Examining communication conflicts between females in eThekwini gendered organisations as a long-term result of feminist resistance: a correlative, mixed method study

Submitted by Meghan Amy Simpson

Student Number: 222126591

Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In the

Discipline of Media and Cultural Studies

School of Arts, College of Humanities, University

of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

August 2024

Supervised by

Prof. Nicola Jones

Declaration

I, Meghan Amy Simpson, hereby declare that the research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research; this dissertation has been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university; and, this dissertation does not contain other person's data, pictures, graphs, or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers; where other written sources have been quoted, i) their words have been re-written, but retains the meaning and is referenced, ii) where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in quotation marks and referenced. I also declare that this dissertation does not contain text, graphics or tablets copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the Reference section.

Signature:  Date: 29 August 2024

Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Nicola Jones for guiding me through my dissertation and offering advice at every avenue.

I would like to thank Danille` Janse Van Vuuren for supporting me and aiding in editing throughout this journey.

I would also like to thank my family, partner, and close friends for accompanying me on this journey and motivating me through each stage. Without you all, I would not have been able to complete this dissertation.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Jacqueline for inspiring me and leading me to such a topic of interest.

Abstract

Female oppression has been a component of injustice in society for centuries, dynamically moulding for each place in which it occurs, evolving despite movements challenging it. Despite feminist movements throughout history challenging all facets of female oppression in the social, legal, economic and political spheres, female oppression continues to be seen and experienced in the economic sphere. Females continue to experience oppressive challenges in the workplace such as unequal pay, harassment, glass ceilings, targeted conflict, and more. Over time, females have learned to resist and challenge this oppression through the form of feminist resistance. However, research shows that this feminist resistance could be leading to further oppressive occurrences such as the increased female adoption of masculine agentic communication traits, and the occurrence conflict with fellow female colleagues. This study aims to address these three phenomena to investigate if there is correlation between the female use of feminist resistance in gendered organisations, the female adoption of masculine communication traits, and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in the eThekwini workplace. Through a critical realist approach, this study employed a mixed method questionnaire, as well as descriptive statistics, qualitative descriptive coding, and inferential statistics to analyse the three phenomena. The results found that females in oppressive, gendered workplaces in eThekwini were employing feminist resistance and that those females were engaging in more female same-sex conflicts of a 'Queen Bee' nature. However, the findings did not show that females in those same environments were increasingly adoption masculine communication traits. As such, the results show that there is correlation between the female use of feminist resistance and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in gendered, eThekwini workplaces.

Key words: Female oppression, gendered workplace, feminist resistance, communication traits, conflict, Queen Bee.

Contents

List of Figures

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication, the transactional process of sending, receiving and interpreting messages, is a pinnacle process in the organisation. It is often seen as the glue that holds an organisation's processes together as without discourse, an organisation cannot thrive. George Angelopulo and Rachel Barker (2014: 76) discuss the importance of organisational communication, explaining it to be the integrated process of exchanging and interpreting all messages inside and outside the organisation by encouraging purposeful, data-driven dialogue to create and nourish profitable relationships with all stakeholders. They suggest that in nourishing organisational communication internally and externally, an organisation's systems and teams can flourish, and their corporate brand can grow (Angelopulo & Barker, 2014). As such, communication is a foundational component of the workplace.

The study of communication has grown to be a key discipline in the human sciences with several scholars researching and discussing communication patterns based on various socio-economic factors. Some scholars have studied these communication patterns based on sex and gender, branching communication studies and gender studies. Research in the early to mid-1900s yielded stereotypical suggestions of males and females adopting communication traits and behaviours aligned to their sex and gender performance. For instance, males were known to adopt more masculine communication traits such as assertive, aggressive, and competitive communication styles, while females were assumed to use more passive, avoidant and apathetic communication styles (Rakow, 1986). However, recent research contradicts such findings, supporting the notion that both females and males employ assertive, aggressive, and competitive communication styles when needed. Scholars have also asserted that this employment of 'masculine' communication traits could be due to the years of female oppression faced in society and in the workplace (Brewer, Mitchell & Weber, 2002). Furthermore, current research is also showing an uptake in females resisting said oppression in the workplace, as well as increasing conflicts between females in the workplace instead of between males and females, furthering contradictions to previously established research findings.

Findings on females in the workplace resisting oppression, exhibiting more masculine communication traits and increased conflicts between female colleagues brings into question several issues. This study will focus on these nuanced questions within the organisational context. This study will thus explore if females in current workplaces still experience female oppression and if they resist said oppression from their male supervisors. Furthermore, this study will question if females in the workplace do employ the typically 'masculine' communication traits and if this has impacted their working relationships with fellow female colleagues by leading to further conflict. As such, this study aims to address the above three key phenomena. In order to set the foundation of this study, this chapter provides background information to introduce the topic, the impact they have on the organisational context, the research questions, hypotheses and objectives in this regard, and a motivation of the relevance for researching these phenomena in the South African context.

1.1 Research Title

Examining Communication Conflicts between Females in eThekwini Gendered Organisations as a Long-Term Result of Feminist Resistance: a Correlative, Mixed Method Study

1.2 Background

Female oppression in all facets of society dates back centuries, encouraging female empowerment movements such as the suffragettes in England fighting for the right to vote and to work in 1848 (Stewart & Zaaiman, 2015). Through more recent decades, these feminist movements grew into the broader waves of feminism, such as first-, second- and third-wave feminism collectively aimed at improving several political, economic, and social contexts surrounding females (Stewart & Zaaiman, 2015). For instance, females can now vote freely, work in business, be autonomous beings without the need of being married or owned by their male family members or spouse and can live their lives mostly free of patriarchal stereotypes and regulations (Burr, 2015). Focusing on females' opportunities for work in business brought on by feminist movements against sexism and female oppression, females are now able to enter workplaces and maintain positions they were previously unable to hold in organisational settings (Sinden, 2017). In South Africa in particular, 44.3 percent of the employed population is female (BWASA, 2017). Articles published in The Media, Forbes, and Independent Online

are also reporting that females are also progressing in those workplaces to more managerial roles, however, the statistics representing this show to be quite low (Gourguechon, 2018; Mabaso, 2018; Macrae, 2016). Reports from the Statistics South Africa (2021) department of the Republic of South Africa show that females occupied only 45.2 percent of middle management positions in 2019, which slightly increased in 2021 to 46 percent. This same report found that only 42.4 percent of senior management positions were occupied by females in 2017, which also slightly increased to 43.8 percent in 2021 (Statistics South Africa, 2021). This further indicates that female managerial representation shows to be less than male managerial representation. However, whilst recognition of females in the South African workplace has progressed, they continue to experience other types of oppression, often facing issues of unequal remuneration, sexism, sexual and verbal harassment, and 'glass ceilings', particularly in workplaces classified as 'gendered' (Sinden, 2017). This shows that while females are progressing in society, their power in the gendered workplace continues to be an ongoing struggle.

In resisting such oppressive issues, females have continued to fight within this power dynamic. For instance, females have used minor acts of resisting male authority in the workplace by refusing certain work tasks, gossiping, and defying their male managers to shift their power. Major acts of resistance to male power in the workplace have also taken place in the form of protests to gender inequality and the push for workplace accountability of gender biases held (Trethewey, 1997; Sinden, 2017). Simultaneously, studies have found that the stereotypical communication traits assigned with gender to males and females have begun to shift as a means of resisting male authority, showing females using masculine competitive, assertive, and aggressive communication behaviours against their male counterparts to fight against sexism in the workplace (Brewer, Mitchell & Weber, 2002; Keener & Strough,2017). Studies as far back as 2002 suggest that females in more male dominated, gendered workplaces are adopting more masculine communication behaviours (Brewer, Mitchell & Weber, 2002, Keener & Strough, 2017). Further studies on the preference of communication style and gender and sex have also shown that females employ said communication styles not only in the workplace, but in conflict situations with friends and romantic partners (Keener & Strough, 2017; Gbadamosi, Baghestan & Al-Mabrouk, 2014).

In this resistance to male power in the workplace and the female adoption of more masculine communication traits, conflict in the workplace has shifted from conflicts between males and females to higher numbers of female same-sex conflicts. Research shows this to be empirically evidenced with female perpetrators targeting female victims in 68 percent of these workplace conflicts (Leo, Reid, Geldenhuys & Gobind, 2014; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2014). In 2021, the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) found that 49 percent of conflict and bullying cases in the workplace involved female victims and 65 percent of those female victims were targeted by female colleagues in those conflict situations (WBI, 2021). While such results are American, similar findings have been found by researchers in various countries in the global South (Leo, et al., 2014; López-Cabarcos, Vázquez-Rodríguez & Gieure, 2017; Mayer, Surtee & Mahadevan, 2018).

Findings show three main phenomena: feminist resistance in gendered workplaces, the female adoption of masculine communication traits in those workplaces, and the increase of female same-sex conflicts. Characteristics of these three phenomena bear similarity to recent studies on the 'Queen Bee' phenomenon in those same gendered organisational sites (Grmek, 2020). This brings into question if these three phenomena are possibly connected in a correlational relationship. As such, this study aims to address this question by investigating the three phenomena individually and in connection to each other to better understand and quantify them.

1.3 Problem Statement

The research problem focused on in this study looks at three phenomena and their possible connection to each other. The first phenomenon is feminist resistance in gendered workplaces. Despite global female progression and growth in the workplace, females still experience various forms of oppression in the gendered workplace, such as unequal pay, sexual harassment, female-directed conflict from male colleagues, a lack of managerial opportunities due to the 'glass ceiling', and stereotypical, gendered job descriptions (Baron & Branscombe, 2014; Redden, 2016; BWASA, 2021; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Focusing on the oppressive nature of the 'glass ceiling', many females are unable to attain positions of higher power, such as managerial positions in the gendered workplace. In 2017, the

Businesswomen Association of South Africa's *Women in Leadership Consensus 2017* found that female representation in management is still low with females only making up 29.4 percent of executive management in the South African corporate workplace. This percentage has remained the same in 2021 (BWASA, 2021). Females in the workplace continue to resist such oppression in what Angela Trethewey (1997) terms acts of feminist resistance or acts against male domination and power in the workplace. According to Trethewey (1997), females in gendered workplaces do so by mocking and refusing compulsory practices, moaning, or gossiping to each other about their supervisors, playing power games, re-envisioning the existing power relationship between themselves and their supervisor, breaking rules, and resisting the bureaucracies they are exposed to. Research continues to focus on ways that workplaces can reduce gender biases and inequalities, however, minimal research on feminist resistance in current gendered workplaces has been done from the South African perspective to understand how that oppression is resisted. This further poses a lack of knowledge on how to address such inequalities in South African workplaces to assist in reducing them and the need for feminist resistance.

The second phenomenon focused on is the female adoption of masculine communication traits. While females have been stereotypically known to use more passive and passive-aggressive communication styles, recent research is showing that females are adopting more masculine aggressive, assertive, and agentic communication styles and traits in the workplace and in conflict situations (Keener & Strough, 2017; Brewer, Mitchell & Weber, 2002). Such research also suggests that this is due to females needing to adopt such communication and conflict management styles to resist female oppression in the workplace and to ensure their individual progression in those workplaces (Brewer, Mitchell & Weber, 2002). However, most studies in this field do not focus on the context of South Africa. Female employment of masculine communication styles has also been suggested to play a role in the increasing numbers of workplace conflicts experienced by females and their fellow colleagues.

The third phenomenon, the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in the workplace, builds on the premise of females having and using more masculine communication traits. As established by the WBI (2014; 2021), there has been an increase in the number of recorded workplace conflicts between female colleagues. This increasing occurrence of female same-

sex conflicts has been linked to the 'Queen Bee' syndrome which suggests that females in gendered workplaces are exhibiting masculine behaviours to build their own power standing above other male colleagues, even at the cost of hindering other female colleagues to do so (Grmek, 2020). While the cause of this 'Queen Bee' syndrome is unknown and minimally studied in the South African context, scholars, such as Niel Brewer, Patricia Mitchell and Nathan Weber (2002) and Magdalena Grmek (2020) have suggested that there may be a connection between feminist resistance, the female adoption of masculine communication traits and the rising numbers of female conflicts to produce this 'Queen Bee' syndrome.

Looking at all three phenomena together, these issues can be detrimental to South African workplaces as they hinder effective workplace communication, behaviour, and ethos. As such, it is important to address these phenomena individually and in connection to each other to understand each component of the problem, as well as to better understand how they occur within the South African context – focusing on the eThekwini area in this study. In addressing these phenomena, the findings of this research can be used to create further solutions to solve these issues and to adjust or draft internal company policies to improve workplace environments.

1.4 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to investigate the three phenomena known as feminist resistance in gendered organisations, the female adoption of masculine communication traits, and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in those workplaces within the context of eThekwini. In doing so, it can be further understood how they fit into the ‘Queen Bee’ syndrome. To do this, this study aims to examine if females in eThekwini gendered workplaces employ feminist resistance, if they do adopt masculine communication behaviours and if they do experience female same-sex conflicts. Additionally, this study aims to understand how females employ those acts of feminist resistance and masculine communication traits in gendered workplaces, and if there is correlation between these three phenomena in gendered, eThekwini workplaces.

1.5 Relevance and Rationale

Personal observation of conflicts between females in KwaZulu-Natal corporate environments led the researcher to conduct further research into the phenomenon from an organisational communication perspective. This research indicated that females are using more competitive and aggressive communication behaviours in the workplace rather than the passive styles typically attributed to them (Brewer, Mitchell & Weber, 2002; Keener & Strough, 2017). This was found to be especially true in workplace conflicts between females. While not many studies have been conducted on female same-sex communication conflicts in recent years or within the South African context, a 2021 American report indicated that female bullies target other female colleagues 65 percent of the time, even in remote working instances (WBI, 2021). Another study from 2014 measured this same female same-sex conflict at a higher rate of 80 percent (Leo, Reid, Geldenhuys & Gobind, 2014). Further literature suggests that these conflicts are a result of the overt female oppression in gendered workplaces. For instance, according to the WBI (2014), the conditions of male-dominated, gendered workplaces cause females to employ acts of feminist resistance, and to compete against one another to progress in the corporate environment, thus increasing their conflicts in the workplace. While workplace conditions for females have improved over the past few decades, the aftermath of the need for feminist resistance in male dominated, gendered organisations continue to oppress female progress in those workplaces.

Looking at the above statistics for the female adoption of masculine communication traits and the phenomena of increased female same-sex conflicts in the workplace, both have been suggested to be linked to previous female oppression in industry and their use of feminist resistance. This raises the question of whether these phenomena of resistance and the female adoption of masculine communication behaviours are linked to the increasing numbers of female same-sex conflicts – or what has more commonly become known as the 'Queen Bee' movement in current corporate workplaces. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine these phenomena to determine if there is a correlative relationship between the three phenomena from a South African perspective, focusing on eThekwini.

1.6 Research Questions

To examine the correlation between the use of feminist resistance by females in male-dominated, gendered workplaces, the female adoption of masculine communication behaviours, and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in the modern eThekwini workplace, this study asks four key questions:

(1) Do females in eThekwini gendered workplaces that employed feminist resistance adopt more masculine communication traits and experience more female same-sex conflicts in the workplace?

(1.1) How do those females who employ feminist resistance and adopt masculine communication traits communicate with other females in the workplace?

(1.2) How do those females experience conflicts with other females in the workplace?

(2) Is there a correlation between females' use of feminist resistance in male-dominated, gendered workplaces, the female adoption of masculine communication traits, and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in gendered, eThekwini workplaces?

It is important to note that whilst the above questions are both qualitative and quantitative in nature, the quantified data collected for this study is based on participants' self-perception of lived experiences and self-reported behaviour in their working environment. Thus, the study makes use of subjective data founded on self-reports of lived experiences.

1.7 Research Objectives and Hypotheses

In connection to the research questions above, this study will test the following hypotheses:

Ha: Previously oppressed females who employed acts of feminist resistance in male-dominated, gendered workplaces in eThekwini tend to adopt more masculine communication traits and thus experience more conflict with other female colleagues in those workplaces.

Ho: Previously oppressed females who employed acts of feminist resistance in male-dominated, gendered workplaces in eThekwini do not adopt more masculine communication traits and do not experience more conflict with other female colleagues in those workplaces.

Investigating the research questions asked and the above hypotheses, the aims of this study are to:

(1) Determine if females in eThekwini, gendered workplaces that employed feminist resistance adopt more masculine communication traits and experience more female same-sex conflicts in those workplaces;

(2) Understand how those females that employed feminist resistance and employ more masculine communication traits communicate with other female colleagues in the workplace; and to

(3) Understand how those females experience conflict with other females in the workplace.

1.8 Conceptualisation

For this study, there are 10 key terms that require conceptualising to understand their meaning within the context of this study. These key terms are conceptualised below to show their defined meaning, relation to the study, and how they are understood within the context of this study.

Sex: Sex refers to the genetic makeup or biological organs that categorise individuals as male, female or intersex (Wiebe, Zhing & Liu, 2018). Within this study, this dictionary definition of sex as the genetic makeup that makes one male, female or intersex is adopted. Thus, when referring to sex, biological terms such as male, female and intersex are used.

Gender: Gender refers to the characteristics commonly associated with those sexes, such as femininity and masculinity and their various traits (Wiebe, Zhing & Liu, 2018). For example, gender may include the roles, duties and communication traits associated with one's sex.

Within the context of this study, when referring to characteristics of gender, terms such as masculine or feminine are used to indicate their difference to sex.

Female: Female, within the context of this study, only refers to cis-gendered females – females identified by cis-gender and biological sex factors (Schudson, Beischel & van Anders, 2019).

Gendered Workplace: These are workplaces that encourage or reinforce gender identity formation and gender segregated environments where the male sex is dominant and masculine traits are favoured (Trethewey, 1997). These characteristics are taken from Joan Acker (1990), who explains that organisations powered mostly by males, that provide high positions to females who behave in a masculine manner, and that include gendered job duties are considered gendered organisational sites (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). In regard to this study, when referring to gendered workplaces or organisations, the characteristics of male domination, stereotypical job duties, gender biases, and female oppression are implied.

Female Oppression: Oppression is a form of sexism in which unequal distribution of power relations takes place between sexes and genders. This often leads to conditions of inequality, exploitation, marginalisation and social injustices experienced by the party that has less power than the other, which usually tends to be females. Within the context of female oppression, this refers to the notion that females often do not have access to the same economic and social opportunities that males are afforded, and within the workplace, this leads to further marginalisation and lack of support (Al-Khouja, Weinstein & Legate, 2021). Within the context of this study, such female oppression is experienced in the gendered workplace, where male dominance, gender stereotypes and biases, and sex-based prejudices occur.

Feminist Resistance: This refers to the discursive acts that females collectively and/or individually employ in the workplace to challenge male dominance and authority as a means of self- and female empowerment (Trethewey, 1997).

Masculine Communication Traits: These include communication behaviours commonly associated with masculinity and the male sex, such as competitive, aggressive, and assertive

communication styles. Please note that masculine communication behaviours are gender associations and are usually based on stereotypical assumptions (Angelopulo & Barker, 2014).

Communication Conflict: Within this study, communication conflicts refer to the expressed struggle between individuals that perceive their values, needs, interests or attitudes to be in opposition. Such conflicts occur most often as a result of dysfunctional communication or a lack there-of, or due to aggressive communication intentionally used when an individual feels their values, needs, interests or attitudes are threatened (Rai & Agarwal, 2016). Communication conflicts can be seen on different levels, such as bullying, non-physical arguments and verbal abuse (Rai & Agarwal, 2016).

Female Same-Sex Conflict: These refer to communication conflicts between females only (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014).

Queen Bee: This refers to a female individual in the workplace that undertakes masculine behaviour, rejecting the typical female behaviour and traits. In doing so, this female uses masculine behaviours and traits to rise to success in male-dominated workplaces at the cost of hindering the progression and success of other females in that workplace. For a 'Queen Bee', the ultimate goal is the acquiring and maintenance of their own individual success and power (Grmek, 2020).

The key terms discussed above are used throughout the study. When they are used, their meanings and connotations as it pertains to this study are as reflected in this section.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

In the study of communication, gender and feminism, several theorists have examined female oppression in the workplace, resistance of male authority in the workplace, sex and gender communication style preferences, and the conflicts that occur in the workplace. To explore these theoretical underpinnings and the various research on these phenomena, this chapter builds the theoretical foundation upon which this study was conducted. In doing so, this chapter first outlines the theoretical framework used in the study for understanding and analysing feminist resistance, the female adoption of masculine communication traits and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in the gendered workplace. Secondly, this chapter reviews previous literature on the above three phenomena, providing context to what has been studied and found on how females have been oppressed in the workplace, how they have resisted, how they communicate, and how they experience conflicts in the workplace with their fellow female colleagues. This will also show the gaps for further research on these phenomena to further clarify the aims of the current study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theories selected for this study's theoretical framework include Trethewey's (1997) *Feminist Resistance Theory* and Michel Foucault's (1978) concept of *Resistance*. Trethewey's (1997) theory built on the notions of power relations and discourse put forward by Michel Foucault, specifically his concept of 'resistance' (Deveaux, 1994). As such, a basic knowledge of Foucault's assumptions of power relations was required for understanding Trethewey's (1997) *Feminist Resistance Theory.* By using these two theories together, data on feminist resistance, as well as on why such resistance may lead to further masculine communication traits and conflict situations for females in gendered workplaces can be investigated, analysed, and tested for correlation.

2.1.1 Foucault's Concept of Resistance

Foucault's (1978) notions of power, knowledge and discourse have often been drawn from his work, *The History of Sexuality,* to explain the power relations and dynamic struggles of gender inequality in gender and feminist studies (Bunting, 1992). Foucault (1978) explained that

power relations are dynamic sites of struggle in which discourse is produced to reinforce, undermine, and challenge power. In this work, he stated, “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978). With this, he claimed that discourse always involves acts of resistance, either collective or individual and that such interactions that have power holders will always involve an element of resistance.

In his work, Foucault (1978) conceptualised resistance to be any act that defies the authority of one’s oppressor. In this way, Foucault (1978) viewed the relationship between power and resistance as dynamic and interdependent. Accordingly, power is not something that can be acquired, held, or given without resistance. It is this relationship that exists between the oppressor and the oppressed, be it between racial, cultural, sex or gender groups. It is this view that scholars in feminist studies have adopted, as advocated by Jana Sawicki, Susan Hekman, Bell Hooks, and Gillian Rose (Deveaux, 1994).

Merged with feminist studies, Foucault’s conceptualisation of power relations has been used to critically view feminist theory, gender, and sex-based power struggles (Sawicki, 1991; Bunting, 1992). Specifically, Foucault’s (1978) conceptualisation of resistance has been used to understand the oppressive relationship between males and females in a sexist nature. Through this, feminist and gender studies showed that women held the power to resist sexist domination and exploitation as all power struggles are dynamic and changing (Hook, 1984). This gave way to the collective discursive acts of ‘feminist resistance’ that challenged and resisted male power (Petersson & Lindberg, 2013), which Trethewey (1997) built upon in *Feminist Resistance Theory.*

2.1.2 Trethewey’s Feminist Resistance Theory

Fusing these notions of power and resistance with gender and feminist studies in relation to the workplace and organisational communication, Trethewey (1997) studied gender inequality and gender power struggles. In her 1997 study, she investigated how females, monitored by social service organisation supervisors, experienced power struggles when their supervisors were male.

In her work, Trethewey (1997) identified gendered organisations as a central component to her theory. She defined these gendered organisations as those organisational sites of gender identity formation characterised by male domination and patriarchal power struggles, in which masculine and feminine traits and roles are internalised and reinforced (Trethewey, 1997). This drew directly from Foucault's 1978 work, and his 1980 work, *Power/Knowledge*, which then established the type of power struggles experienced in those organisations. Trethewey's (1997) theory also followed the proposed notions of Rosemary Pringle (1989), Ann Oakley (1992), Sawicki (1991), Hekman (1990) and Kathy Ferguson (1984) on female oppression in the workplace, who all support the notion that women now use their oppressive experiences to drive resistance to oppressive power relationships in gendered workplaces (Deveaux, 1994). Combining these notions, Trethewey's (1997) *Feminist Resistance Theory* suggests that when placed in gendered organisations where females are faced with male dominance, females will engage in acts of feminist resistance to challenge that power and alter their circumstances as a means of self- and-female empowerment.

Together, these theories act as the framework to be used for this study's aims and investigations. Trethewey's (1997) theory provides insight into what this study views as acts of feminist resistance and the reasons females in the workplace have for employing such acts. Additionally, Foucault's (1978) theory of resistance further assists in understanding the power dynamics and discourses around such acts of resistance. Foucault's theory of resistance also helps in understanding the reasons females adopt certain masculine competitive, aggressive, and agentic communication styles as said styles are usually used when an oppressive power dynamic is present.

Both Foucault's (1978) and Trethewey's (1997) theories further assist in understanding potential reasons for why females engage in conflict with each other in relation to their use of feminist resistance and masculine communication traits. Both theories further guide this study's literature review, methodological approach, questionnaire design, coding technique, and score allocation for the investigation and analysis of the potential correlations between female use of feminist resistance, the female adoption of masculine communication traits and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts.

2.2 Review of Previous Literature

Guided by the three phenomena investigated in this study, a review of previous literature can be conducted and divided into three main themes and an introductory theme: namely feminism and the workplace, feminist resistance in organisational contexts, gender-based conflict communication traits, and female same-sex conflicts in the workplace. The first theme focuses on the foundational aspects of female oppression and feminism in the workplace from a global and South African context. The second theme evaluates previous literature and findings on female oppression in the workplace and the rise of feminist resistance as a retaliation to male-dominated, gendered working environments. The third theme focuses on literature regarding the communication traits used by each sex and the evolution of the female adoption of more masculine communication behaviours. The fourth theme discusses workplace communication conflicts, the trends of those conflicts in relation to sex and gender, and the development of the 'Queen Bee' movement. In doing so, this review discusses these components and how previous scholars have studied them in terms of their methodology, findings, and gaps.

2.2.1 Feminism and the Workplace

Through societal norms and dominant perceptions of sex and gender, stereotypes have been socially constructed concerning one's sex contributing to the emphasis and worsening of gender inequality, most prominently against females (Burr, 2015). Such gender stereotypes have intensified the biases against females in all facets of society, including the workplace. In retaliation to such gender inequality, feminist movements were created, starting with first-wave feminism, which was an ideology and movement that opted for political, economic, and social balance between both sexes (Offen, 1988). This first-wave feminism argued that male dominance overwhelmed the world, maintaining male power in all institutions of society (Stewart & Zaaiman, 2015).

Before feminist movements, females were expected to stay at home and lead a domestic life without a right to vote or work. Additionally, they experienced further oppression by being seen as owned by their male spouses and families (Burr, 2015). Focussing on these inequalities, first wave feminism pushed for basic legal and political rights for females in the

1920s. As a result, females won the right to vote and not long after, they were allowed entry into the workplace in factories and offices (Stewart & Zaaiman, 2015). However, according to Richard Anker, Helinä Melkas, and Ailsa Korten (2003) and Gary Powell and D. Anthony Butterfield (2015), females continued to experience gender inequalities in the workplace after their entry, such as heavily imbalanced pay compared to their male colleagues, lower position job positions, stereotypes, and occupational segregation - all of which continued well into the 1990s and current workplaces.

Another prominent issue that persists in contemporary workplaces is the notion of the 'glass ceiling,' which David Cotter, John Hermsen, Seth Ovadia and Reeve Vanneman (2001) explain is a barrier preventing female progression in corporate workplaces. The concept of the 'glass ceiling' was first coined by Gay Bryant in 1984, explaining that there are hypothetical barriers preventing females from advancing to higher positions in economic and social hierarchies (Baron & Branscombe, 2014). Bryant (1984, as cited in Zimmer, 1988) explained that gender discrimination of this nature continued in the workplace despite feminism movements in the global economic space.

In their re-examination of the glass ceiling theory, Anker, Melkas, and Korten (2003) suggest that there are four criteria for the glass ceiling to be present. They explained these criteria to be that gender or racial difference needs to be present in relevant job characteristics, larger at higher levels in the job and pay hierarchy, prominent in the chances of job advancement, and increased throughout one's career progression (Anker, Melkas & Korten, 2003). Such criteria match further scholars' research, such as David Purcell, Kelly MacArthur, and Sarah Samblanet's (2010) review of literature on female employment and the glass ceiling in the United States of America. In their study, they focused on understanding the glass ceiling in the workplace, the progress made in lessening its presence, and how it is viewed (Purcell, MacArthur & Samblanet, 2010). In doing so, they found that between the years 1983 and 2000, the percentage of female managers in the United States of America had increased from 32 to 45 percent. However, they also found that the number of females at higher ranked positions, such as CEOs, had decreased to one percent. Further research on this through statistic company reports showed similar trends of low numbers in female positions of high level and high pay (Purcell, MacArthur & Samblanet, 2010). As such, these scholars concluded

that while progress had been made to lessen the impact of the glass ceiling in workplaces, it continues to exist and hinder female progression in business.

Looking at these barriers to female success in the workplace from a South African context, Michele Schmidt and Raj Mestry (2014) examined the impact of intersecting identities of race, class, and gender on female oppression in the workplace. Employing semi-structured questionnaires and interviews, Schmidt and Mestry (2014) conducted qualitative narrative analysis using a sample of females in the workplace. In their analysis, they found that the barriers hindering South African females in the workplace were not only the result of gender or sex inequalities, but were also influenced by factors such as race, class, social capital, agency, motherhood, discrimination, violence, and policy (Schmidt & Mestry, 2014). Such results show that while gender inequality in the workplace is a global phenomenon, South African females experience further oppression due to their intersecting identities and the inequalities that they bring. While female oppression due to intersecting identities is a global phenomenon occurring across several first-, second- and third-world countries, its prominence in countries within the Global South – like South Africa – is of great concern due to the historic and cultural oppression South African females experience. Research conducted by Powell and Butterfield (2015) also explored the status of females in management during the 2010s and how the phenomenon had changed over the previous two decades. In doing so, they found that the nature and status of the glass ceiling in America had remained in a similar state over the 20 years it examined, hindering females from succeeding at higher levels in the corporate environment (Powell & Butterfield, 2015).

While this occurrence of the glass ceiling is prominent, tokenism in the workplace as a means to hide glass ceilings is also transpiring globally. Tokenism was first introduced by Rosabeth Kanter in the 1950s to hypothesise that individuals belonging to certain minority groups are employed for the sole purpose of constructing a certain public image that supports that minority group (Zimmer, 1988; Baron & Branscombe, 2014). This practice is connected to the 'glass cliff' which proposes that once tokens are employed, they are generally exploited as scapegoats for other individuals' failures to provide sufficient work or when projects or plans fall through to the detriment of the company (Zimmer, 1988). In South Africa specifically, these two practices continue to exist at high level positions, further reinforcing the glass ceiling for

most female employees and the exploitation of token females for the benefit of the corporate image. To combat such female oppression and various other forms of inequalities in the South African workplace, legal policies such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) have been implemented, introducing quota systems for organisational employment, however, such policies fail to eradicate these oppressive issues (Fourie, 2008; Baron & Branscombe, 2014).

The discussions of female oppression, feminist movements, and oppressive practices in the workplace targeted at females provide foundational contexts for female oppression in the workplace from various geographical contexts. Most of the studies discussed in this theme have provided a Western context from an American perspective (Burr, 2015; Offen, 1988; Anker, Melkas & Korten, 2003; Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia & Vanneman, 2001; Zimmer, 1988; Purcell, MacArthur & Samblanet, 2010; Powell & Butterfield, 2015). Only two of the works provided by Stweart and Zaaiman (2015) and Schmidt and Mestry (2014) were discussed within the South African context applicable in this study. However, the contextual understanding of female oppression in the workplace from all perspectives provides insight into the phenomena investigated in this study and provides understanding as to why feminist resistance is needed in the workplace.

2.2.2 Feminism and Resistance in Organisational Contexts

While women were previously oppressed and dominated in the workplace, feminist movements have globally fought to make modern organisations more open to and supportive of females (Baron & Branscombe, 2014), resulting in females increasingly acquiring subordinate and managerial positions in the workplace (Brewer, Mitchell & Weber, 2002). However, females still experience forms of oppression in organisational settings (Baron & Branscombe, 2014), such as unequal pay compared to men, sexual harassment, and female-directed communication conflict from male colleagues (Redden, 2016). According to BWASA's *Women in Leadership Consensus 2017*, female representation in management is also still relatively low, especially in South Africa with women only making up 29.4 percent of executive management in the country (2017). This total percentage remains the same according to their 2021 consensus results, however, the representation of females in Director and CEO positions has increased to 27.7 percent and 17.3 percent respectively (BWASA, 2021). Women continue

to challenge and resist this oppression with what Trethewey (1997) notes as feminist resistance movements in the working world (Trethewey, 1997).

Trethewey's (1997) *Resistance, Identity, and Empowerment: A Postmodern Feminist Analysis of Clients in Human Service Organisations* investigated the ways in which female clients of social service organisations resist their male supervisors (Littlejohn, Foss & Oetzel, 2016). Trethewey (1997) examined this through an interpretivist framework using qualitative interviews and thematic analysis to collect and analyse data. The results yielded showed that these female clients in the sample use a variety of forms of resistance against their male supervisors, including mocking and refusing compulsory practices, moaning amongst each other about their supervisors, playing power games, re-envisioning the existing power relationship between themselves and their supervisor, breaking rules, and resisting the bureaucracies they are exposed to (Trethewey, 1997).

Arpana Rai and Upasna Agarwal (2016) – through an extensive review of literature – explain that these forms, specifically mocking, moaning amongst each other as a form of gossiping, and playing power games are all forms of communication-based conflicts. These forms are paramount to and were integrated into this study's quantitative questions concerning the occurrence of feminist resistance and female same-sex communication conflicts in gendered organisations, with further qualitative, open-ended questions regarding the reasons behind the use of such feminist resistance acts.

Niel Brewer, Patricia Mitchell and Nathan Weber's (2002) research on sex and gender in *Gender Role, Organization Status, and Conflict Management Styles*, gives further suggestions developing on Trethewey's (1997) contributions. Their investigation of how gender roles and organisational status influence the individual's choice of conflict management styles using qualitative questionnaires identified mixed results indicating that women are increasingly entering into the workplace and are made to compete for scarce resources and success in gendered organisations ultimately causing them to adopt typically masculine (competitive and aggressive) associated communication traits in order to progress in their careers (Brewer, Mitchell & Weber, 2002).

Comparing these findings to the current 2023 context, studies on similar topics from more recent years support these conclusions. Cailin Stamarski's and Leanne Son Hing's (2015) journal article, *Gender Inequalities in the Workplace: the effects of organizational structures, processes, practices, and decision makers' sexism*, reports that females in the gendered workplace continue to experience oppression in the forms of unequal remuneration, a lack of opportunities, stereotypical gender roles, duties, and job descriptions, and a lack of management support. These findings were found despite feminist movements against such issues, showing partial failure of previous feminist movements (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). While Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) findings contribute to the results of female oppression and Trethewey's (1997) research provides insight into the forms of resistance used by oppressed females, Stamarski's and Son Hing's (2015) findings indicate how females in the workplace continue to be oppressed in gendered workplaces.

Stephanie Redden's (2016) research paper, *What's on the Line?: Exploring the Significance of Gendered Everyday Resistance Within the Transnational Call Center Workplace*, yields data that supports Stamarski and Son Hing's (2015) findings. Redden (2016) claims that call centre organisations have experienced an increase of females in the workplace, however, the study results showed that females still experience oppression in those workplaces in forms of unequal pay compared to men and gender stereotypical job responsibilities (Redden, 2016). Redden's (2016) research also highlighted that female employees still use 'feminisation of resistance' to challenge their oppressors, which is the same principle put forward by Trethewey's (1997) theory of feminist resistance.

In the same year, Montserrat Lolo García's (2016) Master's thesis investigated and described the resistant bodies of Mexican females as collectives of resistance through qualitative content analysis of selected video and television interviews. García (2016) concluded that resistance from females occurs in various forms of singularity and plurality, and often in spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted or violent manners in Mexico. This is similar to Mona Lilja and Evelina Johansson's (2018) study on resistance and power in mainstream Sweden feminism. Their findings also indicated that collective forms of resistance are becoming more popular. This too was investigated qualitatively through content analysis (Lilja & Johansson, 2018). Such findings indicate that despite Trethewey's (1997) theory and findings being based

on the 1997 context, similar occurrences continue to happen in current gendered organisational sites.

In more recent research by Nabiha Chaudhary and Anjali Dutt (2022), broader qualitative understanding of the reasons why females employ acts of feminist resistance was established. In their study, *Women as Agents of Change: Exploring Women Leaders' Resistance and Shaping of Gender Ideologies in Pakistan*, Chaudhary and Dutt (2022) investigated how Pakistani women leaders resist predominant perceptions and gender norms in the workplace, especially in regard to female leadership and power. Using qualitative, semi-structured interviews, they found that Pakistani women in gendered workplaces felt more equipped and empowered to use acts of feminist resistance once they had acquired education, financial independence, and an autonomous self (Chaudhary & Dutt, 2022). The findings from their interviews showed that females in Pakistan, due to intersectional oppressions, felt that they could not perform acts of feminist resistance without these key factors as without them, they had not reached the point of self-actualisation and individual empowerment.

This context of intersectionality is similar to the female oppressive contexts in African countries, such as South Africa, where females are oppressed not only according to their sex, but also according to their gender, race, culture, as well as other socio-economic defining factors – which is the experience in most countries from the global South (Chaudhary & Dutt, 2022). Following a similar methodological approach, Karin Berglund, Helene Ahl, Katarina Pettersson and Malin Tillmar (2023) attempted to conceptualise feminist resistance instead of investigating its occurrence. In doing so, their findings showed that acts of feminist resistance were not only used by females to resist male power and shift the power dynamic in gendered contexts and sites but were also used to empower the individual self and become an autonomous individual (Berglund, Ahl, Pettersson & Tillmar, 2023). While the previous studies discussed investigated female oppression and the use of feminist resistance in the gendered workplace to produce findings of how often it occurs and why it occurs, these two studies took a deeper approach into the reasons behind the choice to use acts of feminist resistance and the reason why such resistance to male power in the workplace was necessary for the female individual.

While these studies provide important contributions to current issues of feminism in the workplace, they are limited in their scope, methodology and perspectives. Trethewey's (1997) study refers to the occurrence of conflicts between males and females in the workplace but fails to provide in-depth analysis of those conflicts in gendered sites. Instead, the study only examines feminist resistance on a small scale, which further limits its generalisability to larger scale male-female conflicts and female oppression (Trethewey, 1997).

Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) research is also flawed in its use of quantitative questionnaires as they criticise them for being unreliable because they depend on self-reported behaviour from respondents, which entails respondent bias and potential deceit. Furthermore, its quantitative nature, while increasing generalisable, lacks the qualitative ability to provide more in-depth analysis and meaning to the reason for their results.

Finally, seven of the eight studies reviewed in this theme are all conducted and constructed in American and European contexts that have aspects that are not applicable to African countries. Only Chaudhary and Dutt's (2022) and Berglund, Ahl, Pettersson and Tillmar's (2023) studies provide a global South perspective with similarities to the South African context. These limitations provide gaps for this study to fill as it uses a more extensive mixed method approach that included quantitative and qualitative tools. Additionally, this study focusses on gaining in-depth understanding into the issue in order to better explain the phenomenon from an eThekwini, South African perspective and the reason it occurs, thus combining the strengths of the studies reviewed in this theme. This further allows for the study to better understand why females employ masculine communication styles and traits in certain contexts and situations.

2.2.3 Gender-Based Conflict Communication Traits

As Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber (2002) suggest, females in male dominated gendered organisations are forced to resist oppression and to compete in the workplace for success and progression, which they postulate has led to females adopting more masculine communication traits. Many studies cover the communication aspect of this, furthering literature on gender and conflict management communication styles. Emily Keener, JoNell

Strough and Lisa DiDonato (2012) examined the different ways males and females manage conflict using communication strategies. In their study, *Gender Differences and Similarities in Strategies for Managing Conflict with Friends and Romantic Partners*, they focused on communal communication strategies – which involve individuals neglecting their own needs in favour of the needs of others – and agentic communication strategies – involving competitive and aggressive communication that overlooks the needs of others (Keener, Strough & DiDonato, 2012). Through quantitative questionnaires, their collected results indicated that men and women are equally as likely to employ agentic communication strategies when dealing with same-sex conflicts – male-to-male or female-to-female (Keener, et al., 2012).

Keener and Strough (2017) repeated this study in 2017, adding attention to the difference between sex and gender and gender socialisation's effect on the individual's communication traits. Following the same methods of their 2012 study with a slightly adjusted questionnaire, Keener and Strough (2017) collected similar results that further indicated and supported the notion that females acquire a mixture of masculine and feminine communication traits, and vice versa. As such, both the 2012 and the 2017 studies support Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) suggestion that females working in gendered organisations engage in competitive and aggressive communications styles when in conflicts with each other.

Adding to this is Oluwakemi Gbadamosi, Abbas Ghanbari Baghestan, and Khalil Al-Mabrouk's (2014) study, *Gender, Age and Nationality: Assessing their Impact on Conflict Resolution Styles*. This study examined gender, age, and nationality as influencing factors to an individual's use of conflict management communication styles (Gbadamosi, Baghestan & Al-Mabrouk, 2014). The study's quantitative questionnaire results revealed that males show a preference for compromising, avoiding, and accommodating communication styles in conflict situations, whereas females show a preference for competitive, agentic communication styles in conflict situations (Gbadamosi, Baghestan & Al-Mabrouk, 2014). This contradicts stereotypical views of feminine and masculine communication styles and corroborates the results of Keener, Strough and DiDonato's (2012; 2017) research, and Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) suggestions.

Weston Wiebe, Yan Zhing and Ning Liu's (2018) *Intergenerational Conflict Management Styles: Exploring the Indirect Effects of Sex through Filial Obligation* focused on the influence of gender and filial obligations on young adults' preference of conflict management communication styles and investigated this through a positivist framework using quantitative questionnaires (Wiebe, Zhing & Liu, 2018). Their findings indicated that sex has no significant influence over the individual's preference of conflict management communication styles, unless partnered with their filial obligations – which are influenced by one's sex (Wiebe, et al., 2018). Despite this conclusion, their recorded results do show a slightly higher male preference for agentic, competitive conflict management communication styles than females (Wiebe, et al., 2018). While these findings contradict those of the other reviewed studies in this theme, the authors' review of previous literature and their acknowledgement of females adopting more masculine communication styles leads them to their initial theoretical suggestion that one's sex does influence the individual's preference of conflict management communication styles (Wiebe, et al., 2018).

More recent studies have found similar results to Wiebe, Zhing and Liu's (2018) finding that sex has no significant influence over one's preference for conflict management communication style. A study by Ovidiu Niculae Bordean, Dalma Szonja Rácz, Sebastian Ion Ceptureanu, Eduard Gabriel Ceptureanu and Zenovia Cristiana Pop (2020) aimed to determine if sex, gender, and differentiation between the two acted as influential factors to one's choice of conflict management style. Through quantitative questionnaires, they found no correlation between sex and the preferred choice of conflict management style. However, gender qualities and gender identities of masculinity were positively correlated to the use of competing and dominating styles – styles that employ competitive and aggressive communication traits (Bordean, Rácz, Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu & Pop, 2020). In comparison, a study by Dr Kabita Kumar Dashi, Dr Susanta Kumar Dash and Dr Swayamprabha Satpathy (2021) showed that in most cases, gender had no significant influence over one's choice of conflict management styles. However, their results indicated that females of a feminine identity were slightly less likely to use the competing style in conflict situations (Dash, Dash & Satpathy, 2021). These findings indicate that while sex may not influence the preference of communication style, gender identities of masculine and feminine do, which can be exhibited by individuals of any sex.

Like Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) research, all six studies reviewed in this theme employ quantitative questionnaires as a data collection tool. As previously stated, this method does not ensure honesty on the respondents' part because they rely on the self-reported responses from respondents who can easily answer questions deceptively or in a way that they think the researcher wants them to (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2014). Additionally, three of the studies are conducted from an American perspective, with the exception of Gbadamosi, Baghestan and Al-Mabrouk's (2014) and Kumari, Kumar and Satpathy (2021) studies providing an Eastern perspective. Due to this, the results and conclusions made in these studies may not be generalisable to the South African context. Keener and Strough (2017) suggest that the study of sex's influence on the preference of conflict management communication traits be studies from a broader perspective and in a real-world context, such as that of organisational settings.

These limitations can be addressed in this study by investigating the component of gender-based communication traits in relation to feminist resistance in gendered organisations and the phenomenon of communication conflicts between females in the workplace from the eThekwini perspective. As such, this study will add to the body of knowledge on the topic of these two phenomena and contributes to a deeper understanding of the topic in an academic sense. Additionally, the current study employs a mixed method approach with a blended, quantitative-qualitative questionnaire to address the shortcomings of each tool in isolation and to address the topic from a critical realist perspective. In doing so, this study aims to address all gaps presented and add to the body of knowledge on this phenomenon in the eThekwini context.

2.2.4 Female Same-Sex Conflicts in the Workplace

Understanding feminist resistance in gendered organisations and the female adoption of masculine competitive and aggressive communication traits from previous literature allows for an evaluation of research on the phenomenon of same-sex communication conflicts between females in the workplace. The studies reviewed in this theme that concern female same-sex conflict situations at times refer to bullying, which, in the case of these studies and the current research, refers to aggressive communication acts intentionally used to harm

someone and that are perceived as acts of 'targeted bullying', such as name calling, gossiping, conversational exclusion, verbal abuse and harassment (Rai & Agarwal, 2016). Therefore, bullying in these cases is a form of communication conflict.

According to the WBI's 2014 report on workplace bullying – which Rai and Agarwal (2016) note to be communication conflicts – the number of workplace communication conflicts is increasing each year and is largely influenced by the gender of those individuals involved in the conflict (WBI, 2014). Their report findings stated that 27 percent of the American respondents experience targeted bullying or communication conflicts in the workplace. The report further indicated that 60 percent of those bullied respondents are female, and that of these cases, 68 percent involve female perpetrators bullying other females (WBI, 2014). These instances of female same-sex communication conflicts are rising in number, according to these findings. Furthermore, the report reveals that of these female same-sex conflicts, the targeted females lose their jobs 89 percent of the time through job termination, forced resignation and voluntary resignation (WBI, 2014). Similar findings are indicated for male same-sex bullying cases, however, the rate of female same- sex bullying is higher than with males, and the job losses for female targets are also higher (WBI, 2014).

The WBI repeated this survey in 2021 using the same methodology but taking into account remote working conditions due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Similar results were found showing that 49 percent of bullied employees are female and that 65 percent of the time, those targeted females are bullied by other female perpetrators (WBI, 2021: 11). Interestingly, the total percentages of workplace bullying have decreased, likely due to the fact that remote working has been introduced and largely undertaken across the world. However, 43 percent of remote workers still experienced bullying through emails and predominantly during virtual meetings (WBI, 2021: 8-9).

Supporting the WBI's findings, Leigh Leo, Robyn Reid, Madelyn Geldenhuys and Jenni Gobind's (2014) study, *The Inferences of Gender in Workplace Bullying: A Conceptual Analysis*, investigated bullying in the workplace through quantitative content analysis. Their results suggest that 58 percent of males in the study's sample group target other males for workplace bullying. Additionally, the authors reported that 80 percent of workplace bullying

communication conflicts involving female perpetrators also involve female targets (Leo, et al., 2014), which is higher than the results recorded in the WBI's reports (2014, 2017). Their findings further led Leo, Reid, Geldenhuys, and Gobind (2014) to conclude that same-sex conflicts are more common in the workplace than opposite-sex conflicts. Furthermore, they explained that those same-sex conflicts were made up of various types of conflict behaviours, not just bullying (Leo, et al., 2014). Such conclusions and suggestions are important to this study as the nature of these same-sex conflicts as they pertain to female employees informs how those same-sex conflicts take place and why.

Ángeles López-Cabarcos's, Paula Vázquez-Rodríguez's and Clara Gieure's (2017) research paper on role conflict, role ambiguity, work overload, social support and self-esteem as risk factors that leads to workplace bullying is another contributor to this topic, providing insight into the possible causes of communication conflicts in the workplace. Their study employed quantitative questionnaires as a data collection tool and female staff from a Spanish prison as a sample group (López-Cabarcos, Vázquez-Rodríguez & Gieure, 2017). While this context is different from the organisational setting, the results of the study are important to the current research theme as it provides much insight into the different viewpoints from which the phenomenon can be understood. The overall finding of their study indicated that most bullying experienced by female prison staff results from a combination of work overload, a lack of support from colleagues and supervisors, an absence of self-esteem, and role conflict (López-Cabarcos, et al., 2017). These are different contributing factors to those already discussed in previous literature, factors that this study has accounted for in the coding of questions when asking participants for the reasons for their conflict situations and choices.

Broadening these American and Spanish perspectives, Andrej Kovacis, Nevenka Podgornik, Zorica Pristov and Andrej Raspor (2017) conducted a European study on mobbing in non-profit organisations – the term mobbing in this study referred to bullying and conflict discourse. Their study drew on the methodology of the WBI's (2014) report by using the same questionnaire with slight alterations. However, the European study found different results than the WBI (2014). Their findings did not support those of the WBI's (2014) report, or any of the findings of the other studies reviewed in this theme. In their study, Kovacis, Podgornik, Pristov and Raspor (2017) found that a third of their sample had experienced mobbing – or

workplace bullying – in the last three years. Furthermore, they found that age and gender were not influential factors leading to more or less experiences of mobbing or workplace bullying. Finally, they confirmed that the most frequent type of mobbing or workplace bullying experienced is of a vertical nature carried out from an employer or manager to their subordinate employees. These conclusions, while not corresponding with the WBI's (2014; 2021) statistics, show the presence of workplace power dynamics that Foucault (1978) refers to in his notion of resistance. Furthermore, these findings also support Trethewey's (1997) notion that employees are oppressed by their managers. As such, the differences in the statistical results could be attributed to the study's different geographical and cultural setting, which shows the significance of location when studying this phenomenon as location would produce varying results – hence the need for an eThekwini perspective to be provided in this study.

Acknowledging this shortfall, Claude-Helene Mayer, Sabie Surtee and Jasmin Mahadevan (2018) investigated race, gender, ethnicity, and class as influencing factors in the phenomenon of workplace bullying in South Africa. Through qualitative interviews, the study concluded that, in the case of gender, no results indicate a significant influence of gender on the frequency and type of workplace bullying (Mayer, Surtee & Mahadevan, 2018). Despite their findings' lack of support to the current study's research topic, Mayer, Surtee and Mahadevan's (2018) study provided extensive insight into the history of South Africa and addressed the influence of race, ethnicity, and class in South African organisations. Such factors are important when conducting research in South Africa (Mayer, et al., 2018). Thus, these principles will be accounted for in this study and will be used in understanding statistical differences between the sample participants.

As evidenced, there has been an increasing number of conflicts in the workplace between females in particular. This phenomenon has been recently linked to what is known as the 'Queen Bee' phenomenon. According to Magdalena Grmek (2020), the 'Queen Bee' is the female employee that has risen to success in a male-dominated workplace and that would hinder the progression and success of other females in that workplace as a means to maintain their power standing. Grmek's (2020) Master's dissertation, *Who are the Queen Bees? A Systematic Review of Literature,* explained that previous discussions of the 'Queen Bee' in

scholarly works often present it in a negative light, not providing it the critical description and reflection it requires. As such, Grmek (2020) aimed to critically address the concept of the 'Queen Bee', better understand what the 'Queen Bee' syndrome is, and how it is used across gendered and organisational literature. Grmek (2020) explains that 'Queen Bee' behaviour is described as females undertaking masculine behaviour and rejecting the typical female communication traits. Furthermore, Grmek (2020) suggests that this 'Queen Bee' behaviour is typically a result of individual characteristics of females of powerful standing. Using a systematic literature review, Grmek (2020) found that the meaning of 'Queen Bee' had shifted from its original definition. Furthermore, the review found that its current use bares little relevance today, explaining that the consequence of its current use and perception may negatively impact policies aimed at ensuring and safeguarding gender equality in the corporate sector (Grmek, 2020). However, this still brings into question what causes these individual characteristics of females to escalate to what is now known as 'Queen Bee' status?

This 'Queen Bee' phenomenon has been discussed in previous literature prior to its increased reference since 2020. For instance, Leah Sheppard and Karl Aquino (2014) conducted research into the negative narrative surrounding female relationships and interactions in the workplace. In their study, *Sisters at Arms: A Theory of Female Same- Sex Conflict and Its Problematization in Organizations* (2014), they dove deeper into the 'Queen Bee' syndrome to understand why it exists. Sheppard and Aquino (2014) proposed a two-stage theory that first draws from social comparison and in-group distancing to understand why female same-sex relationships in the workplace exhibit more conflict than that of male same-sex conflict. The second stage of this theory then looks at the possible gender differences in various same-sex conflict scenarios using attribution theory (Sheppard & Aquino, 2014). In doing so, Sheppard and Aquino (2014) propose that the same-sex conflicts that occur between females in the workplace is different to that of male same-sex conflict due to the fact that female same-sex conflicts are often made more complex by third parties.

An academic paper by Samantha Paustian-Underdhal, Steven Rogelberg, Eden King, Zoa Ordonez, Ines Weichert, and Rena Rasch (2014) also looked at possible causes of the 'Queen Bee' syndrome. Specifically, their paper *Understanding the Queen Bee Effect in the Workplace: A Cross-cultural Examination* (Paustian-Underdhal, et al, 2014), studied these possible causes

by examining the theoretical contributing factors to the 'Queen Bee' syndrome, namely the relevant cultural and organisational boundary conditions that could be the cause of the syndrome itself. Their research showed that the 'Queen Bee' syndrome arises when male-dominance in leadership and managerial roles are still prominent and that it does not arise when the leader, manager or CEO role is undertaken by a female (Paustian-Underdhal, et al, 2014). Furthermore, results show that the perceived gender discrimination in American workplaces is what most likely brings this 'Queen Bee' syndrome into effect (Paustian-Underdhal, et al, 2014).

While the above studies succeed in defining the 'Queen Bee' movement and syndrome, and understanding when it arises, there is still little proof provided as to why it arises. Sheppard and Aquino (2014) suggest that female same-sex conflicts occur as an effect of the 'Queen Bee' syndrome because female conflicts often involve third parties more than male conflicts. Additionally, Paustian-Underdhal, Rogelberg, King, Ordonez, Weichert, and Rasch (2014) suggest that the 'Queen Bee' syndrome arises because of the gender discrimination present in the workplace. The gap, however, in these studies exists where no definitive correlation has shown a variable association that could cause these conflicts in the broader context. These works have not provided a generalisable theory for the 'Queen Bee' syndrome to understand the factors that correlate to its occurrence. It is this gap in correlational findings on the factors that cause the 'Queen Bee' syndrome that this study can fill by testing the correlation between the three key phenomena under investigation.

Furthermore, majority of the works reviewed in this theme employ quantitative methodologies and quantitative questionnaires or surveys when examining the communication conflicts taking place (Kovacis, et al., 2017; Leo, et al., 2014; López-Cabarcos, et al., 2017; McCormack, et al., 2018; WBI, 2014), with the exception of one work using a qualitative design and those papers looking at the 'Queen Bee' movement (Mayer, et al., 2018). Additionally, most of the works are conducted from American and European perspectives, with one study conducted with a South African perspective accounted for (Grmek, 2020). These factors limit the validity and scope of the studies' results in terms of the quantitative questionnaires being unreliable with self-reported behaviour (Brewer, et al.,

2002) and with the geographic perspectives not matching that of the South Africa context. With such limitations, Rai and Agarwal (2016) provide some suggestions.

Rai and Agarwal's (2016) research into the topic of same-sex communication conflicts or bullying in the workplace identified three suggestions for further research. First, they claim that more studies should be conducted on the topic through a critical framework and using mixed methodologies in order to create deeper understanding of the topic (Rai & Agarwal, 2016). Second, they argue that future research on the topic requires more focus on the factors that cause the occurrences of communication conflicts in the workplace (Rai & Agarwal, 2016). Lastly, Rai and Agarwal (2016) recommend that Interpretivist and qualitative methods be used in future studies on the topic as the subjective data detailing experience and emotion will help build understanding on the topic.

This study accounts for these limitations of the works reviewed in this theme, and employs the suggestions made by Rai and Agarwal (2016). It does so by employing the critical realist paradigm and mixed method designs to include both quantitative and qualitative results and understandings. Additionally, this study focuses on the possible factors that correlate to workplace bullying in its research on the topic's major components. Therefore, this current study investigates how feminist resistance in gendered organisations correlates to females competing in the workplace and adopting masculine, competitive and aggressive communication traits, as well as how this adoption may correlate to females experiencing communication conflicts with other females in the workplace from a South African perspective focused on eThekwini.

3. METHODOLOGY

As this study aims to examine the phenomena of feminist resistance in gendered workplaces, the female adoption of masculine communication traits, and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts to better understand them and their correlation, the study required an intricate methodology that blends quantitative and qualitative methods and data. As such, the methodological approach used is a mixed methodology with various qualitative and quantitative attributes, approaches, and designs. This chapter outlines the methodology used throughout the study. In discussing the methodological approaches used, this chapter discusses the paradigm through which the study was conducted, the approach and the design of the study. This section also provides a description of the population and sample used, the steps taken to reach that sample, how the data was collected and analysed, and how validity, reliability, and trustworthiness were upheld.

3.1 Paradigm

Paradigms are clusters of beliefs and principles that determine what should be studied, how it should be studied and how the results should be interpreted in research. They can be seen as worldviews or basic sets of beliefs that guide research and control the positions a researcher holds regarding epistemology, ontology, theory, axiology, and methodology (Guba, 1990, Creswell, 2009). The paradigm used in this study was the critical realist paradigm, developed by English philosopher, Roy Bhaskar in 1975 to address the limitations of the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. In Bhaskar's work, he suggested that the positivist and interpretivist paradigms were too constricted in their scopes and that research should move beyond set confinements and allow for more encompassing views and methods to study social issues from a critical standpoint (Easton, 2010; Vincent & O' Mahoney, 2016). The critical realist paradigm thus transcends the non-humanistic views of the positivist paradigm and the social constructionist approach of the interpretivist paradigm to build upon their principles to create the critical relativist framework (Parr, 2015; Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

The critical realist paradigm follows the critically oriented way of generating knowledge constructed by Jurgen Habermas. Thus, it is used for research that aims to empower people

through knowledge based on quantitate and qualitative means so that society can solve issues and emancipate itself (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The paradigm encompasses the epistemological view of knowledge and stratified reality existing independent of human consciousness and subjective experience, assuming that knowledge is constructed through historical, cultural, and material contexts (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014; Easton, 2010; Parr, 2015). This epistemological view draws from the paradigm's ontological position, which sees reality as layered with an empirical domain as well as an actual domain – blending the positivist and interpretivist ontological views (Roberts, 2014). Furthermore, critical realist research views reality as stratified with events, practices, and ideologies that are governed by power dynamics in society (Easton, 2010; Parr, 2015). As such, the critical realist paradigm assumes the existence of both an objective world and a subjective, dynamic, and discursive world reigned by power struggles (Vincent & O' Mahoney, 2016). This perspective also emphasises that discourse and communicative interactions are influential factors in all social contexts and power dynamics (Niewenhuis, 2018).

The critical realist paradigm's preferred methodological approach is mixed-method designs as they are able to contribute to the paradigm's overall aim of identifying social injustices and the variable that require understanding, explaining, and transformation (Easton, 2010; Niewenhuis, 2018). Based on this preferred method, aim, and its epistemological and ontological views, the critical realist paradigm axiologically approaches research as valuable for emancipation and social transformation (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The critical realist paradigm further concerns, employs and forms theories that explain the influence of historical, cultural, and material contexts on the way individuals and groups experience injustices and oppression in society (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014), which can be seen in Foucault's (1978) conceptualisation of resistance and Trethewey's (1997) theory of feminist resistance.

These key principles, assumptions and foundations of the critical realist paradigm were suited to and employed in this study in its conceptualisation, approach, design, and findings. Epistemologically, this study viewed knowledge based on objective, empirical methods and subjective, interpretivist methods as equally valuable in understanding the three phenomena investigated. Furthermore, the study acknowledged that the reality of the phenomena and

the sample experiencing those phenomena exist in an empirical domain and an actual domain, needing in-depth understanding, explaining, and transformation. Regarding the paradigm's view of theory and theory construction, this study used a theoretical framework constructed of two theories that focus on the way people experience injustices and oppression in society. Foucault's (1978) conceptualisation of resistance aims to understand and explain the way in which power dynamics are experienced and resisted by the oppressed within that power relationship. Furthermore, Trethewey's (1997) theory of feminist resistance aims to understand and emancipate females in gendered organisations by explaining how they employ acts of resistance to their male oppressors. As such, the theoretical framework of the study matches the metatheoretical assumptions of the critical realist paradigm. Furthermore, this study employed a mixed-method approach and design, thus drawing from the methodological preference of the critical realist paradigm. As previously explained, the critical realist paradigm values social change, emancipation, and transformation.

The aim of this study was to address and investigate the occurrence of feminist resistance in eThekwini, gendered organisations, the female adoption of masculine communication traits, the rising number of female same-sex conflicts in those workplaces, and the possible connection between these phenomena to understand how they fit into the 'Queen Bee' syndrome, thus better understanding the injustices and need for transformation in their potential correlation. As such, the critical realist paradigm was the best suited paradigm for the study and was maintained throughout the research topic's construction, data collection and interpretation of findings.

3.2 Research Approach and Design

This study employed an explanatory and correlative research approach in addressing its topic. Explanatory research aims to determine how and why causal relationships exist, the direction of independence in that relationship and explain such relationships while correlative research aims to determine if causal relationships exist and what their effects are (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Together, these approaches aim to understand correlative relationships and the variables involved in that correlation from all perspectives. This approach was adopted in this study's aim to determine if correlational relationships exist

between the occurrence of feminist resistance in eThekwini, gendered workplaces, the female adoption of masculine communication traits, and the increasing occurrence of female same-sex communication conflicts in those gendered workplaces.

This was done using a cross-sectional design, which entails a shorter research timeframe in which data is collected at one point in time in comparison to longitudinal designs. This design was selected due to time constraints and because correlation does not require a measurement of influence over a longer period of time (Maree, 2016). As such, the cross-sectional design was used to collect data at one point in time on the three investigated phenomena to investigate their potential correlation, closeness, or link.

Furthermore, a deductive research approach was taken, using assumptions and principles from the theoretical framework to test hypotheses and gain specific results and findings (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). A deductive approach was selected due to its suitability to understanding the phenomena under investigation and their correlation based on previously established theories and principles.

The research design employed a mixed-method approach, which is the preferred methodology of the critical realist paradigm as it combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain both empirical and interpreted data. This allows for the exploration of more diverse perspectives and the uncovering of the relationships that exist in society. This is also done to empower oppressed groups and bring forth results that can assist in solutions to struggles and emancipation (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014; Maree, 2016). Blending quantitative and qualitative methods and approaches, this design ensures fuller understanding and investigation of the three phenomena examined.

More specifically, this study employed an embedded mixed method design, which involves the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time within a larger quantitative or qualitative framework. The study employed a mixed-method questionnaire that included majority quantitative, close-ended questions, with a few qualitative, open-ended questions to unpack the more subjective themes within the three phenomena examined. In doing so, both quantitative and qualitative data was obtained, and

the qualitative data was coded and allocated empirical value to match the larger quantitative approach needed for testing correlation. During the interpretation of the data found and analysed, both quantitative and qualitative meaning was given to the results to explain the phenomena and their correlations to each other. This approach and design were selected for the study due to its overall suitability to the critical realist paradigm and appropriateness to the research questions and hypotheses posited.

3.3 Population

The population of a research study is the total sum of people or artefacts that share a set of common characteristics required to gain information from for the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The nature of the population studied in this research were people – participants. The population targeted for the study needed to meet six parameters. First, all participants needed to be female as the study focused on females and their conflicts in the workplace. Second, all participants needed to reside in eThekwini, South Africa as the research aimed to understand the eThekwini context within the larger South African context. Third, the participants needed to be currently working in gendered workplaces in which male dominance was present in some form, and/or where their allocated job descriptions were gender-based for male and female employees. For example, the population must work in an industry where female oppression was known to be present. This requirement was necessary as it was a contextual factor to the research questions asked. Fourth, the participants needed to be between the ages of 35 to 60 years because people under the age of 35 years are less likely to have experienced gendered workplaces or to have felt the long-term effects of female oppression and feminist resistance. Furthermore, the age of retirement for women in South Africa is 60 years, meaning any females over the age of 60 years would not meet the other population parameters for this study. Fifth, the environment in which the participants work needed to have a competitive climate of some nature where people compete against each other for resources. This was a requirement due to the nature of gendered workplaces discussed by Trethewey (1997) in her theorising of feminist resistance. Additionally, this work climate allowed for better targeting of participants that were engaged in power dynamics that required resistance, as per Foucault's (1978) theory of resistance. Sixth, the participants needed to work in positions and workplaces with high levels of communication between

colleagues – horizontal or vertical – as the study focused on conflicts that can only occur within communication and discourse.

From these parameters, the target population was established. The accessible population, however, were those participants in the Durban area willing to participate in the study. Using these criteria, a sample group was established.

3.4 Sampling

The sampling category employed for this study was non-probability, which is typically used in studies that have special situational factors that make the target population difficult to access. Additionally, non-probability sampling is also used when time and budget constraints are present (Maree, 2016). These two characteristics were present in the study, hence its use of the non-probability sampling category. From this category, purposive and snowball sampling methods were employed. Purposive sampling entails the selecting of specific sample group participants that meet the stringent population parameters, disregarding individuals that do not meet those parameters (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This type of sampling is used when the population required is specific and when researcher expertise is needed to purposefully select the required sample. Snowball sampling involves asking already established sample participants to refer further potential individuals that meet the population parameters to the researcher so that a wider population can be reached until the required sample size is obtained (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

To begin the sampling process, purposive sampling was used to select ideal participants for the study that met all population parameters, and that the researcher was already acquainted with. Based on the researcher's knowledge of an acquaintance with 10 potential and ideal candidates, the purposive sampling method allowed for the inclusion of 9 participants that ideally met the population parameters. Thereafter, those 9 participants were asked to forward on the researcher's contact details and study information to other potential participants they knew that met the population parameters. In doing so, a further 14 participants were reached with no breach of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) as the permission to forward the researcher's contact details and study information was already given by the

researcher. Furthermore, a short message explaining the study topic and population parameters was posted on the researcher's social media platforms and general area groups to reach further audiences and gain more participants, which resulted in the inclusion of two more participants. Upon making contact with potential participants, the researcher ensured that all population parameters were met through open discussion of said parameters. A heavy focus was placed on ensuring that the type of organisation, workplace or sector met the characteristics of a gendered workplace to ensure that the data collected from all participants was relevant and appropriate to the nature of the study. The study initially aimed to collect data from a sample group of 40 participants to heighten the generalisability of the results and yield accurate statistics and correlation data. However, only a sample size of 25 participants were reachable due to the nature of the study's topic and the extensive population parameters used to target the sample group. Once this sample group was established, the data collection phase was implemented.

3.5 Data Collection Method

While most mixed-method designs entail two points of data collection, the embedded mixed-method design used in this study entailed the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously at one point in time – through a mixed-method questionnaire. Questionnaires were selected as the most ideal data collection instrument as it allowed for the collection of empirical and interpretive data at no monetary cost and at one point in time. Furthermore, the questionnaire proved beneficial to participants as they allowed for participants to complete the questionnaire at their own pace and time. The questionnaire was also selected for the benefit of participants as the alternative focus group or interview structure for the collection of the qualitative data would have entailed a longer data collection time frame not at the ease of the participant (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Whilst the questionnaire was ideal for this study, it did limit certain aspects of the methodology of the study. In using a questionnaire, the researcher was unable to probe further into qualitative investigations of the lived experiences and perceptions of the sample. Furthermore, the questionnaire was designed to gather data based on self-reported behaviour and perceived lived experiences within the working environment. As such, the data

collection tool, whilst ideal, limits the quantitative quality of the data as well as the amount and depth of the qualitative data collected.

The questionnaire used was designed to include four sections. The first section was the demographic section which asked various descriptive questions about the participants in a close-ended manner, collecting responses that describe the sample group through various demographic categories. In this section, participants were asked to select from predetermined answers what their age, race, industry of work, time working in that industry and job position level was – all of which were nominal scale-based questions.

The second section included questions designed to collect data on participants' use of feminist resistance acts and the reasons they use such acts. In this section, three close-ended questions were asked, mostly using nominal scale formatting, and one open-ended, qualitative question to further elaborate on the quantitative questions posed.

Section three of the questionnaire focused on collecting data on the adoption of masculine communication traits, asking a mix of close and open-ended questions. The section began with an open-ended question asking the participants to define their communication style according to passive, passive-aggressive, aggressive, and assertive characteristics.

Thereafter, eight nominal scale based, close-ended questions were asked regarding the participant's communication style in certain situations. Should the participant have answered a certain amount of those questions with 'yes', they were identified as needing to answer the next open-ended question, which were only for those that displayed masculine communication traits. The final question of this section asked for further subjective perception on how the participant felt their communication style may impact their communication with fellow female colleagues.

The fourth and final section of the questionnaire focused on the experience of female same-sex conflicts in the workplace, requiring participants to answer a mixture of close and open-ended questions aimed at further examining if the participant had experienced conflict with

female colleagues, the nature of that conflict and how their communication styles impact those conflict situations.

The questionnaire was designed with a pre-determined scoring system that allocated a point to each answer that showed signs of the variable under investigation in that section of the questionnaire. Where qualitative, open-ended questions were used, qualitative codes were developed and allocated scores in the same manner. As such, each section of the questionnaire was treated as an isolated measurement with its own potential score, with a higher score indicating a higher likelihood of that variable being present in the phenomenon. There were three variables measured: variable 'a' which was the use of feminist resistance examined in section two of the questionnaire; variable 'b' which was the adoption of masculine communication traits examined in section three; and variable 'c' which was the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts examined in the fourth section of the questionnaire. In separating the questionnaire into sections that measure each variable, the data analysis method was appropriately matched.

The questionnaire was administered online for ease of participation and accessibility to participants. This administration of the questionnaire was specifically done through the Google Forms platform, allowing for participants to be sent a link after filling in the consent form. This further allowed for the participants to complete the questionnaire on any mobile or smart device of their choice and at any time. Responses to the questionnaire were thus also saved online via Google Forms in the researcher's personal, password protected Google account and drive. The questionnaire administered through Google Forms can be found in Appendix B for further inspection.

3.6 Data Analysis Method

Due to the embedded mixed-method design of the study, the data analysis methods used were a blend of descriptive statistics, qualitative content analysis, and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involves various statistical values and formulas used to describe the data (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). These were used to analyse the individual sections of the questionnaire, examining each variable measured in isolation. However, not all

descriptive statistical values and formulas were required for the aim of the study, and thus, only the mean, median, mode and range of the data were calculated for each variable to describe the phenomenon. Qualitative content analysis was used for all qualitative questions employed in the questionnaire. This process involves the generation of codes, or themes and categories that make sense of the data, to give the qualitative, open-ended responses shared meaning (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

Descriptive coding was used to summarise the responses provided into common codes that described the experience or categorised the feelings implied and referred to in the responses. These codes were then quantified into the original scoring system used in the descriptive statistics method so that they would also yield empirical results for the overall score of each variable. Once each variable had been examined in isolation for their own respective scores and qualitative meanings, inferential statistics was used.

Inferential statistics are used to test statistical hypotheses and explore relationships that may exist between variables (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). For this study, only one aspect of inferential statistics was used –Pearson's Correlation Coefficient – due to the correlative nature of the study. This was done by taking the total values scored in the sample for variable 'a' and 'b' and using the Pearson's Correlation formula and method to test for a correlative relationship. This was also done to test the relationship between variable 'b' and 'c' as well as between variables 'a' and 'c' as per the alternative hypothesis being tested.

3.7 Validity

The validity of a study refers to the extent to which its measurement instrument or data collection and coding tools effectively measure what the study sought to (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This validity can be internal – how efficient the test design was in answering the research questions without error – or external – the researcher's ability to and confidence in generalising the test results from a small sample to the larger population (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

When testing for these, four types of validity were focused on: face, content, construct, and criteria validity. Face validity tests whether the measuring instrument was designed the way

it was supposed to be designed for the data (Maree, 2016). This was ensured first in the questionnaire design by cross referencing all questionnaire questions with the research questions of the study. All questions that helped gain information that answered the research questions were kept while all questions that did not assist in the collection of data that answered the research questions were either omitted or replaced with more relevant or ideal questions. During the coding process, all codes were designed to create themes that further answer the research questions to ensure both the quantitative and qualitative questions and their analyses yielded the correct data, thus ensuring face validity. To further ensure that this validity is consistent and of adequate quality and standard, it is also acknowledged that the questionnaire was designed to collect data based on self-reported behaviour and perceptions of lived experiences.

Content validity looks at whether the instrument measures all content that represents the aim of the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This was tested by comparing the research questions, hypotheses, and objectives to the questionnaire to ensure all aspects of the study were examined appropriately. Furthermore, the relevant concepts found in the theoretical framework, literature review and conceptualisation sections were used to ensure all foundational content in line with the study topic were examined in the questionnaire and analysis of collected data.

Construct validity tests if the measurement instrument corresponds with all the variables and constructs of the study (Maree, 2016). To ensure this, the questionnaire sections were designed according to the phenomena and constructs being examined, thus ensuring all areas being examined were included in the measurement instrument. This further allowed for the measurement of each individual phenomena more accurately with quantitative and qualitative data to better understand each phenomenon and to examine their correlations.

Criteria validity tests how well the instrument meets the criteria of the study's constructs and how accurate the measurement instrument would be in predicting future behaviour in further tests (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This was ensured by testing the questionnaire on three different volunteers not part of the sample but that meet the

population parameters, all of which yielded similar responses and results through the questionnaire and measurement tools.

3.8 Reliability

Reliability refers to the level of consistency in the research results and whether the same results will occur if the same concept is tested repeatedly at different times (Maree, 2016; Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). One of the most common ways to ensure the reliability of a study is by re-testing the study in various situations, contexts and with different samples at different times – known as test-retest reliability; however, this was not possible in this study due to its constricted cross-sectional design (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

Furthermore, inter-rated reliability is another method commonly used, which measures agreement of results and codes found by using the same method, tool or instrument on different participants and triangulating the analysis notes between various data analysts, ensuring reduced bias and generalisability (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Due to the minimal qualitative data collected and the codes being descriptive and pre-determined, triangulation was not required for the qualitative data collected.

As the major focus of the measurement of each phenomenon was quantitatively based, empirical results and generalisability were the main focus. Thus, triangulation was not focused on for the qualitative data. The quantitative data collected was analysed in Microsoft Excel, ensuring no bias in the scoring. The reliability was also maintained by using a pilot test of the questionnaire after ethical clearance was granted with three volunteers not part of the sample but that met the population parameters to ensure the results and measurement tool was appropriately designed.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is used in qualitative research to examine whether the findings of the study can be trusted. Due to the mixed-method methodological approach of the study, the qualitative data used required trustworthiness to be maintained. Credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability are the components upon which trustworthiness is built (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

Credibility refers to the accuracy with which the data was interpreted and can be ensured if the researcher spends long periods of time reading through the qualitative data to understand the participants' responses (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Credibility was ensured throughout the data analysis of this study with the researcher reading all qualitative responses to the questionnaire thoroughly and several times before coding the data. Furthermore, where ambiguous and implied meanings were found in responses, more time was spent examining the context of the response to ensure the code was interpreted accurately. This interpretation of data was also done with the understanding that all data collected was based on self-reported behaviours and perceptions of lived experiences.

Transferability focuses on the degree to which results from the sample can be applied to the larger population in similar situations – similar to quantitative research's generalisability (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). While most of the data collected is quantitative, the qualitative aspect does limit the generalisability. However, the data collected, and the results are transferable to individuals in similar situations and that meet the population parameters.

Dependability refers to the appropriateness and quality of the integration between aspects of the overall research design (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). To ensure the dependability, the methodology, approaches, and steps taken all align to the critical realist paradigm and research questions and were employed with rigorous technique. This is evidenced by the design used based on the research approach needed to answer the research questions and the matching of the sampling, data collection and data analysis methods to that approach, design, and paradigm.

Confirmability, the last component of trustworthiness, looks at how well the data supports the researcher's interpretation and findings (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This was ensured by checking and rechecking the data collected and by checking that the results yielded were repeated by other participants. Furthermore, for the ease of confirming

the data, the raw data collected for each question is presented in chapter four to show what data was collected and how it corresponds to the results and findings in chapter five. The scores achieved to show this data can also be seen in Appendix D.

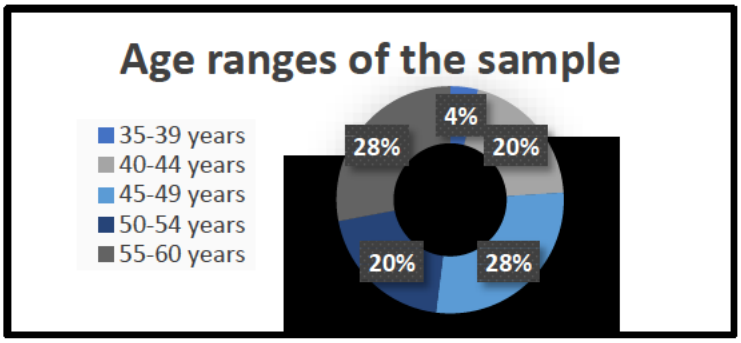
4. PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The data collected through the mixed-method questionnaire gathered both empirical and emotive data of a subjective nature (based on self-reported behaviour and perceived lived experiences) on the phenomena investigated. To make sense of this data and to align them together, this chapter outlines the collected data from each section of the administered questionnaire, showing the link between the empirical and emotive data gathered in each section. In presenting the data, this chapter illustrates all gathered information into describing the demographics of the sample and any statistical trends found in those demographics. Secondly, this chapter discusses all data collected in each section of the questionnaire for variables 'a', 'b', and 'c', discussing them according to each question asked in the questionnaire and according to their overall scores and trends for those sections.

4.1 Demographics of the Sample

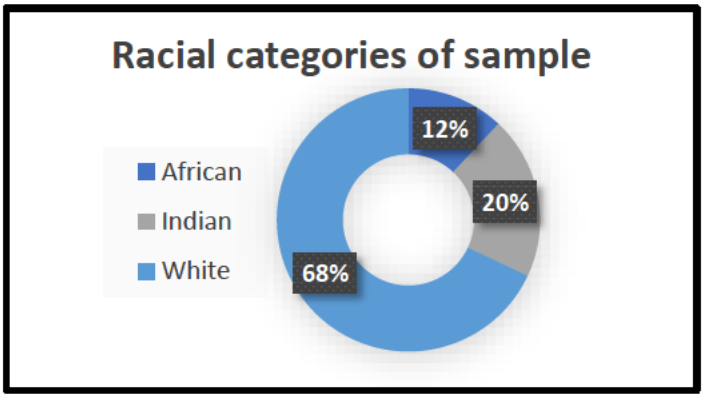
The sample consisted of 25 females working in gendered organisations in eThekwini between the ages of 35 and 60 years. The study's data collection instrument asked five main demographic questions to categorise the sample to find possible trends, made up from age, race, industry of work, years worked in that industry, and job position level. In terms of the age of participants, most participants were over the age of 40 years, with only 4 percent of the sample being between the ages of 35 and 39 years, 20 percent between the ages of 40 and 44 years, 28 percent being between the ages of 45 and 49 years, 20 percent being between the ages of 50 and 54 years, and 28 percent between the ages of 55 and 60 years. Figure 1 below breaks down the age ranges of the participants in the sample.

Figure 1: Age ranges of the sample



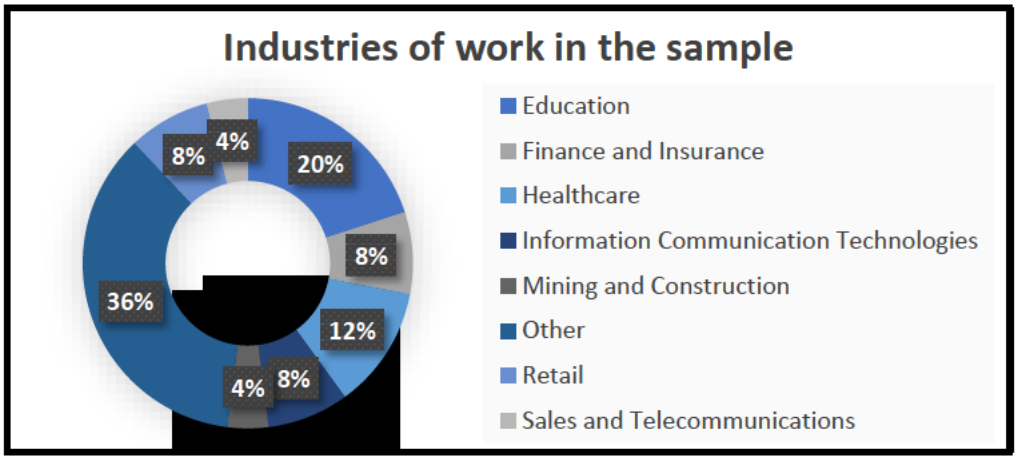
As such, the data collected for this study and their respective findings are only generalisable to populations within the most applicable age range of 40 to 60 years. Additionally, the sample consisted of predominantly White participants with 68 percent, with only 12 percent of the sample being African and 20 percent being Indian. Therefore, the results of the study are more generalisable to that of a White female population. The breakdown of racial categories in the sample can be seen in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Racial categories of the sample



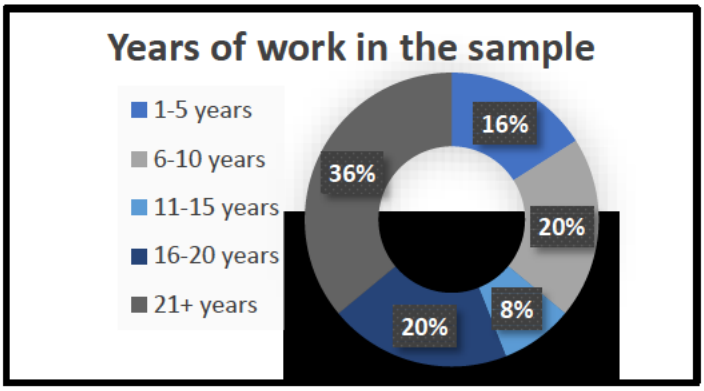
Further categorisation of the sample showed that most of the sample fit into the predetermined industries of work, however, 36 percent did not, selecting 'other' as their industry of work. This shows that the sample encompassed a diverse range of industries of work to generalise findings to. Figure 3 below summarises the industries of work in the sample.

Figure 3: Industries of work in the sample



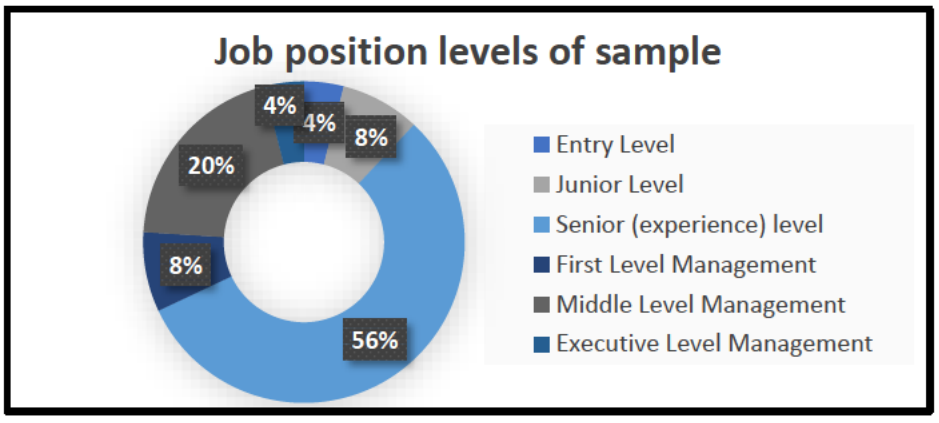
Within these industries of work, most of the sample group had been working in their industry of work for six years and more, with only 16 percent working in their industry for one to five years. Furthermore, 36 percent of the sample indicated that they had been working in their industry for 21 years or more. A breakdown of the years of work in the sample's respective industries can be seen in figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Years of work in the sample's industry



Summarising the sample by job position level, 56 percent of the sample held senior experience job position levels and 20 percent held middle managerial positions. Most of these senior experience and managerial positions are also held by participants with six years of experience and more. A summary of the sample's job position levels can be seen in figure 5 below.

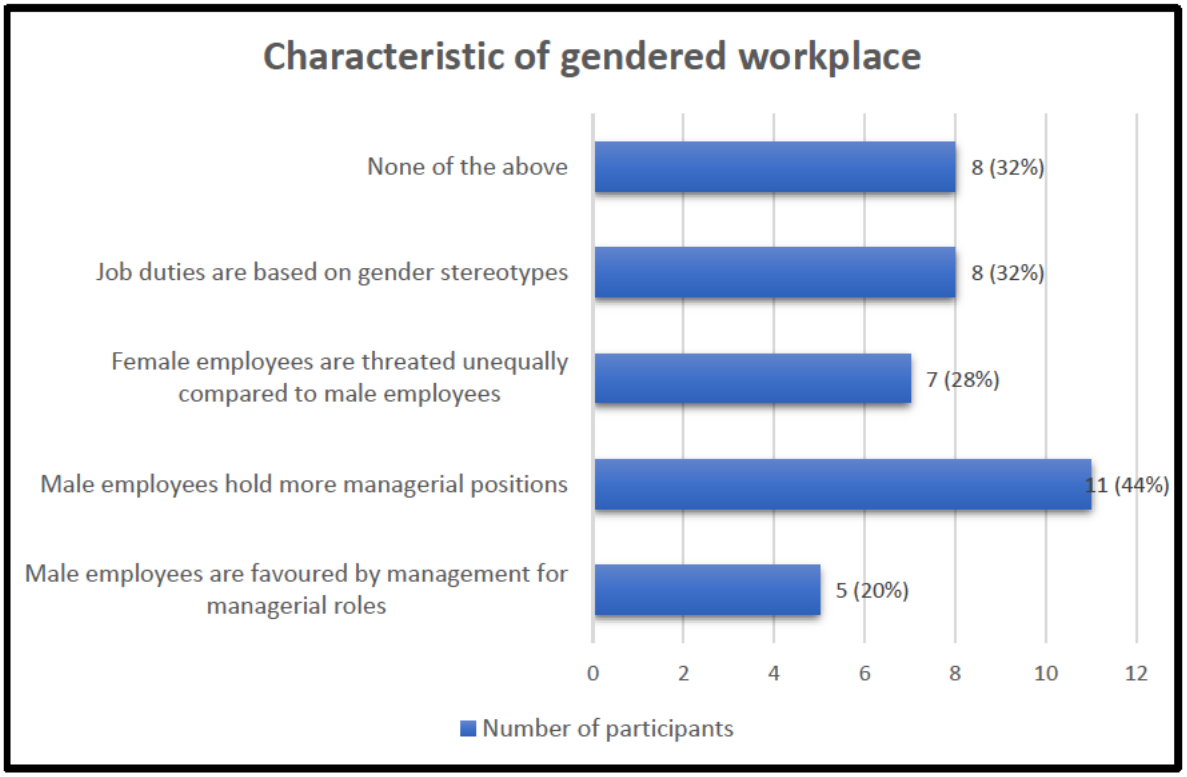
Figure 5: Job position levels of sample



4.2 Variable 'a': the Use of Feminist Resistance in Gendered Workplaces

Variable 'a' referred to the use of feminist resistance in gendered workplaces, measured in section two of the questionnaire. According to the scoring system allocated to that section, the highest possible score that could be achieved was 12 points, indicating that an organisation was highly gendered, and that feminist resistance was an act needed and used. The first question of this section asked participants to indicate which characteristics best described their working environment, with pre-determined characteristics focused on various gender inequality traits in the workplace. Responses to this showed that many participants from the sample experience various characteristics of gendered workplaces, with only 32 percent (or 8 participants) not experiencing any of the provided characteristics. The most commonly experienced characteristic in the sample was that male employees hold more managerial roles with 44 percent of the sample selecting this trait. Furthermore, 32 percent of the sample indicated that job duties in their workplace were based on gender stereotypes. A detailed summary of these results and their frequency of selected characteristics can be seen in figure 6 below.

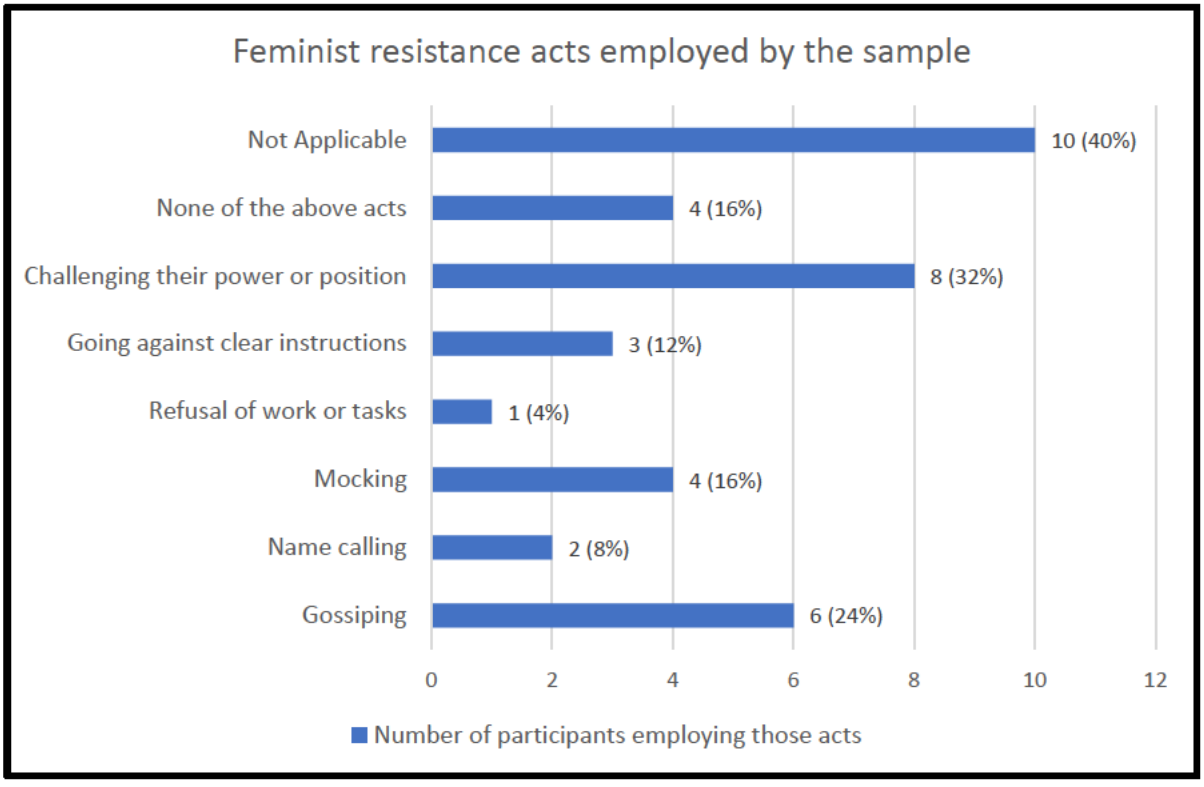
Figure 6: Characteristics of gendered workplaces



Gaining more summarised insight into these characteristics of gendered workplaces and how it translated to participants' experience of female oppression and sexism in the workplace, the sample was asked if they had ever experienced female oppression in their workplace. From the total 25 participants, 60 percent indicated that they had experienced female oppression and sexism, with only 10 participants (40 percent) indicating that they had not. This 40 percent would account for the 8 participants that had not experienced female oppressive characteristics of gendered workplaces. However, as this question was based on their current workplace, those participants could have experienced female oppression in other industries of work.

Focusing on the 60 percent of the sample that had experienced female oppression and sexism in the workplace, the sample was asked if they had ever employed certain acts of resistance in retaliation to their male supervisors. The predetermined acts provided to the participants were those found in Trethewey's (1997) research on feminist resistance. A summary of the sample's responses to this question can be seen in figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Feminist resistance acts employed by the sample



Accounting for the 40 percent of the sample that did not experience female oppression or sexism in the workplace, the 60 percent that did employ various acts of feminist resistance were asked to select the acts of resistance they had used. The most used feminist resistance act by the sample was that of challenging male managers' power or position (experienced by 32 percent of the sample) and gossiping about those male managers (experienced by 24 percent of the sample). Both acts are established acts of feminist resistance found by Trethewey (1997) and were also noted as commonly used acts of resistance in her initial study of the theory in the workplace. These acts also adhere to Foucault's (1978) notion that when power struggles occur between the sexes, the oppressed sex will employ some minor or major act to resist that oppression and authority.

The sample was further asked why they used the above-mentioned acts of feminist resistance in response to male colleagues and supervisors, allowing for further explanation of the reason behind the employment of those acts. In analysing the responses collected, four codes were initially used, however, the need for an additional code arose based on the responses found. As such the below table of codes were found in the sample's responses.

Figure 8: Reasons for using acts of feminist resistance

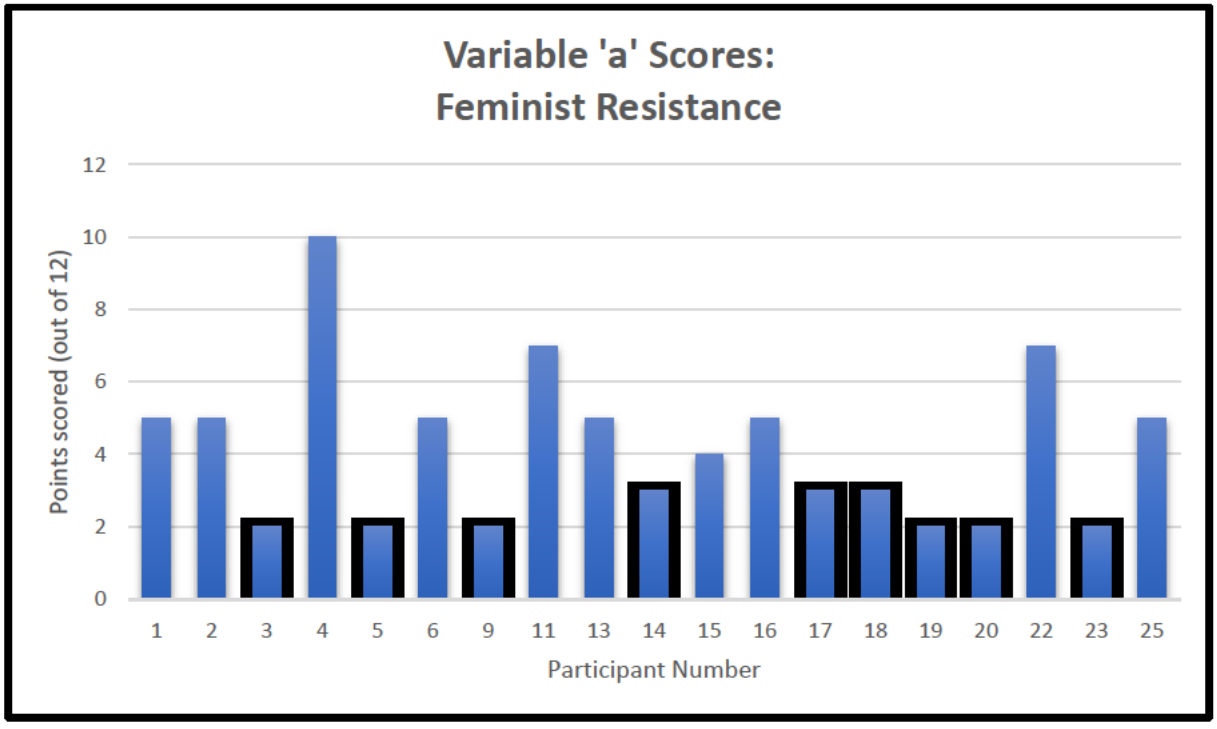
Code Category	Code Meaning	Percentage of sample responses
A	Because of previous female oppression	20%
B	Because they do not like their boss	4%
C	Non-related reasons	12%
D	Not Applicable	44%
E	To push back male authority and power	20%

As per figure 8 above, 44 percent (11 participants) did not employ acts of feminist resistance linked to female oppression. However, 20 percent (5 participants) did so due to perceiving being previously oppressed as a female in that workplace, and 20 percent (5 participants) did so to push back at male authority and power. For the scoring system to indicate female

oppression and the use of feminist resistance, only codes A and E were allocated a point, while codes B, C, and D were allocated 0 points as they did not indicate an act of feminist resistance linked to female oppression or sexism. Summarising this, 10 participant responses to this question yielded a point each, indicating the use of feminist resistance in the way theorised by Foucault (1978) and Trethewey (1997).

Condensing the questions together to indicate their overall scores based on the scoring system used, figure 9 below summarises the scores achieved for each participant for this variable. For this section of the questionnaire, the average score achieved was 3.16 points. The median score achieved was 3, with a mode of 0. The scores ranged from 0 points (minimum) to 9 points (maximum). The highest score achieved (9 points) were by two participants both on different job position levels and from different industries of work. However, they had both been working in their respective industries for 16 to 20 years. While this is an interesting note, there was not enough data to show a trend of this nature for the rest of the participants in the sample.

Figure 9: Variable 'a' scores for feminist resistance



4.3 Variable 'b': the Adoption of Masculine Communication Traits

Variable 'b' referred to the adoption of masculine communication traits, measured in section three of the questionnaire. According to the scoring system allocated to that section, the highest possible score that could be achieved was 12 points, indicating that the female participants had indeed adopted more masculine assertive, aggressive, and competitive communication styles in their workplaces. In finding the sample's perceived communication style, participants were asked to define their communication styles according to the traits of passive, passive-aggressive, aggressive, and assertive styles of communication. This open-ended question allowed for a paragraph response not limited to brief answers. To code the responses collected into quantifiable data to match the scoring system, the coding system categorised responses into passive, passive-aggressive style, aggressive, and assertive communication style themes. A summary of these codes and the percentage of the sample responses that correspond to them can be seen below in figure 10.

Figure 10: Self-defined communication styles of the sample

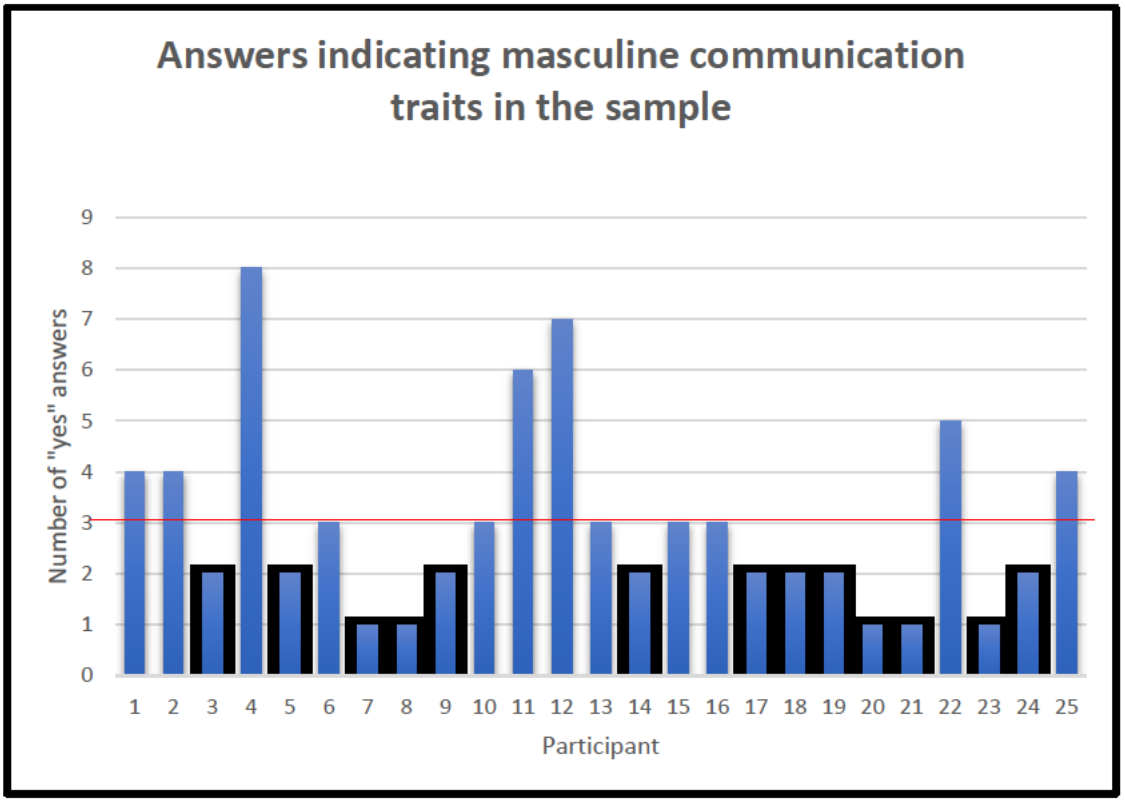
Code Category	Code Meaning	Percentage of sample responses
A	Passive Communication Style	28%
B	Passive-Aggressive Communication Style	12%
C	Aggressive Communication Style	4%
D	Assertive Communication Style	56%

According to the collected responses, only 40 percent of the sample collectively defined their communication as passive and passive-aggressive, the stereotypical feminine communication traits. Furthermore, 60 percent of the sample defined their communication as having traits of aggressive or assertive communication, which were previously known as the stereotypical masculine communication styles (Brewer, *et al.,* 2002). This indicated that the majority of the sample of female participants had self-defined masculine communication traits. As per the scoring system used in the questionnaire, codes that indicated presence of the phenomenon being measured were allocated 1 point whereas codes that did not were allocated a point of

0. As such, 40 percent of the sample were allocated 0 points and 60 percent of the sample was allocated 1 point each for this question.

To further measure these masculine communication traits, a series of eight close-ended questions were asked concerning various communication and discourse actions used by the participants in certain situations. These questions were designed based on previous research on what constitutes masculine agentic communication – competitive and aggressive communication. If three or more of these close-ended questions were answered as "yes", it indicates that the participant does show masculine communication traits, regardless of their self-defined communication style. The figure 11 below summarises the number of "yes" answers provided by the sample.

Figure 11: Answers indicating masculine communication traits in the sample



From the total sample, 12 participants answered three or more "yes" responses, indicating the use of more masculine communication traits. This totals to 48 percent of the sample. Compared to the 60 percent of the sample that self-defined their communication as assertive or aggressive, this shows that 48 percent of the sample not only uses more masculine

communication styles such as assertive communication, but also competitive and aggressive styles not typically exhibited by females – complementing the results found in the open-ended question.

To better understand how the sample felt about their masculine communication traits and the perceived impact it may have on their communication with fellow female colleagues, participants were asked to explain how they thought it may influence their same-sex communication interactions. This open-ended question was coded to quantify the data to match the scoring system used. The codes were designed to describe the manner of influence perceived by the participant based on the descriptions in the response. Figure 12 below summarises these codes and the percentage of the sample responses that showed those themes.

Figure 12: Perceived impact of masculine communication style of female same-sex communication interactions

Code Category	Code Meaning	Percentage of sample responses
A	Shows major impact	4%
B	Shows minor impact	24%
C	Shows no impact	20%
D	Not Applicable	52%

These results show that only 28 percent of the sample perceived that their masculine communication styles and traits had an impact on their communication interactions with fellow female colleagues. Furthermore, 20 percent perceived no impact and 52 percent answered "N/A". While these results are focused on impact, it is important to note that this is perceived impact based on participant perceptions and not an empirically measured impact.

Participants were further asked why they use the masculine communication style they do to understand the reasons they adopted those competitive, assertive, and aggressive communication traits. The responses on why varied but were coded according to four main

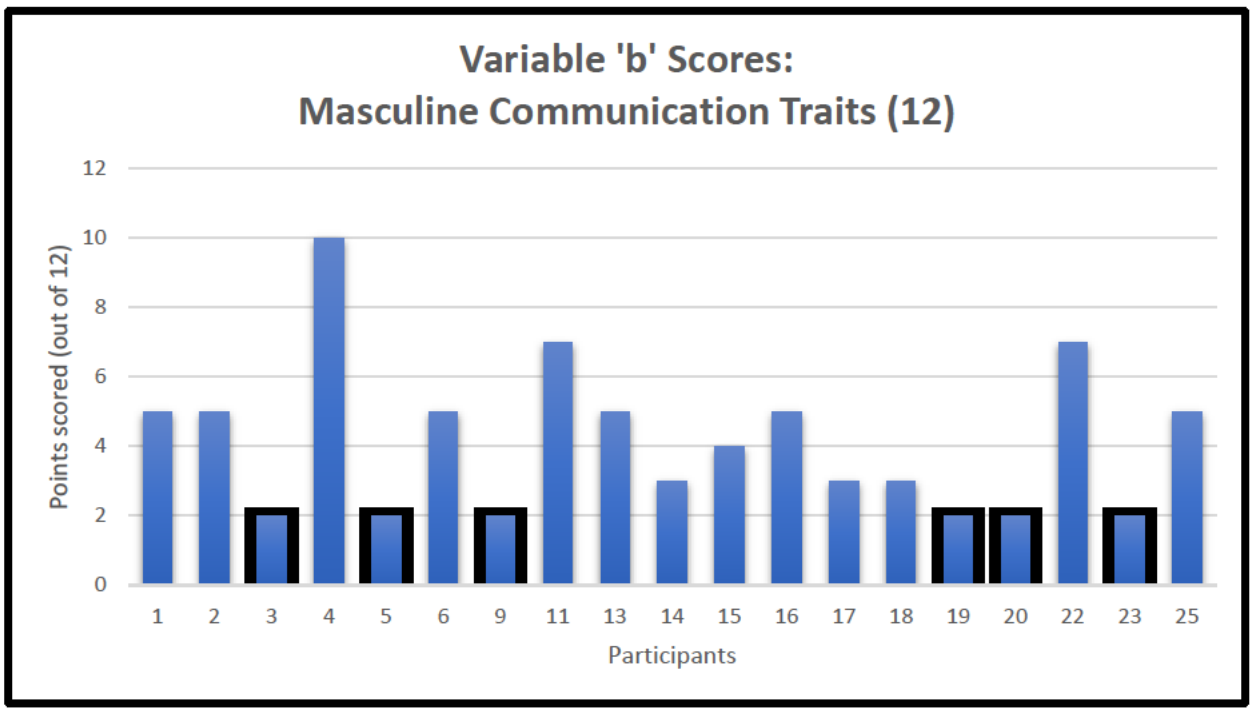
reasons. A summary of those coded responses and how many participants in the sample responded with those codes can be seen in figure 13 below.

Figure 13: Reasons for adopting masculine communication traits

Code Category	Code Meaning	Percentage of sample responses
A	Due to female oppression/sexism to resist male power	8%
B	Due to other females doing it	4%
C	Non-related reasons	44%
D	Not Applicable	44%

From the responses provided 8 percent of the sample indicated that they adopted those masculine communication traits because of female oppression and to resist male power. Furthermore, 4 percent of the sample indicated that it was due to other females doing it, thus, it was a survival tactic to compete with other females in the workplace. These responses correspond with Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) suggested reason for the female adoption of masculine communication traits. However, 44 percent of the sample showed that they adopted these communication styles for reasons unrelated to female oppression, feminist resistance, competition with female colleagues, and other notions related to the study. This leaves majority of the sample that adopted masculine communication traits with reasons that do not match the initially believed reason for the phenomenon. As per the scoring system used in the questionnaire, all codes indicating the presence of the phenomenon being measured were allocated 1 point each while those codes that did not were allocated 0 points. Summarising the above qualitative and quantitative results into the total scores achieved for variable 'b', figure 14 on the next page shows the total scores achieved per participant.

Figure 14: Variable 'b' scores for masculine communication traits



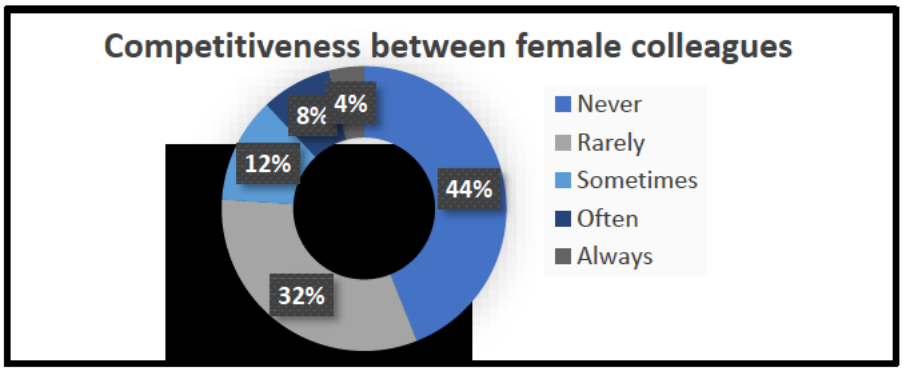
For this variable, the average score achieved was 3.96 points. The median score achieved was 3 points, with a mode of 5 points. The scores ranged from 1 point (minimum) to 10 points (maximum). The highest scores achieved were 10 points by two participants with different demographics but the same age range of 45 to 49 years. While interesting, there was not enough commonality in the data to present this as a trend throughout the sample results. No other common trends or patterns were found for the scores of this section compared to the demographics of the sample.

4.4 Variable 'c': the Occurrence of Female Same-sex Conflicts

Variable 'c' measured in section four of the questionnaire focused on the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in the gendered workplace. According to the scoring system allocated to this section, the highest possible score that could be achieved was 14 points with higher scores indicating that female same-sex conflicts are occurring in the workplace of a 'Queen Bee' nature. The first question of this section asked participants if they were ever competitive with their fellow female colleagues. Participants were asked to select their answer from the

prepopulated answers of never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always. Figure 15 below breaks down the responses from participants to this question.

Figure 15: Competitiveness between female colleagues



From these responses, 44 percent of the sample indicated that they believed they had not been competitive with fellow female colleagues. However, a collective total of 56 percent of the sample – more than half – responded that they believed that they had been competitive with female colleagues at some point in time. While 32 percent of the sample indicated that it was a rare occurrence, that leaves 24 percent indicating that it happens more than rarely. To further understand these occurrences of competition between female colleagues, the sample was asked how they were competitive in these situations. Figure 16 below summarises the codes used to understand and quantify responses.

Figure 16: Nature of competitiveness with female colleagues

Code Category	Code Meaning	Percentage of sample responses
A	Major competitiveness	16%
B	Normal competitiveness	12%
C	Minor competitiveness	0%
D	Not applicable	72%

The coded responses show that only 16 percent of the sample are majorly competitive with their female colleagues, while 12 percent experience a normal nature of competition. However, 72 percent of the sample indicated that this was not applicable to them as they were

not competitive with female colleagues. This high number contradicts the percentage of reported competition with female colleagues established in the question before this. Some responses indicated that the competition with female colleagues was healthy and of a fun nature, further contradicting the findings of studies on conflicts in the workplace and the 'Queen Bee' phenomenon.

The sample was further asked why they were competitive with their female colleagues in order to better understand the reason behind such competition. The codes used to understand the collected responses to this question and their percentage found in the sample can be seen in figure 17 below.

Figure 17: Reasons for competitiveness with female colleagues

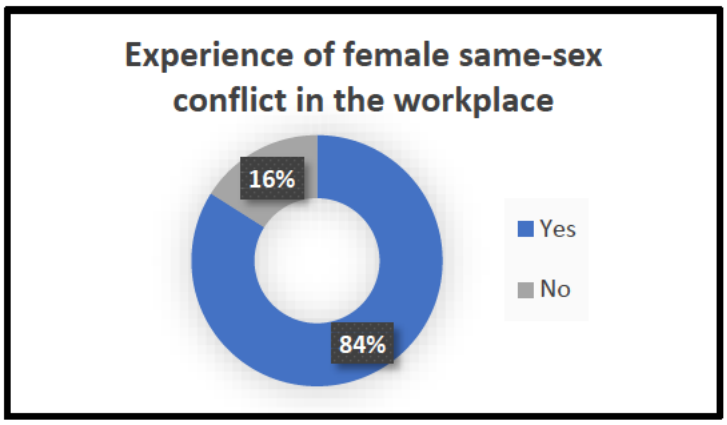
Code Category	Code Meaning	Percentage of sample responses
A	To act like a man and succeed above other females	12%
B	Due to being forced to do so	4%
C	Competitive environment	16%
D	Non-related response	12%
E	Not applicable	56%

Interestingly, 56 percent of the sample responded to this question with answers indicating "not applicable" which contradicts the 56 percent of the sample that had experienced competitiveness with female colleagues. Despite this contradiction in results, 16 percent of the sample indicated that they were competitive with female colleagues because they believed they were either forced to do so or had to compete to act like a man and succeed above their female colleagues. This result matches the suggested reasons provided by Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber (2002). However, 16 percent of the sample indicated that their competitiveness was due to the working environment simply being of a competitive nature or for reasons not related to the phenomena investigated in this study.

Shifting focus from competition to conflict, the sample was next asked if they had ever experienced conflict with their fellow female colleagues. Interestingly, 84 percent of the

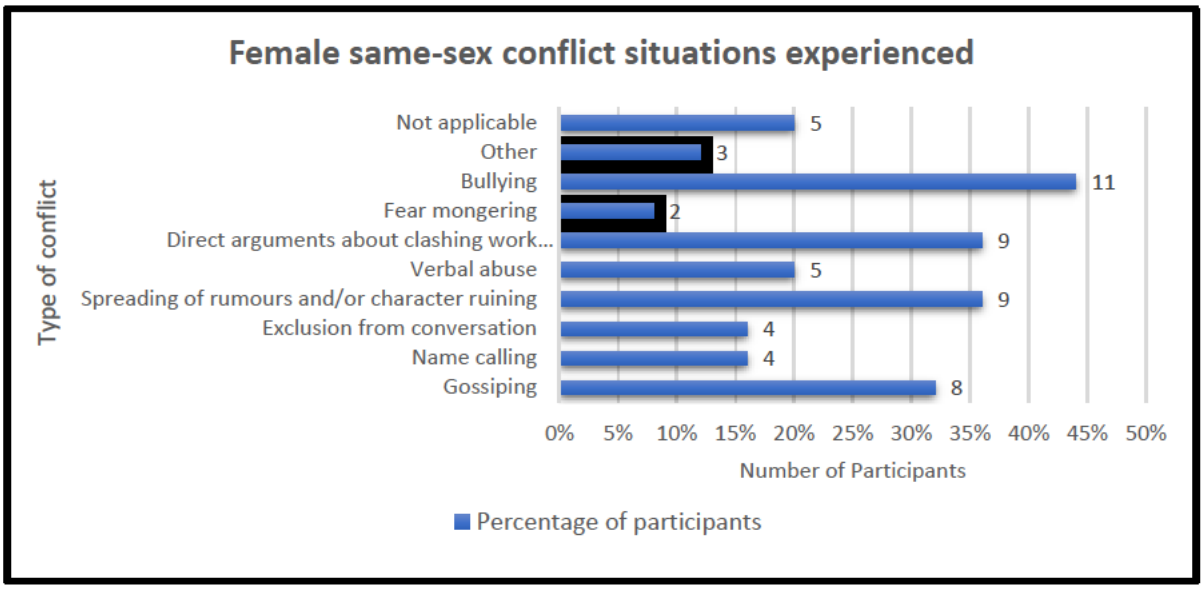
sample (21 participants) indicated that they had experienced conflict with female colleagues, with only 16 percent (4 participants) having not experienced said female same-sex conflicts. This data can be seen in figure 18 below.

Figure 18: Experience of female same-sex conflict in the workplace in the sample



To better understand the nature of these conflicts, participants were further asked about the type of conflict experience based on a set of prepopulated conflict types. Participants were able to select more than one type of conflict to describe the conflict situations experienced. A summary of these situations and the frequency of their selection by the sample can be seen in figure 19 below.

Figure 19: Female same-sex conflict situations experienced in sample



According to the responses to this question, the most experienced forms of conflicts between the sample and female colleagues included bullying (11 responses or 44 percent of the sample), arguments and clashing of ideas/perspectives/opinions (9 responses or 36 percent), the spreading of rumours and character ruining (9 responses or 36 percent) and gossiping (8 responses or 32 percent). In some cases, the sample indicated that they had even experienced conflicts like fear mongering (2 responses or 8 percent), verbal abuse (5 responses or 20 percent) exclusion from conversations (4 responses or 16 percent) and name calling (4 responses or 16 percent). From the total, only 3 participants selected 'other' as their form of experienced conflict.

The final question asked in the questionnaire for this section was aimed at understanding how the sample felt or perceived their communication style impacts their conflict situations with female colleagues. As explained in the previous discussion of variable 'b', perceived impact is not a measure of empirical influence, and instead focuses on whether the participant believes there is impact present. When coding the responses to understand their collective themes and quantify them to match the scoring system of this section, the codes used were focused on if there was the belief of major impact, minor impact, no impact, or not applicable. A summary of these codes and the percentage of the sample that showed these codes in their responses to the question can be seen in figure 20 below.

Figure 20: Nature of impact of communication style on conflict situations

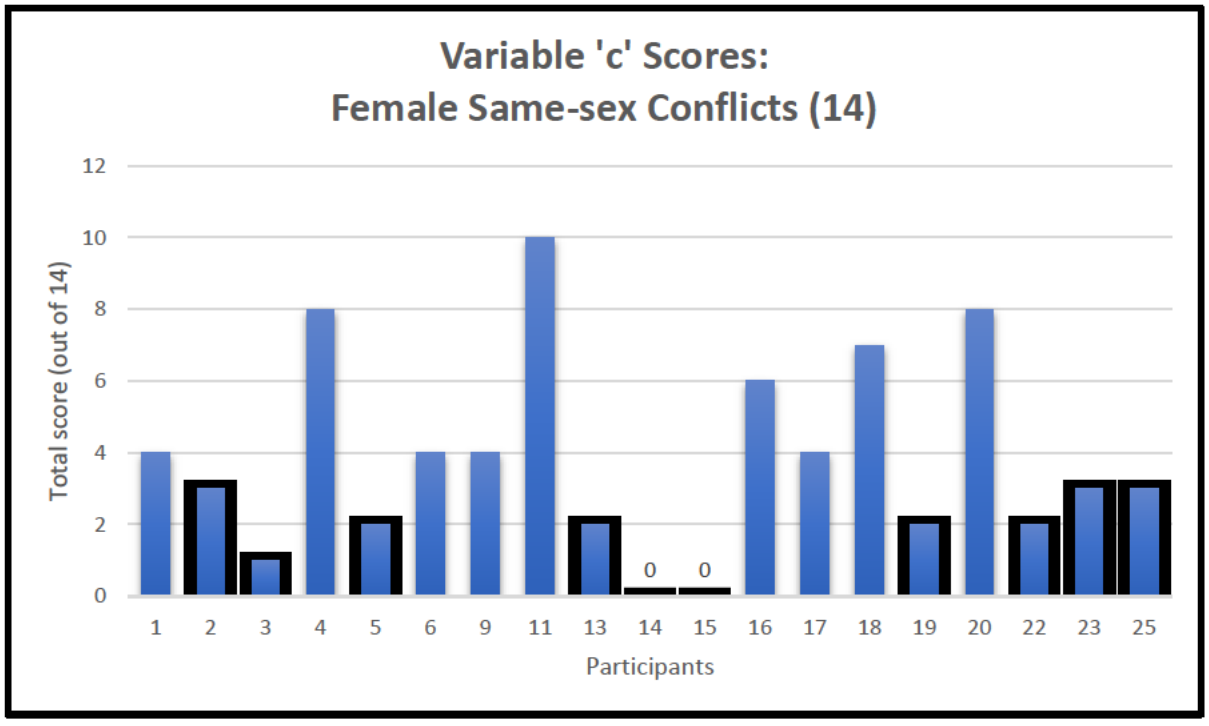
Code Category	Code Meaning	Percentage of sample responses
A	Major impact	16%
B	Minor impact	40%
C	No impact	12%
D	Not applicable	32%

According to these results, only 16 percent of the sample believed that their communication style had a major impact on their conflict situations with female colleagues. A further 40 percent of the sample believed that it had a minor impact on their conflict situations with female colleagues. As such, 56 percent of the sample collectively believes that their

communication styles have some impact on their same-sex conflict experiences. A total of 12 percent of the sample believed that their communication style had no impact on their conflict situations with female colleagues, while 32 percent of the sample responded with "not applicable". Such results indicate a perceived impact exists for more than half of the sample.

As with previous sections, all open-ended questions with coded responses were quantified through the point system by allocating a point to each code that indicates the presence of the phenomenon being measured. Remaining codes that do not indicate the presence of that measured phenomenon were allocated a point of 0. Together with the close-ended question responses and their allocated points, this section of the questionnaire had a maximum achievable point of 14. Figure 21 below summarises the points achieved by all participants in the sample for this section of the questionnaire measuring female same-sex conflicts.

Figure 21: Variable 'c' scores for female same-sex conflicts



From these total scores achieved, the average score for variable 'c' was 4.16 points with a median score of 3 and a mode score of 4. The scores achieved ranged from 0 points (minimum) to 12 points (maximum). The highest scores achieved in this section were 8 and 12 points by

two participants with different demographics. Comparing the scores achieved to the demographics of the sample, no clear patterns or trends were found.

5. FINDINGS

The raw data presented in the previous chapter was collected in accordance with the four key research questions asked in this study. The study first asked if females in eThekwini gendered workplaces employ feminist resistance, adopt more masculine communication traits and experience more female same-sex conflicts in those workplaces. Secondly, this research asked how those females employ feminist resistance and adopt masculine communication traits with fellow females in their workplaces. Thirdly, this study asked how those females experience conflicts with their fellow female colleagues in the workplace. Finally, this study asked if there is a correlation between females' use of feminist resistance in male-dominated, gendered workplaces, the female adoption of masculine communication traits, and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in gendered, eThekwini workplaces. This chapter discusses the interpretation of the data collected in answering these four questions. This discussion is structured with the findings of each phenomena measured, followed by the resulting correlations between them and the overall findings of the study.

5.1 Feminist Resistance in Gendered Workplaces

As per Trethewey's (1997) theory of feminist resistance, as well as the previous research reviewed in the literature review, females continue to experience female oppression in the workplace in various countries of the world. According to previous scholars, the most common forms of female oppression and gender bias that females experience in current workplaces include unequal pay compared to men, job duties based on gender stereotypes, male dominated management, and the hindering of female success to managerial roles (Anker, Melkas & Korten, 2003; Sinde, 2017; Trethewey, 1997). Examining this, the results of this study show that females in eThekwini gendered workplaces between the ages of 35 and 60 years do still experience female oppression and sexism in those workplaces. As per the data collected, 60 percent of the sample group had experienced female oppression in their workplace. This high percentage supports previous research findings, such as those from Trethewey (1997), Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber (2002), Anker, Melkas, and Korten (2003), Schmidt and Mestry (2014), and Stamarski and Son Hing (2015).

The results further show that the characteristics of female oppression that make up gendered workplaces in eThekwini are similar to those forms of gender inequality faced by females in the workplace found in previous studies. As per previous definitions, gendered workplaces are those that encourage or reinforce gender segregated environments, male domination, power and authority, gender stereotypical job duties and descriptions and preference towards male employees for progression (Trethewey, 1997; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). For instance, 44 percent of the sample reported that male employees hold more managerial positions and 20 percent indicated that male employees are favoured for managerial roles. These results correspond to the characteristics that Trethewey (1997) theorised as constructed gendered sites.

Furthermore, they indicate the existence of the 'glass ceiling' hypothesised by Bryant (1984) and found in previous research by Anker, Melkas, and Korten (2003), Purcell, MacArthur, and Samblanet (2010), and Powell and Butterfield (2015). Adding to the results indicating the existence of the 'glass ceiling', the sample demographics also showed that while only 12 percent of the sample were at lower-level job positions, 56 percent of the sample hold senior level positions based on their experience, which does not constitute managerial positions. Furthering this, only 8 percent of the sample held first level managerial positions, only 20 percent held middle management positions, and only 4 percent held executive level management positions. This shows that while there are female management representatives in the sample, they collectively only make up 32 percent of the sample compared to the 56 percent that have senior experience years, thus further indicating that the 'glass ceiling' is at play in these gendered workplaces.

While current scholars have questioned if the glass ceiling still exists, these findings show that it does continue to hinder females in eThekwini gendered organisations. The data also showed that 32 percent of the sample experienced job duties based on gender stereotypes and 28 percent indicated that female employees are treated unequally compared to their male counterparts, both of which are characteristics of gendered organisations as per Trethewey's (1997) definition. As such, the findings show that the oppression females continue to experience in the workplace include these characteristics, confirming that gendered organisational sites continue to show gender inequality in the workplace. Furthermore, these

results confirm that similar issues of female oppression in the workplace found in Western countries occur in the eThekwini context. However, research from Schmidt and Mestry (2014) and Chaudhary and Dutt (2022) suggest that additional issues of intersectionality act as contributing factors to such organisational sites and the types of female oppression experiences.

Trethewey's (1997) theory of feminist resistance further claims that females in these gendered organisational sites employ acts of resistance to male authority and gender inequality. Previous studies show that this feminist resistance does occur in both Western countries and in the Global South. Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber (2002) found that females were increasingly entering into the workplace competing against their male counterparts for success and employing masculine tactics such as competitive and aggressive communication styles. Redden (2016) similarly found that females continue to experience female oppression and challenge said oppression through the use of feminist resistance against male domination and favouring. The above results provide evidence for Trethewey's theory from the Western context. In addition, Chaudhary and Dutt (2012) found that Pakistani females also employ feminist resistance in their contexts, however, they do so to challenge not only male power but also intersectional oppressions.

Similarly, Berglund, Ahl, Pettersson and Tillmar (2023) confirmed that females in the workplace continue to need and use feminist resistance to challenge male power and reach further self-empowerment in the context of the Global South. Accounting for previous findings from these scholars and the specific types of acts typically used as feminist resistance, this study found that 60 percent of the sample had employed similar acts of feminist resistance in eThekwini gendered workplaces. The most commonly used act of resistance in the sample showed to be challenging the power or position of male colleagues or managers, which 32 percent of the sample selected as a form of feminist resistance they employed. This type of feminist resistance was also noted as a highly used act by Trethewey (1997) and Berglund, Ahl, Pettersson and Tillmar (2023).

Another commonly used act with 24 percent of the sample indicating that they used it was gossiping about their male authorities. While this was a small percentage, it does correspond

with Trethewey's (1997) findings, as well as confirms Rai and Agarwal's (2016) suggestion that some forms of feminist resistance take on passive-aggressive forms when head-on resistance is not an option. The mocking of male supervisors, managers and colleagues was also used by 16 percent of the sample, alongside going against clear instructions from male counterparts, which 12 percent of the sample had done. Both of these forms were also found as commonly employed acts of minor resistance by females in the workplace in Trethewey's (1997) study.

The least employed acts of feminist resistance found included the refusal to work on tasks set by male employees and name calling directed at male employees, which were also found to be used in the Western context of Trethewey's (1997) study. This could mean that while they can be employed in the Western context, they may not be used in countries from the global South due to their ineffectiveness in that context, or because they could be too dangerous in such contexts where intersectional oppression is rife. As such, these results indicate that Trethewey's (1997) theory of feminist resistance continues to be true in the context of eThekwini gendered workplaces, despite contextual differences to her geographical context.

Data collected on the reasons why the sample employed these various acts of feminist resistance also correspond with some of the reasons provided by previous scholars. As per the data collected, 20 percent of the sample explained that they used their employed acts of feminist resistance due to female oppression experienced in their workplace. This reason was also noted in the findings from Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) and Chaudhary and Dutt's (2022) studies. Furthermore, 20 percent of the sample indicated that they used their respective acts of feminist resistance to challenge male authority and power in their workplace. This not only corresponds with Foucault's (1978) notions of resistance in power struggles, but also matches findings of Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber (2002), Redden (2016) and Berglund, Ahl, Pettersson and Tillmar (2023). As such, the findings show that females in gendered organisations that need to employ acts of feminist resistance do so within a sex or gender-based power struggle, as per Foucault's (1978) and Trethewey's (1997) assumptions and theories.

Taking all of this into account, the data collected on variable 'a' or on feminist resistance in the gendered workplace provides evidence that female oppression continues to hinder the

ability of females to progress in the workplace. It further shows that females continue to need acts of resistance to challenge the power struggle they are in as per Foucault's (1978) theory and that they do so in similar ways originally theorised by Trethewey's (1997) theory of feminist resistance. While the average score achieved for variable 'a' was lower, the range of the data reflected the high number of participants experiencing female oppression and employing acts of feminist resistance. As such, this study confirms that Foucault's (1978) and Trethewey's (1997) theories of power, resistance and feminist resistance continue to be applicable in 2023 decades after their original theorisation and are applicable to gendered workplaces within the eThekwini context, and potentially within the broader South African context.

5.2 The Female Adoption of Masculine Communication Traits

When communicating with others or engaging in interactive discourse, various styles of communication can be used, including agentic or communal communication styles. According to Keener, Strough and DiDonato (2012), communal communication strategies involve individuals neglecting their own needs in favour of others' needs, which can commonly be seen in passive and avoidant styles of communication. Such styles were typically noted as feminine styles of communication as per previous social norms. In contrast to this, agentic communication strategies, known as the more masculine styles of communication, involve competitive, aggressive, and assertive styles of communication that with either favour the individual's needs or overlook the imbalance of needs (Keener, Strough & DiDonato, 2012). According to various theorists and scholars that focus on feminist resistance in the workplace, when females begin resisting male authority and power, they begin to employ these masculine agentic communication styles as a tool for doing so (Brewer, Mitchell & Weber, 2002).

The results from this study focused on the agentic communication styles employed by females in gendered workplaces in eThekwini to understand them and the reason for adopting said masculine communication traits. When asked to define their communication style, only 28 percent of the sample showed a passive communication style and only 12 percent showed a passive-aggressive style. In contrast to this, 4 percent of the sample indicated the use of an

aggressive communication style, which can include competitive behaviours, corresponds with Gbadamosi, Baghestan, and Al-Mabrouk's (2014) findings that females are employing more aggressive communication tactics.

Furthermore, 56 percent of the sample showed assertive communication styles and traits, which indicates that Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) assertions that females are adopting the necessary masculine communication styles needed for feminist resistance is true. These findings also match the conclusions of Keener, Strough and DiDonato (2014; 2017) that females are employing more agentic communication strategies in certain types of discourse.

However, Bordean, Rácz, Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, and Pop (2020) note that the selection of agentic or communal communication strategies could also be because one's gender identity incorporating more masculine or feminine traits, hence their preference for a masculine or feminine communication strategy. While this does add an additional reason not accounted for in the results, the findings do still show a high level of females in eThekwini gendered workplaces employing more masculine, agentic communication styles.

Concentrating on the tendency to use masculine communication behaviour, the sample was asked a series of eight questions that provided contextual-based questions. In this series of questions, the response of 'yes' indicated the tendency to use a masculine communication style, while 'no' indicated the opposite. Answering three or more of these eight questions with 'yes' was concluded as the tendency to use masculine communication strategies. Out of a sample of 25 participants, 12 showed a tendency to use masculine communication behaviours. This provides empirical evidence of Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) suggestion that females are adopting more masculine communication traits. Furthermore, the data collected indicated that 4 participants from the sample had answered 'yes' to five or more of the eight questions. In this instance, the results showed not only a tendency to use masculine communication traits in certain contexts, but a preference for masculine communication strategies, backing up previous scholars' findings (Keener, Strough & DiDonato, 2012).

While the percentage of the participants using masculine communication styles corresponds with previous research, the reported reasons for the sample's use of those styles does not correspond with previous findings. When asked why the sample uses those masculine communication traits, only 8 percent of the sample indicated that it was due to female oppression and was used to resist male power, matching Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002), Trethewey's (1997) and Chaudhary and Dutt's (2022) studies. Instead, 4 percent of the sample explained that they used masculine communication traits because other females were doing it and 44 percent provided reasons not related to the workplace or the context of this study. Such findings thus oppose the suggestion that females are adopting masculine communication traits to engage in feminist resistance or to change the power dynamic between males and females in gendered workplaces.

Findings that do not match previous scholars' conclusions were also found when asking the sample about the perceived impact their masculine communication styles have on their communication interactions with fellow female colleagues. The results showed that only 4 percent of the sample's response showed a major perceived impact, and only 24 percent showed a perceived minor impact. Collectively this showed that only 28 percent of the sample thought that their masculine communication style had an impact on their interactions with other female colleagues. Instead, 20 percent of the sample responses showed no perceived impact and 52 percent of the sample responses showed that this was not applicable to them. These findings indicate that Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) conclusions are only empirically recognised in 28 percent of the sample from this study. These contradictory results could be due to geographical differences in the studies, due to the existence of intersectional identities at play in the geographic context of this study, or due to the fact that behaviour from Western countries is not translatable to the South African context in most cases.

Overall, the findings for variable 'b' or the female adoption of masculine communication traits corresponded with the anticipated findings and previous research in some cases, but not entirely. The average score found for this variable shows that there is not an increase in the female adoption of masculine communication traits in the sample, but the range of the score does show a select few participants using masculine communication styles. As such, the results for this variable do not entirely evidence Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002)

conclusions and while there is no statistical evidence that there is an increased preference for the use of masculine communication traits in the sample, there is evidence of a percentage of the sample displaying a tendency to use masculine communication traits in certain situations.

5.3 Female Same-sex Conflicts in Gendered Workplaces

Alongside female oppression in the workplace, the use of feminist resistance in the gendered workplace, and the female adoption of masculine communication styles in certain circumstances, previous research has also shown that there is an increase in the number of female workplace conflicts with female colleagues. Research by Leo, Reid, Geldenhuys, and Gobind (2014), the Workplace Bullying institute (2014; 2021), López-Cabarcos, Vázquez-Rodríguez, and Gieure (2017), and Mayer, Surtee, and Mahadevan (2018) show that female same-sex conflicts in the workplace are rising in both the Western and Global South regions. Measuring this, the study found that 84 percent of the sample experience female same-sex conflicts in the gendered workplace. This high percentage corresponds with the findings of the Workplace Bullying Institute's (2014; 2021) high number of female same-sex conflicts in America, as well as with the findings of Leo, Reid, Geldenhuys and Gobind (2014).

This also provides evidence to some of the suggestions posited by Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber (2002) and Grmek (2020) that females are engaging with other females in more conflict situations than with their male colleagues. In understanding the types of conflict situations occurring between these female colleagues in the workplace, Rai and Agarwal (2016) provide a handful of common conflict types experienced, which was used in this study's questionnaire to ascertain the types of conflict experienced between the sample and their female colleagues.

According to the collected data, 44 percent of the sample experienced female same-sex conflicts in the workplace in the form of bullying, corresponding with WBI's (2014; 2021) data. Additionally, 36 percent of the sample experienced this conflict in the form of direct arguments with female colleagues about work related issues and in the form of character ruining and the spreading of rumours. Interestingly, these two forms of conflict represent aggressive and assertive conflict in the form of direct argument and passive-aggressive conflict

in the form of rumour spreading and character ruining. This shows that the forms of conflict types that occur between females in the workplace are diverse in nature.

Furthermore, 32 percent of the sample reported conflict with female colleagues in the form of gossiping, 20 percent experienced verbal abuse, 16 percent experienced exclusion from conversation and name calling, and 8 percent experienced fear mongering. Such results show that many of the conflict types found in Rai and Agarwal's (2016) study still occur in eThekwini gendered workplaces in 2023. With only 16 percent of the sample reporting that they do not experience conflict with fellow female colleagues, and with the various types of aggressive and passive-aggressive forms of conflict experienced, the findings show that female same-sex conflict does occur in high numbers in eThekwini gendered workplaces.

Scholars also noted that these conflict situations occurring between females in the workplace also include competitiveness as a component, with females competing for scarce resources in male-dominated workplaces (Brewer, Mitchell & Weber, 2002; Sinden, 2017). Furthermore, this competitive element to the conflict occurring between females in the workplace has also been linked theoretically to the 'Queen Bee' syndrome, which Grmek (2020) explains is the tendency for females in the workplace to undertake masculine communication traits to act like a man and progress in the workplace at the cost of hindering fellow female colleagues in the process.

In examining this competitiveness, 56 percent of the sample showed that they had been competitive with female colleagues. This corresponds with Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) and Sinden's (2017) assertions that females compete with each other for scarce resources and positions in the workplaces, as well as with Grmek's (2020) suggestion that females compete for success in the workplace alongside men at the cost of hindering fellow female colleagues' success.

Understanding the reasons for this competitiveness also showed minor results matching that of Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) and Grmek's (2020) conclusions. For instance, 12 percent of the sample indicated that they competed with fellow female colleagues in order to act like a man and success above their female colleagues, which adheres to Grmek's (2020)

conclusions and shows evidence of the 'queen bee' syndrome. Furthermore, 4 percent of the sample indicated that they engaged in that competitiveness because they were forced to do so for resources and success, thus matching the conclusions made by Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber (2002).

The results of the study also provided indications of the sample's perceived impact of their communication style and competitiveness on their conflict situations with female colleagues. The results found indicated that 16 percent of the sample perceived that their communication styles had a major impact on their conflicts with female colleagues, and 40 percent perceived a minor impact on their conflicts with female colleagues. This collective 56 percent of perceived impact supports Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber's (2002) and Grmek's (2020) suggestions that females' masculine communication style impacts their conflicts with female colleagues and produces 'Queen Bee' conflict situations, thus linking the female use of masculine communication styles, female same-sex conflicts and the 'Queen Bee' syndrome in the eThekwini gendered workplace.

Overall, the findings of variable 'c' or female same-sex conflicts in the gendered workplace shows a low average score across the sample, but a range of high scores indicating that female same-sex conflicts are occurring and that they are occurring alongside the female use of masculine communication strategies and competitive notion of the 'Queen Bee' syndrome.

5.4 Correlational Relationships

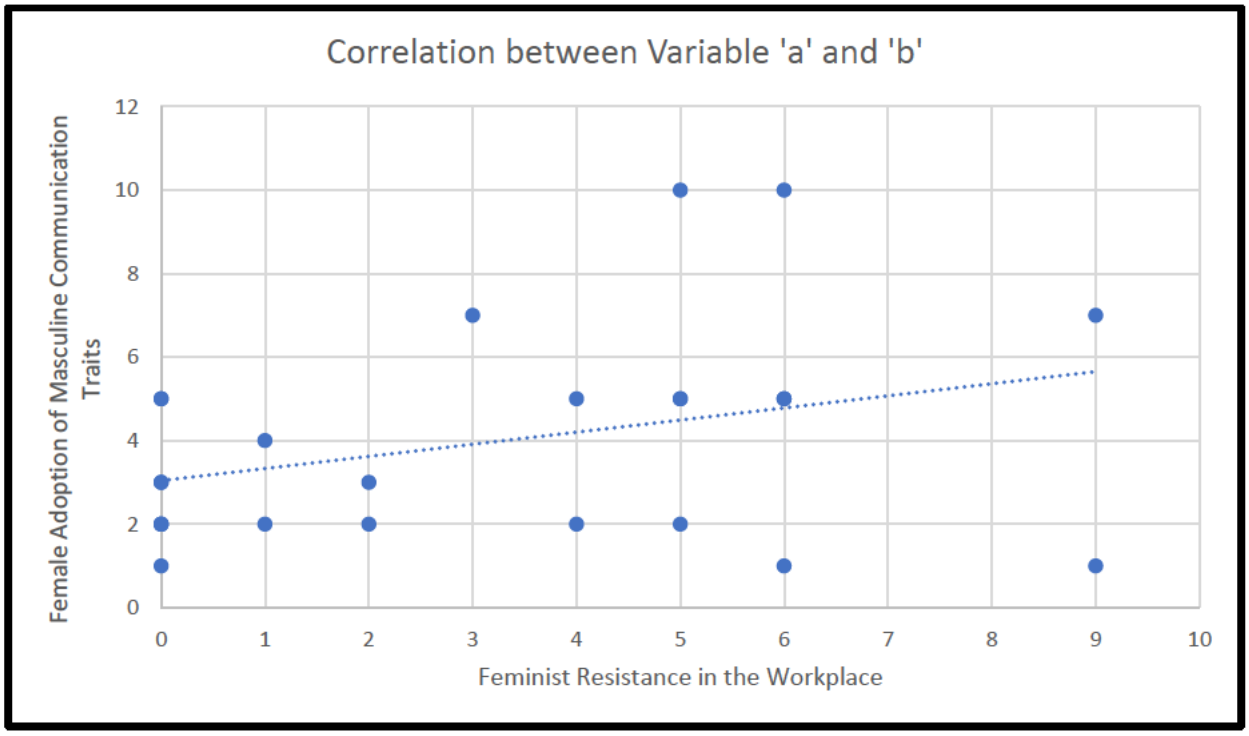
Investigating the use of feminist resistance in female oppressive, eThekwini gendered workplaces, the female adoption of masculine communication traits, and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts, correlations between these phenomena were tested as per the alternative hypothesis provided. This study's hypothesis tests stated that:

> *"Previously oppressed females who employed acts of feminist resistance in male-dominated, gendered workplaces in eThekwini tend to adopt more masculine communication behaviours and thus experience more conflict with other female colleagues in those workplaces."*

To test this hypothesis and the three variables it states are correlated, the three variables were first separated individually and then investigated under variable codes. In doing so, those females who employed acts of feminist resistance in gendered organisations was measured as variable 'a', those females that adopted masculine communication traits were measured as variable 'b' and those females that experienced conflict with female colleagues were measured as variable 'c'. Correlation tests using the Pearson's Correlation Co-Efficient formula on Microsoft Excel were employed to measure the correlation between variables 'a' and 'b', 'b' and 'c', and 'a' and 'c', thus testing the correlation between all variables for the hypothesis. The results of these correlations found correlations that do not support the hypothesis in full, but that do support one correlational relationship within the hypothesis.

In measuring the correlational relationship between feminist resistance in the workplace (variable 'a') and the female adoption of masculine communication traits (variable 'b'), the results showed that there was a slight increasing trend as variable 'a' and 'b' increased. This trend line can be seen in visual figure 22 below.

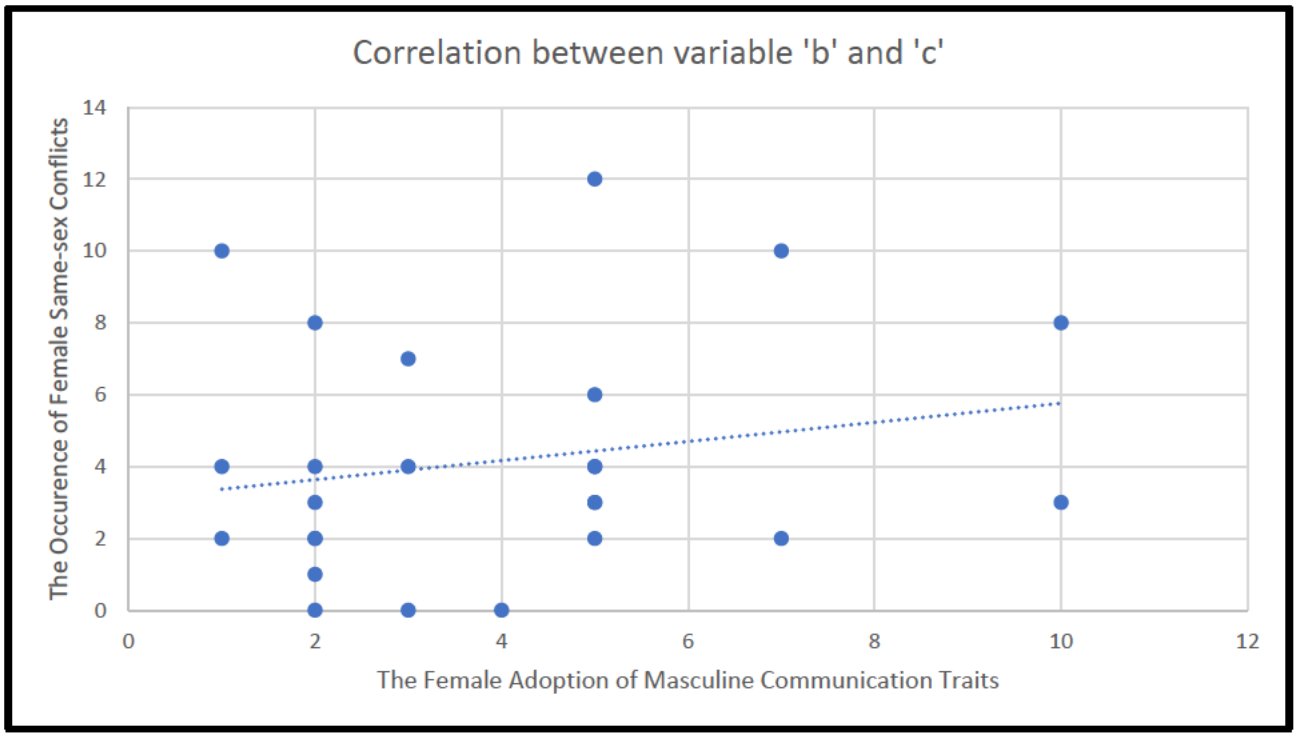
Figure 22: Correlation between feminist resistance in the workplace and the female adoption of masculine communication traits



As can be seen, there is a slight trend as variable 'a' and 'b' increased, however, this trend is minor and only applicable to a select few participants (as indicated by the trend line). In this measurement, *r* (the correlation co-efficient) measured to be 0.34, which – as per Pearson's Correlation rules – indicates no correlation between the variables. As such, the findings of this study indicate that there is no correlation between the use of feminist resistance in gendered organisations and the female adoption of masculine communication traits in those gendered workplaces in the sample used.

In measuring the correlation between the female adoption of masculine communication traits and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in gendered workplaces (variable 'c'), the results indicated a minimal trend as variable 'b' and 'c' increased. However, this trend was only noticeable for a select few participants, as indicated by the small number of participants' measured scores near the trend line. This trend can be seen in visual figure 23 below.

Figure 23: Correlation between the female adoption of masculine communication traits and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in gendered workplaces

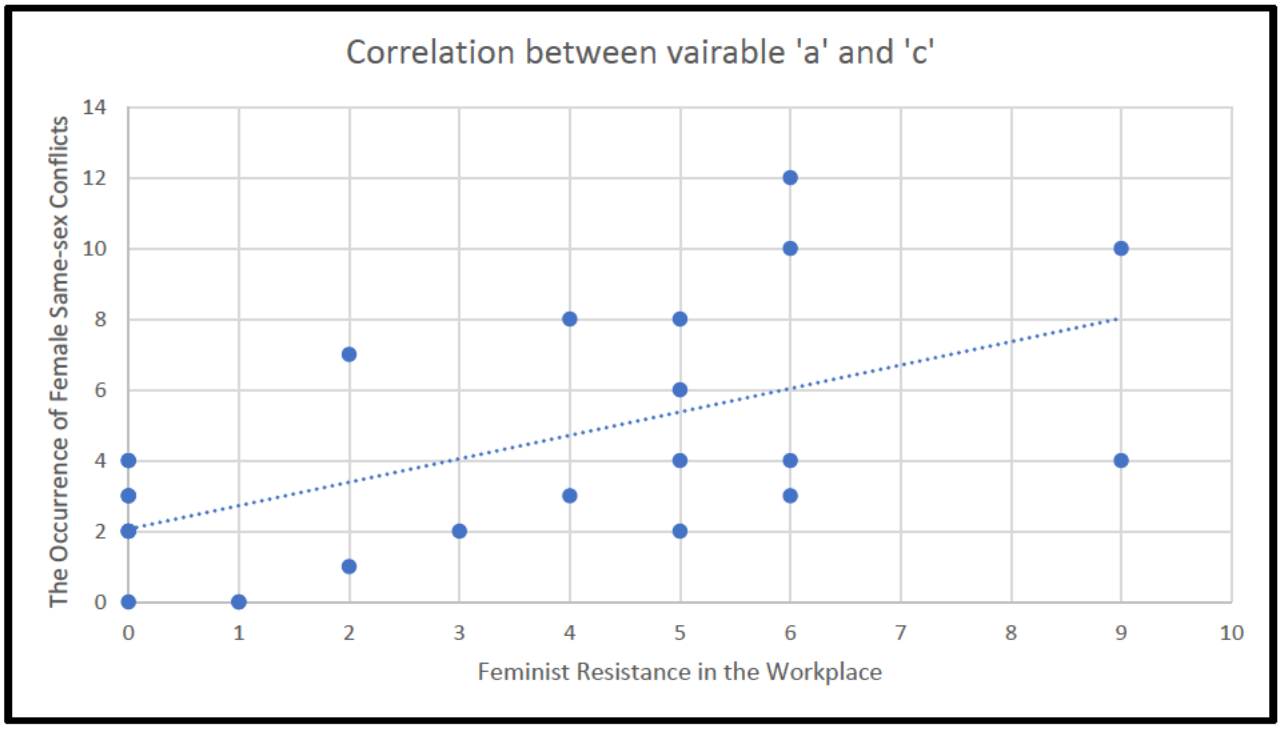


In this measurement, *r* measured to be 0.20, which also indicates that no correlational relationship exists in the sample between the female adoption of masculine communication

traits and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in gendered workplaces. This further shows that as per the null hypothesis, there is no correlation that shows a link between the use of feminist resistance and the female adoption of masculine communication traits in the sample, or between the female adoption of masculine communication traits and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in that sample. However, in measuring the correlation between variable 'a' and 'c', an interesting correlational link was found.

In measuring the correlational relationship between feminist resistance in the workplace and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in the workplace, the results showed that there was a larger increasing trend in the tested relationships between variable 'a' and 'b', and 'b' and 'c'. This trend line can be seen in visual figure 24 below.

Figure 24: Correlation between the use of feminist resistance in the workplace and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts



Within this tested correlation, *r* measured to be 0.59 showing a weak correlation as per Pearson's Correlation rules. While this correlation is deemed as weak, the data still showed a link between the variables and a trend in their increase together for more participants. Should this be tested with a larger sample, a stronger correlation between the variables could be

found. This found correlation, while not showing a link between all the variables in the order stipulated in the alternative hypothesis, does show a correlation between two of the variables noted in the hypothesis tested, as such, neither the null hypothesis nor the alternative hypothesis can be entirely accepted as true.

Looking at these results in conjunction to the theoretical positions taken by the scholars used as the theoretical foundation of this study, certain conclusions and assumptions can be accepted and some rejected. Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber (2002) found that females were increasingly entering into male-dominated workplaces and were made to compete for resources and success in those workplaces, causing female employees to adopt typically masculine communication traits in order to survive and progress in those workplaces.

While not all of these conclusions showed to be empirically true, the correlation found between the use of feminist resistance in gendered workplaces and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in those workplaces does show that Brewer, Mitchell and Weber's (2002) suggestion that females in gendered workplaces are made to compete, however, the findings show that that competition is not with male colleagues, but rather is with female colleagues.

Furthermore, Sheppard and Aquino (2014) explained that these conflicts between female colleagues were a symptom of the 'Queen Bee' syndrome, which Paustian-Underdhal, Rogelberg, King, Ordonez, Weichert, and Rasch (2014) explain arises when male-dominant leadership is present in the workplace hindering female success. The findings of this study show that females in those gendered workplaces resist that male-domination, and as a possible result, engage in competitive and conflict with fellow female colleagues.

Additionally, Grmek (2020) explained that female employees that become 'queen bees' do so due to previous female oppression and ultimately take on masculine communication behaviours to compete with female colleagues to progress themselves and hinder their female colleagues, thus reaching power alongside their male counterparts. This conclusion can be seen in the correlation found between the use of feminist resistance in the female sample in gendered workplaces and their engagement in female same-sex conflicts with fellow female colleagues. As such, the correlation found in this study is not only backed up by previous theorists and scholars but supports certain theoretical suggestions they made.

5.5 Overall Findings

As suggested by Rai and Agarwal (2016) for a complete understanding of the conflict situations that occur between female colleagues in gendered workplaces, a mixed method approach must be taken within a critical paradigm framework to understand the factors contributing to the cause of those conflicts. This approach was taken in this study, examining the variables in isolation and the correlation between them. In doing so, each phenomenon examined in variable 'a', 'b', and 'c' was understood in isolation and in conjunction with each other. The findings of this study indicate that females are indeed still experiencing female oppression in gendered workplaces in eThekwini and continue to be hindered by the 'glass ceiling' despite the progress made in companies for gender equal workplaces. Those females working in gendered workplaces with female oppression are challenging the power held over them by their male counterparts, as suggested by Foucault (1978) and Trethewey (1997) through the use of acts of feminist resistance.

The findings also show that many females in the sample are adopting masculine communication traits in their gendered workplaces, but that this adoption is not necessarily linked to or caused by female oppression and the use of feminist resistance. While this showed to be the cause in some cases for a small number of the sample, this was not found across the sample or across the majority of said sample. The results also showed that there is an increasing number of females engaging in conflict with female colleagues and that those conflicts are indeed competitive.

However, this too was not empirically proven to be as a result of the female adoption of masculine communication traits, but rather as a result of female oppression and the use of feminist resistance in those same gendered workplaces. As such, these findings of the three phenomena answer the research questions that require them to be unpacked and understood. This shows that the null hypothesis cannot be accepted as there is one correlational relationship between variable 'a' and 'c'. However, this one correlational relationship cannot fully accept the alternative hypothesis either. As such, the findings of this study partially accept the alternative hypothesis.

6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

As this study looked at concepts and experiences that could be sensitive to some participants and to the eThekwini context in which various types of intersectional oppression are experienced, the study considered various ethical factors and had to limit the factors examined and how they were examined. This chapter discusses those ethical considerations in regard to those ethical factors for the researcher, those for the relationship between the research and the participants, and how ethical standards were maintained in the study. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the various limitations of the study, including research design limitations, impact limitations, and data limitations.

6.1 Ethical Considerations

Within studies that deal with sensitive topics and that involve participation from people, two ethical considerations categories need to be taken into account: ethics pertaining to the researcher and ethics pertaining to the participants of the study. Looking first at those ethical considerations pertaining to the researcher, focus is placed on how the research design and results are handled (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). When designing the research method, the researcher must ensure that appropriate methods and tools are used in accordance with the data (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). As such, the research design of this study was constructed based on the topic and questions asked.

Due to the sensitive nature of the study topic and the power struggle it refers to, the critical realist paradigm was used so that the results of this study could be used to understand the oppression experienced and so that further research could be done on how such struggles could be tackled for emancipatory purposes. Furthermore, the mixed method approach was used so that data on these sensitive topics could be collected in a quantitative manner with minimal harm done and with qualitative means only for those questions on why certain actions were used, thus avoiding responses from participants that would require sensitive information to be given. Additionally, the instrument used was a questionnaire so as to make participants feel safe in answering the questions posed and so as to allow participants more time to complete the questionnaire at their own pace instead of being forced to do so in a single time frame such as in an interview.

It is also important for the researcher to ensure that no bias takes place within the research process and that no information or data gathered is misused in any way (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). In accordance with this ethical standard, the researcher designed scoring, processing and coding processes prior to the data collection stage so that once data was gathered, no additional scoring skewed towards the researcher's anticipated findings could be used and so that the coding process eliminated opportunity for biased code generation. In the case of the coding process, descriptive coding was used, and those codes were generated before data collection based on previous findings shown in the literature review and based on the possible plethora of answers that could potentially be given by participants for each qualitative, open-ended question. In this way, once the data was collected, it could be analysed without bias and could be interpreted according to the theoretical framework approved without misusing the data at any stage.

Furthermore, it is also important that the researcher does not falsify any information or distort the results gathered at any stage of the data collection, analysis, or interpretation (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). These ethical considerations were upheld throughout the data collection phase using the same process previously mentioned, and proof of this collected data was provided in chapter four of this study, presenting the raw data collected. Furthermore, to ensure that the data collected was not falsified or distorted in the analysis and interpretation of the results, figures in the forms of charts, graphs and tables were used throughout chapter four and five, and all raw data collected from the study itself can be found in Appendix D for clarification and comparison.

Looking at the ethical considerations pertaining to the participants, various ethical standards were ensured to avoid harm and the exhibition of sensitive information. In studies that involve participants, the first ethical standard is that informed consent to participate in the study is collected. Within this informed consent, the participant must sign a consent form that gives consent to use their gathered information within the study and that provides the participant with all necessary information on what the study is, what data is being collected, and why that data is being collected (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

This study employed a consent form that provides this information, an area for signed consent, and that upholds the ethical standards and regulations for informed consent in the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This consent form can be seen in the unsigned copy in Appendix A. Alongside the consent form and its explanation of what data is being collected and why, it is also paramount that the data collected from participant is done so in an appropriate manner that avoids dealing with sensitive information inappropriately and that avoids harming the participant (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This too was considered in this study and upheld in the data collection tool design. The questionnaire used for this study – in Appendix B – was designed in such a way that did not ask for sensitive information that required participants to relive any traumatic events. Instead, all sensitive information or experience of a potentially traumatic nature were collected through quantitative, close-ended questions that only required participants to select from pre-determined answers. In this way, they were not required to divulge details of any event that they experienced that could have been traumatic or sensitive. The coding and score allocation of those experiences can be found in Appendix C.

Furthermore, participants were instructed in the consent form, in the questionnaire introduction and during direct communication with the researcher that if they felt uncomfortable at any point, they were allowed to withdraw from the study and halt answering the questionnaire without repercussion. In doing so, participants in this study felt safe to answer the questions with no participants withdrawing from the study.

During the stage of data collection, another ethical factor that contributed to this was that confidentiality was upheld at all times, as well as a minor level of anonymity. In research ethics, anonymity or confidentiality of the participants' personal details and identity must always be maintained (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). While both cannot be maintained entirely at all times, confidentiality was maintained entirely with a minor element of anonymity to ensure participants felt safe and comfortable throughout the data collection process. Before the questionnaire was administered, participants needed to sign the consent form for the researcher, which stipulated that the personal information and identity of all participants would be kept confidential at all times. This was maintained by not divulging said information to any persons, by saving all signed consent forms with those details in a password

protected file on a password protected computer, and by only referring to 'participant/s' during the discussion of all data collected. Furthermore, a level of anonymity was provided to all participants when filling in the questionnaire as it was designed on Google Forms to not track responses through email sign ins. As such, the response provided by each participant is not attached to their name or email address, allowing for anonymous responses from the known sample group. This further made participants feel safe and comfortable completing questions that involve a level of self-reflection.

Another significant ethical consideration pertaining to the participants was deception. Deception can take place in two main forms in research process. The first type of deception dealt with takes place by telling a participant one thing and doing another without their knowledge (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Throughout the study, transparency on the researcher's part was maintained by ensuring that the consent form provided to participants explained all needed information on the study. Furthermore, participants were provided further information on the study by the researcher upon initial contact and were allowed to ask any question they desired about the study at any stage except for questions regarding other participants and their given responses. The second type of deception that can occur is that of omitting certain information that should be provided (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Omission of information did not take place as the researcher remained transparent at all data collection points with the participants.

Finally, the last ethical standard considered in this study was the providing of incentives, which should be avoided in all research endeavours as paying people to participate in a study could lead to their purposeful skewing of responses to provide the researcher with their desired outcome (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). During this study, no incentives were provided to participants and all participation was voluntary. Taking this into account, as well as the several ethical considerations discussed and upheld, this study ensured that an ethical standard desired from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and their ethics board was maintained.

6.2 Limitations

The limitations of a study refer to the shortcomings of the research or its flaws as a result of scarce resources, sample size, design and approach, or omitted factors that limit the generalisability of the study results (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The types of limitations that can be identified in this study are research design limitations, impact limitations, and data limitations. Research design limitations are those that stem from the way in which the research was designed from the paradigm, approach, population, sampling, data collection method and tools, and data analysis (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

Within these types of limitations, five main limitations are found in this study. First, the study was limited due to time constraints, limiting the opportunity for a longitudinal study to measure the correlation in more depth or to measure causation. Second, the population parameters of the study were rigid, limiting the amount of people that could participate in the study as well as the generalisability of the results to the broader population in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa. Third, the sample size aimed for was 40 participants, however, only a sample size of 25 was achievable, further limiting the generalisability of the results. Fourth, the questionnaire as a data collection tool limited the amount of qualitative data that could be gathered in the study as in order to gather extensive qualitative data, interviews and focus groups were needed. This data collection tool further limited the reliability of the responses gathered as it gathered data in the form of self-reported behaviour and perceived lived experiences. Such data can be exaggerated or underrated at the discretion of the participant without the researcher's knowledge, thus limiting the transparency and truthfulness of the responses collected. Last, due to time constraints, the pilot testing of the questionnaire and data analysis methods were done using only three participants, limiting the amount of detected correction needed.

Impact limitations refer to those limitations that stem from specific factors not accounted for that could impact the study results or those factors that the researcher cannot control (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). With regards to impact limitations, only two main limitations were found. Firstly, the study is limited in its accountability of intersectionality and

the impact this had on its scope and findings. Due to the theoretical framework used, those issues of intersectional identity and oppression could not be accounted for and could not be explored in-depth and adequately analysed as contributing factors to the correlations measured. This includes those identities of gender identity and racial oppression as the only gender considered for this study and generalised to was cis-gendered females and the racial identities and their different levels of oppression were not detected in the study sample. As such, the results of this study are only generalisable to larger populations similar to the sample group used. Secondly, due to the sample used in this study being majority made up of White participants, differences in the experiences of the three phenomena examined based on race could not be examined. Additionally, this limits the generalisability of the findings to the racial profile of the sample, thus not yielding enough results to generalise to non-White racial groups.

Finally, data limitations are those stemming from issues within the data pool, such as statistical limitations of the sample size, limitations to the data based on bias or preconceived assumptions, and limitations of causation versus correlation (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Within these types of limitations, the study acknowledges limitations based on sample size, and causation versus correlation. As explained previously, the generalisability of the data and the results is limited due to the sample size being 25 participants despite the aim of gathering 40 participants. Furthermore, the study's correlation findings are limited in that they indicate a link and linear association between variables, not a relationship that shows causation or influence. As such, should a causal relationship need to be measured, further study with the use of probability and further causal statistics needs to be employed.

Despite these research design, impact and data limitations, the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness measures employed ensure that the results of the study are valid, reliable to the highest extent possible and generalisable to populations in similar contexts and with similar characteristics to the sample group in this study.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the research questions have been addressed, the hypotheses have been tested and the limitations of the study have been addressed. To conclude these findings and this study, this chapter provides answers to the research questions asked and those answers address the research problem. Furthermore, this chapter also provides concluding remarks on how the findings of this study can be used to further address the research problem in the workplace through practical uses and what further research is needed on the topic for more understanding and practical solutions.

7.1 Research Questions Addressed

The first research question posed was do females in eThekwini gendered workplaces that employ feminist resistance adopt more masculine communication behaviours and experience more female same-sex conflicts in the workplace. The findings of this study confirmed that females between the ages of 35 to 60 years working in gendered workplaces in eThekwini do employ feminist resistance due to female oppression in said workplaces. Additionally, the findings showed that those females also experience more conflict in those workplaces with their female colleagues, indicating the potential presence of the 'queen bee' syndrome. However, the findings did not provide any evidence that females adopt more masculine communication traits – aside from a select few participants.

For the purpose of further understanding and unpacking research question one, follow up questions were asked, the first of which asked how those females who employed feminist resistance and adopt more masculine communication behaviours with other female colleagues in the workplace. As per the findings and the answer provided to the first research question, there was no evidence that females that do employ feminist resistance in gendered workplaces adopt more masculine communication traits. However, the findings did provide data that shows how those females employ acts of feminist resistance and why, as well as how females that do employ masculine communications traits use them when interacting with female colleagues.

According to the results, those females that do employ acts of feminist resistance do so in the same manner theorised in Trethewey's (1997) study on feminist resistance. Those forms in Trethewey's (1997) and in the findings of this study include challenging male power and authority, gossiping about male superiors, mocking male authority figures, going against instructions from male managers, name calling targeting at male supervisors, and refusing to complete work tasks allocated by male managers. Furthermore, the findings show that females use masculine communication traits with fellow female colleagues in the form of competitive and aggressive communication behaviour.

The second follow up question further asked how those females experience conflicts with their female colleagues in the workplace. The findings showed that females experience those conflicts majority of the time in gendered workplaces, and that they do so in various forms, such as bullying, direct arguments, the spreading of rumours and character ruining, gossiping, verbal abuse, exclusion from conversations, name calling, and fear mongering. Furthermore, more than half of the sample felt that their adoption of masculine communication styles impacted these conflict situations.

Finally, the last research question asked if there was a correlation between the females' use of feminist resistance in male-dominated, gendered workplaces, the female adoption of masculine communication behaviours, and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in gendered, eThekwini workplaces. In order to test this, Pearson's Correlation was used to test the alternative hypothesis. Findings from these correlation tests indicated that there was no linear link between the female use of feminist resistance and the female adoption of masculine communication traits in those gendered workplaces. Furthermore, there was no correlation found between the female adoption of masculine communication traits and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in gendered organisations. The findings, however, did show that there was a weak positive correlational relationship between the female use of feminist resistance and the occurrence of female same-sex conflicts in eThekwini gendered workplaces. As such, the study rejects the null hypothesis that no correlations exist between these three phenomena, but only partially accepts the alternative hypothesis.

Based on these findings, the research problem can be addressed. The findings of this study can be used as guiding points for how females are oppressed in eThekwini gendered workplaces and how females challenge this oppression. In doing so, organisations in

eThekwini can address the characteristics that make their workplaces gendered, female oppressive, and attempt to reduce said oppression and the need for feminist resistance. Those gendered workplaces can also use the results from this study to understand the female same-sex conflicts that occur in their workplaces and why in order to improve on those factors to create a working environment that is less oppressive and that does not heighten the probability of the 'Queen Bee' syndrome and female same-sex conflicts.

It is further recommended that further study be conducted on this topic focusing on intersectional identities and oppressions in the broader South African workplace and that future studies use these findings to provide possible solutions or policy changes that can be undertaken by companies that experience female oppression, feminist resistance, and female same-sex conflicts.

8. REFERENCE LIST

Acker, J. 1990. Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organisations. *Gender and Society*, 4: 139-158.

Al-Khouja, M., Weinstein, N., and Legate, N. 2021. Motivated to Express: Salience of Oppression Toward Other Women Encourages Women's Self-Expression. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 9(1): 290-305.

Angelopulo, G. & Barker, R. 2014. *Integrated Organisational Communication*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: Juta & Company Ltd.

Anker, R., Melkas, H., and Korten, A. 2003. Gender-based occupational segregation in the 1990. [Online]. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_decl_wp_18_en.pdf [Accessed 2 October 2023].

Baron, R. & Branscombe, N. 2014. *Social Psychology*. 3rd ed. Pearson.

Berglund, K., Ahl, H., Pettersson, K. and Tillmar, M. 2023. Conceptualising feminist resistance in the postfeminist terrain. *Gender in Management: An International Journal,* 32(8): 183-199.

Bordean, O.N., Racz, D.S., Ceptureanu, S.I., Ceptureanu, E.G. and Pop, Z.C. 2020. Gender Diversity and the Choice of Conflict Management Styles in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises. *Sustainability,* 12(17): 7136.

Brewer, N., Mitchell, P. and Weber, N. 2002. Gender Role, Organization Status, and Conflict Management Styles. *The International Journal of Conflict Management*, 13(1): 78-94.

Bunting, A. 1992. Feminism, Foucault, and Law as Power/Knowledge. *Alberta Law Review*, 30(3): 829-842.

Burr, V., 2015. *Social Constructionism.* 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.

BWASA. 2017. *BWASA South Africa: Women in Leadership Census*. BWASA, Research Studies. Brighton Wealth. [Online]. Available at: https://bwasa.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2017-BWASA-CENSUS-report.pdf [Accessed 10 April 2019].

BWASA. 2021. *Businesswomen's Association of South Africa: South African Women in Leadership Census*. BWASA, Research Studies. BWASA. [Online]. Available at: https://bwasa.co.za/wp- content/uploads/2021/10/BWASA-CENSUS-FINAL-TO-PRINT-2021.pdf [Accessed 21 March 2022].

Chaudhary, N. and Dutt, A. 2022. Women as Agents of Change: Exploring Women Leaders' Resistance and Shaping of Gender Ideologies in Pakistan. *Frontiers in Psychology,* 13(2022): 1-16.

Cotter, D.A., Hermsen, J.M., Ovadia, S., and Vanneman, R. 2001. The Glass Ceiling Effect*. Social Forces*, 80(2): 655-681.

Creswell, J. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches.* 3rd edition. United States of America: SAGE Publications.

Dash, K.K., Dash, S.K., and Satpathy, S. 2021. A Study on Gender Differences in Workplace Communication across Organisations. *Rupkatha Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities,* 13(2): 1-10.

Deveaux, M. 1994. Feminism and Empowerment: A Critical Reading of Foucault. *Feminist Studies,* 20(2): 223-247.

Du Plooy-Cilliers, F., Davis, C. and Bezuidenhout, R.M. 2014. *Research Matters*. Cape Town: Juta & Company Ltd.

Easton, G. 2010. Critical realism in case study research. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 39(2010): 118-128.

Ferguson, K. 1984. *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Foucault, M. 1978. *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Fourie, P.J. (2008). *Media studies: Policy, management and media representation*. 2nd edition. Cape Town: Juta

García, M.L. 2016. Resistance Bodies on the México-U.S. Border. Masters in Gender Studies Thesis. Stockholms Universiteit. [Online]. Available at: http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1039086/FULLTEXT01.pdf [Accessed 5 April 2019].

Gbadamosi, O., Baghestan, A. & Al-Mabrouk, K. 2014. Gender, age and nationality: assessing their impact on conflict resolution styles. *Journal of Management Development*, 33(3): 245-257.

Gourguechon, P. 2018. Women In the Workplace: The Myth of The Confidence Gap. [Online]. *Forbes*. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/prudygourguechon/2018/11/06/women-in-theworkplace-the-myth-of-the-confidence-gap/#d9e9c7d6fd0f [Accessed 20 June 2019]

Grmek, M. 2020. Who Are the Queen Bees? A Systematic Review of Literature. MA Dissertation. Catolica Porto Business School.

Guba, E.G. 1990. *The Paradigm Dialog.* SAGE Publications.

Hekman, S. 1990. *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a postmodern feminism*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Hook, B. 1984. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center.* London: Pluto Press.

Keener, E., Strough, J. & DiDonato, L. 2012. Gender Differences and Similarities in Strategies for Managing Conflict with Friends and Romantic Partners. *Sex Roles*, 67(2012): 83-97.

Keener, E. & Strough, J. 2017. Having and Doing Gender: Young Adults' Expression of Gender when Resolving Conflicts with Friends and Romantic Partners. *Sex Roles*, 76(2017): 615-626.

Kovacis, A., Podgornik, N., Pristov Z. & Raspor, A. 2017. Mobbing in a Non-Profit Organisation. *Organizacija*, 50(2): 178-186.

Leo, L., Reid, R., Geldenhuys, M. & Gobind, J. 2014. The Inferences of Gender in Workplace Bullying: A Conceptual Analysis. *Gender & Behaviour*, 12(1): 6059-6069.

Lilja, M. & Johansson, E. 2018, Feminism as Power and Resistance: An Inquiry into Different Forms of Swedish Feminist Resistance and Anti-Genderist Reactions. *Social Inclusion*, 6(4): 82-94.

Littlejohn, S.W., Foss, K.A., and Oetzel, J.G. 2016. *Theories of Human Communication*. 11th ed. Illinois: Waveland Press.

López-Cabarcos, M., Vázquez-Rodríguez, P. & Gieure, C. 2017. Gender and age differences in the psychosocial risk factors of workplace bullying. *PsycholMark*, 34(2017): 1023–1030.

Mabaso, K. 2018. #PressForProgress in the workplace: Three ways SA women can make an impact. [Online] *The Media Online*. Available at: https://themediaonline.co.za/2018/03/pressforprogress-in-the-workplace-three-wayssa-women-can-make-an-impact/ [Accessed 20 June 2019].

Maree, K (ed.). 2016. *First Steps in Research*. 2nd ed. Van Schaik: Pretoria.

Mayer, C., Surtee, S. & Mahadevan, J. 2018. South African women leaders, transformation and diversity conflict intersections. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 31(4): 877-894.

McCormack, D., Djurkovic, N., Nsubuga-Kyobe, A. & Casimir, G. 2018. Workplace bullying: The interactive effects of the perpetrator's gender and the target's gender. *Employee Relations*, 40(2): 264-280. [Online]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-07-2016-0147 [Accessed 5 April 2019]

Niewenhuis, J. 2018. Introducing Qualitative Research. In: K. Maree. 2018. *First Steps in Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Oakley, A. 1981. Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms. In H. Roberts. Ed. 1981. *Doing Feminist Research*, pp. 30-61. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Offen, K., 1988. Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach. *Signs,* 14(1), pp. 119-157.

Parr, S. 2015. Integrating critical realist and feminist methodologies: ethical and analytical dilemmas. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 18(2): 193-207.

Paustian-Underdahl, S., Rogelberg, S., King, E., Ordonez, Z., Wichert, I., and Rasch, R. 2014. Understanding the Queen Bee Effect in the Workplace: A Cross-cultural Examination. *Academy of Management Proceedings*. 2014. 10286-10286.

Pettersson, K. & Lindberg, M. 2013. Paradoxical spaces of feminist resistance: Mapping the margin to the masculinist innovation discourse. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 5(3): 323-341.

Powell, G. N., & Butterfield, D. A. (2015). The glass ceiling: what have we learned 20 years on? *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, 2(4), 306–326.

Pringle, R. 1988. *Secretaries Talk*. London: Verso.

Purcell, D., MacArthur, K. R., and Samblanet, S. 2010. Gender and the Glass Ceiling at Work. *Sociology Compass*, 4(9), 705–717.

Rai, A. and Agarwal, U. A. 2016. Linking Workplace Bullying and Work Engagement: The Mediating Role of Psychological Contract Violation. *South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management*, 4(1): 1–30.

Rakow, L. F. 1986. Rethinking Gender Research in Communication. *Journal of Communication,* 36(4): 11-26.

Redden, S. 2016. What's on the Line?: Exploring the Significance of Gendered Everyday Resistance Within the Transnational Call Center Workplace. *Globalizations*, 13(6): 846–860.

Roberts, J. 2014. Critical Realism, Dialectics, and Qualitative Research Methods. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 44(1): 1-23.

Sawicki, J. 1991. Identity Politics and Sexual Freedom. In: I. Diamond and L. Quinby. eds. *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections of Resistance.* Boston: Northeastern University Press. Pp. 17-191.

Schmidt, M. and Mestry, R. 2014. South African Principalship, Agency & Intersectionality Theory. Special Issue: School Leadership: Opportunities for Comparative Inquiry, 43(1): article 6.

Schudson, Z. C., Beischel, W. J., & van Anders, S. M. (2019). Individual variation in gender/sex category definitions. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity,* 6(4): 448–460.

Sheppard, L. and Aquino, K. 2014. Sisters at Arms: A Theory of Female Same-Sex Conflict and Its Problematization in Organizations. *Journal of Management*, 2(1): 1-25.

Sinden, E. 2017. Exploring the Gap Between Male and Female Employment in the South African Workforce. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(6): 37-51.

Stamarski, C. & Son Hing, L. 2015. Gender inequalities in the workplace: the effects of organizational structures, processes, practices, and decision makers' sexism. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6(2015): 1-20.

Statistics South Africa. 2021. Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 2: 2021. Pretoria: Department of Statistics South Africa. [Online]. Available at: https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02112ndQuarter2021.pdf [Accessed 27 October 2023].

Stewart, P. & Zaaiman, J., 2015. *Sociology: A South African Introduction*. Juta and Company (Pty) Ltd.

Trethewey, A. 1997. Resistance, Identity, and Empowerment: A Postmodern Feminist Analysis of Clients in a Human Service Organization. *Communication Monographs*, 64(4): 281-301.

Vincent, S. and O'Mahoney, J. 2016. Critical Realism and Qualitative Research: An introductory Overview. In: Cassell, Grandy, and Cunliffe, *SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods*.

Wiebe, W.T., Zhang, Y.B. and Liu, N.L. 2018. Intergenerational Conflict Management Styles: Exploring the Indirect Effects of Sex through Filial Obligation. *China Media Research*, 14(3): 44-56.

Workplace Bullying Institute. 2014. *2014 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey.* Workplace Bullying Institute, Research Studies. Workplace Bullying Institute.

Workplace Bullying Institute. 2021. 2021 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey. Workplace Bullying Institute, Research Studies. Workplace Bullying Institute. [Online]. Available at:

https://workplacebullying.org/wp- content/uploads/2021/04/2021-Full-Report.pdf [Accessed 23 February 2022].

Zimmer, L. (1988). Tokenism and Women in the Workplace: The Limits of Gender-Neutral Theory. *Social Problem*, 35(1), pp.64-77.

9. APPENDIX A – CONSENT FORM

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE

Note to researchers: Notwithstanding the need for scientific and legal accuracy, every effort should be made to produce a consent document that is as linguistically clear and simple as possible, without omitting important details as outlined below. Certified translated versions will be required once the original version is approved.

There are specific circumstances where witnessed verbal consent might be acceptable, and circumstances where individual informed consent may be waived by HSSREC.

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 25 March 2022

Dear Ms/Miss/Mrs/Mr

My name is Meghan Amy Simpson from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am currently studying an MA in Media and Cultural Studies and am conducting research in line with completing this qualification. This MA research study falls part of the College of Humanities at UKZN at the Pietermaritzburg campus. A detailed discussion of the research I am doing is below.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research around three main phenomena. First are the phenomena of female oppression in the workplace and if this led to acts of resistance by female employees in male-dominated workplaces. Second is the phenomena of females seemingly adopting more masculine communication traits in the current South African workplace. Third is the phenomena known as the 'Queen Bee' movement, or simply put, the occurrence of conflicts between females in the current South African workplace. The aim and purpose of this research is to understand these three phenomena in more depth and determine whether the three are linked in a relationship where one leads to the other as a process. The study is expected to enroll 40 participants that are female, reside in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, are between the ages of 35 and 60 years of age, work in an industry that experienced female oppression in previous years and that sets a competitive environment – even in subtle ways, and that allows for communication to take place between all employees. Participation in this study would involve completing a questionnaire. The duration of your participation if you choose to participate in the

study is expected to be no longer that 45 minutes for the questionnaire. The study is funded by me as the researcher and receives no additional funding.

The study may involve the following you having to discuss any conflicts experienced in the workplace as it pertains to the study, as well as questions regarding your history with resisting male-dominance and potential adoption of masculine communication traits. At no point, however, will you be asked to provide the name of any company worked for, or any individuals encountered. This information is not allowed to be included in the study or questionnaire responses. Your experiences will be broadly spoken to without identifying factors. I hope that the study will create further understanding of the three phenomena discussed above and may help contribute to the understanding of why they happen so that such conflicts can be prevented in the future.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number_____).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at (222126591@stu.ukzn.ac.za) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001 Durban 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any point in time should they wish to. In the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not incur penalty. Should a participant refuse or withdraw, I, as the researcher, will look for a replacement participant that meets the same criteria. Should it be too late in the research to do this, the loss of a participant will need to be accounted for when analysing the data.

To ensure the safety of participants, all participants' identities will be kept confidential and only known to the researcher and the supervisor. Furthermore, participants will be asked to refrain from providing any details of the companies discussed during the interview stage because the aim of this study is not to identify which companies have experienced these phenomena, but rather is to measure the phenomena broadly. Participants may, however, disclose the industry within which they work.

CONSENT (Edit as required)

I _____(Name and Surname) have been informed about the study entitled "Examining Communication Conflicts Between Females in South African Gendered Organisations as a Long-Term Result of Feminist Resistance: A Correlative, Mixed Method Study " by Meghan Amy Simpson.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at (222126591@stu.ukzn.ac.za).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001 Durban 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

I hereby provide consent to:

Completing the questionnaire and allowing the data collected to be used for research purposes

YES / NO

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

_____ _____

Signature of Witness **Date**

(Where applicable)

_____ _____

Signature of Translator **Date**

(Where applicable)

10. APPENDIX B – QUESTIONNAIRE

Communication Conflicts Questionnaire

The researcher, Meghan Simpson, is a postgraduate student at UKZN studying a Masters degree. In line with this MA degree, Meghan is conducting a research study title "Examining Communication Conflicts Between Females in South African Gendered Organisations as a Long-Term Result of Feminist Resistance: A Correlative, Mixed Method Study." Participation in completing this questionnaire is optional. If you find that you are uncomfortable answering a certain question, you may withdraw from the study without explanation or any repercussions. While your identity will be known by the researcher, it will be kept confidential to all others and your name and personal details will be kept private and confidential at all times. Please note that this questionnaire should take no longer than 45 minutes to an hour to complete. Please provide honest and transparent answers to each question. Please also ensure that you complete all four sections of the questionnaire.

For this questionnaire, the following rules apply:

1. Please do not mention any names of the company you work for at any time or names of colleagues. Such information is not required.
2. Please ensure that you sign the consent form prior to answering this questionnaire.

* Indicates required question

Section One: Demographic Questions

Please tick the boxes applicable to you. Only tick one box per question.

1. Please tick the age group within which you fall:

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ 35-39 years of age
- ◯ 40-44 years of age
- ◯ 45-49 years of age

- [ ] 50-54 years of age
- [ ] 55-60 years of age

2. Please tick the racial group within which you fall:

   Mark only one oval.

   - [ ] African
   - [ ] Coloured
   - [ ] Indian
   - [ ] White
   - [ ] Other

3. Please tick the industry within which you work:

   Mark only one oval.

   - [ ] Retail
   - [ ] Sales and Telecommunications
   - [ ] Information Communication Technologies
   - [ ] Broadcasting and Entertainment
   - [ ] Real Estate, Rental and Leasing
   - [ ] Finance and Insurance
   - [ ] Education
   - [ ] Legal Services
   - [ ] Healthcare
   - [ ] Tourism
   - [ ] Mining and Construction
   - [ ] Agriculture
   - [ ] Other

4. How many years have you been working in the above stated industry?

Mark only one oval.

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21 + years

5. What job position level do you currently work in at your company of employment?

Mark only one oval.

- Entry level position
- Junior position
- Senior (experience) position
- First level managerial position
- Middle managerial position
- Executive managerial position

Section Two: Communication Conflicts

Please tick the boxes applicable to you. Only tick one box per question unless stated otherwise.

6. Which of the following characteristics best describes your working environment? *You may tick more than one box if multiple options are applicable to your environment.*

Tick all that apply.

- [ ] Male employees are favoured by management for managerial roles
- [ ] Male employees hold more managerial positions
- [ ] Female employees are treated unequally compared to male employees

- [ ] Job duties are based on gender stereotypes i.e. receptionists must be female
- [ ] None of the above

7. Have you ever experienced female oppression or sexism in your industry of work?

   Mark only one oval.

   - ◯ Yes
   - ◯ No

8. Have you ever employed the following acts in retaliation or response to a male colleague or supervisor?
   You may tick multiple boxes if more than one is applicable to you.

   Please note that if you answer "No" to question 7 above, you must select "Not Applicable" as your answer in this question.

   Tick all that apply.

   - [ ] Gossiping
   - [ ] Name calling
   - [ ] Mocking
   - [ ] Refusal of work or tasks
   - [ ] Going against clear instructions
   - [ ] Challenging their power or position
   - [ ] None of the above
   - [ ] Not applicable

9. Why did you use the act/s selected in the above question in response to your male colleague or supervisor?
   Please note if you selected "No" in question 7 and "Not applicable" in question 8 above, please mark this question as "N/A."

Section Three: Communication Styles

Please tick the boxes applicable to you. Only tick one box per question unless stated otherwise.

10. How would you describe your communication style in the workplace according to passive, passive aggressive, aggressive and assertive styles?

    Please provide a detailed description of your communication style.

11.1. When communicating with colleagues in the workplace, do you generally control or dominate the conversation?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

11.2. When communicating with colleagues, do you feel comfortable interrupting others to share your own opinions or perspectives?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

11.3. In the workplace, do you feel comfortable making demands when communicating with colleagues and supervisors?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

11.4. When in competitive or conflict situations in the workplace, do you feel that you must win the competition or argument?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

11.5. When working with your colleagues, do you put your own goals first over the goals of others?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

11.6. When communicating with colleagues, are you direct and strategic in the interaction?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

11.7. Are you ever condescending or sarcastic when communicating with colleagues in the workplace?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

11.8. When things do not go your way in the workplace, do you get frustrated easily with your colleagues?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

12. If you answered yes too three or more of the previous questions, our answers show to have some more masculine communication traits if three or more answers were yes. How do you think those communication traits influence your communication with female colleagues?

13. Could you elaborate on why you use these more masculine communication traits indicated in the above questions?

Section Four

Please tick the boxes applicable to you. Only tick one box per question unless stated otherwise.

14. Are you competitive with your female colleagues in the workplace?

Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

15. How are you competitive with your female colleagues in the workplace?

Please note if you selected "never", please answer "N/A" as your answer here - any other answer requires an answer to this question.

16. Why do you think you are competitive with your female colleagues in the workplace?

Please note if you selected "never" , please answer "N/A" as your answer here - any other answer requires an answer to this question.

17. Have you ever experienced conflict/s with your female colleagues in the workplace?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

18. Which of the following options best describes the conflict/s you have experienced with your female colleagues?

Please tick multiple boxes if multiple options are applicable to you. If you answered "no" to the above question, please tick the "Not Applicable" option below.

Tick all that apply.

- [ ] Gossiping
- [ ] Name calling
- [ ] Exclusion from conversation
- [ ] Spreading of rumours and/or character ruining
- [ ] Verbal abuse
- [ ] Direct arguments about clashing work ideas/perspectives/opinions
- [ ] Fear mongering
- [ ] Bullying
- [ ] Other
- [ ] Not Applicable

19. How do you think your communication style impacts these conflict situations with females?

Please answer "N/A" ONLY if you answered "no" in the question before last.

11. APPENDIX C – SCORDING AND CODING SHEET

Section One: Demographics	
1	Demographic – no score attached
2	Demographic – no score attached
3	Demographic – no score attached
4	Demographic – no score attached
5	Demographic – no score attached
Section Two	
6	Male employees are favoured by management for managerial roles – 1 point Male employees hold more managerial positions – 1 point Females employees are treated unequally compared to male employees – 1 point Job duties are based on gender stereotypes – 1 point None of the above – 0 point
7	Yes – 1 point No – 0 point
8	Gossiping – 1 point Name calling – 1 point Mocking – 1 point Refusal of work or tasks – 1 point Going against clear instructions – 1 point Challenging their power or position – 1 point None of the above – 0 point Not Applicable – 0 point
9	A) Reason is because of previous female oppression or sexism –1 point B) Reason is because they do not like their boss – 0 point C) Non-related reasons – 0 point D) N/A – 0 point
Section Three	
10	A) Shows passive definition of own communication style – 0 point B) Shows passive-aggressive definition of own communication style – 0 point C) Shows aggressive definition of own communication style – 1 point D) Shows assertive definition of own communication style – 1 point
11.1	Yes – 1 point No – 0 point
11.2	Yes – 1 point No – 0 point
11.3	Yes – 1 point No – 0 point
11.4	Yes – 1 point No – 0 point
11.5	Yes – 1 point No – 0 point
11.6	Yes – 1 point No – 0 point
11.7	Yes – 1 point No – 0 point
11.8	Yes – 1 point No – 0 point

12	A) Shows that their masculine communication traits have a major impact on their communication with female colleagues – 1 point B) Shows that their masculine communication traits have a minor impact on their communication with female colleagues – 1 point C) Shows that their masculine communication traits have no impact on their communication with female colleagues – 0 point D) N/A – 0 point
13	A) Response shows that it is due to female oppression or sexism and/or to resist male power – 1 point B) Response shows it is because other females do this, so the participant does it in response – 0 point C) Non-related answers – 0 point D) N/A – 0 point
Section Four	
14	Never – 0 point Rarely – 0 point Sometimes – 1 point Often – 1 point Always – 1 point
15	A) Shows major competitiveness with female colleagues – 1 point B) Shows normal competitiveness with female colleagues – 1 point C) Shows minor competitiveness with female colleagues – 0 point D) N/A – 0 point
16	A) Response shows that it is because they mut act like men to succeed in the company above other females – 1 point B) Response shows that it is because they are forced to compete against females – 1 point C) Simply a competitive environment – 0 point D) Non-related reasons – 0 point E) N/A – 0 point
17	Yes – 1 point No – 0 point
18	Gossiping – 1 point Name calling – 1 point Exclusion from conversation – 1 point Spreading of rumours and/or character ruining – 1 point Verbal abuse – 1 point Direct arguments about clashing work ideas/perspectives/opinions – 1 point Fear mongering – 1 point Bullying – 1 point Other – 0 point Not Applicable – 0 point
19	A) Response indicates a major impact – 1 point B) Response indicates a minor impact – 1 point C) Response indicates no impact – 0 point D) N/A – 0 point

12. APPENDIX D – RAW DATA COLLECTED

Participant	Variable 'a' Score Feminist Resistance (total out of 12)	Variable 'b' Score Masculine Communication Traits (total out of 12)	Variable 'c' Score Female Conflicts (total out of 14)
1	5	5	4
2	4	5	3
3	2	2	1
4	5	10	8
5	5	2	2
6	6	5	4
7	9	1	4
8	0	1	2
9	0	2	4
10	6	5	12
11	9	7	10
12	6	10	3
13	0	5	2
14	0	3	0
15	1	4	0
16	5	5	6
17	0	3	4
18	2	3	7
19	0	2	2
20	4	2	8
21	6	1	10
22	3	7	2
23	0	2	3
24	1	2	0
25	0	5	3