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## FEMALE PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WELL-BEING AND RESILIENCE IN CORANE HOUSING (ARCHITECTURE, URBAN INSERTION AND SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS)

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**Abstract:** The study investigated women's perceptions of their experiences of well-being and resilience in homes in Corane, Mozambique, adopting a qualitative, basic and descriptive approach. Initially, semi-structured interviews were carried out with five women, in addition to a public workshop to hear the women's opinions and a two-day home immersion in a family headed by a woman. The results revealed several limitations faced by women in the Corane housing context. Issues related to durability, acoustics and comfort were identified as significant challenges with regard to the appropriate housing model. Furthermore, the urban insertion of housing showed deficiencies in public equipment, acoustic aspects, public safety, drainage and urban afforestation. The socioeconomic conditions of women were also addressed, highlighting restrictions related to income generation. An important contribution of the study was the presentation of fundamental solutions and strategies for gender-responsive housing models in Corane. By considering women's perspectives, these solutions can guide the redefinition of IDP resettlement programs in the future. However, despite the socioeconomic opportunities created, cultural issues still limit women's participation in income generation in Corane, often leaving them dependent. While divorced or single women actively seek to become self-sufficient, married women tend to depend more on exchanging products and donations.

**Keywords:** women; housing; architecture; urban insertion and socioeconomic factors.

## INTRODUCTION

In response to the humanitarian crises triggered by armed attacks in the Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique, the government and civil society organizations undertook efforts to relocate and resettle displaced families (Portal of the Government

of Mozambique, 2021). However, housing programs established to serve this population face significant challenges related to the housing model, its urban insertion and the socioeconomic conditions of these communities.

Especially for low-income communities, housing is a critical social determinant of well-being as housing options can be limited (Headen et al., 2022). This sense of well-being and belonging to a specific place is crucial for the human and social development of a community. However, for displaced people, the situation becomes even more challenging, as they face obstacles related to family integration, access to housing, social infrastructure and the creation of employment opportunities (Center for Investigative Journalism, 2023).

In Mozambique, among the displaced, subgroups are identified that present an even greater vulnerability, women, children and the elderly are identified as particularly vulnerable social groups due to their economic dependence (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, 2022). Especially women, who are often not recognized as breadwinners due to established social customs, face additional difficulties due to the lack of access to education and work opportunities (Kalabamu, 2006). In this context, we sought to understand how the feminine vision influences the perception of the experience of well-being and resilience in Corane homes?

To answer this question, the study analyzed the contribution of women's perspectives to understanding the experience of well-being and resilience of housing, considering the effects of architecture, urban insertion and socioeconomic factors in Corane, by carrying out an Assessment Post-Occupancy of Housing in the Center of Corane, from the perspective of Well-being (resilient home), with the indicators continuing to learn,

become aware, donate, be active and connect (criteria based on Araujo & Villa, 2020).

The study adopted a qualitative, basic and descriptive approach in its field research procedures. Initially, documentary and bibliographical research was carried out to support the study. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 women, followed by public listening workshops to listen to female voices. Additionally, a two-day home immersion was conducted in a female-headed household, providing valuable insights for a deeper understanding of the specific needs of women in Corane.

The following aspects stand out as fundamental motivators for carrying out the study:

- The lack of published studies on the homes of Corane, a region occupied by people displaced by armed conflicts that require attention;
- The importance of understanding the impact of women's domestic practices, influencing not only their individual well-being, but also the stability and future of the entire family (Tang et al., 2022);
- The recent armed conflicts in Cabo Delgado started in 2017, which have generated new displaced people in 2024;
- The growing need for new investigations into the feeling of home among internal migrants (Tang et al., 2022);
- The concern of Mozambican authorities, including the Minister of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources, with resilient housing (1st Congress of Architecture of Mozambique: Building Resilience – Challenges of Professional Practice in Mozambique, 2024).

The structure of the article comprises a review of the literature on housing, well-

being and resilience focusing on the female perspective, description of the method, discussion of results, case study in Corane covering architectural, urban planning and socioeconomic aspects, final considerations and bibliographical references.

## THEORETICAL REFERENCE

The theoretical framework of the article presents an analysis of concepts related to the female perspective in housing, exploring how this dimension influences the well-being and resilience of housing.

## HOUSING

Understanding housing encompasses a variety of forms (Pasternak, 2016). Contemporary conceptions highlight the home as a central space of meaning and geographic identity, where interpersonal relationships are established and strengthened (Cresswell, 2020). Furthermore, residential experiences reflect and perpetuate historical, geographic, and social patterns, shaping individuals' life opportunities and self-image (Mechlenborg & Gram-Hanssen, 2020). Thus, differences in perceptions of home are observable across different demographic groups, being influenced by historical and technological changes.

In a broader context, housing plays a crucial role in promoting health and well-being, so better housing conditions contribute to saving lives, reducing poverty and minimizing the impacts of climate change (WHO, 2018).

In the context of Corane and its dwellings, feminist understandings of the home take on significant importance. These perspectives highlight that the notion of home is not static, but rather multiple and fluid according to Longhurst, (2012), this is influenced by a variety of factors, including gender, culture and family dynamics. When considering the experiences of women residing in Corane, it

is essential to recognize the complexity and diversity of their perceptions and practices related to home. This may include how they define, shape, and experience home, as well as how their experiences affect their well-being and resilience within that specific context.

### **GENDER (FEMALE)**

From the literature, it is understood that daily practices and conceptions about home and housing are strongly influenced by gender (Mechlenborg & Gram-Hanssen, 2020). These gender-based power differences are reflected in living spaces, resulting in distinct housing realities associated with specific arrangements and practices carried out at home (Vásquez-Vera et al., 2023). Special attention has been given to migrant women due to their role in domestic work and food provision, although knowledge about rural migrant women's sense of home is still limited (Tang et al., 2022).

Wives' lower status in terms of education, occupation, and income compared to their husbands often results in their inability to contribute significantly to family finances (Cui et al., 2023). Gender is an essential element in understanding the meanings attributed to home. In Corane, women play a significant role in the domestic context, traditionally associated with their domain. However, it is important to consider that interpretations of home and domestic responsibilities also involve distinct masculine and feminine correlations. These dynamics influence the way women in Corane perceive and relate to the domestic environment, as well as their roles within this context. Furthermore, these gendered meanings of the home are malleable, as gender is socially constructed and people negotiate changing masculine and feminine norms (Gorman-Murray, 2012).

### **WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE: EXPLAIN THE INDICATORS**

Housing, being the basic unit of analysis of urban life, is recognized as an important social determinant of health and well-being (Vásquez-Vera et al., 2023). Studies over time have explored the relationship between housing and well-being, including female perspectives, recognizing the crucial role of these perspectives (Baker et al., 2017; Kalabamu, 2006; Miled, 2020; Mubiru et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2022; Vásquez-Vera et al., 2023). These studies highlight a strong link between housing and individuals' mental, social and physical well-being.

Furthermore, research also investigates the resilience of housing, examining its ability to withstand shocks (Amorim-Maia et al., 2023; Moreira et al., 2020). Partial results from these studies demonstrate the direct relationship between housing resilience and well-being. These findings contribute significantly to scientific knowledge on the topic, highlighting the importance of promoting resilient housing environments that promote the well-being of communities, including Corane.

### **METHOD**

This study used a qualitative approach to understand how women's views influence the perception of well-being and resilience in Corane homes. Initially, bibliographical and documentary research was carried out to build a theoretical framework and gain a greater understanding of the object of study. Three field visits were then conducted to the intervention area: the first to establish contact with the women of Corane and learn about the housing models; the second for a detailed survey, home visits and interviews; and the third to hold a workshop and gain greater sensitivity to the female perspective on housing.

During the visits, three data collection

instruments were applied: an observation grid by the author, a semi-structured interview guide and the transcreation of female perspectives in the workshop. All instruments considered three factors associated with well-being and housing resilience: architecture, urban insertion and socioeconomic factors, assessed through indicators such as continuing to learn, becoming aware, donating, being active and connecting.

The home interviews were carried out with five women of different age groups and education levels, all mothers and the majority married, they are identified in the study by letters to preserve their identity. The observation included five homes, based on the author's reading of the space, in addition to an immersion in a family's home for two days to understand daily and nighttime activities.

The workshop, open to the public, was mainly attended by female students from the Corane bricklaying course and older women from the community, who contributed clear examples of their experiences and notions of well-being and resilience.

Finally, the data was qualitatively analyzed to identify relevant patterns and themes, using organization and interpretation techniques. This included coding, triangulation and comparative analysis and discussion to understand women's perspectives on wellbeing and resilience in Corane housing.

## **CASE STUDY: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

In 2021, in Corane, in Meconta district, Nampula province, the first and largest resettlement center for internally displaced people from Cabo Delgado was established. With approximately 1100 families, each family received a homemade of local material, on a 500m<sup>2</sup> plot of land. However, currently with just over 1000 homes and increasingly displaced people, housing conditions in

Corane are now a concern for government intervention.

Therefore, in the context of this study on housing conditions in Corane, some points were observed between the interviewees' reports and the workshop, reflecting common challenges faced by displaced women in relation to gender-sensitive architecture, urban insertion and socio-economic factors.

### **GENDER-RESPONSIVE ARCHITECTURE**

Regarding the size and structural conditions of the houses, all interviewees, regardless of their specificities, mentioned the smallness of the houses as a central issue. Interviewee A expressed the need to expand houses to accommodate visitors, while the others noted that their houses are small for the number of residents.

“The house is small, you can only sleep in it... imagine there are 10 of us here at home, in a 2-bedroom house.” B said.

Women's lack of identification with their homes due to their small size and limited compartments is a significant barrier in forming a sense of belonging in the residential environment. According to Mechlenborg & Gram-Hanssen, (2020), home is a place loaded with emotional, cultural and personal meaning, where a sense of belonging to the world is built.

Furthermore, there was total convergence regarding issues of maintenance and durability of housing. Interviewee A reported the need to plaster the walls daily during the rainy season, while Interviewee D highlighted the deterioration caused by termites. In addition to this, the study revealed the need to develop techniques that guarantee greater resistance to the bamboo used in the structure of houses. This concern with the quality of construction materials highlights the importance of ensuring the durability and safety of housing



in Corane. Interviewee B states:

“I sold rice and flour that I produce and expanded my house. I have a huge house, I invested in cement plaster and even so, the structure (bamboo) of the house is rotten and could fall.”

In the context of housing, the term “home” encompasses the feelings, values, cultures and practices that are linked to the physical structures where people live (Mechlenborg & Gram-Hanssen, 2020). The constant degradation of the house, and the structure compromised after an extension, highlights the disconnect between the feelings of security and comfort expected in the concept of “home” and the physical reality of housing. This makes it difficult for women to identify with the residential space, undermining their confidence and emotional comfort.

“The roof of the house, made of sheets, has holes and water drops enter whenever it rains.” Mentioned D.

Lack of housing security can harm health by causing stress, which can lead to negative well-being outcomes (Caswell & Zuckerman, 2018). On the other hand, the lack of privacy inside and outside the house was another recurring concern among the interviewees, highlighting the ability of those inside the house to hear conversations from the street and vice versa.

“I wait for nightfall so I can talk and be intimate with my husband, so the children don’t hear. Sometimes we use the outdoor kitchen.” C said.

Another issue raised was the inadequacy of sanitary facilities. The study noted that toilets are placed strategically far from houses as they are open-air latrines, requiring women and children to walk through the yard at night to access them. This could pose a risk to their safety. Refuge spaces need to be designed taking into consideration, gender differences, being culturally inclusive and easily accessible

(Amorim-Maia et al., 2023).

During the immersion in the house, the nights were relatively peaceful, although the feeling of being in a cramped and oppressive space due to the lack of circulation in the house caused by the arrangement of furniture and belongings piled up in almost every place. The light structure of the walls and roof gave the feeling of sleeping in a tent in the open air. Despite the structural limitations, efforts were made to improve the internal conditions, trying to create some additional amenities. However, the house was quite cold at night and during the day, it became an extremely hot environment due to the absorption of heat by the zinc sheets, forcing residents to carry out activities in the courtyard, the lack of privacy was evident, with the need to leave the house to answer phone calls.

Furthermore, the house made of raw earth accumulated a lot of dust inside, making breathing uncomfortable. At night, the presence of six cats in the house, bred to avoid intruders such as rats and snakes, brought agitation, not allowing for a peaceful night, but rather security against intruders.

The points raised by the study highlight the multiplicity of challenges faced by displaced women in Corane and the need for holistic and gender-sensitive approaches in formulating housing models and policies.

## URBAN INSERTION

With regard to urban insertion, several points were unanimously mentioned by the interviewees. Regarding domestic waste, the study found that it is discarded near bathrooms or buried in backyards. The lack of suitable places for the deposit and treatment of this waste results in inadequate practices in Corane.

Regarding security, although the community is characterized by the absence of robberies in houses, there was general

agreement among those interviewed about the challenges related to the theft of power lines and that it contributes to the lack of adequate lighting in the streets at night, which increases the feeling of insecurity at night.

With regard to access to water and energy, the community has access to sources of drinking water and electricity. However, despite there being fountains and wells, interviewee D expressed difficulties in accessing water during periods of high demand. What was also noted during the immersion, the author woke up at 4 am to join the water queue at the manual water pump fountain. At first, there were only 8 people in the queue, but at around 7 am, more than 30 women with buckets and basins were ready to collect water for their homes, with their children.

Regarding energy, there were reports from four of the interviewees about the difficulty of lighting the interior of their homes due to the costs of purchasing electrical equipment to supply the home.

Regarding health, all interviewees expressed concerns about the lack of access to adequate medical care, especially at night. Interviewees A and C referenced the distance to the hospital and the lack of adequate transport for emergency situations at night, when health services are unavailable in Corane, saying:

“People die here..., there is no ambulance, no midwife, no medical center, no first aid, motorbike taxis are called to help patients and they take advantage of this and charge a lot of money because they realize it is an emergency.” Interviewee A.

“We don’t have a hospital at night when one of the children is sick, we have to go to the village, without transport facilities”. Mentioned by D.

Regarding schools, there was consensus on the importance of education for community development, but also concerns about the

accessibility of the secondary school during the rainy season due to the difficulty of crossing the river. Added to the diverse vulnerabilities, due to women’s maternal responsibilities, they face other obligations to ensure adequate care for their children, including access to services such as schools, health, safety and psychosocial support (Mubiru et al., 2022).

With regard to drainage and the existence of trees on the streets, during the workshop, the women demonstrated that the lack of adequate rainwater drainage, which has created erosion on the roads and highlighted the absence of shade trees, in relation to this point D he said:

“There are no shade trees, they were all destroyed when this center for displaced people was set up, so I planted my trees.”

Interviewees E and C also lamented the lack of entertainment spaces for all age groups in the community, highlighting the absence of parks, squares and games for adults. I miss places to have fun...” Interviewee C stated.

Regarding the relationship with the natives of the community, there were reports of conflicts and discrimination between the displaced and the natives, especially related to the occupation of spaces and resources, as mentioned during the workshop:

“because we have minimal survival conditions, something that the natives don’t have, access to energy, water, free housing, food donations and the opportunity to take courses... they tell their children “don’t play with their children because they eat people.”

Displaced people are particularly impacted by the conflict, as when they flee to safer areas, they encounter unfamiliar places, which makes them feel strange and out of place. In these new places, they face the challenge of surviving with limited resources, seeking shelter and food (Center for Investigative Journalism, 2023).

These different perspectives highlight the

complexity of the issues facing the Corane community and the need for integrated and collaborative approaches to effectively address these challenges. When addressing housing, not only the physical structure of the residence is considered, but also how it integrates into the urban context, as well as the level of access to infrastructure services and social facilities available (Pasternak, 2016). Home is more than just shelter. It is a set of components that together affect the lives of individuals (Baker et al., 2017).

### **SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS**

Regarding socioeconomic aspects, particular situations were noted. For example, in the Sustenance theme, the first interviewee, identified as A, shared her daily struggle to support her family as she and her husband are retired and depend mainly on subsistence farming and small businesses to survive. She highlighted the difficulty in saving money due to lack of financial resources, affecting their ability to participate in savings practices common among Corane women and added:

“Here I live on 500.00 MZN / 7.7USD per month, with a household of 3 people and in Mocimboa before the armed attacks, my husband went fishing and I sold the fish and we made 5000.00 MZN / 77.5USD a month.”

The lack of financial resources among Corane’s victims leaves them embarrassed to ask for help, as they previously had homes, jobs and a stable life (Center for Investigative Journalism, 2023). Now, they face a series of devastating losses: family members, material possessions and the sources of security and stability that once provided them.

On the other hand, the second interviewee, B, highlighted her success in agriculture, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the fertile land of Corane to produce and sell agricultural products, and said:

“The government recognized my efforts in

agricultural production, gave me a mill and lent me two tractors, but we couldn’t use them due to lack of drivers, these are the ones here.”

However, she claims to face discrimination and exclusion from other residents and the leadership, who feel threatened by her prosperity, fear of the transfer of knowledge to other women and the end of food donations by the government and NGOs. This dynamic reflects a historical pattern in Southern Africa, where women traditionally grew food and built houses but never owned the land, which was controlled by male tribal leaders (Kalabamu, 2006).

Interviewees C, D and E shared similar experiences of economic dependence on their husbands and the lack of opportunities to undertake or save money due to the lack of a fixed income. While some expressed the desire to start their own businesses, but faced significant financial and social obstacles to doing so.

Participation in Community Activities  
The study demonstrated a certain level of involvement in community activities, such as neighborhood meetings, however, their participation is often limited by the social context dominated by traditional gender roles. C, D and E face social barriers that prevent them from having a significant voice and influence in community decisions. While some women, like A and B, play active roles in local health committees and women’s groups.

“Women are not considered very much, even if some participate, they have no voice.” C said.

This lack of voice and social power is evidenced when women with fewer asset resources than their husbands have less influence in financial and domestic matters, often choosing to remain in a marriage even when the relationship disintegrates (Cui et al., 2023).

Regarding the practice of savings among



women in Corane, it is varied. While some interviewees participate in savings groups and complain about a lack of understanding and internal conflicts among women, others face challenges in saving due to a lack of consistent financial resources and a lack of support for savings initiatives. During the workshop, they expressed the need for support in creating cooperatives and managing businesses, considering their previous failed experiences and the challenges they faced when trying to diversify their economic activities.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The feeling of well-being is and, in this case, proves to be related to the perspective of whoever defines it, as it can be defined depending on the values, beliefs, experiences, habits and customs associated with individual aspirations.

The feminine vision plays a fundamental role in the perception of the experience of well-being and resilience in Corane's homes. The study revealed that women face significant challenges in their daily lives, especially in relation to three key areas: the appropriate housing model, the urban insertion of this model and socioeconomic conditions.

The results indicate that single women, especially those with children, tend to be more committed in the search for a living, demonstrating notable socioeconomic resilience. On the other hand, married women often face cultural and social limitations that prevent them from seeking entrepreneurial income alternatives, resulting in greater dependence on product exchanges and donations.

Furthermore, the increasing involvement of women in construction courses offered by non-governmental organizations reflects an awakening to the importance of female participation in the process of recovering and maintaining housing. However, issues such as a lack of privacy and the structural limitations of homes continue to negatively affect women's experience of well-being in Corane.

These results show everyday limitations for each of the three in-depth areas, (1) the appropriate housing model, limitations related to durability, acoustics and convenience. (2) Urban insertion of the housing model, scarcity of public equipment, acoustic aspects, public safety, drainage and urban afforestation. And (3) socioeconomic conditions, limitations combined with the ability to generate income, where women without a partner rise up and seek entrepreneurial alternatives for sustenance, unlike those with a partner, settle down and exchange agricultural products, becoming more dependent of donations.

One of the biggest contributions this study brings is the construction of the ideal housing situation thought from the perspective of women, as they are the ones who spend the most time in housing, which could serve in the future to redefine resettlement programs for displaced people.

Therefore, the results of this study highlight the need to consider women's perspectives when planning and implementing housing policies in Corane and others like it, where solutions and strategies that take into consideration, women's experiences and needs can significantly contribute to improving quality of life and the resilience of local communities.

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