TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN GRADE R

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DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment/partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Educational Psychology, in the Graduate Programme in Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

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As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

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Date: 16 July 2024

ABSTRACT

The first year of formal schooling for a child in South Africa is grade R. During this time, the child becomes conscious of themselves and others. In this first academic year, gender becomes a crucial component of a child's consciousness. This awareness might be brought about formally or informally. In some ways, it is emphasised or internalised more to distinguish between the genders., such as using spoken language, providing specific resources in the classroom, or assigning specific duties to learners. The South African educational system has made significant progress toward being a more inclusive institution. An important component of inclusive education is the acceptance and inclusion of learners' gender identities, including those who identify as non-binary, queer, gay, lesbian, or homosexual, male and female, as equitable learners. Thus, the study attempts to contribute to the topic of gender equality by exploring the perceptions of Grade R teachers on promoting gender equality. This qualitative study, established within an interpretive paradigm, aims to acquire an understanding of gender equality by grade R teachers. By doing so, an investigation to examine how gender equality is promoted in the Grade R classroom will be conducted. In addition, a critical look into the relevance and necessity of promoting gender equality in Grade R is explained. The theoretical frameworks that underpin this study are Critical Emancipatory theory, social role theory and social constructionist theory. The sampling of two Grade R educators at an Early Childhood Development centre in the informal area of Cato Manor, Durban had been purposively selected to provide relevant data. Two data collection methods were used: collages and semi-structured interviews, which assisted in the data generation. This case study provided in-depth knowledge of the perspectives of the Grade R teachers. In doing so, teachers' perspectives on how gender equality is promoted in grade R and the necessity for the promotion of gender equality in this grade are analysed. The findings showed that teachers have an awareness of the varied gender learners in grade R. This knowledge contributes to their pedagogy, in and out of the classroom. It is recommended that gender-responsive pedagogy be introduced to all teachers, including the in-service training teachers, to provide a cognisance and an inclusive environment for all gendered learners.

Keywords: Grade R, gender, gender equality, Grade R teachers, learners, gender roles, language, inclusivity

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ABBREVIATIONS

CER	Critical Emancipatory Research
DoE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
GRADE R	The Reception Year

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

South Africa has many areas with unfair treatment due to its troubled and diverse history. Education is one of the most affected sectors. “The positions of our innocent and helpless children were determined by our decadent and immoral race and exclusion” (White Paper 6 Special Needs Education, DoE, 2001, p.4). Consequently, South Africa boldly moved forward. For example, in the Admission to Public Schools 5(1) under the South African School’s Act (84 of 1996), it is stated that “A public school must admit learners and serve their education requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way”. This meant that White Paper 6 (2001) offered more on inclusive education for clarification purposes. The children of South Africa had to be respected and acknowledged as well as provided with support, free from racist judgments or stigmatisation based on their race, gender, background, and language. The school environment, teaching materials, and method of instruction should be embracing and welcoming to all learners (WP6 Special Needs Education, DoE, 2001). Becoming a rainbow nation has brought together the different races in a cohesive manner, whereby there is an acceptance and understanding of the differences in language, customs, backgrounds, and culture. The remaining difference, which is still a stark reality in South Africa, is gender inequality and acceptance.

Grade R is the first official year of schooling for a child whereby the child is conscientized about the differences that exist between all learners. This may take place formally and informally. Preschool emphasises children’s involvement and gender equality, and for many children, it is the first significant step in their education to become democratic citizens (Hjelmér, 2020). Gender becomes a critical aspect of these differences during this initial learning year at school. Gender recognition and integration of learners, not merely of male or female, but rather of non-binary, queer, gay, lesbian, or homosexual, is a crucial aspect of inclusive education. UNESCO (2005, p.12) defined inclusive education as “a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning”. This definition goes on to say that adjustments must be made to the strategies, content, and methods of education. In 2022, inclusive education in South African primary schools, expanded its boundaries by introducing Gender Responsive Pedagogy to Grade R teachers, to be implemented by Grade R teachers.

Gender disparities in South African society permeate the classroom in a variety of interconnected ways. These elements influence learners' sense of agency as well as their professional goals and accomplishments (Rarieya et al., 2014). The goal of Grade R policies and programs is to support a child's democratic right to develop his or her cognitive, emotional, social, and physical potential, as stated in Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education (RSA, DBE, 2001a). Every person is a stakeholder in this process. Through in-depth investigations into teachers' perspectives on gender equality in Grade R, gender-responsive pedagogy can be improved. As social activities between the teacher and learner contribute to the child's overall development and understanding, teacher effectiveness and teaching quality must be prioritised (Luckner and Pianta, 2011). This study aims to acquire knowledge of the teachers' perspectives on the promotion of gender equality in Grade R as well as to examine the relevance of gender equality and how it is promoted in Grade R.

1.2 Rationale

Three key elements have motivated me to conduct this study: my professional, personal, and contextual perspectives. My perspectives developed from conversations with friends who identify as male, female, homosexual, lesbian, or non-binary. These friends frequently talked about the struggles and injustices they encountered at school because of their "gender," beginning in Grade R. Throughout their school days, they experienced mistreatment, exclusion, bullying, and misunderstanding from both teachers and peers. It was interesting to hear about their experiences with the curriculum, the language used in the classroom, and the attitudes of both teachers and students. There appeared to be a lack of acceptance, tolerance, and understanding in the educational system. I can also recall instances from my childhood where I was prohibited from participating in particular hobbies just because I was a "girl," such as practising soccer and karate. These were activities that only "boys" were involved in.

My professional encounters, which came to light when I was teaching, supported this. I have 29 years of experience teaching in the Foundation phase, having worked with learners in grades R through 3. As such, I have encountered many people who have put up with being considered the "butt of the joke" and having their gender misinterpreted. Unfortunately, the curriculum is not created with all learners in mind, and the misunderstanding widens. I discovered that my personal experiences shaped and impacted my attitude toward learners. My interactions with acquaintances who identify as non-binary gender and my own experiences of exclusion have

already made me more accepting and mindful of other people. This attitude of acceptance and understanding helped me when I interacted with my students. A teacher may find it challenging to identify and value others if they have not interacted with the various "gender" students or if they are still dogmatic about male/female roles.

I participated in a workshop conducted by the Early Childhood Development (ECD) department in 2022, which trained Grade R teachers on classroom practices that promote gender responsiveness and acceptance of various gender identities. For all teachers, gender awareness and gender-responsive teaching methods are essential. The first step in removing obstacles and advancing toward learner integration involves training teachers. During the Gender Responsive session, a colleague related her story of her lesbian daughter telling her parents about her gender identity or when she "came out." The colleague claimed that her husband's initial response was likewise unwelcoming, as the Black society did not tolerate different gender identities. Since the Indian community is also quite traditional and reluctant to accept the gay, queer, and non-binary genders, as well as the rigidly divided roles that men and women must play, I could identify with her. One contextual aspect that influences people's views and recognition of gender-nonconforming people is growing up in a culture or society that is non-accepting and inflexible in its thinking and beliefs about gender. This might also have an impact on the grade R teacher's worldview and mindset.

Due to the apartheid system that formerly existed and excluded people of other races or cultures, South Africa as a nation has put laws and regulations in place to become more inclusive and tolerant. The concept of gender is included in this regulation as well. According to UNESCO (2015, p. 9-10),

> "Gender refers to the socially constructed relations between men and women… Gender equality ensures that men and women enjoy the same status and have equal opportunities to exercise their 74 human rights and realize their full potential. Gender equality in education ensures that female and male learners are treated equally, have equal access to learning opportunities, and benefit from education equally. They become empowered and can fulfil their potential so that they can contribute to and benefit from social, cultural, political, and economic development equally. Special treatment/action can be taken to reverse the historical and social disadvantages that prevent female and male learners from occurring and benefitting from education on equal grounds."

Considering this definition, it is also necessary to investigate the inclusion of gender differences in education and perhaps create plans to improve their integration. Beyond simply

being male or female, gender distinctions also encompass being gay, lesbian, transgender, and non-binary, among others.

To envision gender-expansive education in the educational system and to provide light on two trans-affirmative policies and their effects on supporting transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary students, Omercajic and Martino's study (2020) was conducted. Creating awareness and understanding about the best strategies to assist male, female, transgender, and non-binary children in schools was the aim of the project. They conducted a critical policy analysis, looking at the limits of tolerance and the need to embrace gender equality through curriculum and pedagogy changes. According to the research, teachers and managers need to keep a close eye on ethical and political issues in education and school systems as part of an overall initiative to support gender equity and gender democratisation for all learners. It also emphasised the necessity of a positive policy aimed at resolving marginalisation concerning pre-service and in-service teaching to ensure that the implementation of the required teacher threshold understanding of gender diversity can take place.

According to Kuteesa et al. (2024), one of the main tenets of human development and societal progress is gender fairness in education. It means making sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally, irrespective of gender, in every facet of the educational process, from outcomes and experiences to access to educational opportunities. Kuteesa et al. (2024) further reiterate that globally, gender equality in education has advanced significantly, yet discrepancies still exist, which presents obstacles to social empowerment and equitable development. This is very relevant to the current research as it brings attention to educational policies.

South Africa, as a democratic nation, has put policies and legislation in place to encourage and ensure democracy. It is essential to be aware of the policymakers who are active in policy development. Consequently, the purpose of this research is to raise awareness of the policies that have been put in place and determine whether they are being followed. It will be possible for policymakers to question and modify such policies critically. The democratic system and inclusive education in South Africa both depend significantly on gender inclusion. The key factor after having such policies in place is delving deeper into the people that implement these policies; in this case, the teacher features as the central figure. Thus, establishing equality and fairness among genders in the classroom is the combination of the policies at schools and the social construct that the teacher employs to ensure that gender knowledge and acceptance are implemented.

1.3 Background of the Study

Gender can be interpreted and understood in different ways. According to Lindqvist et al. (2020), a person's gender assigns them to one of two binary categories: woman/man or female/male. However, gender goes beyond being merely male or female. Lindqvist et al. (2020) proposes to operationalise gender as a combination of multiple dimensions, which can further be categorised into four primary elements: (a) bodily/physiological features (sex); (b) legal gender (c) social gender and (d) self-defined gender or gender identity. By investigating these four elements, a clearer definition of gender will be gained. Nonbinary gender identities are defined by McNabb (2018) as those who identify as neither exclusively male nor female. Individuals who identify as nonbinary may exhibit characteristics of both sexes, blend, or exist outside of the conventional male-female spectrum entirely. McNabb (2018) goes on to say that the term "nonbinary" refers to both a broad category and a particular one. Other terms that describe this identity include genderqueer, bigender, and genderfluid. Despite the recent increase in representation, McNabb (2018) claims that these people have existed for generations.

Indigenous communities around the world have acknowledged alternative perspectives on gender and identities that fail to neatly fit inside the Western dichotomy (McNabb, 2018). However, the Anglo-European gender system is a strict binary that exclusively acknowledges males and females in predetermined gender roles. Nonetheless, there have always been people who did not fit in. The Euro-centric worldview, which recognised exclusively males and females, was embraced in the setting of South African history. Currently, especially in education, they are being modernised and acknowledged as not being inclusive.

According to Chapin and Warne (2020), the gender gap in education starts in the early years of learning. In settings where boys receive an unequal number of teachers' attention and when girls are frequently directed toward "lower status" areas and discouraged from speaking, different-gendered learners are merely disregarded. Chapin and Warne (2020) further draw attention to the idea of a "hidden curriculum," in which a particular gender is allowed to dominate debates and classroom space, which emerged because of gender-blind teaching techniques, which perpetuate gender inequality in the classroom. These disparities continue into higher learning. To be inclusive, schools need to be conscious of all genders of learners (not only male and female) and more importantly, to recognise, understand and accept them.

The role of the teachers in the inclusion of all learners is vital, especially in Grade R, as this is the learners' first interaction with many "different" learners. To support schools and teachers in this attempt and the political project of effecting gender democratisation, resources are also required.

This study, therefore, aims to explore the teachers' perspectives on enhancing gender integration in Grade R, to get a clearer understanding of it, and to provide possible strategies in which to enhance the integration of the varied gendered learners in the Grade R classroom.

1.4 Problem Statement

When children are born, they are assigned a gender. However, according to McNabb (2018), even though most people identify with the gender they were given at birth, sex and gender are not always related. The gender designation is determined by the biological sex of the newborn, which is determined by the infant's genital appearance. However, biological sex is much more intricate than physical sex; in addition to the external genitalia, it also encompasses chromosomes, hormones, reproductive organs, and secondary sex traits. Judith Butler, a feminist thinker, asserted in 1990 that neither gender nor sex is politically neutral and that both are generated within a system of power dynamics that supports rigid heterosexuality. Gender, according to her, is not a state but rather an activity (McNabb, 2018). These provoking lines of thought take one deeper into establishing what gender is.

Barr et al. (2024) further distinguish between sex and gender. Sex includes anatomy, physiology, genetics, and hormones, while gender incorporates identity, roles and norms, relations, and power. To put it another way, gender, a social, cultural, and structural variable, and sex, a biological variable, work independently of one another and in ways that can either strengthen, decrease, or neutralise the other's impact on health. Every aspect of gender has a big influence on people's daily lives, employment prospects, family relationships, and health. Gender stereotypes are ingrained in societal conventions, institutional systems, and interpersonal relationships (Barr et al., 2024).

In my experience, people associate gender with genital appearance rather than what gender the individual relates to. After that, roles are assigned or expected from the individual based on their genital appearance. According to Kogan (1997), critical gender theorists (male and female) question the assumption that everyone typically conforms to either of the two

distinctive types of gender (masculine or feminine), which are determined by biologically generated sexual traits. Critical gender theory argues that a person's gender representation need not be related to their biological sex. By societal beliefs, social accomplishments, and acquired performances, men and women present themselves as gendered individuals. Biology does not causally determine gender (Kogan, 1997). Ramadhani and Setiawan (2021) clarify that gender is a term about a person's biological system. Gender also becomes the primary factor that determines a person's viewpoint on anything, which another perspective of social and cultural aspects of society must follow. This viewpoint perpetuates a stereotype about whether men and women have different duties and rules to follow to be considered regular members of society.

To challenge gender stereotypes, Tavits and Perez (2019) claim that numerous countries have passed legislation supporting gender equity and inclusion. Examples of these laws include those that increase childcare alternatives, decrease gender wage disparities and impose quotas on female political participation. Furthermore, these measures have led to the creation of rules that lessen social and economic discrimination against the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities while promoting their political rights. To promote gender integration, nations like Sweden have embraced the usage of gender-neutral pronouns, such as "they", in place of "he" or "she," as well as the introduction of the word "hen." If gender-neutral pronouns diminish the significance of traditional gender roles, speakers who use them will be more supportive of LGBT persons and are less inclined to feel that these roles are being violated (Tavits and Perez, 2019).

According to Markus et al. (2022), learners' social ties are seen to be important factors for their school well-being because learning occurs in a social setting every day in schools. Studies, however, particularly at the preschool (grade R) level, are deficient in examining the gender-specific interactions that learners have with their teachers and peers. Herein lies the gap or problem. The possibility exists that the way a teacher interacts with their varied gender learners might influence how the learners interact socially and accept each other. Teachers who have a strong understanding and rapport with their students may also be able to provide them with greater emotional support, which promotes gender social growth. Thus, the need arises to explore teacher's perspectives on gender equality as a means of promoting school socialisation and gender acceptance.

With South Africa promoting inclusive education as a means of achieving equality and acceptance in its education system, it is imperative to delve into the question of gender

integration at schools. According to Warin and Adriany (2015), early childhood education (ECE) has long been recognised as one of the most gendered professions. Thus, Gender Responsive Pedagogy, which focuses on teaching styles, methods, assessments, and feedback, among others, becomes a critical component in the recognition of gender equality and is now being encouraged at schools starting in Grade R. However, the pivotal person in this inclusive process is the teacher. The standpoint or views of the teacher on gender differences and gender acceptance can either enhance or diminish gender integration and the understanding of learners with varied gender recognition preferences. Acknowledging and accepting gender differences by teachers in Grade R may set an inclusive environment for learners to progress in without any stigmas or exclusion being attached to the learners. Thus, the teachers' perspectives on gender equality and integration are critical to this study.

1.5 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore teachers' perspectives in Grade R on the promotion of gender equality.

The objectives of this study are:

1. To acquire knowledge of the teachers' perspectives on the promotion of gender equality in Grade R.
2. To examine how teachers promote gender equality in Grade R.
3. To investigate the relevance and necessity of promoting gender equality in Grade R.

1.6 Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What are teachers' perspectives on the promotion of gender equality in a Grade R?
2. How do teachers promote gender equality in Grade R?
3. Why is it necessary for teachers to promote gender equality in Grade R?

1.7 Location of the Study

This case study was conducted in Cato Manor in the town of Durban. Known for its African, Indian, and colonial influences, Durban is a coastal city in the KwaZulu-Natal province of eastern South Africa. Affectionately referred to as the "Durbs," this metropolis is the biggest

in KwaZulu-Natal and, following Johannesburg and Cape Town, the third most populous in all of South Africa. The eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality, which includes Durban, is home to 3.44 million people living in the surrounding towns. Cato Manor is approximately 7 kilometres from the city centre of Durban. The history of Cato Manor is one of injustice and discrimination during the apartheid era. Poverty and inequality are still widespread here. The ECD centre selected for the case study is in the Umlazi District's Cato Manor neighbourhood. It will be referred to under the pseudonym "Shining Stars." Shining Stars serves local babies, toddlers, and Grade R learners. The roll of the school is 204 and this includes the babies and toddlers care as well because many working parents need this service for their children. The Grade R learners, babies, and toddlers are kept in distinct areas and have access to separate facilities. The ECD centre provides services to this lower income community. The Department of Basic Education supports this public ECD centre by providing financial subsidies to pay for teachers, learners meals, and amenities such as lights and water. Some learners pay school funds while the Department of Basic Education funds some. Six teachers who are qualified to teach Grade R are responsible for this foundational level of education. The principal is also a qualified Grade R teacher.

1.8 Clarification of Terms

1.8.1 Grade R

In 2001, Grade R was implemented in South Africa as a prelude to formal education. Before this change, preschool was supposed to provide various preparatory experiences to provide children with the tools they needed for successful formal education. Grade R is currently covered in the Foundation Phase of Early Childhood Development (ECD) education. Aiming to ensure Grade R standards and requirements before entering Grade One, the present Grade R curriculum is outlined in CAPS (2011), along with the Resource Kit and policy instructions in DBE (2015) documents (Segooa and Machaba, 2024).

1.8.2 Gender equality

The fair and equal treatment of people in all respects, including access, opportunities, and results, is known as gender equality. It includes fostering an atmosphere in which women and men, girls and boys, and other gendered individuals have equal access to and utilization of resources, programs, careers, opportunities, and experiences (Kuteesa, Akpuokwe, and Udeh, 2024). When people of all genders have equal access to education and learning, the chances of success help them personally and advance society as a whole. This promotes social empowerment

1.8.3 Early Childhood Education

The education of children aged three to five is the main focus of early childhood education. These programs seek to enhance children's academic abilities, including language and early literacy skills and the development of math and science-related knowledge and skills. The growth of their social and emotional abilities is also crucial. This is frequently the first group setting the children have ever been in (Epstein and Barnett, 2012). Early Childhood Education is defined as: “An umbrella term which applies to the process by which children from birth to nine years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially” (DoE, 1995a:23).

1.8.4 Gender Responsive Pedagogy

Gender Responsive Pedagogy refers to the teaching and learning processes (both within and outside the classroom) whereby the learning requirements of students are taken into consideration based on their gender. When designing and facilitating lessons, teaching staff considers gender issues and responds to them. They also constantly reflect on and make adaptations (Chapin and Warne, 2020). According to Dorji (2020), for educators to establish a gender-responsive learning environment, gender-responsive pedagogy is especially crucial. Teachers and learners frequently lack awareness of the demands that are unique to boys and girls based on their gender. In schools, discriminatory behaviours against a specific gender occur, whether intentionally or inadvertently.

1.9 Research Design and Methodology Synopsis

The research design and methodology synopsis describe the route that I undertook when conducting this study. This research used a case study design and was conducted within the interpretive paradigm. In qualitative research, case studies enable the investigator to perform a comprehensive analysis of the subjects (Tzannetis, 2022).

1.9.1 Sampling Strategy

This study uses purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, which is the deliberate participant selection. Etikan et al. (2016) claim that neither underlying theories nor a set number of participants are necessary for this non-random technique. In short, the researcher decides what data is required and then looks for people who can and will provide it based on their expertise or experience. This purposive sampling enabled me to select teachers who

possessed attributes that were pertinent to the research. Two teachers of Grade R made up the sample selected for this investigation. The educational background and teaching experience were taken into consideration as sample selection criteria for the objectives of this study.

1.9.2 Research Methods

The semi-structured interviews and collages were used to generate the data needed for the study were conducted with participants. Studies of this kind, which require the views of teachers, typically employ semi-structured interviews, and to make sure that the researcher accurately gathered the teachers' thoughts, ideas, and comprehension of gender equality, open-ended questions were asked during the interviews (Barrett and Twycross, 2018). The participants were also allowed to freely express themselves using images and illustrations by creating collages. While the participants were given precise directions and a time limit to complete the collage, the interviews necessitated a prearranged meeting time.

1.9.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this investigation. First, a transcription of the interviews was made. The interviews' transcriptions were then read several times over. Following that, the data was categorised and sorted. Data reduction, thereafter, is the procedure that allows the researcher to concentrate on important concerns from the data analysis. The researcher was able to find recurring patterns in the data by organising and classifying it. Next, the patterns were shown in a themed format. The data was then used to come to conclusions (Creswell, 2013).

1.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethics must be considered when doing research investigation. According to Creswell (2012), following a set of rigid rules, like those issued by professional groups or school institutional review boards, is only one aspect of practicing ethics; there are many others to consider. Ethics has become a more prominent concept from the beginning of a research study until its eventual completion and dissemination.

In this study, the principal's approval was needed. An application for ethical clearance was made. The researcher ensured that every participant understood the goal of the study by communicating with them openly and honestly. Following that, every participant provided written approval to take part. The fact that the interviews would be recorded was disclosed to the participants. They also received assurances that their involvement in the study would not

cause them any damage. The participants received information about the protection of their identities. They were then informed that their privacy, safety, and confidentiality would all be safeguarded. Also, the participants were told they might leave the study during the interview procedure if they wished to do so.

1.11 Outline of Report

Chapter 1: This chapter provides the study's overview. There is also an explanation of the study's significance, background, and reasoning. It then goes on to address the study's objectives and research questions before providing a brief overview of the school where the study is being done. The outline for each chapter is then provided.

Chapter 2: The literature review is covered in this chapter. Initially, the literature on gender equality is reviewed followed by the impact of the community on gender equality. After that, scholarly reviews on the role of the teacher in promoting gender equality are discussed. Lastly, literature about the role of the school is evaluated. The conclusion is presented in the last section of this chapter.

Chapter 3: This section examines the study's theoretical foundation. The study's theoretical frameworks used are the Critical Emancipatory Theory, the Social Role Theory, and the Social Construction Theory. The theoretical frameworks and how they underpin this study are discussed in detail.

Chapter 4: In this chapter, the methodology used in this investigation is presented. The discussion of the qualitative method comes first. The interpretive research paradigm is then covered. After a brief explanation of the study's location, the selected sample strategies are discussed. An explanation of the research methodologies and ethical considerations follows this debate. The methods for data analysis are covered after that. Following that, an explanation is given outlining how the research project ensured its findings could be verified. This chapter's penultimate section addresses the study's shortcomings before outlining the conclusion.

Chapter 5: This section includes a thorough examination of the information gathered. Through the use of the thematic analysis of the data received, themes and sub-themes emerged, which are presented in this chapter. Every theme is thoroughly discussed, and each explanation incorporates research from academic sources. The theoretical framework of the research is incorporated into its rationale as well.

Chapter 6: The researcher concludes this study by revising the research questions, followed by the synopsis of all the previous chapters. After that, the study's key findings are summarised. The limitations of the study are presented subsequently and, lastly, recommendations for potential directions for further research are suggested.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter began by providing a summary of the study, followed by a discussion of the rationale. The background knowledge and the study's significance were then given. The aims, objectives, and research questions were clarified. The location and the outline of the report followed the research questions. An in-depth literature review is included in the next chapter, Chapter Two.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave an overview of this study, which delves deeper into the teachers' perspectives on gender equality in Grade R. The study's purpose which is to acquire knowledge of the teachers' perspectives on the promotion of gender equality in Grade R as well as to examine how teachers promote gender equality in Grade R, was discussed. The relevance and necessity of gender equality in Grade R was also included. The research questions, linked to the aims and objectives, were presented. The previous chapter also included the location of the study, which is an ECD centre in the informal settlement of Cator Manor. This chapter presents the body of research pertinent to the investigation of Grade R teachers' perceptions of gender equality. Research articles, dissertations and thesis by various scholars were perused on the subject of gender equality. The effect of gender inequality on academic achievement and the emotional and social impact of gender inequality in South Africa as well as in other countries are also examined. Presenting various literature reviews assists in making meaning of the conceptualisation of gender equality, the impact of the community on gender equality, the role of the teacher in promoting gender equality and how the school can support and influence gender equality.

2.2 The Conceptualisation of gender equality

Knowing what gender integration is and the opposite thereof, which is gender inequality or segregation, is crucial to comprehending what gender equality means. According to Limaj (2022), gender equality refers to the ability for people to freely express their preferences, grow their knowledge and abilities in any field they choose, and have equal chances and rights in all spheres of life, regardless of their biological gender.

There are three main stages in life when people recognise their gender diversity, according to Brill and Pepper (2008), (as cited in Bartholomaeus et al., 2017): childhood, early adolescence, and late adolescence. For instance, a United States of America study (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011, as cited in Bartholomaeus et al., 2017) found that the mean age at which participants realised their gender or that they were transgender or gender different was 5.4 years old. This is very relevant for this research study as the focus is Grade R, in which the learners' ages range from 4.5 years old to 5.4 years old. It is at this age that children recognise themselves and other genders. This awareness thus needs an environment of understanding and support for "who"

they are. Paechter (2021) confirms that children's gender performances are fundamentally shaped by their bodies. Along with other identities, like ethnic or religious ones, their clothing choices, hairstyles, and use of makeup and nail polish are some of the ways they reveal and occasionally actively embody their gender identities. This is especially evident in some of the youngest, who often hold strong opinions about the proper ways for boys and girls to use their bodies and look.

According to Rahilly (2015), as cited in Paechter (2021), younger children may find it easier to experiment or transition socially to a greater or lesser extent because of the outward similarities between girls' and boys' bodies, with differences depending on things that can be easily changed. This includes tomboy girls who present as boys to a group of new friends, as well as trans children who are fully recognised in their identified gender in their family, educational institutions, and social life. Rarieya et al. (2014) maintain that boys and girls are affected by gender in distinct ways. Due to their gender-specific socialisation, boys and girls have distinct life experiences that are reflected in the educational system, both in the classroom and subsequently in post-secondary educational settings. Girls and women should have equal learning chances with men according to gender equality (Rarieya et al., 2014).

2.2.1 Conceptualisation of gender at school

This leads to a further discussion on professional practices involving gender in the educational sphere. To improve the academic performance of all children and for educational institutions attempting to meet the requirements of these different gendered learners, educators and policymakers must understand the quickly altering landscape of gender inequality that exists. To promote gender equality and coherence, Paechter et al. (2021) contend that it is critical to consider children's gender identities. The way the school handles children according to their gender has a significant effect on how society develops. Understanding and being aware of gender disparities will facilitate and promote the integration of learners from diverse gender backgrounds in the classroom. This aligns with Buchmann, Diprete and McDanile (2007), who presented similar thoughts years before regarding advancing our understanding of gender differences in education and how it could be facilitated by pursuing the following three research objectives:

1) Research needs to examine gender differences in education early in a person's life.

2) Research on the connection between gender differences in educational achievement and how schools are run is vital during this process.

3) Future studies need to look at various gender discrepancies.

This is relevant to the current study as it recognises the relevance of investigating gender equality in early childhood experiences. The Department of Education has already trained Departmental Heads and Grade R teachers in Gender Responsive Pedagogy in Durban in 2022. I, as well as the Grade R teacher at my school, attended these workshops, in order to understand and integrate gender differences in the Grade R class. These workshops focused on the early education in a person's life. Studies as well, have increased in the area of gender discrepancies and inequalities that exist. Research and implementation have already been put into motion by many international countries (Dorji, 2020).

Limaj (2022) believes that promoting everyone's right to an education is a global priority, and gender equity in education is one of those goals. Ensuring equitable access for both boys and girls to complete their educational cycles and promoting equity throughout the educational process is imperative. Limaj (2022) corroborates the idea that inequity of genders in schools is a global issue rather than a problem unique to any one nation. Rarieya et al. (2014) support this idea and further state that discourses that perpetuate negative stereotypes about girls' academic performance continue to hinder their educational opportunities. This includes gendered conventions around the physical and domestic labour of maintaining clean classrooms, as well as regular school procedures that may deter girls from pursuing degrees in science, math, and other technical fields.

Limaj (2022) provides an alternate view by stating that today's educational system is thought to support female-centred teaching methods while downplaying the importance of good masculine manners. Females are more likely to express their ideas and thoughts verbally, do their schoolwork, and collaborate in groups. Limaj (2022) further states that due to these behaviours, which disregard masculine strength and interest, a sizable portion of boys drop out of school. Two contradictory viewpoints point out that there is a problem experienced at schools in recognising the equals of the different genders. This provides an opportunity for researchers to delve deeper into gender equality at schools, more specifically, in this research investigating the perspectives of Grade R teachers.

Childhood gender awareness contributes to gender equality in adulthood. Sweden is regarded as one of the most egalitarian nations in the world, with a robust national equality discourse

and a comparatively high proportion of men performing traditional community activities like parenting and household chores. This would suggest a change in perception toward greater male communion. The masculine stereotype and views of gender equality were the main topics of Senden et al. ‘s (2019) investigation on the dynamics of gender stereotype content in Sweden. According to the Swedish participants, there has been a rise in the engagement of both genders in non-traditional roles over time. Nevertheless, this shift in roles only served to moderate views of women; that is, the rise in masculinity was accounted for by the rise in the number of women occupying societal roles that required agency. The study’s findings demonstrated how the masculine stereotype of women grew more prevalent.

Additionally, while evaluating a target in the present, the stereotypes of men and women converged on masculinity. Swedish women and men are, therefore, viewed as equally strong in the modern era. This outcome reinforces the idea that Sweden is among the world’s most equitable nations. This is encouraging as it displays gender equality being a possibility for all communities and countries.

2.3 The Impact of the Community on Gender Equality

According to Perry et al. (2019), the gender identity and gender equality of children and the impact it has on their behaviour and mental health have garnered more attention in recent years. A person’s assessments of their compatibility with and desire to blend in with a certain gender collective might be combined to form their gender identity. Gender identity security is a cognitive and affective tool that supports children’s development of self-worth, self-assurance, and social skills with age-appropriate peers, in addition to helping them manage stress. However, if this does not happen it leads to gender dissatisfaction. Gender dissatisfaction is the term used to describe sentiments of unfairness and disappointment that some activities are prohibited because they are thought (by others) to be more suitable for a different gender than oneself (Perry et al., 2019).

Limaj (2022) argues that socioeconomic circumstances strongly influence access to education and educational outcomes, and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds typically do worse than those from more advantaged homes. This research suggests that there are fewer options for girls and boys to receive an education in less developed, rural, or isolated regions and homes with lower incomes (Limaj, 2022). Frequently the emphasis is placed on male education, as it is viewed as future income-bearing. Further research on the perceived “feminisation” of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) was done by Xu (2018), who also included the

viewpoints of children in the discussion over whether more males should work in ECEC. Two hundred and eighty children from Edinburgh, Hong Kong, and Tianjin, ages 2 to 6, participated in pictorial discussions. The results demonstrated that while children did occasionally relate teachers to their gendered experiences both inside and outside of ECEC, children's gender subjectivities are dynamic and connected to their engaging, flexible, and long-term connections with adults. Children in this study have shown that they absorbed the gender binary thinking of men and women's conventional distinctions even in their early childhood, mirroring the larger social structures of gender. This literature brings to the fore the question of how teachers' own perceptions or personal experiences can influence the learners that they teach. In my experience, the grade R learners are easily influenced and moulded at this tender age. Thus, they may sometimes readily imbibe the attitudes and perceptions of their teachers, more especially in the area of gender equality and gender acceptance.

Children see a strong connection between men's and women's societal positions and their gender physicality. The social experiences that children have in the larger social society regarding gender have a profound impact on these imprints of gender expression. In conclusion, the perspectives of children, as presented in this research, indicate that activities such as reading books, kicking balls, and holding babies are still perceived in society as largely gendered activities that belong to different sexes. More significantly, it is discovered that these gendered representations are socially and intergenerationally replicated starting in early childhood (Xu, 2018).

Sansfacon et al. (2018) illustrate in their research on the well-being of youth in Quebec that in addition to the significant influence of the youths' gender experiences in formal settings such as hospitals, schools, workplaces, and youth protection organisations, they also expressed that their well-being was greatly impacted by their ties with their families and other close social groups. The learners expressed that one of the most important coping mechanisms for overcoming challenges regarding their gender was family support, which they defined as feeling loved, accepted, and supported by both direct and extended family. Community areas, nonetheless, can also serve as significant sources of misfortune. Interpersonal disputes and a lack of knowledge and understanding, in community settings negatively impacted numerous participants' well-being. Behavioural norms so impose boundaries on acceptance and inclusion in communal areas. This highlights the importance of the community and families in recognising, appreciating, and supporting the gender differences that exist.

According to Lorber (2018), all of society's institutions are gendered, and this is reflected in and maintained by these social processes. The disadvantaged position of women in most countries is a result of gender divisions. Given a significantly large and unbridgeable disparity between female and male "natures," communities can ensure that disparities are not used to justify uneven legal rights or discriminatory actions. However, there is always disagreement over how equal women and men can be. The gendering processes can be changed, reversed, lessened, or eliminated if social constructionists are correct in their assertion that the gendered social order and its ongoing reproduction and upkeep are what separate men and women from one another (Lorber, 2018).

The research articles that have been examined in the above section have covered how society can perceive gender equality while simultaneously perpetuating either inequality or equality. Social conceptions and preconceived notions are transmitted from one generation to the next. It can occasionally exacerbate emotions of unworthiness, uncertainties, and rejection. Teachers are members of a community and have been shaped by the values and norms of that community. The impact of the community on gender equality is crucial to a child as well as an adult. This is key to this research since it investigates the Grade R teachers' perceptions of gender equality and its importance.

2.4 The role of the Teacher in Promoting Gender Equality

Tzannetis (2022) examined early childhood school environments as caring places that promote each child's growth and aid in the development of a sense of security and belonging. In other words, these settings assist in creating in young children a sense of respect from the adults who have been entrusted with them. Tzannetis (2022) further argued that interpersonal interactions, competent educators, program support structures, culturally sensitive practices, age-appropriate curricula, and extensive family engagement opportunities are characteristics of these socio-emotionally responsive physical environments. Thus, these components foster alliances and ties between the home and the classroom.

One research was conducted by Warin and Adriany (2015), using data from two separate interview-based studies: one with Swedish preschool teachers and the other in an Indonesian kindergarten. The results of the above study imply that gendered practices in early childhood education stem from implicit gender attitudes held by teachers that are shaped by broader socio-political discourses. Before implementing a gender-conscious pedagogy, early childhood educators need to acquire an explicit gender consciousness.

However, research also consistently shows that students who identify as gender non-conforming have less favourable psychological conditions than their cisgender peers, according to Bower-Brown et al. (2021). There is a relationship between perceived school affiliation and outcomes related to mental health, such as self-harm and suicide attempts. According to studies, bullying hurts adolescents' self-esteem and academic performance. Similar health effects were found by Levy et al. (2019). In their review of the literature, Levy et al. (2019) looked for and included assessments of any program that aimed to be gender transformative, that is, to intentionally address gender norms and power imbalances to benefit individuals aged 0 to 24 and carefully measured any possible changes in health-related outcomes.

According to Taylor and Ligozat (2019), gender norms that constrain choices in life and negatively impact health are a problem for everyone, but they particularly affect women and girls. These are the health repercussions of gender inequality. To enhance the health and well-being of young people, this systematic review examined data from programs that underwent rigorous evaluation to reduce gender disparities and change constrictive gender norms. It also happens frequently among young people who identify as gender nonconforming, according to Bower-Brown et al. (2021). It also made clear that youth who identify as gender nonconforming deal with other forms of oppression like ableism, racism, and classism. Bower-Brown et al. (2021) 's paper focused on the students' perceptions of their teachers' attitudes toward the variety of gender expression as a key component of the gender climate at their schools. Multiple regression analyses showed that teachers' positive attitudes had a substantial predictive impact on how connected gender-varied learners felt to their learning environment, emphasising the importance of teachers being aware of and supportive of gender diversity.

According to Bartholomaeus et al. (2017), societal conceptions of gender diversity and attitudes toward it influence children who acknowledge and then disclose that they are gender diverse and how likely they are to have others confirm their gender. Bartholomaeus et al. (2017) concur with Bower-Brown et al. (2021), stating that it is important to note that schools, and educators in particular, play a crucial role in providing children with a supportive and knowledgeable environment when they come forward as gender non-conforming. Teachers have a responsibility to promote an inclusive school climate that values gender diversity and equality because they owe it to all their learners.

Given the apartheid and historical imperatives in educational provision in South Africa, Reygan and Steyn (2017) argue that policymakers and education professionals should place more emphasis on the pedagogical, methodological, theoretical, and epistemological foundations of diversity literacy in schools. This methodology applies to all educators, not just those teaching Life Orientation, who are usually tasked with educating learners on topics about human rights, diversity, and inclusivity. More advanced diversity literacy is desperately needed for curriculum and resources in elementary, intermediate, and post-secondary education to become inclusive (Reygan & Steyn, 2017).

Some countries have initiatives already in place to enhance school cultures, such as offering opportunities for gender diversity-focused teacher training. Bartholomaeus et al. (2017) mention the "Safe Schools Coalition" as a prime example of this in Australia. A government initiative supported by federal funding, the Safe Schools Coalition provides tools, training, and assistance to school personnel and students to make their schools safer and more welcoming to learners, staff, and families who identify as same-sex, intersex, and/or gender non-conforming. Schools have a considerable influence on how young people understand gender and sexuality, from gender-segregated restrooms, play areas, and toilets to formal sexuality education (Keenan, 2017; Kendall, 2013, as cited in MacAulay, 2022). This may be a crucial need for the Grade R teachers in developing their understanding and providing them with tools to encourage gender equality in the classroom.

According to Hjelmer (2020), preschool is a critical initial stage in preparing many children in Sweden to become democratic citizens, with a focus on gender equality and the children's impact. Examining everyday behaviours related to "free play" is relevant in these subjects. In Sweden, free-play activities have always been highly respected. Hjelmér (2020) investigated how preschoolers' impact and gender construction occur in free-play scenarios in various communities. Both the decisions made by the learners and the educational strategies employed to facilitate free play are highlighted. The area that preschoolers have the greatest influence on, according to both educators and children, is play. Two main questions served as the basis for the research study: a) How are free play sessions planned, and what materials and toys are used? b) What decisions do children make when they have unstructured playtime (about playmates and resources), and how do teachers respond to these decisions?

Six schools were part of Hjelmer's (2020) study. Four preschools are run in large cities, two of which are in districts with a significant concentration of affluent families and the other two of

which are situated in rural areas. Children were split up into age-appropriate groups, and these preschools had about four units apiece. Staff members spoke various native tongues. The research employed a critical ethnographic methodology. The observations concentrated on the activities that children were invited to and attempted to influence, the materials and toys that were provided, the engagement of local and family cultures, and the formation of gender in play scenarios. Free play was noted to occur often and at various times throughout the day in all the preschools under study. Toys and materials that may be categorised as materials often found in Swedish preschools, such as dolls, cooking toys, automobiles, animal figurines, Lego, drawing supplies, jigsaw puzzles, bicycles, slides, and sand toys, were offered by all the schools in varying amounts.

In the above study, beyond these standard preschool playthings and activities, there were some notable variations among the various environments, which closely matched the character of the neighbourhood and the family backgrounds served by the preschools. The relatively broad goal of "being fun and interesting" guided the selection of the toys and materials. organisation of this was primarily based on the opinions of the teachers regarding what is good for children rather than specific educational theories or lessons that children could acquire by experimenting with various objects. Numerous related instances imply that, even in situations when the teachers were critical of a particular choice, the expectations placed on girls and boys by the teachers (as well as the reasons for their behaviour) influenced the selection of materials and activities. The ability of teachers to assess what various children say regarding the content and form of pedagogical practice and the power dynamics at play holds the key to bringing about change in the everyday activities of preschools.

Axell and Boström (2021) conducted a study to investigate the technology content from a gender standpoint in a variety of picture books used in preschools in Sweden. Preschools must challenge gender norms that restrict children's growth, choices, and education. According to Axell and Bostrom (2021), children should be allowed the chance to pursue their interests and abilities regardless of their gender identity. The Swedish preschool curriculum emphasises the value of technology education and states that the objective is to ensure that children cultivate their capacity to recognise and investigate technology in their daily lives. Their findings were that the language of society also makes a clear divide between technology that is coded for women and men. It is common to refer to the former as "soft" and the latter as "hard." The

“soft” technology, that is, women’s labour, knowledge, and common objects—is frequently more comparable to manual labour and is not even universally recognised as such.

In a similar line, a lot of traditionally feminine jobs are labelled as non-technical, even though the worker needs a broad range of technological skills and knowledge. As a result, gendered objects and professions serve as vehicles for the perpetuation of gender norms. A further investigation into children’s exposure to literature also presented opportunities for either reinforcement or challenging gender norms. Swedish preschools have a long history of reading aloud, and they frequently use books from local libraries. Previous studies have demonstrated gender stereotyping and the underrepresentation of women and girls in children's picture books (Axell and Bostrom, 2021). Boys have typically been portrayed as enthusiastic, “doers,” and girls as subservient, waiting for all the adventure that lies ahead of them. These studies become crucial for educators to be aware of. Knowing how stories impact children’s understanding and development of their gender allows teachers to make wiser decisions when choosing resources.

In Britain, the educational experiences and coping mechanisms of teenagers who identify as gender nonconforming, binary-trans, or non-binary were separately investigated in a study conducted by Bower-Brown et al. (2021). The study also examined their peers’ non-binary experiences. The results showed that gender-diverse teens face discrimination in the classroom from peers, teachers, the curriculum, and the physical surroundings. In this context, a variety of strategies are used to navigate, such as transparency discussions, reorganisation of thinking, and preventive protection. The study’s conclusions suggested that the British educational system is inappropriate for gender identities and provides insight into the school experiences of teenagers who identify as gender different.

This study is relevant to the current research as the researcher wants to establish if teachers in South Africa experience these problems and how gender equality can be enhanced. There are limited studies involving gender equality in Grade R, which shows a gap existing in this research realm, which thus makes the current research study very pertinent and necessary.

2.5 The promotion of gender equality by the school

Paechter (2021) maintains that schools are firmly binary institutions. For instance, most have facilities that are gender-segregated, dress codes that are gendered, and official documents that are classified according to gender. Children in primary school are nevertheless occasionally invited to participate in class discussions or competitions that pit males against girls, or they may be asked to form single-gender lines by teachers or their peers. Paechter (2021) further

argues that schools provide a robust implicit curriculum of gender binaries that serves as the foundation for all pedagogical approaches used in the educational system. Non-binary youth in schools are simultaneously invisible and unnoticed because of these institutional binaries.

An investigation into non-binary youth and schools, as well as the pedagogical implications, was conducted by Paechter (2021). According to their research, there is a lot of implicit and explicit binary content in the curriculum, which makes it difficult for young people who identify as non-binary to come out in schools. Respondents had to educate themselves on gender identity and the possibilities of non-binary identities without much, if any, help from their schools. Due to non-binary identities not being accepted at school, some learners experienced pressure from transphobic bullying as well as binary norms of behaviour and self-presentation, which made them feel uncomfortable. Owing to the fear of being recognised, several respondents expressed reluctance to use any services provided for non-binary individuals. The conclusion was that institutions should work harder to educate staff members about non-binary identities, and non-binary youth should be involved in the development of inclusive projects to bring about gender equality among all learners.

Mardashova et al. (2021) argue that it should be acknowledged that, despite the abundance of research on gender pedagogy, there is not a comprehensive scientific theory for gender education of young children. Without such a notion, one is unable to properly address the issues with early childhood education while accounting for the gender variations among young children. This argument provides an alternate view of the implementation and idea of gender pedagogy in the early educational years of children and encourages a deeper understanding and research into this study.

Further research on schools being more gender inclusive was investigated by Keddie and Ollis (2019). Data from the comprehensive assessment of the adoption and results of a whole school approach of Respectful Relationships in Education (RRE) at one school in Australia was reported on by Keddie and Ollis (2019). Staff and children produced the phrase “free to be me” to encourage a variety of gender expressions. The school’s inclusive culture of children’s ability to inquire about their gender (or other) orientations was perceived to be reflected in the motto. By trying to be more gender equitable in their use of resources, attention, and language, the school further promoted gender inclusion. Teachers had been acutely aware of how their methods and resources tended to favour boys and masculinity as part of their involvement in

the recently launched RRE Program. They were eager to address this by placing a stronger emphasis on girls and femininity.

According to Fabes et al. (2019), it is not an easy assignment, but schools and teachers are responsible for fostering socially harmonious learning environments that support students' positive academic, social, and emotional development. For instance, it can be challenging to address the gendered aspect of learners' peer relationships in the classroom. This involves teaching learners the social, emotional, and relational skills necessary to interact effectively, as well as organising and facilitating peer interactions in partnerships, small groups, and large groups. Fabes et al. (2019) further state that stress comes from stakeholders outside the school, such as demands and pressure from parents and legislators, who frequently want a more rigorous academic (rather than social) focus in the classroom. In addition, there is a lack of awareness of the best practices that foster harmony in schools as well as concerns related to peer segregation, particularly about gender, even though educators and parents recognise the significance of assisting children in developing healthy, lifelong relationship skills. This emphasises the necessity of developing peer relationships and socioemotional learning-promoting classroom and school climates, policies, and structures (Juvonen, 2018, as cited in Fabes et al., 2019).

A study on "Gendering a gender-neutral uniform" at the Student Police Cadet (SPC) program in Kerala, India was conducted by Chacko (2019). Adolescent boys in most Indian schools are dressed in shirts and pants. Conversely, girls dress in salwar kameez, pinafores, or skirts. Nonetheless, the National Cadet Corps (NCC) uniform is the same for boys and females. This made wearing khaki-neutral uniforms such a "special" experience, especially for the female cadets, and offered them a sense of freedom and societal inclusion. Neary and Cross (2018) conducted a study of gender identity or expression and the highly gendered systems, practices, and language in primary schools in Ireland. This study also bears reference to Chacko's (2019) study and findings.

The following findings were established by Neary and Cross (2018). Most parents and teachers in this study clarified that their schools offered uniforms. When there was no uniform or a gender-neutral option, such as a tracksuit and t-shirt, parents were extremely appreciative. Others talked about how gendered uniforms and gender segregation upset their children. The schools that were in this study also exhibited a range of approaches concerning their restrooms. Some parents discussed how their children were upset when they used restrooms

designated by gender. For the majority, having a child who is gender nonconforming in their school has meant adjustments or modifications to procedures regarding restroom usage. Some schools now have gender-neutral restrooms. Others had segregated restrooms for the upper classes but gender-neutral restrooms for the lower classes. Some had separate communal restrooms but gender-neutral restrooms in their classrooms. Nevertheless, as one parent pointed out, modifications to restrooms or uniforms did not necessarily indicate a shift in more general gender norms. Lastly, parents considered teaching methods and language that consistently separated boys and girls to be especially problematic, for example, the use of the words "boys and girls" stunts social skills and acceptance of their respective genders (Neary and Cross, 2018).

Ansari et al. (2022) provided a contradictory view on uniforms and their use of them. When compared to learners in schools without school uniform requirements, it was found that learners in schools with uniform requirements did not exhibit superior social skills, internalising and externalising gender conduct, or school attendance. Ansari et al. (2022) further stated that in the past, people in a range of settings (such as the military, the medical field, and sports teams) had worn school uniforms to denote to spectators and participants alike their intended roles. Uniforms have been said to have two functions: (a) identifying members from non-members and (b) informing the performer and the spectators of the anticipated behaviours. These similar as well as opposing views draw on the use, need, and/or the importance of uniforms in schools. The gap that exists is that the studies are undertaken in other countries, not in South Africa. The research discussed will be aligned with this study to gain clarity regarding the need or importance of uniforms in a South African grade R class. The reviewed literature focuses on the role schools play in enhancing gender equality.

In South Africa, the Department of Education (2014) has created The Policy on the Standard for Principalship (2014) which is targeted exclusively at principals. This policy's purpose is to guarantee that principals assist students who identify as gender and sexually diverse (Department of Education, 2014). The Department of Education (2014) states that every school's principal is required to implement this policy to guarantee that students with diverse gender and sexual orientations have a secure and supportive learning environment. In addition, South African Council for Teachers (SACE), 2018, has made it clear that all professional educators must respect their learners regardless of their gender identity and give them the assistance they need to succeed in their academic endeavours (SACE, 2018). In theory, these

regulations ought to guarantee that learners who identify as gender nonconforming feel secure and at ease with their gender or sexual orientation (Department of Education, 2015; SACE, 2018).

The establishment of policies is crucial to bringing about changes in a system. Jacob and George (2023) conducted a study to examine the social construction of gender in South African policy processes by highlighting the variety of policy actors, describing their narratives and various gender framings. Between 2019 and 2021, thirty policy actors and adolescents participated in in-depth, semi-structured interviews that yielded qualitative data. The findings demonstrated that although additional gender-transformative strategies and gender power relations were explored during the policy-making process, they were not included in the final policy. This study draws attention to the implementation of policies and questions the lack of implementation thereof. Thus, emphasis is placed not only on the importance of having policies to bring about positive changes but also on the implementation of these policies as well.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature that is pertinent to the current investigation of teachers' opinions on promoting gender equality in a Grade R school was evaluated in this chapter. The first section of the chapter covered the definition and conceptualisation of gender equality. The literature on the influence of the community on gender equality, acceptance, and recognition was evaluated in the section that followed. This chapter's penultimate component examined academic research on teachers' roles and perspectives in advancing gender equality. The literature about the schools' role in promoting gender equality was subsequently analysed. In the next chapter I delve into the theoretical framework which underpins this study.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the literature reviews on gender equality, the impact of the community on gender equality, the teacher's role, and the school's role in promoting gender equality. This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that the research is guided by. The study's theoretical framework drew on three Theoretical Frameworks: The Critical Emancipatory Theory, Gender as a Social Role Theory, and Social Constructionist Theory. The reason for choosing three theories is because of the interconnectedness and complementary influence they have on one another. My topic on teachers' perspectives on gender equality in Grade R contains elements of all three theories and thus these theories provide a supportive framework for my investigation into the views of Grade R teachers. A theoretical framework is first clarified before the Critical Emancipatory Theory is discussed, followed by the Social Role Theory and the Social Constructionist Theory.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Grant and Osanloo (2014) argued that for a research project, the theoretical framework serves as the cornerstone around which all knowledge is built, both literally and symbolically. It provides the framework and backing for the study's justification, problem description, goal, importance, and research questions. The methodology and analysis and, most significantly, the literature review is grounded or anchored by the theoretical framework. Vapio et al. (2020) elaborated further by stating that it is a logically constructed and interconnected collection of ideas and presumptions derived from one or more theories that a researcher develops to support a study. The researcher must define any theories and concepts that will serve as the study's foundation, connect them logically, and tie these concepts to the research being conducted to develop a theoretical framework (Vapio et al, 2020). A theoretical framework, to put it briefly, is an expression of the effort that the researcher makes to apply a theory to a particular subject. It serves as the dissertation inquiry's "blueprint." It offers the framework to specify how one will approach the dissertation from an epistemological, philosophical, methodological, and analytical standpoint. It also acts as a guide on which to construct and support one's research (Grant and Osanloo, 2014).

3.3 The Critical Emancipatory Theory (CER)

Early 20th-century critical theory combined Hegelian-inspired Marxist thought with insights from psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and existentialist theory to create a theory that could

identify opportunities for liberation from oppressive social systems without being associated with any particular political system (Govender, 2020). Govender (2020) further elaborates that Marx and critical theory both hold that society should be observed critically, with an emphasis on the concepts of alienation and reification. According to critical theory, there is a conflict between those who oppress and the oppressed. Critical Emancipatory Research (CER), which focuses on enacting change and liberating individuals, is derived from Marx's study of social and economic circumstances and class hierarchies (Nkoane, 2012). The Frankfurt School in Germany in the late 1920s is associated with this theory (CER), which is a subfield of critical theory. In an attempt to further the Marxist tradition, Felix Weil's father, Herman Weil, established the Frankfurt School in 1923.

Critical theory employs an explanatory, normative, and practical methodology. Not content to analyse merely what is, critical theory also looks at what could and needs to be. In general, critical theory seeks to clarify the problems with the oppressive social reality that now exists and to pinpoint the key individuals who have the power to alter it, all the while offering clear normative direction and achievable, realistic objectives for the liberation of society (Govender, 2020). However, critical theorists go a step further and contend that many oppressions and injustices exist in our society, including the educational system. Therefore, critical theorists' educational mission should involve educating learners about politics and power in addition to aiding with their information acquisition. It is also impossible to dispute the critical theorists' contributions to the Frankfort School when it came to bringing critical theory into the classroom (Govender, 2020).

Jurgen Habermas, however, popularised the theory by incorporating the idea of emancipation into the theory (Ndaba & Dube, 2021). The goal of Critical Emancipatory Research (CER), according to Murray and Ozanne (1991), is to overthrow the limitations and controls imposed on human freedom. According to Nkoane (2012), the goal of CER is to advance social justice by fostering values, equity, respect, and humanity. Nkoane (2012) continues to say that to evaluate and comprehend the data gathered, a partnership of equal importance is formed between the researcher and the participant in the study. Examining the downtrodden and underprivileged is the primary objective. Texts and language play an important role in CER as a means of knowing and understanding (Nkoane, 2012).

This bears relevance to this study, as established through the literature review in Chapter Two, which aligns the importance of the use of language and resources to the understanding and

acceptance of gender roles and gender equality. Dube and Hlalele (2018) assert that CER highlights three crucial concerns that can lessen the effects of gender exclusion: social transformation, social justice, and the elimination of false awareness.

Critical pedagogy, which is associated with critical theory, serves as an educational reaction to the unequal and oppressive power dynamics within educational institutions (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014). The goal of critical pedagogy and critical theory is to investigate institutional and societal behaviours that challenge the establishment of prevailing social norms and systems. However, the main purpose of critical pedagogy is to address the unequal treatment and discriminatory power dynamics that are present in schools (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014).

The idea that education should contribute to the development of a just and democratic society is at the heart of emancipatory pedagogy. The relationships in classroom instruction, knowledge creation, school institutional structures, and the social and economic relations of the larger community, society as a whole, and country are all considered, negotiated, and transformed in this approach to education (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014). Nouri and Sajjadi (2014) further clarify that this approach's primary educational goals are to develop a problem-solving issues education system, humanise the subject matter and foster critical thinking. According to emancipatory pedagogy, there should be a significant shift in the power dynamics in the classroom and a need for mutual learning between educators and learners. This method promotes discussion and introspection above memorisation and instruction. This indicates that learners are the most powerful demographic and may have an influence on social matters.

This study's purpose is to understand teachers' perspectives to enhance learning environments, increase the equality and rights of learners of various genders and bring about gender equality in the Grade R class. Therefore, the CER with critical and emancipatory pedagogy is relevant and imperative to this research. This study aims to improve knowledge, values, respect, equity, and acceptance, which are components of the Critical Emancipatory Theory. To create fairness in society, education and the connections between educational experiences, knowledge development, the institutional frameworks in schools, and the economic and social interactions of the greater community are essential. Critical and emancipatory pedagogy is thus needed. Thus, this theoretical framework is suitable for exploring gender equality in Grade R and how to promote it to enhance gender integration and provide inclusion and acceptance to non-binary and gender alternate learners. In turn, this would bring about positive change and knowledge in the schools.

3.4 Gender as a Social Role Theory

The Social Role Theory, first developed by Alice Eagly in the 1980s, recognises the influence of contextual elements, including cultural values, on the conclusions drawn from role occupations that are observed to have stereotypical contents (Senden et al., 2019). This theory also explains how gender stereotypes and gendered behaviours are created by the strong, all-encompassing, and separated social roles of men and women (Schneider & Bos, 2019; Eagly & Wood, 1999). The following are key concepts as categorised by Schneider and Bos (2019).

3.4.1 Beyond Sex as a Dichotomy to Gender as a Category and a Process

Fundamental aspects of identity that are important to comprehending political action are gender and sex. Sex is the term for the chromosomal pattern that distinguishes humans according to how well they reproduce, which is frequently determined by physical characteristics at birth. In models of political outcomes, sex frequently manifests as a binary variable to account for the differences between men and women (Schneider & Bos, 2019). If one considers gender to be socially constructed, one can study how it evolves throughout a person's life, as well as how society's conceptions of what constitutes male and female stereotypes alter over time. It is important to include the experiences of people whose experiences do not fit neatly into the male-female dichotomy when discussing gender. Lastly, by prioritising gender over sex, the analysis is broadened to consider how femininity is underrepresented rather than only concentrating on women and their absence (Schneider & Bos, 2019).

3.4.2 Overview of Social Role Theory

Since men and women play separate roles in society, stereotypes and gendered features emerge. Historically, biological distinctions gave rise to these roles: Due to the strength of men and the reproductive nature of women, men were traditionally assigned to responsibilities related to hunting and public labour, while women took care of the home and raised the family. The physical strain of delivering children and raising them kept women out of the paid workforce even as countries grew more industrialised, giving men greater time to advance their careers in this field (Schneider & Bos, 2019). Most men developed the agentic traits (for example, aggressive, ambitious) appropriate to their roles as hunter, farmer, worker, and eventually leader. In contrast, most women developed the communal traits (for example, empathy, caring, kind) essential to be effective when caring for others. Modern occupational segregation (for example, women as childcare workers, men as mechanics) promotes the specialised training of

men and women into occupations that call for agentic and communal traits accordingly. This is true, even though the division of labour between men and women as providers and women as homemakers has declined over time as physical strength matters less in post-industrialised nations and women have advanced their education (Hentschel et al., 2019).

3.4.3 Early Gender Role Socialisation

Young children are exposed to gender norms at home, where women tend to perform household chores for longer periods than men do and where toys and books they read and play with represent stereotypically feminine qualities of character, leisure, and housework. Media images frequently objectify women and girls, equating the value of guys' aggression, power, and domination with that of girls' youth, beauty, and sexuality. Children are encouraged by these factors to take on the gendered characteristics and roles that correspond with their biological sex (Schneider & Bos, 2019). Teachers' actions in formal educational environments have the potential to perpetuate established gender norms. Different expectations are frequently placed on boys and females by teachers in the classroom, which lowers achievement and self-esteem. Teachers perpetuate sex differences in the classroom when they divide the students by gender (for example, by having them line up), refer to them as "girls and boys," or use pronouns. When boys and girls play differently and emulate the gender roles they see in society and at home, for instance, this can lead to more pronounced gender differences (Schneider & Bos, 2019).

3.4.4 Diffuse Gender Roles and Specific Occupational Roles

According to Social Role Theory, the division of labour that is observed is what gives rise to gender stereotypes (Eagly, 1987, as cited by Senden et al., 2019). People are encouraged by socialisation to identify broadly as men or women or to take on a separate gender role. Regardless of their societal responsibilities, men and women often act gender in agentic and communal ways, respectively, as the socialisation of gender roles would imply. Compared to people who do not identify as either a woman or a man, those who embrace the feminine gender role and men who embrace the male gender role are more likely to exhibit personality traits, behaviours, and attitudes associated with these respective diffuse gender roles (Eagly, 1987, as cited by Senden et al., 2019). Social Role Theory states that specialised social and professional responsibilities, in addition to diffuse gender roles, should be a better indicator of significant consequences than biological sex alone. Furthermore, specialised and dispersed roles may interact to produce attitudes and behaviours, especially when such roles overlap and are consistent with established gender norms. These vocational positions will frequently align due

to the gender gap in the workforce and considering that women still do more household work (Schneider & Bos, 2019).

3.4.5 Gender in Conjunction with Other Roles

According to a social role paradigm, assigning people to various roles based on their affiliation with groups leads to stereotyped norms for that group dependent on the characteristics needed to perform that job. Group members internalise these expectations, as doing so will immediately result in their behaviour aligning with the roles that they typically play. The observers develop stereotypes about a group according to the characteristics necessary for that function after seeing members of that group occupying those roles (Schneider & Bos, 2019).

In conclusion, sex-based distinction persists in civilisations due to the continued division of men and women into various roles. In contrast to situations where women dominate, where communal attributes are required, and status is lower, men's distinct occupational and social positions typically demand agentic traits and have a higher status. Gender identity is acquired during childhood socialisation, which encourages boys and girls to conform to roles and behaviours that are specific to one sex. Men and women so develop diffuse gender roles, in which they broadly identify with the male or female gender role in addition to the specific roles they fill (Schneider & Bos, 2019). This bears a direct link and provides clarity to the research in this study to explore the promotion of gender equality in Grade R. Teachers' perspectives and behaviours could be influenced by societal expectations, experiences, and attitudes. Incorporating the Social Role Theory provides the framework for examining and finding the meaning of the teachers' views.

3.5 Social Constructionist Theory

According to the social constructionism idea, all meaning is produced by society. Even if social structures seem natural, they are not. This is because they are deeply imprinted. A large portion of what people take to be true is predicated on common assumptions and people acquire their understanding of the world within social contexts. Many of the things people take for granted and think are part of the objective world are, in fact, products of social construction and can change as society does, according to Social Constructionist Theory (Vinney, 2019).

Vinney (2019) further clarified that the Social Construction of Reality, written in 1966 by sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, introduced the Social Constructionist

Theory. Several theorists, including George Herbert Mead, Emile Durkheim, and Karl Marx, influenced the concepts of Berger and Luckman. Social constructionism has its roots in three distinct intellectual movements that came together in the late 1960s. The first was an intellectual movement that challenged social realities and exposed the political motivations underlying them. The second was an effort to dissect language and how it affects our understanding of reality through literary and rhetorical means. The third critique of scientific practice was headed by Thomas Kuhn, who contended that rather than representing objective reality, scientific discoveries are influenced by and, therefore, indicative of the societies in which they are created.

According to Vinney (2019), the key assumption of this theory is as follows:

2. According to the theory of social constructionism, knowledge and meaning are produced by society.
3. Social constructionists hold that those perceptions of gender, race, class, and disability, all of which are commonly accepted as natural or normal in society, are socially built and, as a result, are not true representations of reality.
4. Social constructions are frequently developed within cultures and institutions and gain notoriety throughout historical eras. Due to their reliance on past, present, and future political and economic circumstances, social conceptions are subject to evolution.

The three intellectual movements of Social Constructivism are as follows:

a) Knowledge is socially constructed

According to social constructionists, human relationships are the source of knowledge. Thus, social processes that occur in historical and cultural contexts produce what people consider to be true and objective. This indicates that, as far as the sciences are concerned, there is no ultimate truth that is more valid than any other, even though truth might be discovered within the parameters of a particular field (Vinney, 2019).

b) Language is central to social construction

Some laws apply to language, and these norms influence people's perception of the outside world. Language is, therefore, not neutral. It highlights some points while downplaying others. Language, therefore, limits people's ability to communicate and understand their experiences and knowledge. (Vinney, 2019)

c) Knowledge construction is politically driven

A community's knowledge has social, cultural, and political ramifications. A community's view of certain realities, values, and truths is accepted and upheld by its members. Such information spreads even further when newcomers embrace it in the community. Concepts of privilege and power within a community are formalised when such understanding becomes policy. Social reality is, thus, created by these socially manufactured concepts, which, if left unchecked, seem to be set in stone. Relationships between communities with different conceptions of social reality may become hostile (Vinney, 2019).

3.5.1 Gender as Part of the Social Constructionism Theory

Ramadhani and Setiawan (2021) explained that the term "gender" refers to a person's biological system. Gender also plays a major role in determining an individual's perspective, which is always influenced by other people's perspectives on social and cultural issues in society. Based on their gender, the perspective here perpetuates a misconception about whether men and women have their responsibilities and regulations to make themselves acceptable in society. Davis and Preves (2017) concluded that a biological binary is frequently the basis for the social construct of gender. However, even the most sophisticated laboratory tests are unable to classify individuals as "male" or "female reliably," and they may not even need to.

When a newborn is given a physical sex label, female or male, social interactions instantly and irreversibly "gendered" them (Nababan & Nurmaily, 2021). The essential indicator of sex has changed over time, even though people often base their sex assignment on genital appearance at birth, specifically, the existence or lack of a phallus. Sex categories for bodies have been applied to genital appearance, sex hormones, sex chromosomes, and the brain at various times. Instead of viewing the infant as the destined outcome of a historically varied and socially formed sex and gender system, the focus should be more broadly placed on the infant as a human being (Daves & Preves, 2017). Ramadhani and Setiawan (2021) referred to this as genetic factors in biology. In men, the XY chromosome predominates over testosterone, while in women, the XX chromosome predominates over oestrogen and progesterone.

Rahman et al. (2023) maintains that traditionally, children are given names that are either masculine or feminine, have pink or blue nurseries, dolls or trucks as accessories, and closets full of gowns or collared button-up shirts. It is said that blue is for boys and pink is for girls. Most academics believe that gender is a social construct, which means that cultural and societal standards generate the concept rather than something that exists inherently. Gender

socialisation happens through various important socialisation agents, including peer groups, families, schools, and the media. It starts at birth (Rahman et al., 2023).

According to Lorber (2018), there are two primary themes in the idea of gender as social construction: One is gender as a process: By acting out or performing gender, people create gender for both themselves and the people they interact with. The other is gender as an institution, system, or structure: The gendered structure of social environments and gender divisions are like iron cages that offer little opportunity for protest or resistance. The two themes contrast and complement one another. Structure and process go hand in hand because processes establish and preserve structures.

Lorber (2018) further clarified that the social reaction to a gender stereotype refers to the circumstances that influence people's desires, actions, and social responses in society. This is a viewpoint or assumption about the character's function. It is the simple rules that society has agreed upon since they were born, regardless of gender, and so, society must be obeyed. The treatment recipients will be negatively impacted by the cycle that is shaped by this stereotype. For instance, it was once believed that ladies should dress in women's clothing and men should dress in men's clothing. They will, therefore, condemn them for defying the stereotype whenever they encounter something strange in society. It implies that men and women may be referred to as men and women, respectively, depending on how they behave (Ramadhani & Setiawan, 2021).

The social and structural variables of gender include many dimensions, including gender identity and expression, gender roles and norms, gendered power relations, and gender equality and equity, all of which have an impact on health (Barr et al., 2024). According to social constructionists, gender is distinct from sex. Gender, on the other hand, is an organising element of social organisations that separates individuals into two main groups: "men" and "women" (Barr et al., 2024). They grow different because they are treated differently and are expected to be different. Social constructionists use social dynamics and the hierarchical power imbalances between men and women to explain the historical and cross-cultural diversity of gender differences. These social processes happen automatically: people "do gender" because they are gendered, and doing gender shapes their identities, behaviours, home and professional lives (Lorber, 2018). Lorber (2018) further reiterated that although gendered norms and expectations can be changed, resisted, or actively rebelled against, gendering generally occurs without much consideration or awareness. Gendered institutions, such as nation-state regimes

and organisations, and the results of institutionalising gender reproduce and reinforce gendered processes.

3.5.2 Schools as a Social Construction

Rapp and Corral-Granados (2024) reveal that being an integrational institution in society is the educational system's primary objective, and inclusive education is often viewed as the means of achieving this. Information, messages, and understanding are all part of the communication of the educational system, which is done through spoken and nonverbal means. A system can be deemed autopoietic if it generates the same kind of communication that it is designed to support. As a means of communicating an issue in a complicated setting, various social systems can be understood as solutions (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024). A learner in an educational system needs additional support that the larger system cannot give. Upon determination, numerous possibilities for widespread differences become apparent. An inclusive system will differentiate the classroom when it comes to things like special education or adaptive teaching, per the policy (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024).

According to Bengtsson and Bolande (2020), a norm-critical perspective and a desire for an inclusive practice were evident in specific language use patterns used in Sweden, in addition to a fundamental comprehension of language as a communication tool. Throughout any instruction, a few key terms are frequently utilised. These words had nothing to do with the subject matter; rather, they were employed as a generic method to address both the learners and one-self. Thus, teachers complemented han (he) and hon (she) in lectures and discussions by using the gender-neutral Swedish word "hen" where appropriate. One interpretation of this expansion of language use is a challenge to the binary gender paradigm that exists in schools.

Schools often collaborate on multiple school development projects designed and conducted by an organisation to establish shared approaches and procedures. This coordination aims to control, rationalise, simplify, and legitimise the reasoning of the organisation. One can embrace and oversee the intricate content of the organisation while satisfying the many needs of the educational setting by sorting through all the diverse duties and attempting to maintain a standardised, function-driven organisation with rigid procedures (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024).

Thus, this theoretical framework bears significance and is relevant to this study as the research explores gender equality related to the school and takes into consideration the teachers' perspectives.

In my teaching experience, I have encountered gender identities, gender inequality and gender equality, present among teachers, parents, and learners. I have seen how many self-actualisation concepts that are internalised through the learnings and practices we experience in our childhood, at home, school, and in the community. The social constructionist theory provides the foundation for the understanding that gender is created by ourselves and others. It can be seen as a system or structure through which one lives their life. The gender structure created by ourselves or others can link to the social role theory which provides a further in-depth study of the social roles we thereafter embrace as different genders. The division or gap between the genders increases which could lead to gender inequalities. At this point, I recognise the necessity of the Critical Emancipatory theory which focuses on how to liberate and bring about changes in a positive manner. The oppressed are liberated and those who oppress are encouraged to understand the process of liberation. Understanding teachers' perspectives requires me to investigate the theories behind their understandings how gender and gender equality is developed, sustained and encouraged. This depicts the interweaving of the three theoretical frameworks for this study, which provides a holistic understanding.

3.6 Conclusion

The theoretical foundation used in this investigation was covered in this chapter. The necessity of a theoretical framework was briefly covered at the beginning of the chapter. The three connected theories that form the basis of the theoretical framework are Social Constructionist Theory, Gender as a Social Role Theory, and Critical Emancipatory Theory. All three theories overlap and are interconnected in this study. The researcher has discussed how each theory relates to the current research on the views of Grade R teachers regarding the advancement of gender equality in the classroom. The research technique of the investigation will be covered in the upcoming chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three introduced the theoretical framework of Critical Emancipatory theory, Social Role Theory, and Social Construction Theory, which this study on the teachers' perspectives on gender equality in Grade R has followed. This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology that were followed in conducting the study. It describes and comprises methods adopted for the research, research design, sampling techniques used, data generation methods and the instruments used for data generation. The qualitative analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. A case study design was conducted within the interpretive paradigm This study used purposive sampling, which was selected because it enabled the researcher to select teachers who possessed attributes that were pertinent to the research. The semi-structured interviews and collage analysis were used as data collection tools. These research elements are discussed in detail in this chapter. Finally, the chapter discusses the trustworthiness of the study and presents ethical issues.

4.2 Research Design and Methodology

"A process of steps used to collect and analyse information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue" according to Creswell (2012, p.1435, as cited in Khatri, 2020) defines research. Here, Creswell (2012) defines research as a procedure used to gather and analyse data to comprehend a particular problem. This includes the research paradigm, research approach, method of sampling, data methods, and data analysis.

According to Khatri (2020), research is a methodical, structured approach to investigating a particular phenomenon. It describes how the researcher arrives at conclusions about the research issues at hand. The research design could employ the qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method design to address the research aims and objectives. This study employs the qualitative approach as a research strategy or design to provide answers to the research questions. "An approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" is how qualitative research is referred to (Creswell, 2014, p.32, as cited by Kamal, 2019). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that other attributes of qualitative research are to comprehend people's experiences and that the researcher is the main tool for gathering and analysing data. Thirdly, an inductive analysis is performed on the study's data. Put another way, the researcher will develop ideas, theories, or predictions to explain the

facts. Ultimately, a rich description will be generated using information from a variety of sources, including interviews, documents, and field notes.

This approach is suitable for this study as teachers' perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and understandings are being investigated. This aligns with Denzin and Lincoln (2011), who stated that the goal of the qualitative approach is to give meaning to people's interpretations of phenomena by studying them in their natural environments. Taking this definition, a step further, Creswell (2013) included the research process as it is a necessary component of the investigative process when looking into social or human problems. The use of multiple data collection methods by the researcher to validate the findings, as well as the open-ended and less structured arrangements in the data methods, is employed in this study. This is important as it entails recording the participants' subjective feelings, experiences, and perceptions and giving meaning to them (Kabir, 2016).

4.2.1 Research Paradigm

"A set of beliefs that deals with the ultimate or first principles" is Guba and Lincoln's (1994, p. 107) definition of a paradigm. It offers a potential perspective from which a person can explore their role in the universe. The researchers' definition of the world, methods of operation, and worldview are all reflected in their paradigms. The researcher's ideas and opinions of topics investigated direct their work. Khatri (2020) on the other hand, states that the foundation (theoretical or philosophical) for the research project is referred to as the research paradigm. Ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology are the four elements of a paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Khatri, 2020). Epistemology is a term used in study to describe how people come to know something, or how people see the truth or reality. It addresses the methods used by researchers to find information to get a grasp of reality (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). This is pertinent to this research as the reality of gender equality in Grade R and the teacher's perspective is investigated.

This study also focuses on the phenomena of gender equality in Grade R and the promotion thereof. The process of pointing to a sort of existing information that can be acquired to find a reality or answer to a research topic is referred to as ontology (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The primary focus of ontology in this research is the essence of the existence of the phenomenon. In this research, the ontology will refer to the existence of gender equality in Grade R. The methodology of the research includes the data collection, participants, tools used, and data

analysis. It also includes the assumptions made, the obstacles faced, and how these were lessened (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This study engages the case study approach with a focus on semi-structured interviews and collages as tools to collect data from both the teachers. The last element of a paradigm is axiology, which refers to the moral concerns of the study. This identifies and assesses the appropriate and inappropriate behaviour concerning the study (Khatri, 2020; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Various research paradigms such as positivism, realism, critical theory and interpretivism could also be used by a researcher.

The paradigm underpinning the current study is the interpretive approach. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) argued that interpretivism is more considerate of each person's unique contribution and meaning. It is also based on the idea that meanings (of values, ideas, and sentiments) are essential to making sense of the realities of society (Kekeya, 2019; Yanow, 2014). The interpretivist paradigm is suitable for this study as it delves into the perspectives of Grade R teachers regarding gender equality. It focused on the teachers' understanding, interpretations, and behaviours in the social setting of the Grade R classroom. The framework for interpretive research is in keeping with the study as it seeks to reveal the knowledge that is generated and regenerated via social interactional behaviours and actions in modern social contexts.

4.2.2 Research Methodological Design

An interpretivist single case study will be used in this qualitative research. Yin (2014, p 16) defined a case study as "…An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be evident. In other words, one would want to do case study research because one wants to understand a real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to your case." Starman (2013) elaborated further that an interpretive case study tries to understand how participants interpret phenomena or experiences. Place is often used to define a case. Researchers may use the term "case" to refer to a single institution, setting, or place, or they may use it to refer to each individual within the institution, place, or setting (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). Two main approaches, one put forth by Robert Stake (1995) and the other by Robert Yin (2006), served as the foundation for case study methodology. Both approaches work to make sure that the subject of interest is thoroughly investigated and that the phenomenon's core is revealed, but their respective approaches are very different. A case study is a type of

research methodology that produces a thorough, comprehensive understanding of a complex problem in its actual setting (Crowe et al., 2011).

In this study I use a case study approach, which is confined to a single organisation, in this case, an ECD centre. The two Grade R teachers belong to the same ECD centre where the research is conducted to investigate the phenomenon of gender equality and the promotion thereof by the teachers. The results depict or describe that specific context. The ECD centre is in an informal area in Durban. This ECD centre provides education for largely poorly resourced learners and is one of the chosen centres for the ECD project. The teachers teaching the Grade R learners are the participants in this in-depth case study. The next section focuses on the sampling methods that underpinned this study.

4.2.3 Method of Selection: Sampling

According to Etikan et al. (2016), there are two types of nonprobability sampling methods: Purposive sampling and convenience sampling. Researchers use nonprobability sampling techniques, such as convenience sampling and purposeful sampling, to select a sample of subjects or units from a population. Etikan et al. (2016) further stated that even though nonprobability sampling is not a good representative of the population because of its many limitations stemming from its subjective sample selection process, it can still be helpful in situations where randomisation is not an option, such as in very large populations. When a researcher is working with limited funds, time, or staff, it can be helpful. In situations where the goal of the research is not to produce findings from which generalisations about the entire population can be made, it can also be applied. Nonprobability sampling is, therefore, necessary (Etikan et al., 2016).

This research used purposive sampling. This entails locating and choosing individuals, or groups of individuals, who are knowledgeable and skilled about a phenomenon of interest. A crucial role is played not only by knowledge and experience but also by availability, willingness to participate, and the capacity to articulate, expressively, and reflectively communicate ideas and experiences. Purposive sampling techniques avoid random sampling and ensure that certain types of cases of individuals who may be involved are included in the research study's final sample (Campbell et al., 2020).

The purposeful selection of a participant is a component of the judgment sampling method (which is also known as purposive sampling). This non-random technique does not require underlying theories or a predetermined number of participants. Simply put, the researcher

selects what information is necessary to have and then searches for individuals who can and are willing to supply it due to their knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016).

This study selected the teachers at an ECD centre that is conveniently and easily located. The participants were identified and were willing to availed themselves of the research. They are suitably qualified as Grade R educators and have the necessary experience and knowledge to teach Grade R. The teachers in this case study are also currently teaching Grade R learners.

4.2.4 Location of the study

Kwa-Zulu Natal is made up of 12 education districts, which is the link between Provincial Education Departments, education institutions, and the public. These districts and their offices have a pivotal role in ensuring that all learners have access to high-quality education; Umlazi is one of the districts. The ECD centre (which will use the pseudonym 'Shining Stars') that has been chosen as a case study is in the area of Cato Manor, which is in the Umlazi District. Cator Manor (Figure 4.1) is one of the city's oldest informal settlements and has a diverse history. A considerable percentage of the general population and the learners themselves live in informal settlements. The people who live in this informal settlement work in the nearby communities. Frequent blackouts of power and water also impact the suburb. Violent protests are occasionally the outcome of these outages, and they are influenced by the community's need for better service delivery. Shining Stars caters for 204 Grade R learners, toddlers, and babies from the area. It incorporates the care of toddlers and babies as well as many parents are working and require this service for their children. The toddlers, babies, and Grade R learners are housed in different areas and use separate facilities. This ECD centre renders services for the community in this informal area. The foundation of learning, that is, Grade R, is managed and taught by qualified Grade R teachers. The DoE (Department of Basic Education) provides financial support.

Figure 4.1: Cato Manor as viewed on a map

4.2.5 Data Generation Methods

According to Cohen et al. (2003, as cited in Dammak, 2015), methods are the "range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation." Creswell (2008) (as cited in Dammak, 2015) further divided the qualitative data into four categories: documents (private and public records, letters, newspapers, and personal journals); audiovisual materials (photographs, pictures, videotapes, paintings, digital images); participant and non-participant observations; interviews and questionnaires (focus groups, one-on-one interviews, telephone, and online interviews). The two data generation methods employed in this study are collages and semi-structured interviews.

4.2.5.1 *Collage*

The first method that was used to derive data for this study was a collage created by the participants. According to Culshaw (2019), a collage is a visual representation to express one's thoughts and ideas. It is a more recent data collection method that is arts-based. According to Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) and Gerstenblatt (2013) (as cited in Dealy et al., 2021), collage-elicited interviews are simple to conduct, easy to use, accessible to participants regardless of their location or perceived artistic ability, reasonably priced, and appropriate for participants of various ages and ethnicities. Additionally, participants are given the chance to show and narrate their experiences and lives (Mannay, 2015).

The two teachers created a collage of visual images that reflected their understanding of gender equality in the Grade R class. This was a digital collage created on a device, for example, a laptop, using pictures, gifs, sayings, words, and animation, among others, for one teacher. The other teacher used pictures that made sense to her perceptions and stuck them on pages. Both teachers also provided write-ups of their collage, to furnish me with an explanation for the choice of visuals in the collage. The collage was a once-off presentation to gain an understanding of the teacher's view of the concept of the promotion of gender equality in Grade R. They were given an hour and a half to complete it as they needed to be as spontaneous and natural in the collage design.

Instructions were provided on the day of the meeting, and the teachers submitted the collage on the next day within an hour and a half of completion. The teachers needed to have a digital device with Wi-Fi or magazines with pictures, blank paper, scissors, and glue (depending on whichever method they chose to create a collage) to complete this task. Once the collage was completed, the teachers did a write-up explaining the choice of visual arts and what it represented to them in their understanding. Many participants find it easier to present a narrative of their thoughts or experiences once they have a visual representation done first (Mannay, 2015). The collage was used as the first data collection method to initiate the process for the teachers to engage with the topic and specifically addressed the first research question which is 'What are teachers' perspectives on the promotion of gender equality in a Grade R?'

4.2.5.2 *Semi-structured interviews*

The type of interview that researchers conduct depends on how well it fits the goals of the study and the research questions. Using effective data collection techniques, interpretive researchers can establish a rapport with their subjects (Dammak, 2015). According to Barrett and Twycross (2018), qualitative research involves the collection of data through participant interviews. The most direct and easy way to obtain rich, in-depth information about a particular occurrence is through interviews. The sort of interview that is used to gather data can be customised to the research question, participant characteristics, and the researcher's preferred method. Although telephone interviews are increasingly used to overcome geographic constraints to participant recruitment, face-to-face interviews are still the most common type of interview. Gill et al. (2008) stated that there are three approaches used to conduct research interviews: semi-structured, unstructured, and structured. Semi-structured interviews, where key components of the phenomenon being examined are specifically questioned by the interviewer, are a popular

method in qualitative research (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). A well-planned semi-structured interview should provide flexibility for individuals to bring their unique personalities and perspectives to the discussion while ensuring that data are recorded in important areas (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Barrett and Twycross (2018) further stated that, subsequently, interviews can be tightly framed to give the researcher more control, thus turning them into questionnaires with vocal responses in place of written ones.

I used semi-structured interviews, which provided a few key questions but permitted for the divergence in feedback which allowed for the sharing of all related experiences of the teachers. For one-on-one interviews, the researcher requires participants who are not afraid to speak out and exchange ideas, and they need to find an environment that makes this possible (Cresswell, 2013). According to Cresswell (2013), the researcher may encounter challenges from time to time and obtain inadequate information from the shy, less talkative subject. It is important to employ appropriate recording methods when doing one-on-one sessions. Through one-on-one interviews, I was able to learn more about gender equality and integration from the participants as well as how to support and improve it (Appendix E has a list of interview questions).

I met with each teacher separately, at the ECD Centre at a time that worked for them, that is, after school, and gave them information about the study. The first meeting involved informing both of them about the research and getting their permission to be a part of this project. At the second meeting interview questions were presented to them, one at a time, and their responses were recorded. This took approximately one hour per teacher. English was used for conducting the interviews. When asked about their level of English proficiency before the interviews, both teachers responded that they were extremely proficient. I treated them with respect and let them know how much their contributions meant. The teachers understood the questions, and none of them required clarification from me. They were made to feel comfortable, and the interviews were conducted at a leisurely pace. The interview material did not cause any discomfort for any of them, and both teachers were eager to share their views and opinions. I sincerely appreciated their time and expressed it after each interview.

4.2.6 Data analysis

The qualitative descriptive design encompasses both thematic analysis and qualitative content analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). These are collections of methods for deciphering themes in textual data through analysis. The methodical process of coding, analysing meaning, and describing the social reality through theme creation is their defining feature. All qualitative

approaches include the description and interpretation of participant perspectives. The primary outcome of data analysis that produces useful findings in the field of study is called the "theme." Braun and Clark (2008) underscored the adaptability and utility of the thematic analysis approach in conducting precise and thorough data analysis.

To give the data meaning, coding will divide it up and organise it into categories. The method of thematic analysis finds, investigates, and summarises the themes or patterns found. The theme must identify data that is pertinent to the research question (Braun & Clark, 2008). The research findings are emphasised in this way. Thematic analysis was used to examine the experiences, viewpoints, and classroom realities of the teachers with the learners by identifying themes and patterns from these noteworthy interactions of the study's participants. The text yielded textual data that was prepared for thematic analysis and arranged in a model worksheet. The data from the interviews and collages was transcribed, turned into text, and arranged thematically.

4.2.7 Maintenance of Research Rigour

Trustworthiness

To define trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) (as cited in Elo et al., 2014) employed five quality criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity. Reiterating any researcher's claim is the aim of credibility. Starting with data collecting and ending with reporting, the five criteria aid in ensuring the validity of the research. Content that is well-founded and clarified improves the overall accuracy of the research investigation.

Credibility confirms and validates the participation (Elo et al., 2014). To guarantee the validity of the results, audio recordings of every interview in this study were made. Having the interviews recorded increased credibility because it decreased the likelihood of transcription errors during the interview process. The teachers were read the transcriptions, and they attested to their veracity. To make sure their words were not mistranslated, both teachers were also asked to double-check the transcriptions of their responses. This made sure that the opinions of the participants were accurately reflected in the results. Additionally, the teachers had the chance to correct any inaccurate information that may have been recorded during the transcription process.

The ability to comprehend and extend the results to other contexts is known as **transferability** (Elo et al., 2014). This study guarantees transferability by offering a comprehensive account of

the population under analysis as well as demographic data pertinent to the main research issue. I included a detailed description of the study's location and the ECD Centre. These summaries might encourage the conducting of additional research in a location that shares traits with the suburb and the school. I also included a detailed explanation of the research techniques used in this study. As a result, other researchers can apply the same methodologies in their research.

Confirmability focuses on the impartiality and fairness of the study so that other researchers can agree on the significance and validity of the findings (Elo et al., 2014). In the data generation phase, I used an audio recorder to capture the teachers' explanations and made notes of any obvious biases, personal feelings, and insights. This study's confirmability was increased by providing a detailed explanation of the entire research process. Other scientists would then have sufficient information to determine whether they would draw the same conclusions.

According to Elo et al. (2014), **dependability** evaluates the conditions whereby the research information was gathered, as well as the research's longevity and dependability across time. This study will guarantee dependability by incorporating peers into the analysis process. In addition, I gave a thorough description of the research methods employed, which helped to emphasise the importance of the preliminary findings.

The degree to which the researcher's control and assessment were fairly completed is suggested by **authenticit**y (Elo et al., 2014). For this study, I ensured that all components of the research procedure adhere to the dependability criteria. To be sure that their statements had not been translated incorrectly, the teachers were also requested to review the transcriptions of their answers twice after the interviews. They then confirmed the data that had been transcribed.

The methods used in this study to ensure trustworthiness are described in this section. It is crucial to remember that any study's results could be adversely affected by unavoidable constraints. This research was no different. The limitations that this study encountered are described in the section that follows. Ross and Zaidi (2019) affirmed that research limitations are flaws in the method of inquiry that could affect the findings and recommendations of the study. Thus, researchers have to disclose any relevant and truthful limits to the academic community when presenting a study. Giving the reader relevant information is the aim of exposing the limitations of the research. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) further elaborated that any given study's limitations are potential flaws that are typically beyond the researcher's control and are directly related to the research design that was selected, the limitations of the

statistical model, the availability of funding, or other variables. From this angle, a limitation represents an "imposed" restriction that is outside the researcher's control. However, it might have an impact on the study's design, findings, and conclusions in the end, so when the paper is turned in, it should be properly acknowledged.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethics deals with actions that are judged to be right or wrong (Bertram & Christainsen, 2014). The following ethical considerations were kept in mind when conducting this study. Before beginning, this study I asked for and received approval from the university's gatekeeper. The ECD centre that was used falls under the umbrella of a project undertaken by the university, focusing on different aspects of ECD. Both teachers and the ECD centre received an ethical consent letter asking for their permission to take part in the study after the study had received ethical clearance. The teachers in this study maintained their autonomy. Each teacher was given due consideration, and all information gathered was kept in a secure location to which only my supervisor and I had access.

I ensured that the participants' confidentiality was upheld and that their rights were not compromised at any point during the research process. Both teachers and the school were identified only by pseudonyms. The initial meeting informed them about the topic and what the research involves. It was reiterated that participation in this research project was entirely optional. All involvement was voluntarily given, and the option was provided for the teachers to stop at any point should they be uncomfortable. The types of questions asked were sensitive and avoided hurting the teachers' feelings physically or psychologically. The interviews and collage discussions were also held in a location that was comfortable for both of them so that they could speak forthrightly, that being at school. They were also interviewed separately to ensure their level and safety of comfort and responses. The teachers' feedback in the interviews and the collage were safely stored to retain their anonymity.

4.4 Conclusion

The research methodology that I employed in this study is covered in this chapter. The qualitative research design and the rationale behind the strategy's selection were covered in brief at the beginning of the chapter. The interpretive paradigm was then expanded upon. After that, the study's sampling strategy was described. The purpose of purposive sampling in this study was briefly discussed. The study's selected data generation techniques, collage and semi-

structured interviews, were then expanded upon. After that, the data analysis techniques were covered, and then the study's security procedures for reliable results were explained. The study's limitations have also been mentioned. The process of data analysis will be covered in detail in the upcoming chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The research approach was covered in the previous chapter, along with the steps used for generating the data needed for this investigation. An ECD centre in Cator Manor was used as a case study to conduct this research. Two grade R teachers from this centre were the participants. The findings from this investigation were analysed and are presented in this chapter. The teachers' semi-structured interviews and their collages served as the primary data sources. Following the transcription of the interviews and write-ups on the collage, a thematic analysis of the transcriptions was conducted. A review of the data revealed the following themes:

Table 5.1: Presentation of Themes and Sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. Understanding gender and gender Equality	• The acceptance of gender differences by the community/society • Attitude and beliefs of the Gr R teacher
2. The role of the teacher in promoting gender equality	• The language used by the Gr R teacher • The resources used in the Gr R class
3. The promotion of gender equality by the school	• Uniforms as a means of gender equality • Toilets as a means for gender equality

Sourced from Author: SMG

A discussion of these themes and sub-themes (Table 5.1) is followed up in this chapter. Academic literature has been included in the conversation. In addition, the data was interpreted using the study's theoretical framework. Three main themes were identified: Understanding gender and gender equality, the teacher's role in promoting gender equality, and the school's promotion of gender equality. Sub-themes arose under these main themes.

5.2 Understanding Gender and Gender Equality

Gender is a construct created by humans to group individuals and create social norms about what two people should be like. In addition, it covers responsibilities, behaviours, expectations, needs, identities, bodies, and characteristics based on social norms regarding what constitutes suitable gender roles. It is unique to each individual and varies throughout time. Gender is

entwined with people's other identities and is intrinsic to who they are, which includes sexual orientation, race, class, and ethnicity. Collectively, they shape people's identities (Garcia et al., 2021, as cited by Tzannetis, 2022).

The data gathered from the teachers revealed the importance of recognising gender and understanding the holistic meaning of gender equality to better support learners in the Grade R classroom in understanding their genders and that of others. It also communicated the teachers' opinions of the need to appreciate, accept, and acknowledge the different gender choices of learners. I posed the following question to the participants:

- Have you witnessed learners experience any difficulties with regards to their gender roles in grade R?

Teacher 1 noted that most of her learners did not have any negative reactions or responses to their gender roles, Teacher 1 also mentioned an example of a learner struggling to identify with the gender with which she was born.

> Teacher 1: *"Some learners do not have a problem when they are differentiated according to their gender. But there is one specific learner that has a problem with her gender. She doesn't want to wear skirts and dresses that her mum dresses her with to school and she refuses to use the girls' toilets, preferring the boys' toilets. She also does not like to play with the girls and would rather be playing with the boys."*

Teacher 2 brought to attention the fact that discrimination between the genders has short-term as well as long-term effects on the learners. This is compounded by society placing different social standings or statuses based on the gender of the person. However, gender equity in education leads to greater economic productivity, improved health outcomes, and reduced poverty rates. Furthermore, it promotes social cohesion, fosters democratic values, and helps challenge and dismantle discriminatory attitudes and practices (Kuteesa et al., 2024). According to Preece et al. (2022), social-construction and normalisation of gender stereotypes follow the binary concept of biological sex, that is, according to the sex the individual is born with. Thus, stereotypes based on a person's gender influence how they see themselves and other people, act, present themselves, and take advantage of possibilities in the workplace.

> Teacher 2: *"… Is to focus particularly on gender-based differences in status and power and consider how such discrimination shapes the immediate needs as well as the long-term interest of girls and boys."*

The sub-theme that emerged under gender equality was the acceptance of gender differences by the community or society.

5.2.1 The acceptance of gender differences by the community/society

The teachers were asked if they feel that individuals (male, female, gay, non-binary, among others) are treated differently based on their gender. Both of them, in their responses indicated that the community has an enormous impact on the acceptance of gender-stereotyped individuals. Non-conformity leads to non-acceptance and inequality. Individuals are ridiculed and ostracised based on their gender preferences. According to Levy et al. (2020), gender norms are ingrained in community traditions and structures as the frequently unstated guidelines that regulate views about what constitutes appropriate behaviour for members of the community (that is, injunctive norms, ideas regarding what is appropriate) and views of what most members of the community genuinely do. Preece et al. (2022) analysed it further to state that gender stereotype non-conformity is associated with reduced chances, social rejection or isolation, and victimisation by peers.

There is also an indication that beliefs about gender are passed on from generation to generation without questioning or understanding these beliefs. Rapp and Corral-Granados (2024) view that every human action has the potential to become ingrained. Every social situation that arises over time has some level of institutionalisation. Repetitive behaviours frequently develop into patterns that are thought of as “the way we do it" or definitive patterns. Establishing institutions has advantages. When individuals do actions, norms help them use fewer resources. Institutionalisation (in this case, the community or school) reduces the number of possibilities associated with certain activities; thus, each step does not need to be carefully considered.

> Teacher 1: *“Yes, especially in our community, if you are gay, they don't accept you as you are. And the other families, they do the same thing. They don't accept them.”*
>
> Teacher 2: *“Yes, they laugh at each other. Like, when boys like to wear pink colour, they laugh. This comes from their home and what they are exposed to; it is the beliefs of their parents.”*

Teacher 2 used the collage (Figure 5.1) to illustrate how beliefs established at home are visible in the Grade R class. The picture shows the challenges experienced during playtime in the different areas in the Grade R class, more especially in the dress-up corner and construction corner, where boys are “expected to play with blocks and cars,” and girls are “supposed” to

play with pots, pans, and dolls. The challenge arises when a child decides to play with something “different”; for example, a boy plays with the dolls and cooks food. The other children come to school with the ingrained beliefs from parents or the community and therefore, are not accustomed to seeing this scenario and does not readily accept it. They may laugh or ridicule the child.

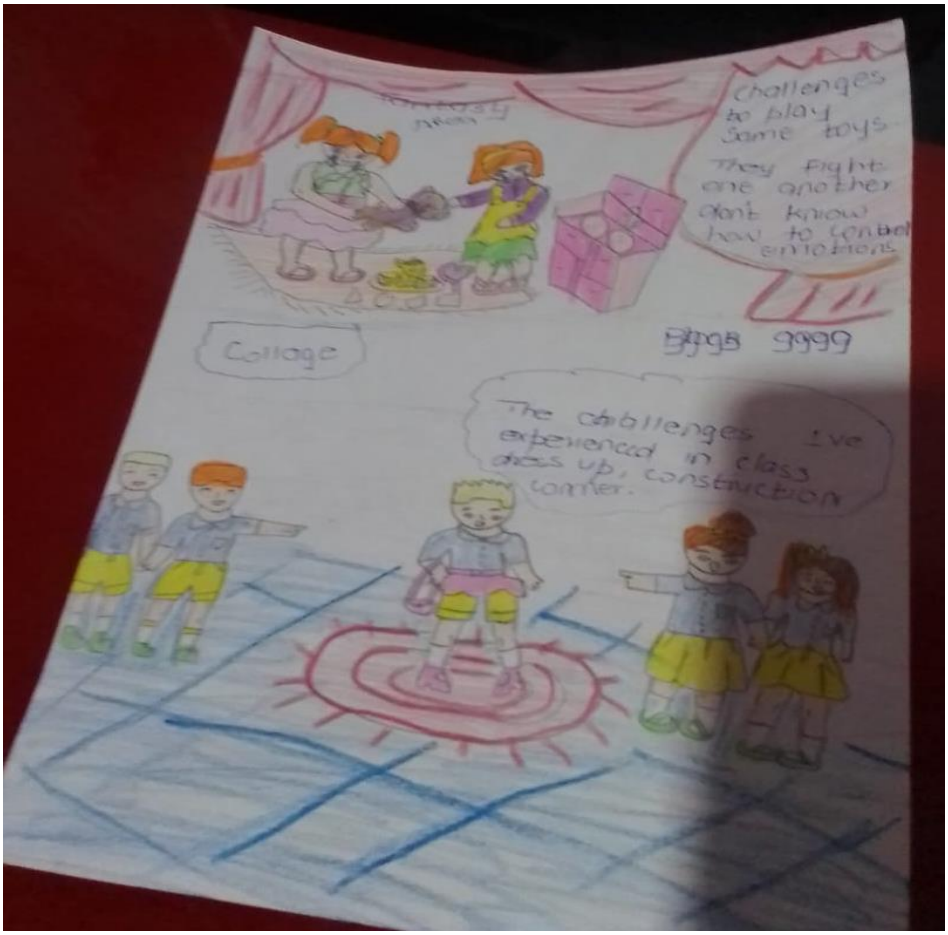

Figure 5.1: Activities in a Grade R class

Sourced from Author: Teacher 2

In Figure 5.2 below, Teacher 1 renders the suggestion that if gender equality exists at home, in all the tasks and activities undertaken, and in the workspace for adults, then there is a better understanding and grasping of one’s gender. This understanding and acceptance transcend to the children, who then internalise this interpretation and appreciation of gender equality. Coming to school is an extension of this knowledge, and the ridicule or ostracization is minimised or eliminated.

Figure 5.2: Gender equality at home and work

Source from Author: Teacher 1

5.2.2 Attitudes and beliefs of the Grade R teachers

Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 are incredibly positive and enthusiastic about the promotion of gender equality in Grade R class. They both felt that the teacher has a key role to play in promoting gender equality in the classroom. Teachers must create gender-friendly classrooms and have a positive attitude towards all learners. The following question was posed to the teachers:

- How can a teacher play a positive role in promoting gender equality in grade R?
  Teacher 2: *"By providing them with equal opportunities and experiences, I then promote gender equality with the Grade R learners."*

Figure 5.3 below (Teacher 2's collage) depicts a classroom in which all learners, irrespective of their gender, are given equal opportunities in all classroom activities.

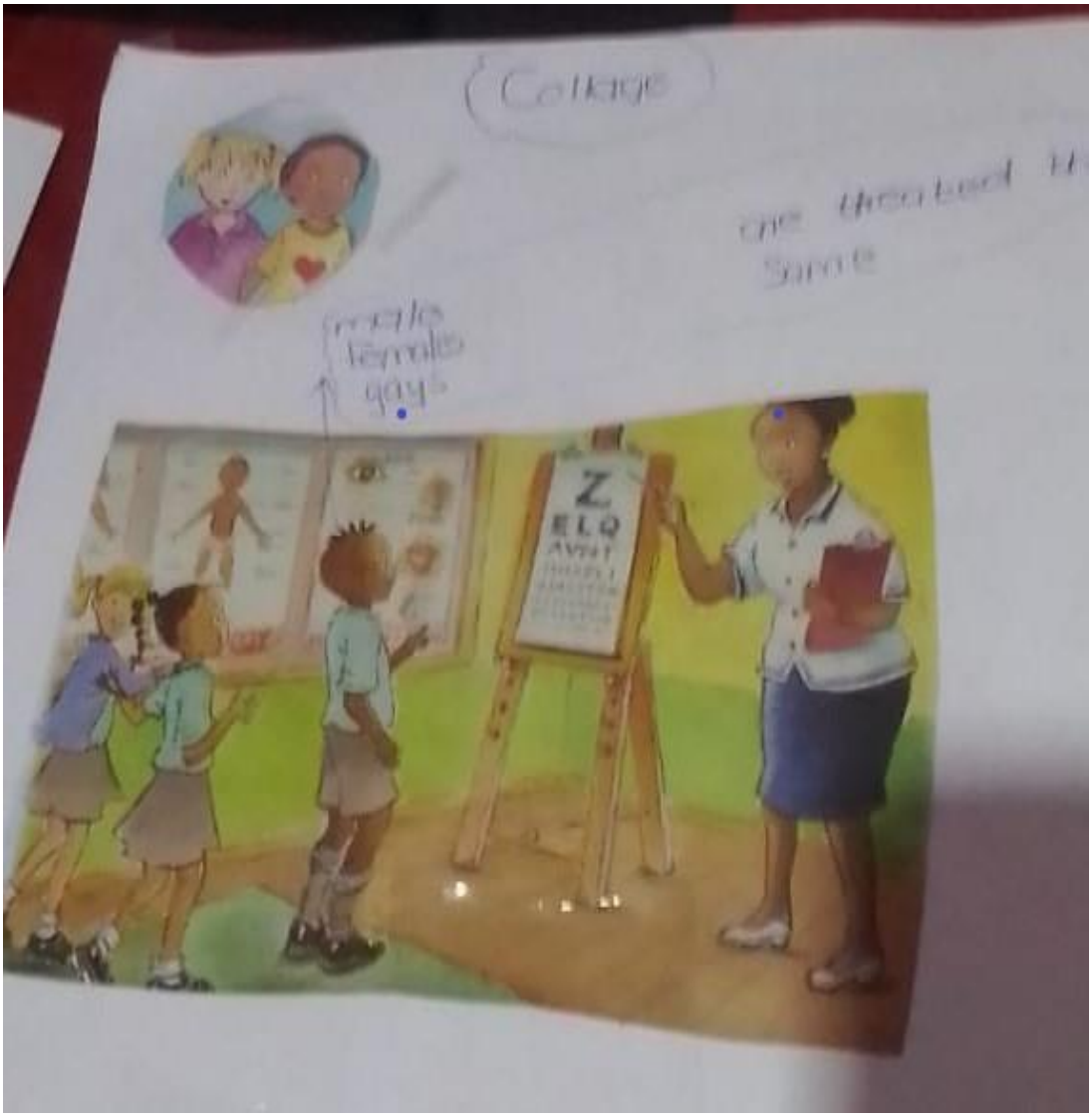

Figure 5.3: Gender equality activities in the class

Source from Author; Teacher 2

Teacher 1's collage (Figure 5.4) below reinforces the same attitude and vision for her classroom as she depicts how all learners are equally involved in learning activities and duties, irrespective of their gender. They sit together and work together. There is no separation of learners on account of their gender.

Figure 5.4: Classroom gender equality

Source from Author: Teacher 1

Both the teachers felt that a teacher must not be biased or bring their attitudes or beliefs into the classroom, which could negatively affect learners. For example, a teacher who believes only boys play soccer, and not girls may be inclined only to give the boys the opportunity to play soccer and keep the girls away from this experience, which leads to discrimination and separation rather than the promotion of gender equality. While normative forms of femininity promote women's sexual fragility and submission, conventional representations of masculinity frequently demand males to be strong and stoic, demonstrating their manliness through involvement in dangerous behaviours (Levy et al., 2020). Thus, teachers need to be aware of the norms and standards that exist in beliefs about gender and make a concerted effort not to bring it into the Grade R classroom, where the learners are receptive to their teachers' beliefs.

> Teacher 2: *"We all grow up with beliefs and attitudes that our family, environment, friends and experiences influence. Our beliefs and attitudes may not necessarily be true,*

but we continue to live by them. As a teacher, I have to be aware of my beliefs and not allow them to affect or influence my learners negatively."

Figure 5.5 below (Teacher 2's collage) shows the separation of genders due to beliefs regarding genders, that is, only girls play with dolls, and boys play with cars. Her collage draws attention to this when teachers instill the belief in learners that boys cannot play netball as it is a sport for girls only. The same can be said for the sport soccer which is associated with boys and not girls.

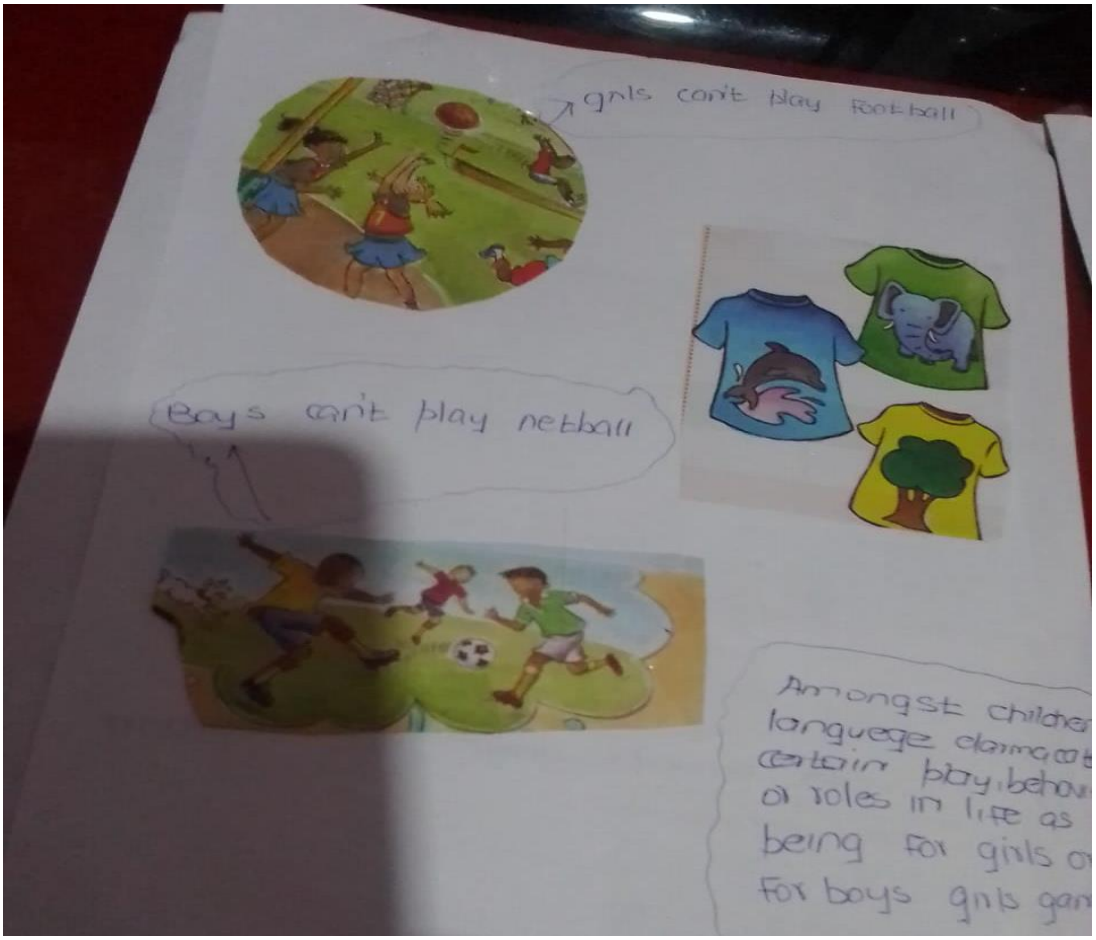

Figure 5.5: Social beliefs separating genders

Source from Author: Teacher 2

This section's analysis concentrated on gender and how teachers' attitudes and the views of the community or society can influence learners' acceptance of people of diverse gender identities.

5.3 Role of the Teacher in Promoting Gender Equality

Allen et al. (2020) maintained that positive school experiences for young learners who identify as sexual or gender nonconforming are also specifically the responsibility of school personnel. Improved feelings regarding security and safety and a sense of belonging to the school community have been linked to having access to helpful school staff. Both teachers were asked about the role the teacher plays in promoting gender equality with learners and their responses indicate that the teacher's role is of paramount importance in promoting gender equality. Integration of the different genders is required, not separation based on gender. Teachers decide how to group and integrate learners in the Grade R class. With an understanding of the importance of promoting gender equality, teachers could provide opportunities for all learners to integrate and accept each other with respect. No segregation or judgment is based on their gender.

> Teacher 1: *"Yes, a teacher plays a good role because we do not separate them. Yes, we are promoting gender equality in our school because we do not separate them according to their gender. A teacher plays a good role because in our classroom groups, we mix them together. We don't separate them according to their gender. So, our groups have boys and girls mixed together."*
>
> Teacher 2: *"Make boys and girls work on projects together. I seat them together in groups."*

The two sub-themes that emerged under the role of the teacher are as follows:

5.3.1 Language Used by the Grade R Teachers

Language is more than just a means of expressing ideas, emotions, feelings, and information via spoken and written communication. Rather, it also communicates the contextual society's ideology and power structures Menéndez (2006, as cited by Andres et al., 2014).

The teachers expressed the importance of neutral language use when addressing the learners in the Grade R class. To avoid further separation and segregation based on their gender, learners are addressed by neutral words.

> Teacher 1: *"And we use the words 'learners' or 'children'. If we call them, we use the word learners or children. We don't mention that boys and girls come to their seats. We don't do that because we are trying to promote gender equality."*
>
> *"I don't call them according to their gender. I use words like children or learners."*

Teacher 2: *"Yes, language separates them. For example, girls are known as doing house chores such as cleaning the house, cooking, etc. The boys are known as doing construction work or gardening."*

Teacher 2: *"In class, we have no right to use that saying, 'Men do not cry.' 'Men are strong'."*

"If you are a man, you're strong because you are always carrying the heavy things. I think it's not good for us to use that language with our learners."

"Language dictates certain play, behaviour, or roles in life, as being for girls or for boys, for example, girls can't play football or boys cannot be a nurse because you are a boy."

The above examples indicate the teachers' experiences that language and phrases that are used can stereotype an individual to believe that only a certain behaviour is acceptable because it is associated with a specific gender. It also draws attention to the activities or careers that are stereotyped for a specific gender, for example, football for boys only and only girls can become nurses. Both teachers expressed the importance of using neutral language and phrases with the Grade R learners. Bengtsson and Bolande (2020) argued that teachers need to exercise caution when selecting terms and work toward using inclusive language. This indicates that, when it comes to gender identification, it is important to refrain from perpetuating binary gendered ideas or polarising them into "us" and "them."

5.3.2 Resources used in the Grade R Class

According to Abraha et al. (2019), teachers frequently have no idea that there is gender discrimination occurring in their environment. They might make derogatory statements about the abilities or traits of either gender, or they might employ educational materials that exclusively show one gender engaging in particular activities. Thus, the use of resources is critical to the understanding and promotion of gender equality in the classroom. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 encouraged free play amongst learners and did not dictate or force learners to play in a certain way or with certain toys or resources. Resources are not differentiated for the different genders but rather, learners all use the same toys and resources. Educational material is varied and easily accessible to all Grade R learners. Learners are not judged on the resource materials they choose to play with. In this way, the learners learn to work together and to respect each other. Teachers can observe important attributes of the learners during this free

play time or when learners use the resources. After that teachers can observe the learners and provide the support required by learners. They are encouraged to make their own choices with the resources and even their future career interests, which are not governed by gender.

Learners are not made conscious of their choices negatively but are encouraged to choose activities in a safe, non-judgmental space. Mardashova et al. (2021) conducted a study at a preschool in Russia and found that children's manifestations of gender stability changed due to well-planned activities in the preschool educational setting. According to their gender identity and gender expectations, the boys' and girls' behavioural responses and self-perceptions were in line with the bounds of social and emotional development. Establishing an accessible environment for issue development inside the preschool institution is also essential. To organise the role-plays, different objects were employed (games, transport, symbolism, among others) to act out different social roles.

This is critical in the current research as the participants also align with this way of thinking and provide activities, opportunities, and resources to encourage gender development, understanding, and equality. These attitudes and beliefs are evident in the teachers' responses.

> Teacher 1: *"I don't separate them according to their gender. For example, usually boys play with cars, girls play with dolls, but in my class, I let them play with all toys."*
>
> *"In our daily program that we use in our class, I let all learners go to free choice and I let them imitate any characters of their choice, such as being a doctor, such as a plumber, such as they like to imitate their parents. It's a way to see their parents and their background."*
>
> *"It's helped me to see their weaknesses and strength. I got to see those who don't respect each other and those who bully other children, and also to those who are not comfortable being around others."*
>
> Teacher 2: *"They learn to respect each other and to control their own immediate needs and impulses. The challenge is to play with same toys, they sometimes fight one another. Some of them don't want to share and don't know how to control their emotions."*

Dorji (2020) stated that the teacher may use instructional materials and resources derived from books that perpetuate preconceptions about one gender being better at specific tasks than the other, such as racing for men and doing housework for women. One gender may be portrayed as being weak, docile, and meek, while the other may be portrayed as leaders who are forceful,

strong, and intellectual. Educators must assess and implement lesson plans, instructional materials and resources devoid of gender preconceptions. This section's examination concentrated on the teacher's role in encouraging gender equality in the Grade R classroom. It explored how classroom language can influence children's comprehension and acceptance of gender differences. Additionally, it reaffirmed how materials and tools used in Grade R classes can promote gender inclusion and understanding.

5.4 The Promotion of Gender Equality by the School

The teachers influence the promotion of gender equality, but they maintain that the school plays an equally significant role in this promotion, too. Through the school rules, activities provided, amenities, ethos, and understanding, gender equality can be encouraged and sustained. According to Dhungana et al. (2021), options may be restricted to examining the curricula at the school level and suggesting standards for identifying gender-neutral language, conventional gender roles, gender stereotypes, visuals, and gender balance. However, merely looking at appearance in gendered contexts would not be enough to explore gendered situations. By upholding the ideal of equality and advocating for a deeply ingrained, culturally inclusive perspective on gender, people recognise the potential to influence others, themselves, and the creation of society.

Both teachers recognised a very crucial dynamic in the promotion of gender equality in learners and that is in getting the parents involved. Parents' understanding and acceptance of gender differences and gender equality contribute to the promotion of gender equality. Teacher 1 mentions the school's method of encouraging parental involvement through the school parent meetings and one-on-one meetings. It is during these meetings that teachers can encourage parents to understand their children's gender needs and how to provide equal opportunity to all their children, independent of their gender. They are made aware of how the language and beliefs of the home affect the child's understanding of their gender and others. Parents are also made aware of the use of resources or materials that all children can use to promote equality. It should not be separated for girls and boys; for example, only boys play with cars and girls play with dolls. Children must feel safe and understood at home and have the freedom to use any resource or toy without the fear of judgement.

Teacher 1: "*We promote gender equality during our school parent meeting or during one -on -one child progress parents meeting so that parents can understand the importance of gender equality."*

Teacher 2: *"Because it is important to provide girls and boys equal care and opportunities to develop."*

"…to ensure any educational material used show genders in equal measure."

"Care must be taken to ensure equality, and participation of boys and girls in all the classroom activities."

"Diversify learning material. Create a safe learning environment. Make it easy for all students to participate."

5.4.1 Uniforms as a Means to Promote Gender Equality

One way discipline is maintained at school is through using uniforms for learners. However, Teacher 1 was faced with a dilemma regarding uniforms. In general, the uniforms of schools involved dresses/skirts for girls and pants for boys. However, Teacher 1 experienced a girl child who refused to wear dresses and skirts. She prefers wearing pants, like the boys. She also prefers the company of the boys. This child, Lena (pseudonym), gets very emotionally disturbed when she is dressed in the dresses for school. This has been communicated by the teacher to the parents via parent meetings. This challenge questions the use of uniforms at schools; should it be the same for boys and girls? Or should it be abolished? In recent years, more schools have introduced unisex uniforms, for example, tracksuits, shorts and t-shirts, and golf shirts, among others. This may be a great solution to the challenge experienced by Teacher 1. Ramadhani and Setiawan (2021) acknowledged that typically, males wear shirts, and women wear dresses. Due to gender stigma existing, society has formed those stereotypes. The two genders that are often divided in society are male and female.

Teacher 1: *"Okay. I have Lena in my class, who is a female. She likes to play with boys, not girls, and she's a bully. If she's with girls, she's bullying them. She is always wearing pants because she's not comfortable of wearing skirts. She does not feel comfortable if she's wearing skirts, for example. Our school-wear uniform is separated, the boys wear pants, and the girls wear skirts. Nonetheless for Lena, she does not feel comfortable if she's wearing skirts. My challenge is that the other boys and the other girls feel uncomfortable to see her sitting with boys. The boys come to me and tell me*

that that girl is sitting with boys. I think this is a challenge for me to see the importance of gender equality. I think it's a challenge for us that we need to teach them about gender equality in our class."

5.4.2 Toilets as a Means to Promote Gender Equality

Children grow up in homes where all family members use the same toilets. There is no differentiation between males and females. However, when they arrive at school, it is mandatory to use separate toilets based on your gender. According to Dorji (2020), planning and maintenance of the playground, seating arrangements, and sanitation, that is, toilets for learners are the responsibility of the school administration for every student.

Both teacher 1 and teacher 2 felt that using separate toilets brings attention to one's gender and that learners become more aware of their differences in their gender. This creates more separation rather than integration and understanding. At the Shining Stars ECD Centre, the school has unisex toilets. Boys and girls use the same toilets as a means of creating equality amongst the different genders.

> Teacher 1: *"Our school toilets are unisex, which makes all genders feel comfortable using the same toilets."*

This section's analysis emphasised the school's contribution to gender equality. Focusing on the larger institutional contexts in which educators operate rather than just specific educators, research has revealed that schools typically lack the resources necessary to support gender-variant learners and struggle to challenge prevalent gender norms (Bartholomaeus et al., 2017). Throughout learners' time at school, they absorb and internalise a wide range of attitudes, beliefs, and lifestyles. The influence of the school can shape the type of young people these children become. By using gender-friendly uniforms and discouraging inequalities through the usage of separate restrooms, gender inequality and acceptance of different genders can be improved. Dhungana et al. (2021) promoted establishing a learning environment that is gender-friendly and enhancing gender equity as it would involve encouraging transparency among educators, connecting the curriculum to the community or society, and fostering collaboration between learners, teachers, and school administration.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented an analysis of the data derived from the collage and semi-structured interviews that the researcher included in the study is provided in this chapter. After analysis, the data was arranged thematically. Three main themes, each with two sub-themes, were found overall. The study's summary of all chapters, a synopsis of the key findings, recommendations, limitations, and conclusion are provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter marks the conclusion of my study. The purpose of the study was to learn more about teachers' perspectives regarding the improvement of gender equality in Grade R. The previous chapter consisted of the data analysis process. The data was analysed using the thematic approach using collages and semi-structured interviews. Three themes emerged, with two further sub-themes each. By examining the viewpoints that Grade R teachers in a South African ECD centre have on gender equality and its promotion, the study attempted to add to the developing body of research on gender equality, the role of the teacher, and the role of the school in the promotion of gender equality. In this final chapter, I begin by mentioning the research questions, followed by a synopsis of all the previous chapters. The researcher summarises the study's key findings, and the limitations of the study, and, lastly, makes suggestions for potential directions for further research.

This chapter's focus is on the discussion of the research questions that this study attempted to answer. As previously said, the research questions for this study are:

1. What are teachers' perspectives on the promotion of gender equality in a Grade R?
2. How do teachers promote gender equality in Grade R?
3. Why is it necessary for teachers to promote gender equality in Grade R?

6.2 Summary of the Chapters

This study began with an introduction in Chapter One. I explained in this chapter why it was important to know how educators felt about promoting gender equality in the Grade R classroom. I also gave the reader some background information on the problem statement. The purpose and importance of the study were further clarified in this chapter. Moreover, I described how this study attempted to contribute to the body of literature. The location of the study that is, "Shining Stars" ECD centre (pseudonym), was additionally specified. Together with the aims and objectives of the study, an outline of the report was also included.

The literature relevant to the pursuit and advancement of gender equality was studied in Chapter Two. Literature that looked at how the community has influenced gender equality was examined as well. Studies that examined the roles played by schools and teachers in advancing

gender equality were also reviewed. Scholarly works are analysed in this chapter from both an international and South African perspective.

The theoretical framework that the study employed to interpret the data was covered in Chapter Three. The results of this study were examined and interpreted using the Critical Emancipatory Theory with critical and emancipatory pedagogy, the Social Role Theory, and the Social Constructionist Theory. Each theory's significance and applicability to this study was thoroughly investigated.

The study's methodology and research design were explained in Chapter Four. A qualitative methodology was used in this study to get accurate and pertinent data. Moreover, the interpretive paradigm was selected. Furthermore, a description of the purposive sampling technique used to choose the two participants was given. Additionally, the techniques for gathering and analysing the data were emphasised and clarified. Collages and semi-structured interviews were employed to get information from the participants. The thematic method of analysis used to examine the study's data collection was covered in this chapter.

The information that was gathered through semi-structured interviews and collages was examined and presented in Chapter Five. Data were shown according to themes. To highlight their similarities and differences, the results of this study were compared to those of other local and worldwide studies. From the data, the following themes and sub-themes were evident:

1. Understanding gender and gender equality
    - The acceptance of gender differences by the community/society
    - Attitudes and beliefs of Grade R teachers
2. The role of the teacher in promoting gender equality
    - The language used by the Grade R teacher
    - The resources used in the Grade R class
3. The promotion of gender equality at school
    - School uniforms as a means of gender equality
    - School toilets as a means for gender equality

The research questions are revised in Chapter Six, which is followed by a summary of each chapter. The study's main findings are then outlined. Upon summarising the study's limitations, recommendations are made for possible future research directions.

Every chapter has been summarised in this section. The key findings are covered in the next section. Three sub-themes, each addressing a research question, constitute the next section.

6.3 Main Key Findings of the Study

6.3.1 Teachers' Perspectives on the Promotion of Gender Equality in a Grade R

To answer the first research question, 'What are teachers' perspectives on the promotion of gender equality in Grade R?'

This case study found that the teachers' perspectives on the promotion of gender equality in Grade R at the "Shining Stars" ECD centre (pseudonym) are very encouraging and positive. The two participant Grade R teachers displayed a substantial amount of knowledge, experience, and understanding of gender equality and attempted to promote it in their classrooms. Both teachers had knowledge of Gender responsive pedagogy. Gender-responsive pedagogy is a framework that includes concepts such as the importance of having a mixed-gender workforce, gender education being explicitly taught in courses, and staff modelling of alternative types of masculinities and femininities (Warin & Adriany, 2015). Taylor and Ligozat (2019) clarified further that gender pedagogy encompasses the various approaches to investigating and evaluating gendered disparities, as well as how gender-based efforts in classroom instruction, understanding, and teaching could contribute to the realisation of more democratic and inclusive educational goals.

To help the learners in the Grade R classroom better understand their genders and those of others, it is critical to identify gender and comprehend its holistic meaning, according to the data collected from the teachers. Additionally, the data conveyed the teachers' beliefs about the necessity of respecting, accepting, and acknowledging learners' gender choices. The participants had an extensive knowledge of the different genders of learners and were amenable to accepting new information regarding gender issues. The teachers acknowledged the gender gap, along with the short and long-term effects it has on learners. They also recognised that this is made worse when society assigns people to various social classes or ranks according to their gender. This relates and aligns to the gender role theory that underpins this study, which emphasises that at home, young children are exposed to gender norms, where women traditionally spend more time doing household duties than males do, and where toys and books they read and play with are stereotypically associated with feminine traits like leisure, character, and housework. Images of women and girls are often objectified in the media, which

values the aggression, dominance, and power of men as much as the youth, beauty, and sexuality of girls. These influences promote children to adopt the roles and gendered traits associated with their biological sex (Schneider & Bos, 2019).

It is noted that both teachers expressed how gender stereotypes impact an individual's self-perception, behaviour, presentation, and ability to capitalise on opportunities in the workplace. This aligned with the social role theory, wherein the theory's central claim is that all other psychological gender differences are a result of the distribution of labour by gender in a society (Hyde, 2014). It is further stated that individuals' accommodations or adaptations to the specific opportunities or limitations associated with their gender in their society give rise to psychological gender disparities. The hypothesis recognises the biological distinctions between men and women, including variations in strength and size as well as the ability of women to carry and care for children. In the past, these distinctions influenced the gendered division of labour. Due to their superior size and strength, men have chosen to engage in pursuits like combat, which has increased their status, money, and ability to control women. Men's behaviour grew more domineering and women's behaviour more submissive as they assumed these positions of higher authority (Hyde, 2014).

The findings showed that the community or society plays an important role in the acceptance of one's gender. According to Lorber (2018), social hierarchies are based on the organisational concept of gender, which separates individuals into two main groups: "men" and "women." They are treated differently and frequently unevenly, with men typically enjoying greater privileges because they are thought to be unique. The historical and cross-cultural diversity of gender disparities is explained by social phenomena, according to the social construction perspective. Social constructionists contend that institutionalised social interaction patterns, organisational policies, legal and bureaucratic rules and regulations, as well as group norms and expectations, are the sources of gendered behaviour and practices (Barr et al., 2024).

According to the responses and experiences from both participants, the acceptability of those who fit the gender stereotype is greatly influenced by the community. The role of the community and society in the child's life has a huge impact on the understanding and acceptance of the different genders and their role choices (Lorber, 2018). Non-acceptance is the result of non-conformity. In the teachers' experience, people are made fun of and shunned because of their preferred gender, especially if it does not conform to the community's ideals. There is also evidence that gender stereotypes are transmitted from one generation to the next

without any critical analysis or comprehension of these stereotypes. Young girls and boys acquire up on gender stereotypes from the media and their immediate surroundings. They also learn how to present themselves in ways that are proper for their gender. These interactions with society undoubtedly continue to impact one's life, and studies have revealed stereotype-consistent differences between the self-characterisations of men and women (Hentschel et al., 2019). This links directly to the concept of social constructionism which holds that society creates all meaning. Social systems have strong impact on people. They learn about the world through social situations, and a lot of what they believe to be real is based on preconceived notions. According to social constructionist theory, a lot of the thing's individuals take for granted and believe to be a part of the objective reality are actually products of social construction and are subject to change as society does (Vinney, 2019).

The children are not used to seeing a conventional gender role reversed, such as a girl dressing up as a plumber or a boy dressing up as a nurse, because they arrive at school with deeply entrenched attitudes from their parents or the community. Students become mocked and alienated because of this. The article *"Neurological Basis of gender dysphoria"* by Gliske (2019) indicates that gender sense can vary due to various factors, and in cases of significant discomfort, gender dysphoria can result. It occurs when an individual feels that their behaviour and feelings do not align with their gender at birth. This can be referred to as gender dysphoria. It is reinforced by both internal and external factors that influence an individual's internal gender state, namely culture and external feedback. Both could cause people to feel distressed and react to their body ownership and perception. If those things occur in individuals' lives, the state of society may alter their sense of gender.

The participants indicated that there is a greater comprehension and grasp of one's gender if gender equality exists at home, in all duties and activities performed, and in the adult workspace. Children absorb this perception and appreciation of gender equality after they are shown this knowledge and acceptance. Attending school is an extension of this understanding, and it lessens or completely eradicates mockery and exclusion. The two teachers reaffirmed the same mindset and goals for the classroom and demonstrated how all learners, regardless of gender, participate equally in assignments and learning activities. They collaborate as they sit together and are not divided into groups based on their gender.

Warin and Adriany (2015) hypothesised that gender-flexible education also considers suggestions for activities and materials that young children might be encouraged to participate

in, with a focus on gender performance that is playful and experimental and allows for gender transgression. The idea suggests that educators are aware of the gender roles they play. It also suggests that to encourage these, adults must be receptive to children's gendered actions. Therefore, it has consequences for both what is presented and how it is taught. 'Pedagogy' encompasses the consequences for both teaching and teachers (Warin & Adriany, 2015). Despite only one participant attending the Gender Responsive Pedagogy workshop for Grade R teachers, it is concluded that the information gained at the meeting has been workshopped with the other teacher. Thus, improving and giving understanding to the Grade R teachers' perspectives on gender equality. It is also evident that the participants are attempting to work consciously to encourage and promote gender equality with the grade R learners.

To prevent discrimination and separation rather than promoting gender equality, the participants felt that teachers should not be biased or bring their attitudes or beliefs into the classroom that could negatively affect students. For instance, a teacher who feels that only boys play soccer and not girls may be inclined only to give the boys the opportunity to play soccer and keep the girls away from this experience. To avoid introducing gender norms and standards into the grade R classroom, where the students are open to their instructors' opinions, teachers must be aware of these norms and standards. This aligns with the Social Role theory. According to social role theory, girls who are trained to adopt conventional communal roles and cultivate communal traits are also likely to hear messages concerning their unfitness for roles involving power or any agentic role that compromises communal traits and duties (Schneider & Bos, 2019). It is further stated that research on education shows that even minor curriculum modifications, such as rewriting lesson plans, can have a significant impact on modifying attitudes. Just stating that girls and boys should perform on par with one another neutralises the threatening consequences of basic stereotypes (Schneider & Bos, 2019). According to Fabes et al. (2019), the creation of strategies could encourage gender inclusion and gender equality. Working with educators to raise their awareness of gender equality and segregation in their classrooms is required. If teachers do not particularly consider whether girls and boys are interacting positively, it is easy for them to assume that gender-integrated learning is taking place in a co-ed classroom. Therefore, interpersonal relationships in the classroom are made evident to teachers through professional development, which also offers practical methods for managing these interactions well.

6.3.2 Promotion of Gender Equality in Grade R

This section's analysis focused on answering the question ‘How do teachers promote gender equality in Grade R?’

Data from the participants showed how the language used in the classroom can affect children's understanding and acceptance of gender differences. It also confirmed how resources and equipment used in grade R classes might support gender inclusivity and understanding. This study reinforced how crucial teachers' roles are in advancing gender equality. Gender separation is not necessary; gender integration is what is needed. The grade R class teachers choose how to divide and integrate their students. Teachers might offer the opportunity for all learners to integrate and treat one another equally and with respect if they understand how important it is to promote gender equality. No one is judged or separated because of their gender.

One of the methods used to promote gender equality is using gender-neutral language. Language is more than just a tool for verbal and written exchange of concepts, feelings, and information. Instead, it conveys the philosophy of the surrounding society as well. Rapp and Corral-Granados (2024) maintained that institutionalisation was referred to as "the social construction of reality" by Berger and Luckmann in 1966. They asserted that people socially create institutions via their regular interactions with one another. Marx claims that a person's sociality, which includes what most people consider to be a reality, determines their consciousness and serves as the foundation for their theory of social construction. Thus, reality is socially formed through a specific process. This process is primarily dependent on language, which enables a person to transcend the present moment, objectify and typify a subjective experience, and accumulate meanings and a social pool of knowledge that can be shared and passed down from generation to generation (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024). Both teachers emphasised how important it is to use non-gendered language when speaking to the learners in the Grade R class. The importance and effect of language is also a significant element of the Critical Emancipatory theory, through which one gains knowledge and understanding to bring about changes that are fair and just. Bengtsson and Bolande (2020) provided an example followed in Sweden. They stated that in addition to a fundamental understanding of language as a tool for communication, it was evident that specific language usage styles were indicative of norm-critical thinking and an effort to promote or impede inclusive practices. In schools in Sweden, a few key terms are frequently utilised to address both the learners and oneself in a generic sense rather than about any gender. When appropriate, teachers and group leaders in

Sweden replace han (he) and hon (she) with the gender-neutral Swedish word ‘hen.’ One way to interpret this expansion of language use is as an effort to challenge the binary gender paradigm that exists in schools.

In this study, the two teachers shared their personal experiences of how language and expressions might lead someone to believe that a particular behaviour is the only one that is appropriate since it is connected to a particular gender. It also highlights the professions or pursuits that are associated with a certain gender stereotype. With the Grade R learners, both teachers emphasised the value of utilising neutral language and expressions to prevent additional gender-based division and isolation. Keddie and Ollis (2019) advocated that employing affirmative gender politics can help teachers (1) allocate resources, focus on learners and language in a more gender-balanced manner, and (2) eliminate gender categories to allow children to be who they truly are. Both could be beneficial for achieving gender equality.

Teachers often remain unaware of the gender discrimination taking place around them. Tzannetis (2022) argued that to encourage gender inclusion in preschool classes, resources are crucial. Most preschool teachers have the materials on hand in their classrooms. They add their own, based on their own needs and interests in the class. Tzannetis (2022) further concluded that more versatile tools let children express their imaginations and have deeper, more meaningful playtimes. After that, teachers can switch around the resources throughout the year to better suit the needs of each child and keep them interested in learning as they grow, based on continuing observations. Sometimes, teachers might use instructional materials that only feature one gender participating in specific activities, or they might make disparaging remarks about the skills or characteristics of either gender.

Consequently, understanding and promoting gender equality in the classroom depends heavily on the effective use of resources. Both teachers encourage the promotion of unstructured play among learners without imposing rules or requiring them to use specific toys or materials. Instead of having various materials for each gender, all learners use the same toys and resources. All learners in grade R have easy access to a wide variety of educational resources. The Grade R learners are not assessed based on the resources they decide to use for play. They gain cooperation and mutual respect in this way. During this free play period or when the learners are using the tools, teachers can watch the key characteristics of each child. After that, teachers can watch them and offer any assistance that is needed. They are urged to use the

resources at their disposal and even to pursue professional paths that are gender-neutral in the future. Instead of making learners feel bad about their decisions, learners are urged to select activities in a secure, accepting environment.

Hjelmér (2020) concurred with this and argued that approaches to free play that let learners select their toys and play partners are sometimes seen as the opposite of adult direction, like when it comes to gender equality. Studies in Sweden on unstructured play frequently feature boys and girls engaging with objects that conform to gender stereotypes with children of the same sex. Studies have also shown that, in certain circumstances, boys and girls play together and occasionally defy gender stereotypes. The opinions and attitudes of teachers on gender have an impact on the decisions made by children (Hjelmér, 2020).

The teacher might make use of teaching aids and resources that come from stories or literature that support stereotypes that one gender is superior to the other domains, such as housework for women and racing cars for men. One gender can be represented as timid, submissive, and weak, while the other gender can be represented as powerful, assertive, and intelligent leaders. This aligns with the social construction theory. According to Schaffer (2017, as cited in Baysan, 2024), one must be rooted in particular social patterns to be considered socially produced. According to this theory, men are more likely to question the position of women since traditional male gender roles emphasise dominance and power (Azoulay & Gilboa-Schechtman, 2022). Thus, teachers need to be aware of this in their evaluation and use of lesson ideas, teaching tools, and materials without regard to gender stereotypes.

According to Hilliard and Liben (2010, as cited in Fabes et al., 2019), interactions and connections between peers of the same and different genders can be modified in the classroom by some common teacher techniques. For example, gender stereotyping increased, and learners' play with classmates of other genders reduced when teachers used gender labels in their preschool classes, e.g., lining up children by gender.

In contrast, changes in children's experiences, beliefs, and expectations as well as adjustments in seating arrangements, activity planning, and teacher intervention, can all help to promote gender inclusion.

6.3.3 The Necessity for Teachers to Promote Gender Equality in Grade R

The third research question is ‘Why is it necessary for teachers to promote gender equality in Grade R?’

Although teachers have a significant impact on promoting gender equality, both of them also felt that the school had a significant role to play in this effort. Gender equality can be promoted and maintained by the policies of the school, the programs offered, the facilities, the ethos, and the understanding that exists there. This is evident in the Critical Emancipatory theory, with critical and emancipatory pedagogy, which focuses on the unfair and repressive power dynamics that exist in educational institutions, with the intent to address the discriminatory and uneven treatment of learners. Thus, the goal of emancipatory pedagogy is that education should help create a fair and democratic culture (Melo, 2019). Options can be limited to looking at school curricula and proposing criteria for recognising gender-neutral language, traditional gender roles, gender stereotypes, images, and gender balance. However, examining alone in contexts that are gendered would not be sufficient to investigate gendered situations. People acknowledge the power to impact others, themselves, and the formation of society by promoting the ideal of equality and fighting for a deeply rooted, culturally inclusive stance on gender. Jacobs and George (2023) emphasised the importance that policy stakeholders' comprehension, interpretation, and representation of the problem or issue, play a critical role in shaping how gender and gender inequality are produced in the policy. Policy framing is the idea that policymakers use to make sense of the world and policy processes, and stakeholder narratives serve to articulate and frame the ideas that make up the policy context. In the study by Jacobs and George (2023) of ‘How gender is socially constructed in policy-making processes’ in South Africa, it was argued that government officials contribute their ideas, perspectives, and cognitive constructions to policy-making while operating within gendered and unequal social structures. The way that gender is problematised and how "solutions" are portrayed as part of the social construction of policies are also influenced by the dynamic linkages that exist between policy contexts, players, content, and processes. This suggests that policies and policymakers should be explored more ineptly concerning gender equality at schools.

Each of the teachers realised that including the parents is an extremely important factor in promoting gender equality in learners. Promoting gender equality is aided by parents' awareness of and acceptance of gender differences and equality. Axell and Boström (2021) affirmed that children learn about gender-appropriate behaviour regarding toys, careers, and leisure activities by watching how the adults in their environment classify things based on the

female/male binary grouping. Teachers can help parents understand their children's gender needs and how to give all their children equal opportunities, regardless of gender, during these discussions. The ‘Shining Stars’ school uses one-on-one sessions and school-parent meetings to promote parental involvement. They learn how the child's perception of others and their gender is influenced by the language and values spoken in the family.

Additionally, parents are informed about the usage of materials or resources that are available to everyone. To promote equity, parents are also informed about the usage of materials or resources that are accessible to all children. It should not be done differently for males or females. Children should feel comfortable and understood at home as well and should have the freedom to use any resource or toy without worrying about being judged.

Learners wearing uniforms may be seen as one method used to uphold discipline in the classroom. However, the findings in this study aligned with the literature review on the research conducted by Neary and Cross (2018) as well as with Chacko (2019). Both study's findings displayed the need for gender-neutral uniforms as a means of offering a sense of gender freedom and a non-judgmental environment. ‘Shining Stars’ provided an example of how the separated male/female uniform caused distress and emotional turmoil for a learner. More schools in South Africa, including the school that I teach at, have started wearing unisex uniforms in recent years, such as tracksuits, shorts and t-shirts, golf shirts, etc. This has proven to be a good option to encourage gender equality and acceptance.

Every family member uses the same restroom in the households where children are raised. Males and females are not distinguished from one another. However, learners must use gender-specific restrooms when they get to school. It was observed that both educators believed that learners became more conscious of their gender distinctions when they used separate restrooms, drawing attention to one's gender. Rather than fostering understanding and unity, this furthers division. The school has gender-neutral restrooms at the Shining Stars ECD centre. Boys and girls share the same restrooms to promote gender equality. To encourage and facilitate inclusive education, the Department of Education launched an initial draft discussion document in 2022 on the ‘Guidelines for the Socio-educational Inclusion of Diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) in Schools’. This document encouraged all users to have access to private toilets and changing areas in schools, more especially featuring individual stalls or cubicles. All-inclusive policies for bathrooms and locker rooms were encouraged to be established by schools. Under the terms of the school,

students should be permitted to identify themselves (gender) and have access to the restroom or changing area of their choice without judgments or stigmas attached to their choices (Davids & Sheperd, 2023). This step by the Department of Education brought about vigorous discussions among learners, teachers, parents, and community members.

Rather than focusing on individual educators, research has shown that schools generally lack the tools needed to support learners who identify as gender non-conforming and find it difficult to question prevailing gender norms. Their school may influence these children's development as young adults. Gender inequality and tolerance for various genders can be reduced by using gender-neutral uniforms and preventing disparities by using separate restrooms. To create a gender-neutral learning environment and improve gender equity, teacher openness must be promoted. This must tie in with the curriculum and the community or society. In this way, the learners, faculty, management of the school, and the community are encouraged to cooperate and support each other. Kuteesa et al. (2024) concluded that curriculum materials need to be created with diversity and a challenge to gender stereotypes in mind. A conducive atmosphere for gender equity in education can also be created by including communities and stakeholders in discussions and awareness-raising initiatives. Holistic approaches are required to provide social empowerment chances through education. Kuteesa et al. (2024) further reiterated that beyond only providing access, high-quality education should also provide learners the critical thinking abilities, self-assurance, and the ability to confront structural injustices. Realising gender parity in the classroom is essential to societal empowerment. Through tackling obstacles and advancing inclusive possibilities, a community in which every person, irrespective of gender, can achieve their maximum potential is cultivated.

6.4 Recommendations for future studies

The first recommendation is to prioritise and encourage teacher development in gender education and gender-responsive pedagogy. A lack of knowledge leads to misunderstanding, non-acceptance, and intolerance of the different genders in the classroom. Teachers need to be conscientious about the long- and short-term effects of their attitudes, personal views, and their use of non-gendered language on the Grade R learners. The gender-responsive pedagogy course offered by the Department of Basic Education is a great source of information and needs to be conducted with all teachers. This will assist in breaking down barriers of the social construction of gender that is passed down from generation to generation. Limaj and Strori

(2022) suggested that teachers are generally ill-prepared to work with learners from diverse genders and social and cultural backgrounds. Studies also reveal that most of the teachers' existing education consists of theoretical information with little to no practice, making it difficult to determine how well-equipped teachers are to manage outside influences on diversity and inclusive education regarding gender.

Fabes et al. (2019) studied the role that gender plays in an inclusive classroom and how to improve gender integration and equality, resulting in the identification of two strategies that need to be incorporated into normal teaching activities. The first, called Buddy-Up, was created to function at the peer-paired level by giving children the chance to work together with a variety of peers in partnerships (or small groups, depending on the teacher's assessment). Buddy-Up aims to give children structured opportunities to interact with different gendered peers in teacher-designed activities where they collaborate to achieve a common objective. As a result, a primary goal of the Buddy-Up strategy is to give children a chance to interact with diverse peers in ways that maximise the possibility that these interactions will result in positive outcomes (like encouraging collaboration between genders with understanding and respect for each other).

The second strategy, Meet-Up, was created to function at the large group or classroom level by allowing children to collaborate well in a large setting to establish the rules for the classroom. Teachers' roles in both techniques are to organise and assist with these initiatives. Both were created for and in conjunction with preschool and elementary education. Meet-Up's main objective is to create an environment in the classroom where learners of different genders, such as boys, girls, lesbians, non-binary learners, etc., feel involved in a supportive community and connected. This is accomplished by giving the class the regular, controlled opportunity to talk about and decide on rules for the classroom, to exchange personal information and get to know one another, and to recognise and value differences in their genders as well as similarities (Fabes et al., 2019).

Teachers must be positively engaged in finding strategies like the ones above, which enhance and promote gender equality in the classroom. Likewise, teachers need to broaden their understanding of how gender is socially constructed. If this process takes place, they will come to realise that their behaviour in the classroom greatly influences how children create their gender identities. Encouraging grade R learners to participate in all activities both inside and outside of the classroom is essential, especially when it comes to making use of all available

resources. Teachers are responsible for making sure that learners have access to both gendered and non-gendered resources. No learner should be stigmatised or ostracized for the type of play they choose. According to Axell and Boström (2021), the field of technology is closely linked to the gender binary, which means children begin to stereotype everyday life based on this divide as early as age two. The preschool, through its activities (such as reading aloud from picture books), provides a space in which societal gender norms can be upheld or contested. Books about various artefacts, such as cars, aeroplanes, and boats, frequently introduce children to how humans use technology and may influence how they identify themselves when they encounter different technological resources in daily life. This is relevant to Grade R as resources and technology are part of the curriculum practices to enhance the development of the learners.

It would be beneficial to include gender-responsive pedagogy as part of the in-service teacher training courses. This prepares the novice teachers on the subject matter before they have even arrived at the classroom. Thus, they are already trained in strategies to promote gender equality.

School rules and policies need to be more inclusive regarding gender. Starting from the stereotypical duties given to learners to school uniforms to sporting activities and facilities etc., the school can implement and encourage more participation in all facets of the schooling life rather than the child's gender determining the rules. According to Kuteesa et al. (2024), this included enacting laws that prohibit gender-based discrimination in education, allocating sufficient resources to ensure equal access to quality education for all genders, and implementing gender-sensitive curricula that challenge stereotypes and promote inclusive learning environments.

The Department of Education should provide a thorough, inclusive curriculum that normalises gender diversity. It is necessary to refute traditional gendered games and activities. It is crucial to support every learner in all activities. Gender awareness programs should be implemented by schools in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education for the benefit of parents, community members, and unions. Experts in gender and sexuality should lead these programs. Increasing these stakeholders' understanding of gender and gender diversity should be the goal of the awareness campaigns. These important stakeholders may become aware of the value of gender promotion in grade R through awareness programs intended to raise knowledge of gender stereotypes. Additionally, this could clear up any misunderstandings and disinformation on gender inequalities among the stakeholders.

Regarding possible directions for future investigation, it is suggested to look at studies that seek to comprehend the perspectives that foundation phase and high school educators have regarding gender. Since these educators play a crucial part in the formation of gender and gender identities, it is contended that this is imperative. Before moving on to the subsequent years, the child only spends a year in Grade R. This suggests that to promote gender equality, all teachers working with learners in Grade R should possess the same information and techniques.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

The first limitation was the sample size. This study had only two participants; thus, the quantity of data gathered is minimised. Because of this, it can occasionally be difficult to validate the results because there is nothing to compare them to. More participants in a study give more opportunities to verify and corroborate the information gathered. More perspectives and ideas are also provided by having more participants.

The fact that the study was carried out at only one ECD centre is another drawback. The results may also be impacted and limited by this. A different set of results might be obtained if this study were conducted with Grade R teachers from a few ECD centres. Research conducted in a single ECD centre might produce limited data. The use of the teachers in an ECD Centre may also be a disadvantage as compared to the use of teachers teaching Grade R in mainstream schools.

Another limitation of this study was the time constraint and availability of the participants. The ECD centre caters to the working-class community by keeping the children at the centre as an after-care establishment. The meetings that took place with the teachers had time constraints as the teachers also assisted with the learners after aftercare and were not available for longer periods. Participants were unfortunately not available during the weekends. This added an urgency to attain data in a shorter space of time. The availability of participants always promotes a more comfortable and stress-free environment for obtaining data.

6.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the views of Grade R teachers regarding the advancement of gender equality. This chapter included the key findings of the study, the recommendations for future development of the topic as well as the limitations of this study.

The findings were aligned with the theoretical frameworks chosen and showed how interrelated and relevant they are to this study. Studies on gender equality and its significance have been done in the past, but few of them concentrated on the viewpoints of teachers on advancing gender equality in Grade R classrooms in South Africa. Therefore, by deepening the understanding of the viewpoints of Grade R schoolteachers on the promotion of gender equality, this study aimed to add to the body of literature.

The main conclusions of this study are that grade R teachers are aware of and comprehend gender equality. Their understanding of gender disparities and how to support them may have been influenced by their prior knowledge of gender-responsive pedagogy in Grade R. However, they also highlighted the influence of the community, the teacher, and the school on the acknowledgment and promotion of gender equality in Grade R. The teachers' positive attitude and commitment to encouraging gender equality in Grade R is evident in the activities they conduct with their learners, in the resources they use and, in the gender, neutral language that is used with the learners. This is heartwarming and a very inspirational example for other grade R teachers to emulate.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: ECD Centre Supervisor Informed Consent

Date: 21/09/2023

Dear Prospective Supervisor

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO USE AN ECD CENTRE FOR RESEARCH

My name is Saman Misra-Gani. I am a Master's student from the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) Edgewood campus, 121 Marian hill Road, Pinetown. My contact number is [redacted] my e-mail address is 222121650@stu.ukzn.ac.za

I intend to conduct research which is aimed at exploring the Promotion of Gender Equality in Grade R (Early Childhood Education) in an informal settlement. I kindly request you to collaboratively work with me as one of the ECD centres in this project.

This research project will focus on one informal community settlement, and one selected ECD Centre in Cato Manor (UMkhumbane) in the Umlazi District in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. The purpose of this research is to explore the promotion of Gender Equality in Grade R; I further anticipate that the findings of this project will likely inform and empower various stakeholders collaboratively with different contextual strategies to address issues of gender equality from ECD.

This project's design will be a Participatory Action Research (PAR) and will adopt a qualitative approach. The times and dates of the meetings will be negotiated to ensure that you and your staff members are not inconvenienced in any way. There will be planned workshops closer to data generation processes where participants will be guided on the methods of data generation

and analysis procedures. In this planned research, they will be required to participate in interviews. Each interview will be conducted for 45- 60 minutes, and all sessions will be voice-recorded and a camera will also be used for collages and reflections, with your/your staff's permission. Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

Please note:

- There will be NO financial benefits that the participant may receive as part of their participation in this research project.
- Participation in this study is voluntary; therefore, participants are free to withdraw at any time they so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalties on their part.
- There will be NO financial benefits from participating in this project. Participation is purely for academic purposes, and for the benefit of ECD communities in the informal contexts with the aim to enable and empower them with possible strategies to find ways to enhance ECE teaching and learning.
- All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your or your staff's identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s. In addition, and for your anonymity, a fictitious name/pseudonym will be used to represent your name and that of the ECD centre in the research report/ and conference presentations.
- The interviews and reflections shall be recorded to assist in concentration and participation and in transcriptions of data generated. Any information given and discussed cannot be used against you or your staff, and it will be used for purposes of this research only.
- The generated data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- Please indicate (by ticking where applicable) whether you and your staff agree to the audio recording of the interview and collage-making session:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording		
Use of cameras		

Should you have any questions or concerns about this research study or its procedures, now or in the future, please use the following contact details:

Ms Nompumelelo Madonda: Contact details: Tel: 031 260 3427; Email: Madonda@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

HSSREC Research Office administrator; E-mail: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 4557

Thank you for your contribution to this research study.

Sincerely yours in Education:

_____

Saman Misra-Gani

DECLARATION

I, _____ (Full name and surname of supervisor), confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I am aware that I am at liberty to withdraw my ECD centre from the study at any time. I also understand that a copy of this document will be available upon request.

I consent/not consent to participate in the research study.

_____ _____

Signature of participant Date

Appendix B: Participant Informed Consent Form

Date: 21/09/2023

Dear Prospective Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

My name is Saman Misra-Gani. I am a Master's student from the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) Edgewood campus, 121 Marian hill Road, Pinetown. My contact number is [redacted]9 my e-mail address is 222121650@stu.ukzn.ac.za

I intend to conduct research which is aimed at exploring the Promotion of Gender Equality in Grade R (Early Childhood Education) in an informal settlement. I kindly request you to collaboratively work with me as one of the participants in this project.

This research project will focus on one informal community settlement, and one selected ECD Centre in Cato Manor (UMkhumbane) in Umlazi District, in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. The purpose of this research is to explore the promotion of Gender Equality in Grade R, I further anticipate that the findings of this project will likely inform and empower various stakeholders collaboratively with different contextual strategies to address issues of gender equality from ECD.

This project's design will be a Participatory Action Research (PAR) and will adopt a qualitative approach. The times and dates of the meetings will be negotiated to ensure that you are not inconvenienced in any way. There will be planned workshops closer to data generation processes where you will be guided on the methods of data generation and analysis procedures. In this planned research, you will be required to participate in interviews and collage-making. Each interview will be conducted for 45- 60 minutes and all sessions will be voice-recorded, and a camera will also be used for collages and reflections, with your permission. Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

Please note:

- There will be NO financial benefits that you may receive as part of your participation in this research project.
- Your participation in this study is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalties on your part.
- There will be NO financial benefits from participating in this project. Your participation is purely for academic purposes and for the benefit of ECD communities in informal contexts with the aim to enable and empower them with possible strategies to find ways to enhance ECE teaching and learning.
- All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s. In addition, and for your anonymity, a fictitious name/pseudonym will be used to represent your name and that of the ECD centre in the research report/ and conference presentations.
- The interviews and reflections shall be recorded to assist in concentration and participation and transcriptions of data generated. Any information given and discussed cannot be used against you, and it will be used for purposes of this research only.
- The generated data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.

If you agree to participate in the interviews and collage making, please indicate (by ticking where applicable) whether you agree to the audio recording of the session:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording		
Use of cameras		

Should you have any questions or concerns about this research study or its procedures, now or in the future, please use the following contact details:

Ms Nompumelelo Madonda: Contact details: Tel: 031 260 3427; Email: Madonda@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

HSSREC Research Office administrator; E-mail: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 4557

Thank you for your contribution to this research study.

Sincerely yours in Education:

_____

Saman Misra-Gani

DECLARATION

I, _____(Full name and surname of participant) have been informed about the study 'Promotion of Gender Equality in Grade R' by Saman Misra-Gani and confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I declare that my participation in this study is voluntary, and I am aware that I am at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that a copy of this document will be available upon request, and should I have any further questions/concerns that, I may contact the researcher.

I consent/not consent to participate in the research study.

_____ _____

Signature of participant Date

Appendix C: Acceptance Letter

Ekuthuleni Educare Centre

[redacted]

Chesterville ext.1

Durban

4091

[redacted]

[redacted]

September 28, 2023

Acceptance letter

To whom it may concern: Saman Misra-Gani

We write this letter to inform you that we have accepted your offer to collaborate with our school for research purposes. We are looking forward to working together.

Regards

Mrs T.I Mhlongo (Principal)

[redacted]

Appendix D: Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

26 October 2022

Ncamisile Parscaline Mthiyane (642158)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear NP Mthiyane,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00004862/2022
Project title: Promotion of psychosocial wellbeing of supervisors, practitioners and children for sustainable early childhood development in an informal settlement.
Non-Degree

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 04 October 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 26 October 2023.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 **Email:** hssrec@ukzn.ac.za **Website:** http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics
Founding Campuses: Edgewood | Howard College | Medical School | Pietermaritzburg | Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

CO-INVESTIGATORS DECLARATION FORM

Please note that it is a requirement that all co-investigators (internal and external to UKZN) in a study must complete the attached form. After completion this form must be given to the Principal Investigator of the Study.

The Principal Investigator must upload the completed form on the attachments tab under Signatures.

First name(s)	Saman
Last name	Misra-Gani
Initials	S
Internal or External to UKZN	Internal
Staff or student (for UKZN staff and students only)	Student
Population Group/ Race (Black, White, Coloured, Indian, Other)	Indian
Gender * (Male, Female, Not specified)	Female
Nationality	South African
e-mail address	222121650@stu.ukzn.ac.za
Mobile Number	[redacted]
Organisation/Company (if external applicant)	N/A
School (if staff or student)	School of Education (Edgewood)
College (if staff or student)	College of Humanities
PROJECT TITLE	Teachers' perspectives on the promotion of gender equality in Grade R
Role in Research project	Researcher
I HEREBY DECLARE THAT I AM A CO-INVESTIGATOR IN THE ABOVE PROJECT. SIGNATURE OF CO-INVESTIGATOR:	[redacted]

Appendix E: Collage and Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Time of interview:

Date: Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee: Position of interviewee:

(Briefly describe the project)

QUESTIONS

1. What are teachers' perspectives on the promotion of gender equality in a Grade R?

COLLAGE

The participants create a collage of visual images that reflect their understanding of the promotion of Gender Equality in the Grade R class. This will be a digital collage created on a device e.g., a laptop, using pictures, gifs, sayings, words, animation, etc. or a physically handcrafted one with the sticking of pictures and symbols that reflect the participants understanding. The participants will also provide write-ups of their collage, to furnish the researcher with an explanation for the choice of visuals in the collage. The digital collage will be a once-off presentation to gain an understanding of the participant's view of the concept of Gender integration. The participant will be given two hours to complete it as he/she needs to be as spontaneous and natural in the collage. Instructions will be provided on a Monday and the participant will need to submit the collage on the same day that it is completed. The participant can have a digital device available to complete this task or materials like magazines, newspapers, etc. Once the collage is completed, the participant will do a write-up, explaining the choice of visual arts and what it represents to him/her in their understanding. Many participants find it easier to present a narrative of their thoughts or experiences once they have a visual representation done first. The collage will be used as the first data collection method to initiate the process for the participant to engage with the topic and will specifically address the first research question.

Semi-structured Interview

Question 2: How is gender equality promoted in Grade R?

- What strategies do you use in the Gr R classroom to show gender equality?
- What are some other ways that you can promote gender equality during play?
- How can the different areas (e.g. Dress up, construction corner etc) in the grade R class be used to promote gender equality?
- What do you think are the advantages of having all learners interact with the same materials/toys?
- What challenges have you experienced in having all learners interact with the same materials/toys?
- Do you think that the language you use in the class, e.g. Boys and girls/guys/ can separate learners according to their gender or promote gender equality? Provide some examples of the language you use.

Semi-structured Interview

Question 3: Why is it necessary for teachers to promote gender equality in Grade R?

- Do you feel that males, females, gays, etc are treated differently based on their gender? Name some instances that this happens.
- Have you witnessed learners experience any difficulties with regards to their gender roles in grade R?
- How do the learners react or respond to being differentiated based on their gender?
- Does a teacher play a role in promoting gender equality with learners?
- How can a teacher play a positive role in promoting gender equality in grade R?

Thank you for your time and co-operation. Everything that you have shared with me today will remain confidential, and your name will not be used.

Appendix F: Turnitin Report

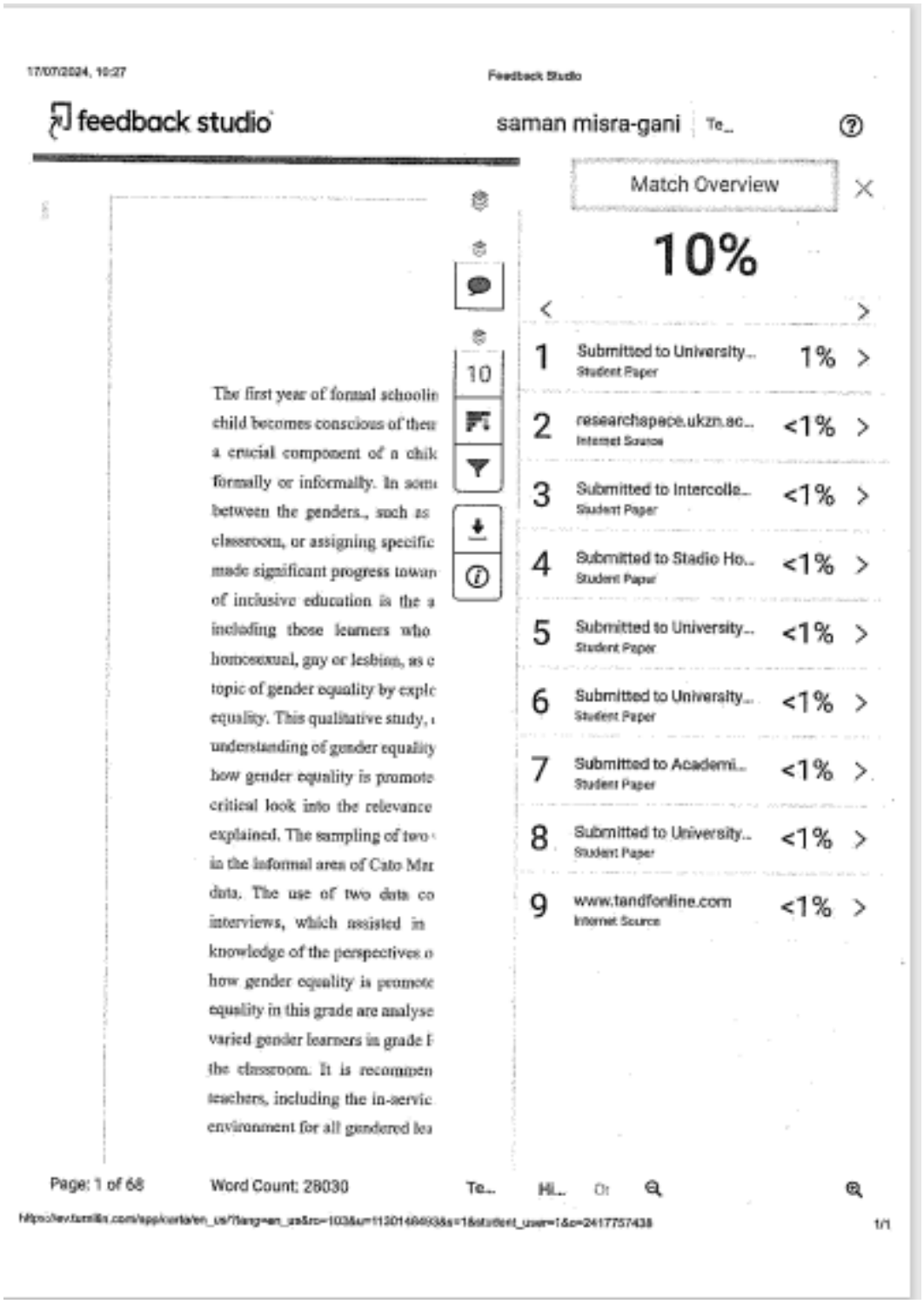
turnitin

Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author:	saman misra-gani
Assignment title:	Teachers' perspectives on the promotion of gender equality ...
Submission title:	Teachers' Perspectives on the promotion of gender equality ...
File name:	TEACHERS_PERSPECTIVES_ON_THE_PROMOTION_OF_GENDE...
File size:	100.15K
Page count:	68
Word count:	28,030
Character count:	157,498
Submission date:	16-Jul-2024 10:50PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID:	2417757438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saman misra-gani
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The first year of formal schoolin
child becomes conscious of their
a crucial component of a chil
formally or informally. In som
between the genders., such as
classroom, or assigning specific
made significant progress towar
of inclusive education is the a
including those learners who
homosexual, gay or lesbian, as c
topic of gender equality by explo
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understanding of gender equality
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data. The use of two data co
interviews, which assisted in
knowledge of the perspectives o
how gender equality is promote
equality in this grade are analyse
varied gender learners in grade F
the classroom. It is recommen
teachers, including the in-servic
environment for all gendered lea
Page: 1 of 68
Word Count: 28030
1/1

Turnitin Originality Report

Processed on: [illegible]
ID: [illegible]
Word Count: [illegible]
Submitted: 1

Teachers' Perspectives on the promotion of gender equality in Gr R. By saman misra-gani

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APPENDIX G: Editor's Report

Website: www.chiefeditors.net

Email: info@chiefeditors.net or boldwin@chiefeditors.net

Cell: [redacted] or [redacted]

Dear Sir/madam

Re: Confirmation of editing and proofreading

This letter informs the responsible authorities that our team proofread and edited the work authored by **Saman Misra-Gani (222121650)** to the best of its ability. Our editing involves spelling check, punctuation, grammar, sentence construction, word reduction, cross reference citations, basic formatting (general layout), presentation style, indexing, and other mechanics of the English language. No technical alterations have been made.

Corrections were made using track changes, which have been clearly outlined for the author's reference. It is the onus of the author to accept or reject the suggested changes.

Please do not hesitate to contact us on the details provided above for more information.

Disclaimer: The editor will not be held responsible for any errors introduced due to the changes made after editing.

Yours,

[redacted]

B. Mutsvene (Coordinator)

Affiliation: International Affiliation of Writers Guilds (IAWG)

IAWG