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with the difficulties, focusing mostly on cost-cutting measures, accepting the circumstance, and adopting lifestyle changes.

Cost-cutting was a common adaptation technique seen among retrenched personnel. Participants acknowledged the need of conserving their limited financial resources and hence reduced spending on non-essential things such as cosmetics and non-essential food items. Furthermore, many workers altered their living arrangements in search of more economical living choices. This included looking for cheaper rent and possibly migrating to a village where the cost of living is lower than in the city. By adopting these cost-cutting measures, the workers were able to alleviate some of the financial burdens and adapt to the new economic realities.

Lifestyle adjustments were also evident in the participants' adaptation process. Facing reduced financial means, some workers made significant changes in their day-to-day lives. They learned to better manage their resources, prioritize necessary spending, and adjust their expectations and goals to match their present financial condition. Despite the uncertainties brought on by the retrenchment, these lifestyle changes allowed them to preserve a sense of security and control over their lives. While the study shows diverse adaptation tactics, it is important to emphasize that the workers' experiences were not uniform, and everyone dealt with the challenges differently based on their unique circumstances and support systems. Several of the participants had indicated that they utilized a number of tactics to effectively deal with the associated issues.

Due to retrenchments, workers livelihoods changed. The study revealed a significant lifestyle degradation experienced by retrenched workers, which resulted in an inability to afford some essentials and a departure from the comforts of their previous existence. One

of the most noticeable effects on the employees' lifestyles was their inability to maintain the same level of living they had before the layoffs. The loss of a regular income created a dramatic difference, as many workers found themselves unable to afford some necessities and luxuries, they had previously taken for granted. The inability to enjoy life's soft comforts created significant problems and adjustments to their everyday lives.

Migration to rural areas, where the expense of living was comparably cheaper, was a notable response to changes in livelihoods. As a deliberate response to the economic slump, some workers decided to migrate to villages. This change enabled them to cut their living expenditures and explore alternate means of sustaining their families. During these difficult times, sending children to schools in the village and adopting a simpler lifestyle became a feasible choice for several laid-off workers. Amid the challenges, several people sought to generate new possibilities by launching small businesses. However, the ensuing lockdown measures enacted in reaction to the pandemic forced the closure of these ventures, aggravating their economic uncertainty.

The study also highlighted the implications for workers access to healthcare. Some participants' and their families' medical aids were cancelled as a result of the retrenchments. As a result, they were forced to rely on public hospitals for treatment, providing extra financial and health-related challenges during an already difficult time.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic has brought forth difficulties, for individuals working in the tourism industry. This has resulted in the recognition of a range of problems, including limitations, employment hardships, social barriers, mental and physical health burdens and substantial disruptions to livelihoods. Moreover, the first-hand experiences of workers impacted by job losses have shed light on the enormity of these challenges. As a result, this study comes with various recommendations.

- During lockdowns, the Government should prioritize clear communication with public about lockdown measures, providing accurate information about virus, preventive measures, and rationale, building trust and ensuring compliance.
- Government should consider allowing tourism-related accommodations to function while adhering to COVID-19 regulations, easing travel restrictions and allowing tourism enterprises to thrive during lockdown.
- Policymakers should develop crisis management plans and contingency strategies for Namibia's tourism sector, addressing challenges like coordinated responses, communication, and financial support.
- Businesses in the tourism sector should establish transparent communication channels between employers and employees, engage in dialogue with employee representatives, and gather input from the workforce.
- The research study suggests the implementation of financial education programs for workers within their workplaces. These programs would focus on imparting essential knowledge and skills related to financial management. Particularly, the

significance of establishing emergency funds to mitigate the impact of unforeseen circumstances is emphasized. Such initiatives can play a crucial role in enhancing employees' financial well-being and resilience.

- Ministry of environment and Tourism Namibia should encourage robust financial planning and risk management, including emergency funds, business interruption insurance, and scenario analysis, to better prepare for and respond to future pandemics.
- The study recommends a collaboration between tourism businesses, government, industry associations, and trade unions to develop strategies and contingency plans for managing workforce challenges during pandemics. Share resources, expertise, and best practices to support job retention.
- Prioritise adaptive skills development programmes for hospitality workers in the aftermath of COVID-19's impact on the hotel sector and equip them not just with industry-specific talents, but also with transferable skills that will help them meet the changing demands of the future labour market.

### **5.3.1 Recommendations for future pandemics**

In preparations for future pandemics, the study recommends the following:

- The Government should offer financial and social support to affected individuals and businesses during lockdowns, such as income assistance, grants, subsidies, and loan deferrals. They should also prioritize mental health support services, such

as counselling, helplines, and online platforms, to ensure basic needs are met and emotional well-being during challenging times.

- Ministry of Health and Social Services (MHSS) should invest in strengthened healthcare infrastructure to handle patient surges, secure equipment, and ensure efficient distribution. During pandemics, they should increase hospital beds, ventilators, and medical staff, and build strategic stockpiles of essential supplies like PPE to mitigate shortages.
- MHSS should introduce public health education campaigns should increase awareness about pandemics, focusing on preventive measures like hand hygiene and vaccination. Accurate information should be disseminated through channels to combat misinformation and promote adherence to guidelines.
- Governments should promote collaboration with international organizations, neighbouring countries, and experts to exchange best practices, lessons learned, and scientific knowledge for informed decisions and effective pandemic response.
- The Namibian government should enhance the Sovereign Fund's accessibility and transparency, providing clear guidelines and mechanisms for financial support, particularly during pandemics, to enhance its effectiveness in providing relief.
- The WHO Pandemic Treaty should prioritize global equity in access to medical resources, fostering collaboration among nations to ensure equitable distribution, enhancing preparedness for future pandemics, minimizing vulnerable populations' impact, and promoting global health security.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations for Legislative and Policy Reform**

To enhance resilience and sustainability within the tourism sector during future crises, the study recommends the following legislative and policy reforms:

- The Government of Namibia should amend labor laws to strengthen job security measures, requiring businesses to implement structured retrenchment policies, severance packages, and social security benefits for affected workers during crises.
- Policymakers should revise the Social Security Act of 1994 to expand coverage, ensuring that all workers, including those in the tourism sector, have access to unemployment benefits, financial relief, and emergency assistance.
- The Government of Namibia should establish a legal mandate requiring tourism businesses to develop and implement crisis preparedness plans, including financial contingency strategies, employee support programs, and pandemic-specific operational guidelines.
- Policymakers and the Government should introduce industry-specific financial relief policies that provide targeted support, such as tax breaks, grants, and low-interest loans, to help tourism establishments remain operational and prevent mass layoffs during economic downturns.

### **5.3.3 Recommendations for future research**

This research primarily focused on a modest quantity of retrenched workers from Safari Court Hotel and key informants; therefore, there is a need to expand the number of participants and other tourism establishments in order to conduct a deeper analysis on the challenges faced by retrenched workers as a result of COVID-19. This will contribute

valuable insights to the existing body of literature and enhance our understanding of the subject. Additionally, forthcoming research will equip policymakers with a more comprehensive understanding of the matter at hand.

#### **5.4 Summary**

This final chapter of the thesis culminates the study with its concluding findings and recommendations. The way forward was provided in the form of recommendations based on the results of the study. Overall, the challenges faced by workers in the tourism sector during the COVID-19 pandemic have been diverse and significant. The recovery and reconstruction of the industry will necessitate assistance, training options and the implementation of policies to tackle these challenges and guarantee the welfare and livelihoods of tourism employees. Finally, the study is likely to add to the scant literature on the challenges faced by workers in Namibia's tourist industries as a result of COVID-19 retrenchments.

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## APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



### ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: SHS 0050 Date: 29 July 2022

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Decentralized Ethics Committee (DEC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the School of Humanities, Society & Development Decentralized Ethics Committee.

Title of Project: Workers experiences of Covid-19 challenges: A case study of Safari Court Hotel employees, Windhoek, Namibia  
Researcher: Mirjam Ndahafa Puye-Ipawa Tuvadhimbwa  
Student Number: 201409203  
Supervisor(s): Dr. Artwell Nhemachena & Ms. Lydia Kauaria

#### Centre for Research Services

Take note of the following:

1. Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the ethics committee. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
2. Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the ethics committee
3. The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the ethics committee (through the Chairperson) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by the ethics committee
4. The ethics committee retains the right to:
  - i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
  - ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

The ethics committee wishes you the best in your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trywell Kalusopa".

Prof. Trywell Kalusopa (Chairperson, Decentralised Ethics Committee)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Davis Mumbengegwi".

Prof. Davis Mumbengegwi (Head, Multidisciplinary Research)

## APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER

**CENTRE FOR RESEARCH SERVICES**  
*Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor: Research, Innovation & Development*  
University of Namibia, Private Bag 13301, Windhoek, Namibia  
340 Mandume Ndamulayo Awanua, Plansers Park, Office F223 - Fblock, Second Floor  
☎ +264 61 206 4673; E-mail: [cmr@unam.na](mailto:cmr@unam.na); URL: <http://www.unam.edu.na>



### RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER

Date: 29/08/2022

**Student Name:** Mirjam Ndahafa Puye-Ipawa Tuvadhimbwa

**Student Number:** 201409203

**Programme:** Masters ARTS in Sociology

**Approved Research Title:** Workers experiences of Covid-19 challenges: A case study of Safari Court Hotel employees, Windhoek, Namibia

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

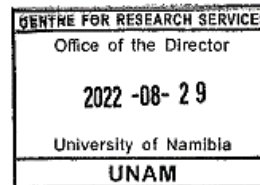
I hereby confirm that the above-mentioned student is registered at the University of Namibia for the programme indicated. The proposed study met all the requirements as stipulated in the University guidelines and has been approved by the relevant committees.

The proposal adheres to ethical principles as per attached Ethical Clearance Certificate. Permission is hereby granted to carry out the research as described in the approved proposal.

Best Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AEE Shikongo', is written over a horizontal line.

**Dr. AEE Shikongo**  
Head: Postgraduate Support Services  
Tel: +264 61 206 3129  
E-mail: [aeshikongo@unam.na](mailto:aeshikongo@unam.na)



### APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**TITLE OF RESEARCH:** WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF COVID-19 CHALLENGES: A CASE STUDY OF SAFARI COURT HOTEL'S RETRENCHED EMPLOYEES, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA.

Name of interviewer	MIRJAM TUVADIMBWA
Institution	UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA
Date	Starting time:      Finishing time:      Total time:

#### **Introduction**

My name is Mirjam Tuvadimbwa, I am a master's student from the University of Namibia. We're currently conducting research on workers experiences of COVID-19 challenges, Safari court hotel, Windhoek. We have identified you as one person who could enlighten us on the subject and would like to request that you share your knowledge and experiences with us.

#### **Description of the Research**

The interview will approximately be 30 minutes long, whereby I will be asking you questions and with your permission, I would like to record your interview, however if you don't feel comfortable, I will take notes instead.

#### **Potential Risks and Discomforts**

There are no risks involved, however we know that some of the information we will be asking may be painful to share, and although we would like to know as much as possible, you have the right to decide what information you wish share with us.

#### **Confidentiality**

Your responses are completely anonymous, no personal identifying information will be collected. The audio recordings and any electronic or printed transcripts will safely be stored in encrypted files or in a locked, secure location for three years after the publication of this research, after which, all files will be destroyed.

#### **Voluntary Participation and Authorization**

Your decision to participate in this study is complete voluntary.

**Withdrawal from the Study and/or Withdrawal of Authorization**

If you decide to participate in this study, you may withdraw from your participation at any time without penalty.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research program

Yes

No

I understand that I will be given a copy of this signed Consent Form.

Name of Participant:

Signature:

Date:

Name of Witness interviewer:

Signature:

Date:

**APPENDIX 4: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR GENERAL POPULATION**

**Semi-Structured Interview Schedule**

**N0. -----**

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WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF COVID-19 CHALLENGES: A CASE STUDY OF SAFARI COURT HOTEL EMPLOYEES, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

Name of interviewer	MIRJAM TUVADIMBWA
Name of note taker	
Others	
Institution	UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA
Date:	Starting time-----Finishing time----- Total time-----
Interviewer Self-check	

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Age: 18-25  26-30  31-35  36-40  41-45  45 and above

Sex: Male  Female

**Highest qualification:**

1. How would you describe your experience with the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How has COVID-19 impacted you on employment level?
3. When did things start changing at work due to COVID-19?
4. What challenges have you experienced due to COVID-19 employment wise?
5. When did you get retrenched?/ When did they inform you about salary cuts, and how did they inform you?
6. Did you get a retrenchment package?
7. How has life been since COVID-19?
8. What were you up to during the lockdown period?
9. What challenges did you face during lockdown at home?
10. How have you adapted to these challenges?
11. Did you have a salary come in during lockdown?
  
12. What lifestyle changes were you forced to make due to the pandemic?
13. What methods did you use to adapt to these changes?

Is there anything else you would like to share or add on?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME, IT IS HIGHLY APPRECIATED.

**APPENDIX 5: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR KEY INFORMANTS**

**Semi-Structured Interview Schedule**

**N0.** -----

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WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF COVID-19 CHALLENGES: A CASE STUDY OF SAFARI COURT HOTEL EMPLOYEES, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

Name of interviewer	MIRJAM TUVADIMBWA
Name of note taker	
Others	
Institution	UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA
Date:	Starting time-----Finishing time----- Total time-----
Interviewer Self-check	

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

**Age:** 18-25       26-30       31-35       36-40       41-45       45 and   
above

**Sex:** Male       Female

**Highest qualification:**

1. How would you describe your experience with the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How has COVID-19 impacted your relative/friend on employment level?
3. When did things start changing at work for your relative/friend due to COVID-19?
4. What challenges have you realized your relative/friend experienced due to COVID-19 employment wise?
5. How has life been since COVID-19 for your relative/friend?
6. What were your relative/friend up to during the lockdown period?
7. What challenges did your relative/friend face during lockdown at home?
8. How have your relative/friend adapted to these challenges?
9. Did your relative/friend have a salary come in during lockdown?
10. What lifestyle changes were your relative/friend forced to make due to the pandemic?
11. What methods did your relative/friend use to adapt to these changes?

Is there anything else you would like to share or add on?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME, IT IS HIGHLY APPRECIATED.