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**An Assessment of the Experiences of Women in Leadership Positions:  
a Case-Study of the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone**

**Submitted by**

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## DECLARATION BY STUDENT

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the experiences of women in leadership positions in the national government department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The aim of this study was to establish what were the challenges that impacted women's experiences in leadership? The objectives of this study were: first, to determine the challenges that impacted women's participation in leadership; second, to assess the institutional mechanisms and strategies that were put in place to encourage and support women's access to decision making and leadership; and third, to provide policy recommendations for the increased participation of women in leadership.

The theoretical approach that underpinned this study was Marxist feminist theory to understand of how various variables were used to exercise unequal gendered power relations between men and women within the Department. On April 27, 1994, South Africa became a constitutional democracy with progressive principles such as freedom, human dignity, equality, non-racialism, and non-sexism. However, this study revealed that gender stereotypes in decision-making processes are still deeply embedded in the government's Department of Employment and Labour at the Port Shepstone office. This research further revealed that women are proportionally represented in national government in KwaZulu-Natal. A consideration of the qualitative evidence collected in this research showed no differences in how female and male perceived their leadership roles. However, the study indicated that there was gap between the policy and implementation levels in local government in the Department of Employment and Labour, Port Shepstone, in KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, the study suggested that the Department should restructure its gender policies and gender programmes to be in line with current legislation and policies.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Affirmative Action
AGDI	African Gender and Development Index
AIC	African Independent Congress
AWLN	African Women Leaders Network
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
BWA's	Business Women's Association
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGE	Commission on Gender Equality
EEA	Employment Equity Act
GAD	Gender and Development
GAP	Gender Advocacy Programme
IDP	Integrated Development Programme
LGI	Local Government Institution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PEPUDA	Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SDBIP	Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
WCAPD	Women, Children and People with Disabilities
WDF	Women's Development Foundation
WID	Women in Development

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

In post-apartheid South Africa, various legislation, policies, and strategies have been introduced, including the new labour and employment legislation, for example, the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998, and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997 which aimed at advancing equitable, fair and nondiscriminatory labour force practices. These laws and legislation resulted in an increased number of women occupying managerial and leadership positions in large organizations, both in the public and private sectors (SADC Gender Protocol, 2010). However, it is evident that over the past 30 years of South Africa's transition to democracy (to 2023) that women still face gender-based challenges at work.

Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution of 1996<sup>1</sup> focuses on the Bill of Rights. Section 9, of the Constitution is entitled "Equality" and it guarantees that everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. Subsection 2 and 3 of Section 9 of the Constitution outlines, inter alia, that equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms, and that the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Although the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa makes specific reference to equality, it is ironic that women still face discrimination and other related challenges that inhibit them from performing their assigned duties to the best of their abilities in the work environment (Msibi, 2020). Many of the questions about women's leadership positions have often arisen in several studies (Elias [2018], Kiamba [2009], Rhode 2017]). Women bring an array of essential qualities to the workplace. Women are empathic listeners, who value collaboration and teamwork while also acting as experts

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<sup>1</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

at building relationships, and encouraging others to achieve their maximum potential. Lessons are often learned from women in leadership positions. However, there is scant information on the challenges that women in leadership positions faced in the public sector. South African women, who have met the requirements for vacant positions, were determined to break through the glass ceiling that historically prevented them from achieving leadership positions (Rosser, 2003). Women are powerful agents of change, and the far-reaching benefits of diversity and gender parity in leadership and decision making are increasingly recognized in all spheres (Barnes & Burchard, 2013; Trigg & Bernstein, 2016). However, the subtle gender bias that persists in society, community, families, and organizations stands as a strong barrier to women's leadership (Brown, Killick & Renaud, 2013).

Women in leadership in government play crucial roles in shaping policies, providing representation, and driving community development. Their presence promotes diversity, equity and different perspectives in decision making (Matoan, 2015). Encouraging and supporting women's participation in government were essential for fostering inclusive and effective governance. However, women in government often face unique challenges and experiences, including gender bias. The gender bias and stereotypes that women face hinder their advancement and decision-making authority (Akinola, 2018). Women have limited representation that cause underrepresentation in government leadership positions, making it harder to influence policies and priorities. Women have limited access to networks and mentorship opportunities which affect their professional growth (Dodo & Mwale, 2017). According to Ogunsanya (2007), women in leadership in government are not coping with balancing their leadership roles with family responsibilities. Consequently, this causes significant challenges for women in government (Ogunsanya, 2007). Moreover, women in leadership in government face gender-based harassment and discrimination while in leadership roles. Despite these challenges, women in government make significant contributions, advocate for gender equality, and influence positively the changes in their communities. There are therefore significant efforts to address gender disparities and promote inclusivity in advancing women's leadership (Razavi, 2016).

Women continue to be vastly under-represented in decision making in politics, business, communities, and organizations in South Africa (Andrede & Madsen, 2018). The South African Government prioritized initiatives that address the unequal

economic and social position of women. Yet, overcoming gender inequality in the workplace remains a major challenge across many industries in South Africa (StatsSA, 2021). Having said that, there are no legal barriers to women's participation in elections or to them becoming representatives for political parties. Women register and turn out to vote in higher numbers than men in national, provincial, and local elections. However, at the local government level, women's representation has stagnated, particularly at the ward level (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013).

Despite the efforts aimed at transforming both the country (i.e., South Africa) and the public service to embrace national priorities of development and economic growth, gender parity challenges persist for women across the public sector. For example, while women have the potential and ability to be leaders, they often lack opportunities, resources and support for realizing their potential. This is peculiar to the public sector where there are more women entering leadership positions in South Africa. Against this background, this study examined the challenges women in leadership positions faced in the Department of Employment and Labour at Port Shepstone in KwaZulu-Natal.

## **1.2. Research Problem Statement**

According to Mokoena (2018), societal pressures and regulations promote assumptions and prejudices, posing hurdles for women in positions of leadership. Under apartheid, the white authorities removed many black South Africans from their traditional land, and forced them into small, segregated settlements in reserves that had basically no infrastructure and little or no fertile land for farming. Women were forced to work in farms, and men in mining. The rural areas were classified as reserves called "Bantustans" for the "Bantu", a classification used for all black South Africans under apartheid (Nattrass & Seekings, 2008). Even though post-apartheid South Africa is democratic and emphasizes equality, economic development, and education for all, rural women continue to be left behind. They continue to face discrimination from economic, social, and political institutions and from a patriarchal culture (Eynon, 2017).

According to Freund and Hernandez-Maskivker (2021), women work at the lower levels compared to their male counterparts. The number of women in the workforce today (2023) is far greater than before the end of World War II when less than one-

third of women worked outside the home (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). With more women in the workforce, issues surrounding gender diversity continue to be a concern. According to StatsSA (2020) there were a total of 1, 207 males in top managerial positions in the public sector and only 589 women, compared with senior management levels where there were 7, 298 males and 4, 883 women (Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). There is a gap between males and females in leadership or managerial positions (StatsSA, 2021).

South Africa's Constitution of 1996 (Act No. 5 of 1996) and the Employment Equity Act (No 55 of 1998) are premised on gender equality as a founding principle and a *conditio sine qua non*<sup>2</sup> in the workplace (Statssa, 2021). The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill, in particular, calls for equal representation in decision-making positions. However, the gender representation for women is still below 50% for positions that come with a great deal of influence (StatsSA, 2021). Women in South Africa accounted for 43,4% of the total employment in the second quarter of 2021 of those persons in managerial positions, while there were 66,9% men compared to 33,1% women in leadership positions.

In spite of the changes that have occurred in the composition of the workforce with women's participation in leadership positions, women are usually paid lower salaries than men (Freund & Hernandez-Maskivker, 2021). Gender pay gaps are a serious blow to progress for South Africa and they threaten to undermine the wellbeing of successive generations. Women in South Africa earn 23% less than men, and the percentage of managers who are women is still only approximately 38% (Statssa, 2021). Additionally, when it comes to top-level executive positions, women are even far less represented with only a meagre 10.4% of them being chief executive officers at Fortune 500 companies (Hinchliffe, 2023). Men in executive positions appear to be least concerned about advancing women into managerial roles, thus promoting a culture of gender polarization (Nayak & Tabassum, 2021). Regardless of the implemented policies to redress gender inequality in the workplace, males still dominate in leadership positions in South Africa (Matotoka & Odeku, 2021)

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<sup>2</sup> Gender equality is an indispensable and essential action, condition, or ingredient.

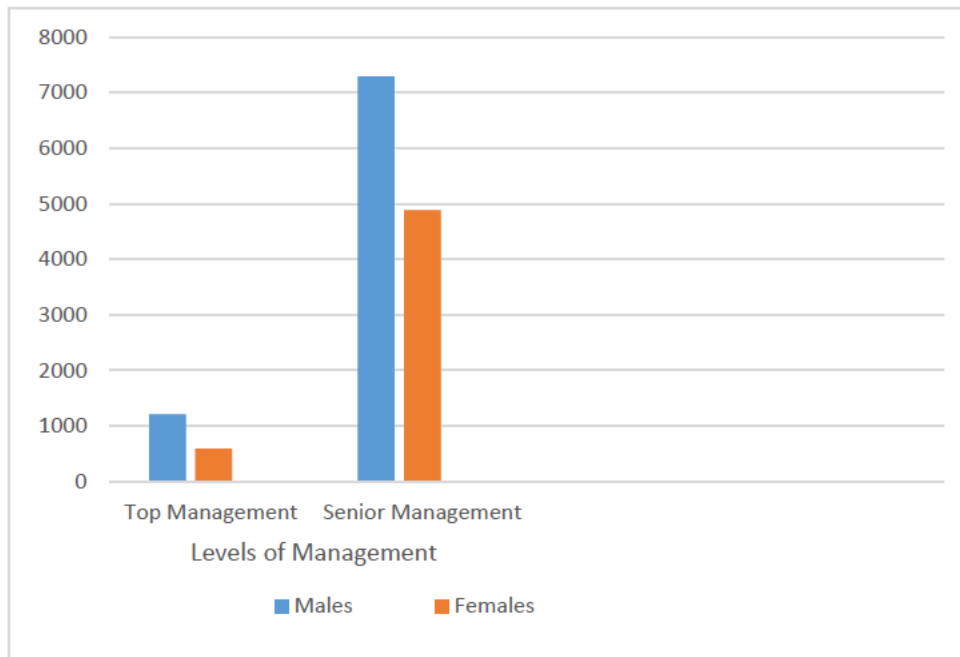


Figure 1. Comparison of Leadership Positions of Males and Females in the Public Sector in KwaZulu-Natal (2020)

The above figure (Figure 1) shows that there were 1,207 males in top managerial positions in the public sector and only 589 women in KwaZulu-Natal in 2020, compared with the senior management levels where there were 7,298 males and 4,883 women. Figure 1 shows that women were underrepresented in both the top and senior management levels in the public sector in KwaZulu-Natal in 2020.

### 1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the experiences of women in leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour at Port Shepstone, in KwaZulu-Natal. The reason the researcher chose this case study was because the Department of Employment and Labour provided service delivery to four municipalities that are still led by Chiefs. The research questions of the study sought to determine the experiences of women in leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour at Port Shepstone.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions informed the study:

- What are the factors or challenges that impact women's participation in leadership positions at the Department of Employment and Labour, in Port Shepstone?
- What are the institutional policies and strategies put in place to encourage and support women's participation, and what are the structures that support women's access to decision making and leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour, in Port Shepstone?
- What are the policy recommendations in regard to the participation of women in leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour?

## **1.5 Research Problems and Objectives: Broader Issues to be Investigated**

The study claims that the participation of women in decision making throughout the world has increased. In spite of the incremental progress towards women's participation in the public sphere, it is generally recognized that women have largely remained outside of formal leadership roles due to many factors (Abdi, Bade & Velmurugan, 2022). This study therefore explored the nature of women's representativeness in leadership positions and assessed the institutional strategies and policies that were put in place to encourage and support women's active participation in leadership positions.

## **1.6 Research Methodology**

The design of the study was qualitative, and the research methodology comprised accessing primary and secondary sources. The nature of the research objectives and the research problem made this a qualitative study. Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems (Tenny, Brannan & Sharts-Hopko, 2017). It is used to understand people's beliefs,

experiences, attitudes, behaviour, and interactions. Qualitative research gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviour. It answers the how and why, instead of how many or how much? In this study, interviews were conducted to explore women's daily challenges in leadership positions. According to Federici (2018), the importance of social hierarchies at workplaces should not be undermined in order to overcome the inequality and difficulties women experience.

### **1.7 Clarifications of the Notion of Gender Parity**

According to Davies (2014), it is common knowledge that the idea of participation does not distinguish between distinct types of engagement. It is therefore impossible to infer a woman's position in a decision-making hierarchy from her overall degree of participation (Stevanovic, 2018). According to Freund and Maskivker (2021), women may be part of an institution but be subordinated within it, for example, by being segregated or relegated into lower-ranking roles. Leadership describes the management roles of employees within a company. For example, executives, managers, supervisors, and chief executive officers (CEOs) are all regarded as being in leadership positions. Leadership is the ability of an individual or group of individuals to influence and guide followers or other members of an organization (Freund & Maskivker, 2021).

In the study of gender relations, segregation is a crucial concept. Segregation is a social practice in which men and women are segregated from one another, with the dominant group typically occupying superior or senior positions (Blackburn, Jarman & Racko, 2012). There are significant variances in how the phrase is used depending on whether the concept is focused on neutral, negative, or positive forms of this practice. These usually depend upon whether it is a strategy implemented by the dominant group to further their domination (the usual meaning), or whether the term also covers a defensive strategy on the part of the subordinate group which involves concentration (though the term separatism is more usual in such instances), or whether it can be used in a neutral, technical manner (such as labour market segregation which treats as equivalent both the above). Representative is broader than representation in this case as the person giving the presentation, the confidence to use is utmost. The presenter is also the leader of the group (Bohnet, 2016).

Women's leadership research is motivated by the observation that despite progress in the representation of women in leadership roles, there is a global leadership gap between men and women. In politics, business, government, education, non-profit organizations, and other sectors around the world, there are still substantially fewer women leaders (Andrede & Madsen, 2018). Men and women in formal leadership roles have apparent, influential, and recognized power differences (Barnes & Burchard, 2013; Trigg & Bernstein, 2016). Women in leadership positions are paid less than their male counterparts, and these disparities are especially obvious in high-powered jobs. Prime ministers, board members, CEOs, and presidents, for example, have salary discrepancies between men and women who hold these positions (Bishu & Alkadry, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2018).

## **1.8 Chapter Outline**

The dissertation has five chapters structured as follows:

Chapter one introduces the background of the study, and provides the research problem statement, the aim and objectives of the study, the research question of the study and the broader issues to be investigated, the methodology used in the study, clarifications and assumptions. Chapter two consists of review of the relevant literature linked to the challenges women face in leadership positions in both the public and private sectors, and a presentation of the theoretical framework underpinning this research. It critically analyses the challenges facing women, and discusses the literature related to the objectives of this study at a global, regional, South African, and KwaZulu-Natal level. Chapter three analyses the methodology used in the study. Chapter four presents an analysis of the data and

the study findings from the Port Shepstone case study, and discusses the challenges that impacted women in their leadership positions. Chapter five provides the conclusions and recommendations stemming from this research as well as the recommended areas for further research.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

#### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explain the influence and experience of women in leadership positions, and the challenges women leaders faced in the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone in KwaZulu-Natal. Wachs (2001) examined the careers of 14 top female leaders, including eBay President and CEO Whitman, an American business executive. Whitman was described as “relentlessly optimistic,” and those who worked with her said that her ability to stay focused and positive set her apart from most executives and politicians who served as president and CEO of eBay (1998–2008). What she discovered mirrors Caliper's training, including a willingness to reinvent the rules: “... the ability to sell your vision; determination to turn challenges into opportunities; and a focus on 'high access' in the high-tech business world” (Wachs, 2001, p. 38).

This chapter provides a review of the literature related to women's experiences in leadership positions, the challenges and barriers that impede women's success in the workplace, and the theoretical framework of the study. Bezuidenhout, Davis and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) state that after identifying the research topic and deciding on the scope of the investigation, the researcher can then study the literature that is closely relevant to the study. A literature review is in order to establish what elements/aspects/topics have already been undertaken in the field of research and then to establish the gaps (in the field of research) that still need to be researched. The specific research questions, and the aims and objectives of an individual's research emerges from the gaps detected in the literature review Bezuidenhout, Davis and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) Welman et al. (2006) suggested various aspects that make the review of the literature important, and they concluded:

- It provides vital facts and information about the topic; it helps to avoid duplication;
- It helps with developing various parts of the study;
- It can give the researcher ideas on methods of proceeding with the study;

- It gives insights about the challenges of the earlier studies, and assists with establishing the findings and conclusion of earlier studies; and
- It can provide motivation to the researcher to be eager to study more.

Bougie and Sekaran (2016) state that reviewing literature helps the researcher to narrow down the bigger problem or challenge, while also developing a clear and specific problem statement. They also indicate that literature can be obtained from a variety of sources, including textbooks, journals, theses, conference proceedings, unpublished manuscripts, reports, newspapers, and the internet. Bezuidenhout et al. (2014) distinguish between two sorts of sources: primary sources, which include interviews and eyewitness reports, and secondary sources, which include published journals, books, databases, and online sources. Welman et al. (2006) add a third category of literary source: indexes and abstracts, encyclopedias, and bibliographies.

## **2.2. Women's Experiences in Leadership Positions in Government**

Women's experiences in leadership positions highlight the complex power dynamics, patriarchal norms and structures that underpin gender disparities (Hillenbrand et al., 2015), as well as clear differences between being both a female and a leader (Zeng et al., 2018). Women in leadership positions suffer from a double bias of being perceived as less sympathetic than men and are judged more harshly as leaders because of their gender (Eagly & Karau 2002; Madsen & Andrade, 2018). A series of problems arise regarding the limitations of women's potential to aspire to leadership positions.

Sadie (2005, p. 24) "argues that the root of the constraints faced by women is the patriarchal system where decision making is in the hands of men". In this framework, conventional beliefs and cultural attitudes regarding women's roles and status in society remain prominent, and many women who are part of this system find it difficult to stray from it for fear of being ostracized. Regardless of women's education levels and access to the labor market, women's roles are viewed as that of a normal housewife. On the other hand, men are seen as the breadwinners, the heads of the household and having authority in public life (Sadie, 2005). Despite the merits of highlighting individual leaders as women in specific contexts, in general, discussions tend to be more descriptive and are less likely to engage critically. The structures and

contexts in which women lead, and how these systems allow or limit effective leadership are also important. That said, Lituchy et al. (2017) provided a comparative account of the differences among countries and the context relevant to the discussion of the leadership role of women.

The United Kingdom (UK) compares median wage gap by gender as the difference between the average hourly wages of women (middle-income women) and the average hourly earnings of men (middle-income men). On the other hand, the median gap is a measure of the difference between the average hourly wages of women and men. According to Investec's 2019 annual results outlining a UK government pay gap report, the gender pay gap for global operations outside South Africa showed the average hourly wages of women were 38.8% lower than those for men (Investec, 2019). For Investec Ltd, which included Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) listed businesses (and included South Africa, Mauritius, Botswana and Namibia), the average pay difference was 26.6%. A similar picture emerged when comparing average salaries: Male employees at Investec Ltd earned an average of 32% more than female employees, with female employees making up 54% of all employees. Men were also at an advantage over women if bonuses are considered. The Investec (2019) report gave as an example the following details: the average bonus gap by gender is 73.4% globally and 33.3% in South Africa, with women at a disadvantage. In spite of these findings, Investec contended that men and women are paid the same for the same work within its firm. The gender pay gap, Investec further contended, existed because there was a lower proportion of women in leadership and revenue-generating positions within the firm (Lituchy et al., 2017).

The results of the Business Women's Association (BWA's) annual census of South African women in business leadership roles in 2008 that were released in May 2008 were a revelation with the inclusion of women in the public sector. The share of women working in government across all pay ranks was 54.76%, indicating a clear majority. Despite these encouraging figures, a large salary disparity existed with male civil servants earning significantly more than their female counterparts in management/leadership positions (StatsSA, 2021). On the corporate side, despite a steady increase in the number of women in leadership positions, women still lagged behind their male counterparts in decision making positions in South African business (Beeton, 2008).

In Botswana and Mozambique, the media repeatedly failed to cover the campaigns of the aspirant politicians or to interview them. Men were also known to treat women aggressively during political crusades. According to Trigg (2016), during the 1996 presidential election in Uganda, there were many cases where men, even husbands with opposing political views, threatened and harassed women. Politically active women in Uganda were threatened with deprivation of family support, with some being evicted from their homes and others murdered (Trigg, 2016).

Enaifoghe (2018) stated that the turning points in women's lives were not noticeable or even unrecognized. Enaifoghe contends that it is important to clarify the situation attributed to women, from the birth of the little girl in a boy's image, and the chances of women succeeding in society. In various African cultures, the customs and rituals associated with a boy raised him for leadership positions, whether at the local or national management level in business, politics or public administration (Enaifoghe, 2018). Pandor (2006) showed that women in leadership positions do not always help other women. They tend to want to maintain the status quo. There are also structural barriers other than culture and religion. Evidence from the Danish Comparative Leadership Study (2015) sample indicates that certain admission situations and gender-determined conditions appeared to be the rule for selecting senior leadership positions in business, as well leaders in politics and in the public spheres. Religion has the potential to reinforce these cultural norms. For example, boys were raised to take over their father's inheritance. Thus, if the father owned a business a boy child is raised to understand the business and a girl is raised to become a wife and take care of family and children.

Some cultures forbid women from working or holding positions of leadership in the community. Given this situation, women did not lead any organization in the community. In some cultures, even if a woman needed property to build a house, she required a male agent (Coltrane, 1996). Gender stereotypes therefore fuel gender prejudice and instill negative performance expectations based on the notion that there is a mismatch between what women are like and the attributes believed necessary for good performance in male gender-typed occupations and duties (Heilman, 2012). This is one of the reasons why men's decisions are always taken more seriously than women's. In this regard, Federici (2020) contended that men perform the same duties

as women, but the reports of men are given more recognition even if women have outstanding performances.

According to Seaberry (2019), most religions have stereotyped functions for men and women wherein women are thought to be less equal than men, and are often segregated on the basis of functional divisions. In her account of women's religious experiences, Enaifoghe (2018) examined rituals performed for and by men in different religions such as Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. She argued that religion often empowered men in different ways. Religious structures and practices cripple women's efforts to gender equality.

In several public arenas, patronage and prejudice hampered the admission of women into leadership positions. Women are often victims when it comes to finding a management position. This can be attributed to society's stance regarding male and female functions. In their argument about the challenges women face when seeking leadership positions, Grove and Montgomery (2000) argued that women received little or no incentive to search for leadership positions.

Leadership positions often require demanding work, and long hours. For women, this stress is coupled with the responsibilities of caring for children, home and family, a phenomenon that Sadie (2005) called double displacement. For many women, the time demands of these leadership positions conflict with the needs of the family, which is an obstacle. These considerations are also valid for women in higher education. Besides issues of family responsibilities that may not facilitate women's advancement, cultural beliefs about the roles of men and women limit women's advancement into leadership roles and in politics.

Hojgaard (2002) contended that the social backgrounds of male and female leaders, as a criterion for admittance, had a unique role in political leadership. A sample of politicians revealed that both fathers and mothers of female leaders had greater education and better occupations than parents of male politicians. One significant result was that for women to hold high-level positions in politics, they must come from a more privileged social background than men. Furthermore, there were variations in career pathways between male and female leaders, with males working in more positions than women. Men also advance into leadership positions faster than women.

Regarding gender positioning conditions, Hojgaard (2002) considered marital status, the presence of children, and the division of labour in the family. Male leaders were more likely to be married, while female leaders were more likely to be divorced or living independently. In addition, the percentage of women without children was higher. Women leaders' partners were also more likely to be full-time workers, while male leaders' partners, especially business leaders, were more likely to be part-time workers and women who were full-time at home. Two-thirds of male leaders do little or no housework, indicating that the majority of male leaders, unlike female leaders, are relieved of the burden of family life and were able to devote all their energy to work. These results were clear about the social costs of leadership for women, and the gender-positioning conditions presented in the Danish study can be applied to African women. It was not surprising that many women were reluctant to take up leadership positions due to pressure, side jobs, family and domestic violence (Cole, 2006; Gardiner & Tiggerman, 1999).

From an African point of view, the dichotomy between work and family contains many contradictions for women. African women have certain traditional roles. They are expected to be tolerant, take care of their children and manage the family. At the same time, African women today have the ability to earn a living and contribute to the governance of society (BBC News, 2005). To summarize, McLagan and Nel (1995) described African women as walking on a political/gender tightrope, but also a leadership and gender tie.

Dangarembga from Zimbabwe, in an interview with BBC News (BBC News, 2005), said that one of the reasons why there were few women in positions of power was because of the lack of unions among women. She said that because women compete for limited resources, they tended to see other women as a threat, and they therefore envied one another. She added that women have the potential to bring about change, but were not organization due to lack of time in their many roles of breadwinner, wife and mother. African women were also afraid to speak up for fear of being victimized due to cultural expectations about what women should or should not do. Dangarembga (1993) also pointed out that women were afraid of being dominant because it made them intimidating. Women who wanted to marry should present themselves as humble and submissive.

Conn, Mass and Tripp-Reimer (2020) found that no matter how much political progress women made in the 1990s, their efforts were fruitless in getting women into public offices. Women lacked essential financial support, and resources are often personally and publicly mobilized. This latter matter is a strategic measure used to involve women in politics. Furthermore, it is contended that women were too ignorant of politics, composure, education and connections to run for office (BBC News, 2005; Tripp, 2001). Also, the time women devote to their reproductive roles was also mentioned as a limitation to their participation in leadership roles (Shayo, 2005). These obstacles were not unique to African women. Associated questions have been raised regarding educated Chinese women.

Qin, Rana and Way (2008), investigating the advancement of female university students in China, found that a number of factors collectively inhibited their desire to be successful women in their careers. These included traditional discrimination, social pressure, women's kindness to people's misconceptions about successful women, and men's tendency to prefer family-oriented wives. These women were even afraid that they were more talented than men, and therefore avoided demanding jobs. Women were torn between work and family because they did not want to be housewives, but at the same time they were challenged to be superwomen. They yearned, and were bewildered, both by the opportunities and challenges in the outside world. Women professionals in leadership positions faced many challenges, and those in higher education institutions were no exception.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) contended that women's socialization in the workplace happened within a system of power and inequality, and that these systems tended to reproduce various types of inequality. In South Africa, conventional colleges have a corporate mentality that dominates females in society. When women became leaders in such companies, they quickly discovered that they were unable to adhere to, or assimilate into, the existing culture. After all, how can one be welcomed to a chosen club while contradicting its essential values? McMillan and Schumacher (2001) contended that black women, particularly those in managerial positions, were more conspicuous, suffered greater difficulties, and were isolated. Women had to work really hard since they did not appear to have time. In many organizations, women's access to leadership positions were facilitated through the implementation of positive action and equity policies.

Leadership for women is not a simple task and so rising to, and staying on top is not necessarily fun (Lowe, Morna & Mbadlanyana, 2011). Other literature on female leadership in higher education showed that women were less likely to participate at higher levels of leadership than men. Acker (2000) hypothesized that there were obstacles that affected women's leadership aptitudes or their curiosity for leadership positions. Advocacy in higher education in South Africa tends to be driven and responsive to government equity legislation rather than something that women in the field actively fight for. Many women make sacrifices to achieve something, whether professional or personal. For example, women are expected to be responsible for raising their children, but men are less expected to take responsibility for parenting. Consequently, Polly (1998) observed that if women did not give enough attention to their children, they knew that they were in danger of being abandoned. If men did not care enough, they knew their wives will fulfil this responsibility with their children. This observation holds true for many working African women, even today (2023).

### **2.3 Challenges and Barriers that Impede Women's Success in the Workplace**

Hollnagel (2016) defined a barrier as an obstacle or impediment capable of preventing an action from being carried out as intended, or reducing the impact of a consequence. Nxumalo (2017) agreed with Hollnagel's definition. Within the framework of this research project, barriers can also be considered as a challenge that prevent women from performing their assigned tasks to the best of their abilities, hinder their work authority and their decision making.

This research focuses on the barriers and challenges that women in leadership positions face in government in a case-study of the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone in KwaZulu-Natal. The contemporary literature on women's leadership in Africa highlights persistent barriers and systemic challenges such as early socialization, gender stereotypes, limited educational attainment, discriminatory policies and procedures. The gender norms in Africa also emphasize women's primary roles as mothers and wives which discourage them from entering the labour market and rising to higher positions in the workplace. Furthermore, the recruitment and promotion processes often impede women's success at work, and the perception of women as incompetent forces them to achieve higher standards in their performances on the job.

Going forward, women's leadership in Africa will benefit from continued theoretically-based research, advocacy, and discussion covering the complexity and diversity of African female leaders. The African Women's Leadership Network, the leading advocacy group with a mission to empower women in leadership in Africa, has set a key priority for their struggle: eradicating violence against women and girls; increasing access to education; promote a women-centred care economy and encourage leadership amongst young women. In the words of Sirleaf, and as Nguyen (2013, p.133) has quoted, "Now is the time to realize that real transformation of development and peace cannot come without a fundamental change in who leads and how".

## **2.4 Gender Equity in Leadership Positions**

Although much has been done globally to guarantee that women play an important role in all levels of governance, they remain underrepresented in many government institutions, particularly in positions of power and leadership (De La Rey, 2005). The average female participation rate in leadership roles was 30%, which was slightly more than half of the aim of 50% female representation set by the 2008 Gender and Development Protocol (StatsSA,2022). The status representation of women in parliament showed that only four SADC Member States achieved more than 30% of women representation in parliament, with South Africa having the highest rate at 45%, followed by Mozambique with 39.2%, Angola with 38.6% and the United Republic of Tanzania with 36% (Adams, Scherpereel & Jacob, 2018).

Many efforts have been made in good faith to promote gender equality and women's leadership through multilateral institutions such as the United Nations (UN, 2022) and in international organizations, and different regions and countries. However, these organizations, regions and countries have not paid enough attention to the cultural differences in human assessment between men and women, and the gender gap that creates a major obstacle in achieving, maintaining, and upholding gender equality or equity goals. It is therefore not surprising that all these efforts, because they are designed and implemented within a framework that ignores the value gap of women and girls can only achieve limited desired results. This situation consequently threatens the achievement of different goals and time frames for achieving substantive or complete gender equality, even those in global development agendas such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs) (Gouws, 2011). For example, the commitment of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to eliminate gender pay gaps if men control promotion and advancement to upper-level positions, and an organization does not promote a culture of gender diversity, it is noted that women are left behind and do not have the same opportunities as men for promotion (Moorosi, 2010). This disparity can create an atmosphere of distrust and a sense of injustice for women.

## **2.5 Perceptions on Gendered Differences in Leadership in South Africa**

In South Africa, perceptions of gender differences in leadership ability among men and women are also marked by race. Black and coloured women face stereotypes rooted in their historical work as domestic workers in white owners' homes. In several studies on this topic, Booyesen (2001, 2005) observed differences and similarities between male and female amongst South African managers and in their roles in directing leadership.

Men have demonstrated leadership in a variety of societal contexts. According to Booyesen (2001, p. 36), "South African female executives emphasize collaboration, empowerment, engagement, intuition, and empathy." She defines the women's styles in her sample of 216 retail managers as transforming and engaging (Booyesen 2001). Booyesen also incorporated racial disparities in managers' behaviour in her sample. She discovered that the organizational culture of white managers differs significantly from that of black people. The black managers in her sample were more African-focused in their leadership styles (Booyesen 2001). This Afrocentric model of leadership is based on the concept of 'ubuntu'. Ubuntu is not a leadership style, but a philosophy of African humanism that values collectivism and group-centredness as opposed to individualism (Booyesen 2005; Khoza 1994; Mbigi 1997). Booyesen (2005), using Hofstede's model of national culture, gave blacks a higher score for collectivism, human orientation, and gender equality, than for whites. She concluded that blacks were not as driven by results as whites. In addition, she observed differences in the cultural orientation of white and black women. Black women scored higher on people orientation than white women.

In general, black South African women leaders emphasized their concern for employees as well as collective support and interdependence, compared with white

women leaders who emphasized independence and freedom as well as future plans and actions. It should be noted that Booysen's sample excluded Asians and mixed-race people. In summary, Booysen's research (2001) suggested that in South Africa, the leaders' perceptions of behaviour tend to vary by race and gender. However, compared with the findings of Booysen, Thomas and Bendixen (2000) noted that there were no cultural differences amongst the managers in their study. For them, management effectiveness was independent of ethnicity and race. Furthermore, using Hofstede's national culture model, Booysen et al. (2000) observed the effects of racial/ethnic diversity on managerial performance in South Africa. Regardless of the managers' identification with their ethnic group, there was a common ethnic culture at the management level. Aspects of this national culture, including a high degree of originality and little tolerance for differences in power hierarchy, were similar to those found in the Netherlands, Great Britain, and the United States.

## **2.6 Leadership in the African Context**

There is no monolithic African culture or context. Within and between the African countries and their contexts, there is a great variety of racial, sociocultural, ethnic, political and historical circumstances that shaped power relations and explain how women participate in leadership positions (Poltera & Schreiner, 2019). For example, the data show that countries in North Africa are generally worse off in terms of economic participation, equal opportunity, and women's representation in formal leadership positions than in the United States, and the sub-Saharan African countries (Punnett & Clarke, 2017). Furthermore, while countries such as Rwanda and Tanzania have constitutional provisions for gender quotas, this is not the case for all African countries. African women have also been elected presidents in some countries (e.g., Liberia and Malawi), while other African countries are more patriarchal.

Patriarchy, structural inequality and oppression are put side by side with initiatives like Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, which defines women's leadership at all levels. In a gender-sensitive continent (Africa), there are still significant challenges in recognizing women as leaders. These apparent nuances and contradictions speak to the need for continued critical research on leadership challenges specific to women in different African countries and contexts. However, some common features of the

content are relevant to understanding the challenges of shared leadership in Africa and these include corruption, oppression, political conflicts, cultural pluralism, favouritism, colonial heritage, and inequality (Lituchy et al. 2017; Ndlovu, 2016).

African women's contributions to the socio-economic development of their countries are underestimated and not fully recognized, despite comprising 72% of the agricultural labour force, 70% of the informal sector, and over 70% of the front-line health workforce. Exacerbating gender discrimination is the diversion of funds from women's empowerment programmes which also negatively impact women's contributions to peace and security. However, women's solidarity and resilience are the only social capital that should be used as a resource and actively involved in peace-building processes. There are also governance challenges across the continent, economic instability, lack of effective and ethical leadership, challenges related to resource wealth, an unstable global environment and attempts at rapid economic growth (Lituchy et al. 2017; Ncube, 2010).

It is apparent that with all leadership activities, and perhaps especially in the African context, there are always ethical challenges (Nicholson, 2005). The need for effective and ethical leadership is fundamental in Africa, given the relatively high levels of corruption, inequality and oppression. These high levels are believed to be created by much of the post-colonial experience of the aspiring bourgeoisie through parasitic relationships with the state, government agencies, and the discretionary tax authorities (Poltera & Schreiner, 2019). Inherent in this path of accumulation through the state is a leadership style motivated by individual or collective interest. Recognizing this does not preclude the fact that leadership challenges acknowledge and apply to a greater or lesser extent to individual contexts within the African continent. Furthermore, these challenges concern all leaders, regardless of gender (Alozie & Akpan-Obong, 2017).

## **2.7 Gender Stereotypes**

Self-expression discrepancies between men and women are caused by both descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes, and they reflect differences in how

women and men express and represent standards and norms about how men and women should behave (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Furthermore, descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes of men and women are similar in that the behaviour prescribed for each gender is positively associated to valued characteristics. According to Koenig (2018), gender stereotypes in culture are emphasized with girls having to learn household chores by helping their mothers while boys do the gardening, which is seen as demanding work for women. Gender plays a significant role in career choice between men and women, with areas of work found to be physical for boys and emotional attachment for girls (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2022). Gender stereotypes have descriptive components or beliefs about how men and women typically act, as well as prescriptive components or beliefs about how men and women should act. For example, women are meant to nurture and avoid domination, and men are expected to avoid weaknesses (Stats, 2020). According to South Africa's gender statistics in December 2020, only 21.8% of women have a driver's licence compared to 40.1% of men, which is a result of the expectation that driving is only for males (StatsSA, 2021). However, it remains unclear whether people have normative gender stereotypes about different age groups (Koenig, 2018).

## **2.8 The Subordinate Position of Women in Society and in Local Government**

Social norms and perceptions about the roles of men and women in society and the economic value associated with work influence the gender pay gap. "The combination of these creates enormous complexity" (Farvaque 2015, p. 132). Thus, whether it's the penalty of motherhood (or the pay discrimination that can affect working mothers) or the outdated notion of an ideal worker available 24/7, ignoring or underestimating the cost savings of women's work is a serious challenge. A 2013 German study found that the time spent on unpaid domestic work that women performed was valued at nearly 830-billion Euros, or 33% of gross domestic product.

In South Africa, central and provincial governments are in charge of establishing policies and regulating election processes for local communities, which are prejudiced and geared to benefit certain individuals at the expense of others. These election practices and systems may prohibit women from being elected or gaining access to power. Phillips (2009) believes that thinking on structural inequality is critical to supporting the case for gender equality in formal politics based on human rights and

justice. According to Henig (2002), election systems were not developed in a political vacuum, and they may attract powerful forces in society. They contended that even in First World countries, electoral politics and institutions are "a means to an end, merely a sign of the prevailing closed political culture, which by definition was aimed at keeping women out of politics" (Henig 2002, p.16).

Although the number of women in leadership positions is increasing (but is not sufficient yet), this has not translated into increased influence or power for women in organizations (Glass & Cook, 2015). An increase in the number of women appointed to organizational leadership positions does not correlate with meaningful inclusion and participation in decision making. Nefdt (2021) explored the narratives of women in the most male-dominated organizational cultures, the oil industry. She highlighted the race-based barriers for women entering senior leadership positions and the obstacles they must overcome to reach the top. Nefdt (2021) discussed the reliance on gender discourse strategies that women used to survive and perform in masculinized organizational cultures and their reliance on the networks of women for support and recognition in the workplace. Both articles contribute to an understanding of the gender needs of women in leadership positions where they are a minority and remain underrepresented despite gender equality policies. Inherent stereotypes need to be addressed without tighter control over affirmative action policies and an open, gender-sensitive organizational culture. Government introduced different legislative framework to fight against subordination of women in leadership positions both in society and in government sectors.

## **2.9 Government Legislative Framework**

### **2.9.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996**

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa as stipulated in Chapter 1, Section 2, is regarded as the supreme law of the land, governing almost every human aspect to

which all citizens of the Republic must adhere to, and comply with. In addition to the Constitution, the policies and laws that govern the organizations in South Africa must be in accordance with the Constitution.

Chapter 2, Section 9(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa serves to promote the attainment of equality and the advancement of the previously disadvantaged groups, while Section 9(3) further states that no one must be discriminated against on the basis of “race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Chapter 2, Section 23(1) of the Constitution states that everyone has a full right to fair labour practices. This makes provision for women to freely participate in decision making and to occupy positions of power and authority in organizations. It enforces the equality of both genders whilst also promoting a nondiscriminatory, nonsexist and nonracial environment in organizations.

### **2.9.2 Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, No. 4 of 2000 (PEPUDA)**

South Africa is a democratic country that requires the abolition of all economic and social inequalities, particularly those that are considered systematic in nature. Colonialism, apartheid, and patriarchy have resulted in suffering and pain for the majority of people, including women and children. In order to eradicate the aforementioned, the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, No. 4 of 2000 (PEPUDA), was enacted.

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act No. 4 of 2000 was legislated to implement Section 9(3)1 of the amended South African Constitution of 1996. This Act (i.e., PEPUDA) also enforces the provisions of the Employment Equity Act, particularly Chapter Two, that deals with the prohibition of unfair treatment of employees within an organization. It establishes the following objectives as its primary outcomes and envisions achieving these through the implementation, enforcement, and promotion of its provisions in all organizations.

To prevent and prohibit unfair discrimination and any form of gender-based harassment, to promote the culture of equality while eliminating unfair

discrimination and prevent and prohibit hate speech and to provide for matters connected therewith ((Republic of South Africa. Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 2000).

It is evident that measurable progress has been made in striving toward the achievement of a nondiscriminatory working environment, but inequalities, patriarchy and the unfair treatment towards women still remains. Most of the South African organizations are not yet close to the realization of a 50/50 gender representation in management and leadership positions. This suggests that a level of injustice still remains in these organizations and they seemingly are not doing enough to eradicate such injustices and inequalities.

### **2.9.3 Paper on Affirmative Action (564 of 1998)**

The White Paper on Affirmative Action was developed as a mechanism for achieving a representative and equitable Public Service, largely on the basis of racial classification, across the national and provincial levels of government in South Africa. It seeks to create an environment that encourages and enables those who have been historically disadvantaged or excluded, due to unfair discrimination, to reach their full potential within the Public Service. The objective of this White Paper is also to maximize the benefit of the diverse skills and talents of the formerly disadvantaged people to help improve service delivery. The goal of affirmative action is set out in the Employment Equity Bill, 2020 and other relevant labour and Public Service legislation. The following are the affirmative action policy objectives as stated in the South African Constitution, 1996, as amended:

Enhance the capacities of the historically disadvantaged through the development and introduction of practical measures that support their advancement within the Public Service, inculcate in the Public Service a culture which values diversity and supports the affirmation of those who have previously been unfairly disadvantaged and to speed up the achievement and progressive improvement of the numeric targets set out in the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996)

In addition to the statutory framework that supports the concept of equality, the South African government has established a number of entities tasked with carrying out

responsibilities aimed at achieving gender equality and human rights. Some of these structures are the Human Rights Commission, the Commission for Gender Equality, and the Parliamentary Committee on Women, Children, and People with Disabilities.

#### **2.9.4 Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998**

To be on par with the idea and objective of the principle of democracy, South African organizations, including those that are state-owned, must uphold, encourage, adhere to, and comply with all laws, regulations, and policies that were drafted with the goal of correcting and balancing the imbalances of the past. For these reasons, the Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998, herein referred to as EEA within state-owned enterprises, was enacted. It sought to balance gender disparity inside organizations while also enacting corrective steps to resolve employment discrepancies at all levels of the hierarchy. The Department of Labour (1998) identified the following basic objectives as the primary reasons for the Act's establishment; they also gave a comprehensive grasp of what the Act aims to achieve within organizations. The following are the objectives as stated in the Act:

To promote the Constitutional right to equality, to eliminate unfair discrimination in employment, to ensure the implementation of employment equity to redress the effects of discrimination, to achieve a diverse workforce broadly representative of the people and to promote economic development and efficiency in the workforce and give effect to the obligations of the Republic as a member of the International Labour Organization (Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998).

Organizations that support, comply with, and adhere to this Act can work and aim to achieve gender equality and fair treatment for all members of the organization, regardless of gender, race, age, religion, or culture.

Given the situation in South Africa in 2023, a legally binding commitment to promoting gender equality is high on the agenda. South Africa is ranked 18th out of 115 countries in terms of reducing the gender inequality gap. In terms of political empowerment, South Africa is ranked number one in Africa, with 42% of the cabinet ministers and 33% of members of parliament being women. In terms of the business environment, the picture is less impressive. Compared with 79% of men, only 46% of women are

employed in South Africa with women earning on average less than half that of their male counterparts (Van der Walt, 2007).

According to South Africa's statistics published in the second quarter of 2017, 44 out of every 100 employees are women. Women hold 44% of skilled positions, including managers, specialists, and technicians (StatsSA, 2020). This number has not changed over the years because in September 2002 it was still 44%. Although South Africa has made great strides, female gender representation is still below 50% for high-profile positions. Women make up a significant percentage (32%) of Supreme Court judges, 31% of lawyers, 30% of ambassadors and 24% of heads of state enterprises.

If we take a quick look at the top 40 companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) in Year (2020), only one company had a female CEO (StatsSA, 2020). Parliament works much better. According to 2020 statistics of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, South Africa is the 10th country in the world in having the highest percentage of women in Parliament, with every 4 out of 10 seats held by women. What about city and local councils? In 2016, 276 of South Africa's 278 municipalities had mayors, of whom 107 (or 39%) were women, down slightly from 42% in 2017. The municipalities in Limpopo Province led the gender equality initiative, followed by the municipalities in the North West and Eastern Cape Provinces. Traditionally, leadership is associated with masculinity and the belief that men are better leaders than women. Although the number of women leaders, especially in Africa, has improved in the last two decades since the Beijing Conference in 1995, women's representation and participation in leadership positions in society is still low. Moreover, data were collected from 24 women in leadership positions in the greater area of Pietermaritzburg and Durban in KwaZulu-Natal. Derera, Khwela and Kubheka (2020) showed that 58% of the women compared 75% of men were employed in the Public Sector, while 42% were employed in the private sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

Hojgaard (2002) asserted that the cultural structure of leadership itself creates differences. It is only recently that women can gain access to leadership positions. According to Ngcongco (2010), it is believed that in African culture men lead and women follow. For example, it is usual in rural villages in Africa to find the man literally walking ahead of the women (Kiamba, 2009). Different motives may be postulated for this, but eventually it demonstrates the intensely held conception of leadership as masculine.

De La Rey (2005) listed the qualities commonly linked with leadership as effective communication skills, task completion, responsibility, problem-solving, originality, decision-making, vision, self-awareness, confidence, experience and power. Although it is possible to develop these qualities in all human beings, in male-dominated societies, as is often the case in African societies, male leadership and styles prevail and are regarded as the more acceptable forms of leadership (De La Rey, 2005).

This study acknowledged the role of Marxist feminist pressure groups in building a solid foundation for bringing women's issues to light. Since the early 1980s, a number of procedures have been undertaken to incorporate the development of women's issues, not only in politics but also in terms of workplace representation inequity (Gimenez, 2018).

## **2.10 Theoretical Framework**

Marxist feminist theory was used in this study because it related to women's experiences by examining the interaction of various types of oppression based on gender, race, class, politics, age, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, ability, and appearance. Feminist thought played a significant part in the fight against gender disparities, highlighting women's involvement in consolidating democracy and social justice while also challenging traditional thinking and oppressive, sexist government practices.

The Marxist feminist framework of social reproduction as well as its historical roots allow the conceptualization of gender discrimination and inequality in the workplace from a structural perspective. The root causes of these forms of gender discrimination and inequality are allocated to the wider social contexts of different formal and informal institutions. The exploitation and alienation within the capitalist mode of production occurs where women have no voice in decision making, even though they are a part of the leadership (Meyenburg & Selmanovic, 2020).

Marxist feminists attribute one of the primary reasons for male dominance and women's subjugation in society to the capitalist mode of production. In other words, they seek to establish links between the production and reproduction spheres in order to locate a material basis for women's subjugation; to find a relationship between the

modes of production, or capitalism, and women's status. Marxist theorists believed that the basis of all power dynamics in a society is the mode of production. They contend that the manner of production produced the disparity between the 'private' and 'public' worlds of women and men (Chinchilla, 2018). Chinchilla claimed that one development in the production process that increased the power of men in the ancient world was the taming of animals, and in particular the private ownership of cattle.

According to Chinchilla (2018), this shift in the mode of production enabled men to amass riches while making women's domestic work less desirable. Men were dominant within the family as the shift in the method of production provided men with economic power. Given that women's domestic labour did not generate a direct and obvious economic gain, it was labeled "servitude," and women were viewed as "a mere instrument for the production of children" (Chinchilla 2018, p.39). With the spread of capitalism following the industrial revolution, this tradition was given a new impetus.

According to Vogel (2013), a capitalistic society lives through "production" and "reproduction." That is why a gendered division of labour is required. Men labour outside to meet the demand for 'output' and 'generating surplus'. Consequently, men deal with public spaces. Women, on the other hand, work at home and participate in biological reproduction (Vogel, 2013). Federici (2020) suggested that housework has changed into a natural quality of our feminine physiology and mentality, an internal need, a goal, apparently stemming from the depths of female character. Housework had to be converted into a natural attribute rather than recognized as a social contract because it was destined to be unwaged from the outset of capital's design for women. The unwaged conditions of housework have been the most powerful weapon in reinforcing the common assumption that housework is not work. Women have struggled against this perspective, except in the privatized kitchen or bedroom quarrel. "Women are seen as nagging bitches, not as workers in struggle" (Federici 2020, p. 274).

According to Engels (1972), when private property becomes a mechanism of production, women also lose power. Men's possession of private property, and their ability to generate a surplus as a result, shifts the family structure to a patriarchal one in which women, and often slaves, become the property of the father and husband (Engels,1972). Federici (2020) argued that just as God created Eve to be subservient

to Adam, capital created the housewife to serve the male worker physically, emotionally, and sexually, and to raise his children, mend his socks, and patch his ego when it is crushed at work and in terms of the social relations that capital has reserved for him. It is precisely the peculiar combination of physical, emotional, and sexual services involved in the role women perform that creates the specific character of servant and the housewife, and make her work so burdensome and invisible (Federici, 2020).

Marxists maintained that women are doubly alienated in capitalism due to the public/private divide which confines their work as mothers and housewives to the home. While mentally denying them full personhood, citizenship, and human rights. In the recent past, women who have largely come under the influence of Marxist Feminism have critically assessed their own situation and worked to reshape and transform society. Equality feminists argue that the dominance of all women is founded on sexism, and that the only way to correct and fix this situation and its potential consequences is to eliminate it as a consideration. They contended that gender should be immaterial in politics and advocated for equal rights for men and women (Coy, Malekpour, Saeri, and Dargaville, 2021).

Despite the evident anatomical distinctions between women and men, equality feminists believe that women are equal to men. In other words, sex differences do not always imply inequity. In patriarchal and culturally conservative African countries and contexts, women face more challenges as leaders due to their historical oppression and discrimination. For example, African women in general experienced high levels of discrimination, socio-economic and political exclusion, gender-based violence and limited access to education, all of which created barriers to their leadership, leadership recognition, and their take up of formal leadership positions. It has also been argued that in some African countries, women's abilities to exercise leadership roles may be severely limited (Lituchy et al. 2017; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). The idea here is that there is a so-called "big man" conception of leaders as men who are assertive, all-powerful, and authoritarian in some parts of Africa (Michaud, 2019).

The perspectives discussed in the above paragraph create barriers for women to exercise leadership roles in a context where the most important people equate leadership with "masculine" traits (Hoyt, 2010). In such contexts, there are fewer

opportunities for women to take up leadership positions, but two points are worth emphasizing here. First, women of character can be assertive and authoritative leaders. Represented here is the perspective that involves women who are inspired by men in the workspace and seek advancement in leadership roles. These persons are regarded as embodying traits that are commonly considered more masculine. An impersonal conception of female leadership easily allows women to be effective leaders even in oppressive environments, or if they lead in ways commonly associated with male leaders. Second, the African context is also shaped by shared values and a tendency to associate effective leadership with “masculine” African values and ideals. This is linked to the “big man” theory described above.

In short, in Marxist theory, servant leaders make sound decisions and behave ethically based on values and integrity (Achen & Lumpkin, 2018). At the same time, Ubuntu's African philosophy increasingly emphasizes the inclusion of common and distinctive African values, namely the connection with one another and with community, as well as displaying harmony, dignity, and compassion (Gyekye, 2011; Metz, 2018; Ncube, 2010).

## **2. 11 Conclusion**

This chapter presented a literature review and the theoretical framework of the study. The literature covered the challenges and barriers that impact women in leadership positions from a global perspective to the local government level, and confirmed that women are subordinate at both the community and the workplace environments. Women are still experiencing wage differences in comparison with their male counterparts. Gender stereotypes also play a huge role when it comes to decision making positions, with women regarded as inferior and weak for (and in) leadership. Regardless of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa and other South African government legislation and policies that have been put in place to guarantee the equality of all people in the post-apartheid period, and especially a non-sexist and nonracist approach, women are still at a distinct disadvantage. Over and above the legislative framework that supports the concept of equality, the South African government has also established various structures that are mandated to carry out functions towards the realization of gender equality and human rights. Some of these structures include The Human Rights Commission, The Commission for Gender

Equality, The Parliamentary Committee on Women, Children and People Living with Disabilities. These structures must guide policies and programmes that will result in the implementation of gender equality. This includes female representation at all levels of governance as such representation is recognized as a fundamental human right in many countries, and adheres to the principle of fair democratic representation. Currently (2023), the main strategies used to address the gender imbalances in the various structures of the public and private sectors are affirmative action, the (racial) quota system given the historical imbalances resulting from the apartheid era in South Africa, an equitable number of positions allocated to women, and through leadership appointments. It is anticipated that once the situation of gender equality has normalized in South Africa, the filling of vacant positions will be through a competitive process. However, it appears that it will take time to get to that stage due to the various challenges that confront women in public places. For a gender-equality situation to normalize in South Africa, women need to engage in perspectives that Wachs (2001) advanced, namely, 'the ability to sell your vision; determination to turn challenges into opportunities; and a focus on 'high access' in the high-tech business world' (Wachs 2001, p. 41)

This study investigates the gender-based challenges that women faced in leadership positions at the government level in the Department of Employment and Labour, in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal. The study utilized Marxist feminist theory because it contends that women's experiences are shaped by the junction of several forms of oppression, including gender, racism, class, politics, age, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, ability, and attractiveness. Marxist feminist theory is essential for understanding the fight against gender inequality. In addition, it highlights women's agency to consolidate democracy and social justice, and it challenges traditional thinking and oppressive, sexist practices of governance. Women are still discriminated against, are often treated unfairly at work. face exploitation, and are often challenged over their decision making when they are in leadership positions.

## Chapter Three

### Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design that was followed in this study. It provides information about the methods used to undertake this research and the justification for the choice of the research methods. The chapter also describes the various stages of the research. This includes the selection of the participants, the data collection process, and the data analysis process. For this study, a qualitative research approach was used. The qualitative approach facilitated the translation and the description of the phenomena under study. In this regard, Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014, p.57) stated that, "Qualitative research deals with the basic qualities of subjective experience and the meanings associated with phenomena". The decision to use a qualitative research design in this study stems from the fact that it facilitated in-depth knowledge and understanding of the respondents' appreciation of the topic, and their understanding of the problem under investigation. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) and Mishra and Alok (2011) stated that qualitative research uses verbal, visual, and not numerical information.

The chapter also discusses the researcher's role in qualitative research in relation to reflexivity. The chapter ends with a discussion of validity and reliability in qualitative research and discusses how these two requirements were met in the current study. This research explored the challenges and experiences of women in leadership positions in a case study area of the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone, in KwaZulu-Natal. The interaction between the researcher and participants took the form of a dialogue where experiences and multiple truths were investigated (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). This is also in accordance with the feminist approach to conducting research. The researcher drew on Marxist feminist theory to inform aspects of this study, including social reproduction, the conceptualization of gender discrimination, and inequality in the workplace. This study's purpose was to understand the factors or challenges that impact on women's participation in leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone in KwaZulu-Natal, and to assess the institutional mechanisms and strategies that encourage and support women in their leadership positions in their work environment.

The research methodology that was adopted ensured that the structural elements that underpinned women's difficulties and challenges were studied.

### **3.2 Research Design**

According to Pandey (2021), research design is a conceptual structure within which research is conducted. Moreover, Pandey contends that it is a plan that begins with the formulation of clear and unambiguous research objectives, organized data collection methods and clear selection of the population and sample being studied. Sekaran and Bougie (2020) suggested that a research design is a plan wherein a researcher collects, measures, and analyzes data to produce answers to their research questions. A research plan gives direction and guidance on how the researcher conducts the research. Almasi (2016) described research design as a process that helps plan how, when, and where to collect and analyze information. The descriptive study design and the explanatory study design are some of the main types of research designs (University of Southern California Libraries, 2016).

This study was designed to focus attention on formulating the study's objective (what is the study about and why is it being conducted?), designing the data collection methods (what techniques of data collection were used?), and selecting the sample (i.e., how much material was required, where, or from whom should the information be gathered)? The research design also addresses how data are processed and analyzed, as well as the conclusions reported (Kothari, 2004).

### **3.3 Research Methods**

The research method is one of the most important parts of any research. In general, research methods may be qualitative, quantitative and/or mixed methods. Without a proper research method, the research is not valid. The qualitative research method is used to understand concepts, opinion and experiences. In the qualitative research method, one can collect primary and secondary data, but the analysis needs to be thematic.

The quantitative research method deals with the numerical concepts of data by collecting and manipulating numbers. If the research project uses numbers, statistical analysis is required. This research project uses qualitative data to determine the impact on the experiences of women in leadership positions.

### **3.4 Study Site**

The case study site was chosen because it is mainly dominated by places that are still led by chiefs where traditional African norms and cultures are practised. This study was conducted in the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province that rendered services to four municipalities on the KZN South Coast, namely, the Umzumbe Municipality, Umdoni Municipality, Hibiscus Municipality and Umuziwantu Municipality. The Department was structured into four sections and the sample was drawn from all of them.

### **3.5 Target Population**

This study was designed to focus attention on developing the study's objective (what is the study about and why is it being conducted?), designing the data collection methods (what techniques of data collection were used?), and selecting the sample (i.e., how much material was required, where, or from whom should the information be gathered)? The research design also considers how data are handled and interpreted, as well as the findings drawn (Kothari, 2004). An example is a research conducted within an organization that focuses just on permanently employed employees; thus, all people who are permanently employed within that organization become the study's population. According to Brynard and Hanekom (2006), "population" refers to phenomena, cases, objects, individuals, events, and activities that a researcher wants to investigate in order to obtain new information and/or knowledge. As a result, Brynard and Hanekom (2006) defined a population as a group in the universe that shares specified features. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) stated that a study's population is the "total group of people or entities from whom the information is required" (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014).

Considering the topic of the study and the research problem for this project, the population of this study were men and women, irrespective of race and age, who occupied managerial positions with some level of authority and decision making, and those who were not in managerial positions. According to the structure of the government's organizations, a responsibility manager is a person who has authority and power in his or her section or division, and who is accountable for the performance of a section of the organization. In this study, the population consisted of the 14 research participants in management positions and management support services in

the Port Shepstone office of the Department of Employment and Labour that rendered services to the four municipalities of Umzumbe Municipality, Umdoni Municipality, Hibiscus Municipality and Umuziwantu Municipality on the KZN South Coast.

### **3.6 Sampling and Sample Size**

Sampling refers to the selection of a small group of participants from the population of interest. While it is ideal to have the entire research population involved in one's research, this may not be logistically feasible. Therefore, by searching for a smaller, representative group obtained from the population one is interested in, one can generalize the results and draw conclusions about the entire population. Given that a researcher is not always able to study the entire population, the researcher then chooses a sample which is representative of the entire population. This is called a sample in the study.

Non-probability sampling is defined as a sampling technique in which a researcher selects a sample based on the researcher's subjective judgment rather than random selection. It's a less restrictive method of choosing a sample. This sampling method is highly dependent on the expertise of the researchers who use it extensively for qualitative research. In this research, purposive sampling was used and the researcher conducted interviews with 14 respondents within the Department of Employment and Labour (based in Port Shepstone), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016), this is the most commonly used sampling method. Nine (9) participants' interviews were undertaken in the Department of Employment and Labour's boardroom during the participants' lunchtimes in December 2022, and 2 participant interviews were undertaken at Murchison at the participants' home on weekend in December 2022. Both the arrangements were suitable for the participants since they dealt directly with clients and they did not have time for interviews during office hours. One participant interview was undertaken at Scottsburgh during the week in December 2022. The last 2 participants' interviews were undertaken in the Department of Employment and Labour's boardroom during the participants' lunchtime in the first week of January 2023. Interview guides were used to collect the data.

The race, age, gender and qualifications of the respondents who participated in this research are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Department of Employment and Labour, Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Study Participants (2022)

Participants	Race	M	F	25-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	Qualifications
Participant 1	African		X	1			Honours Degree
Participant 2	African	X		1			Undergraduate Degree
Participant 3	African	X			1		Undergraduate Degree
Participant 4	African		X			1	Matric plus certificate
Participant 5	African	X		1			Matric plus certificate
Participant 6	African		X	1			Undergraduate Degree
Participant 7	African	X			1		Matric plus certificate
Participant 8	African	X				1	Honours Degree
Participant 9	African		X		1		Matric plus certificate
Participant 10	African		X	1			Honours Degree
Participant 11	African	X			1		Undergraduate Degree
Participant 12	African	X		1			Undergraduate Degree
Participant 13	African		X	1			Undergraduate Degree
Participant 14	African		X	1			Honours Degree

The 14 participants were all Africans as the office only had 3 Asians. Two of these were males but they were not available during the interviews. One of the Asians was female but she was uncomfortable about participating in this study. Of the 14 participants, 7 were females with 5 of them at aged between 25 to 35 years, 1 aged between 36 to 45 years, and 1 aged between 46 to 55 years. Of the 7 males, 3 of them were aged between 25-35 years, 3 aged between 36-45 years, and 1 aged between of 46-55 years. None of the respondents were under 25-years of age or over 55-years of age. The qualifications of the respondents showed that 4 of them were in possession of an Honours Degree, 3 of whom were females and 1 of them a male. Six of the 14 respondents were in possession of an undergraduate degree, 4 were males and 2

were females. There were 4 respondents in possession of the matriculation qualification plus a 1 or 2 years post matriculation qualification. Of this last group of respondents 2 of were females and 2 males.

### **3.7 Data Collection Method and Measuring Instrument**

According to Giorgi (2009, p.270), "what is sought in a research interview is the fullest possible description of the experience a participant has had". Face-to-face interviews are often lengthier, resulting in greater detail and depth. Further, data analyses aim to characterize psychological significance, including participant self-explanation (Giorgi, 1997). During the data collection procedure, the study used a cross-checking strategy, which included evidence from several sorts of sources, such as primary and secondary research. These are shown below.

#### **3.7.1 Primary Sources**

Primary sources are first-hand accounts that include personal responses and are written by event watchers or participants. Interviews were used in this study. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), interviews as a data collection method have significant advantages in terms of data generation and speed. The researcher was aware of, and recognized, the limitations of interviews such as their dependence on trust. The researcher had a trust relationship with the participants as she first explained the rights of the participants to withdraw if they felt uncomfortable and that all conversation was treated as private and confidential. However, trust relationships are time-consuming and the participants may be unwilling or uncomfortable to share everything that the other person is not comfortable with (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Purposive sampling was used to select the relevant participants in order to understand the challenges that women in the Department of Employment and Labour who were in leadership positions faced on a daily basis. The researcher made arrangements with the participants to avail themselves at times that were convenient to them, and interviewed them in December 2022 and in the first week of January 2023. Five males and 6 females were interviewed at Port Shepstone in Department of Employment and Labour's boardroom during their lunchtime during the week, 1 female and 1 male were

interviewed in Murchison in their home during a weekend, and 1 male was interviewed at Scottsburgh in terms of his availability.

### **3.7.2 Secondary Sources**

Secondary sources are sources of information that interpret, include, describe, or draw conclusions based on work written by others. Secondary sources are used by authors to present evidence, support arguments and claims, or help express a point of view by using and citing multiple sources (Turabian 2018, p. 329).

Secondary sources included the official documents and archives of the Department, such as the Annual Performance Plan (APP) which is the main master plan that has the reports or statistics, and development frameworks that the Department of Employment and Labour used in reporting its strategic plan and employment equity report, spatial development plans, gender policy and related publications.

### **3.8 Interviews**

A researcher has a qualitative goal and a qualitative research question. She seeks information of the content of the experience, frequently in-depth, and the meaning of events, rather than how many individuals have encountered such phenomena. The participants were the Deputy Director of the Department of Employment and Labour (a male), and two other males from the management team. In addition, interviews were held with 4 males from the management support services, 4 females from the management team and 3 females from the management support services.

Brinkmann (2007, p. 1119) stated that these leaders are "elite" and that the interviews with them "are a special case of interviewing focused on a particular type of interviewing partner". Given their top managerial roles, these participants had decision-making authority and were familiar with policy procedures and consequences. It was therefore advantageous to include them in the investigation. "Elite interviews" present significant conceptual, epistemological, methodological, practical, ethical, and regulatory challenges. Thus, research with a clear focus on interviews with the "elite" is relatively rare compared with research of "non-elite" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Interviews in this study used semi-structured, open-ended questions (see Appendix 1). According to Creswell (2009), they should be brief and geared to elicit participants' thoughts and ideas. Marshall and Rossman (2016) recommended that during guided interviews, the researcher should cover broad topics. In this study, guided interviews were important for the study of gender dynamics concerning women in decision-making and leadership positions in a case study of the Department of Employment and Labour in the KwaZulu-Natal. A majority of 11 respondents were interviewed in the Department's offices and 2 respondents were interviewed in the Murchison area where they resided. The final respondent was interviewed in Scottsburg at the Cutty Sark Hotel where it was convenient for him. The interviews were successful. Unfortunately, during the interviews, the participants interrupted the recordings to answer the work-related telephone calls. The researcher observed that the following participants A, J, H, L, K and M were emotionally touched during the study and suggested that it was important for everyone within the Department to understand gender issues.

### **3.9 Observations**

Ciesielska, Boström, and Öhlander, 2018, p. 42) defined observation as “a systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social context chosen for study”. Observation is a fundamental data collection method and is very important in qualitative surveys (Ciesielska, Boström, and Öhlander, 2018). Observations allow the researcher to describe existing situations using the five senses, and helps to provide a written picture of the situation being studied (Kawulich, 2005). Research requires “active research, memory enhancement, intimate interviews, detailed field notes and, perhaps most importantly, patience” (De Walt & De Walt, 2002: vii).

In this research, certain observation methods were useful to the researcher in a variety of ways (see Appendix 2). The qualitative observations were conducted in the Department of Employment and Labour in the Performance Information Management System (PIMS) meeting that was scheduled on the 07<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and in the Office meeting that was scheduled in the first week of December 2022. These meetings bring together officials, managers, and management teams to discuss and strategize office performance. The observation assisted the researcher in identifying and guiding relationships with informants, learning how people in the setting interacted

and how things were organized and prioritized in that setting, understanding what was important to the people in the social situation under study, getting to know the participants, and understanding what constituted proper questions, how to ask them, and which questions will help the researcher answer the research topic (Kawulich, 2005).

These were meetings in which the management interface with the officials to discuss the strategic plans and office performances. The main data collection techniques used in this research study were the interviews and observation.

### **3.10 Data Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation**

To complete this study, the data collected needed to be analyzed, interpreted, and presented. Marshall and Rossman (2016, p.275) define data analysis as the process of organizing, structuring, and meaning-making the collected data. It is a messy, uncertain, time-consuming, creative, and captivating process. It doesn't happen linearly; it's not clean. Data analysis is about finding answers about relationships between data types. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) go even further and contend that data analysis is about how the researcher moves from describing what the case is to explaining why the case is the case.

Marshall and Rossman (2016, p.275) pointed out that “continuous analysis of comparative data helps to develop theories based on specific phenomena”. This is what Welman and Kruger (2001) called content analysis. Interpretive methods, including inferences from the data obtained, are based more on how a person feels when participating in the action being studied, which falls within the scope of qualitative research. Often, researchers rely on their experiences in specific contexts to interpret information that the study participants provided (Vosloo, 2014).

The researcher worked on this portion (data analysis) with other aspects of the growing qualitative study, such as data gathering and the writing of the findings. While conducting interviews, for example, the researcher studied a previous interview and even prepared notes that may eventually be incorporated as a narrative in the final report (Creswell, 2014). Given the density and richness of the text and image material, not all of it was used in the qualitative analysis.

Data analysis requires researchers to "screen" the data (Guest, Macqueen, & Namey, 2012). In qualitative research, this method reduces data to a limited number of topics or themes (Creswell, 2013). Following this, the researcher must check that the data are appropriate for the analysis. This requires consideration of a wide range of details, such as whether the target population of the data source is sufficiently related to the target population of the analysis, whether the source variables and concepts and definitions are considered relevant, whether their meaning is relevant to the study, and whether the study is longitudinal. In addition, the researcher must establish whether the cross-sectional nature of the data source is appropriate for the analysis, whether the sample size in the study area is sufficient to obtain significant results, and whether the data quality as described in the literature observed or assessed by analysis is sufficient (Ciesielska, Boström, and Öhlander, 2018).

Validity and reliability are equally important for the researcher to cover the field of factual investigation when conducting research. This exercise is called value research. Taherdoost (2018) referred to validity as ensuring that what is measured will be measured. In considering the issue of validity, a researcher discusses different types of values in research, namely, extrinsic value, content value, construct value and criterion value (Taherdoost, 2018). Maree (2010) asserted that validity and reliability, for research instruments, are important aspects of research; therefore, when these aspects are mentioned they usually refer to reliable and trustworthy research. Although these aspects are important in research, Leedy and Ormrod (2016) suggested that since validity and reliability are measures, qualitative research does not measure everything numerically but is concerned more with the validity and reliability of the data collected for study. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) considered validity in qualitative research as the reliability of how the researcher collects data.

For Taherdoost (2018, p.321), "Reliability is concerned with the extent to which a phenomenon measurement yields stable and consistent results, and also with repeatability". There are people in life that we consider trustworthy because they keep their word, they do what they say they will and when they say they will. This is a practical demonstration of the term reliability (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). In research, readers always want to trust the research results that the researcher provided as part of their research work; they want to make sure that if another researcher conducted the same study, it would produce the same results. In the study,

we talk about the reliability of the study. Based on the above discussion on the validity and reliability of the study and trying to achieve these aspects in this study, the researcher consulted and used the techniques that Alshenqeeti (2013, p.155) suggested. These techniques are as follows:

Making notes during the interview; allowing the respondent to sum up and give clarity about the opinions they have made; avoiding the use of leading questions during the interview; avoiding the portrayal of the researcher's opinions, projections and attitude towards an issue, and minimizing the tendency to seek answers that lead to the researcher's own preconceived notions.

The researcher had to consider the appropriateness of the research question was valid for the desired outcome; the choice of methodology as appropriate for answering the research question; the design in relation to the methodology and finally, the validity of the results and conclusions for the sample and context.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

Integrity and honesty are key characteristics to consider when conducting any study, and they are not limited to the abilities, expertise, and diligence required by researchers. For these reasons, ethical considerations are taken into account in order to maintain and defend the rights of study participants, particularly if they are human (or animal) subjects.

In research, human respondents have rights such as anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent and self-determination. Thus, observing these rights renders the research study ethical. As part of upholding the ethical considerations of the study, written approval to conduct research and collect data within the respective organization, also referred to as the Gate Keeper's Letter, was obtained from the Department of Employment and Labour under study. An Ethical Clearance Certificate was also obtained from the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee with reference HSSREC/00004740/2022.

Before data collection commenced, all 14 participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix 3). This document informed them of their rights as participants and

that their participation in this study was voluntary. This meant that they had the right to accept or deny involvement, as well as withdraw from participation at any moment without consequence. In addition to that, the confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained throughout the research by not mentioning their names and/or the names of their portfolios of responsibility within the Department of Employment and Labour as this was ultimately linked to their identities. In conclusion, as per the condition of the Gate Keeper's Letter, this research is only for study purpose and not for publication as an article in any journal or book without the consent of the Department of Employment and Labour. Importantly, the outcomes of this study must be made available to the Department.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

This chapter explored the different strategies and steps that the researcher employed to find possible answers to the research questions, and in light of the aims and objectives of this study. The research methodology and the specific strategies were discussed in detail to give a clear indication of how the researcher conducted the study, and what strategies were used to undertake this research. Various aspects of the research were discussed to provide a full context of what was required and expected from all parties in the study. This chapter covered aspects such as the data collection method, and the chosen research design used in this study. This study investigates the gender-based challenges that women faced in managerial positions, hence the study involved field research conducted through a case study approach. Primary data were collected through face-to-face interviews with 14 participants in settings conducive to the respondents, which was invariably their workplace or office environment. In the following chapter, the researcher presents the findings stemming from the respondents' responses to questions asked during the interviews.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Presentation of Research Findings**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter three presented detailed information regarding the research methods adopted and utilized in this study. The study investigated women's experiences in leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal.

The researcher wanted to ascertain whether the status of women improved when they became more involved in executive and policy development in government through their active involvement in community work and women's movements. This was because women in government are fully aware of the issues women faced in their communities and are uniquely positioned to address them. To achieve this, data were collected through in-depth interviews with a sample of four females in senior management, three females in junior management, and with the assistance of three males in senior management and four males in junior management in the Department. The Department of Employment and Labour consisted of four sections that operated with different stakeholders, including the public. The literature review helped provide a better perspective and a basis for analyzing the information obtained through the interviews with the sample.

The interview schedule used to collect data included 57 open-ended interview questions (see Appendix 1). The interview guide had six themes, with each in its own section. In addition, the observations that were used to collect data included six key observations of the behaviour and action of participants during the meetings. The first section of the interview schedule was about each participant's personal and education history, their background (before undertaking their current position), what motivated them in the positions they held, and their future career development plan. The second section related to the participants' current occupation. The third section looked at the theme of issues and ideologies about gender. The fourth theme was about issues surrounding the working environment in the Department of Employment and Labour.

The fifth and sixth themes were both about institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming, while the sixth and last theme also dealt with the concluding and confirmatory questions. These questions aimed to determine the standard of official readiness in relation to systems, procedures, and organizations that support females in executive and leadership roles. This chapter presents details about the response rates of the participants to the open-ended questions during the interviews, and an analysis of the responses of the respondents. The research outcomes discussed in this chapter are a result of the research questions and research objectives presented in chapter one of this research.

It is significant to indicate that apart from interviews, observation methods were also used in various ways. The observations were arranged with the Deputy Director of Local Chief Operations, to observe the Performance Information Management System Meetings. These meetings were about the performances of the office where the strategies and planning were implemented. The researcher observed nonverbal behaviours such as posture, gestures, eye gazing, facial expressions, and tone of speech. In this chapter, the researcher provides the data that were collected, processed, explained, and evaluated in a methodical manner using the steps of the research process. The goal was to provide the data in an understandable and interpretable format in order to find trends and relationships consistent with the research objectives. These objectives included the empowerment of women to the point where they can compete fairly with men in appointments to decision-making positions, and put in place policy development framework systems to reinforce cooperation for the support of women participating in leadership positions in Department of Employment and Labour.

#### **4.2. Respondents Workers' Organizational Backgrounds**

The response rate for the face-to-face interviews conducted with open-ended questions totalled 14 participants. The organization's management team and officials were diverse with different professions and academic backgrounds. Some were more into what they classified as support services or administrative support, which includes strategic management and financial services, while some were from professional services such as occupational health and safety, client services and practitioners. Gathering data from people with different and diverse knowledge, skills and

experience where some were office-based, and some were field-based assisted the researcher to cover most units across the organization and provided the researcher with an overall perspective of their experiences, perceptions and feelings around the subject matter.

#### 4.2.1 Respondents: Positions held and periods worked in the Organization

Out of 14 participants, A, B, E, J and L had 2 to 4 years work experience; participants C, G, H and I had 10 to 20 years work experience, while participant D had more than 20 years' work experience in the Department. Participants F and K had 5 to 9 years' experience, while participants M and N had 1 year experience working in the Department of Employment and Labour (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. KwaZulu-Natal Department of Employment and Labour – Work Experience among Managers and Senior Managers at the Port Shepstone Office, by Gender (2022)

There were 14 respondents in this study, 7 females and 7 males. The female respondents' work experience in the Department of Employment and Labour varied from 1 year to more than 20 years, while the male respondents' work experience varied between 2-4 years and 10-20 years (see Figure 2).

#### 4.2.2 Respondents' Positions in Previous Occupations/Jobs

Participants C, D and I were previously in junior management job positions, and participant H previously worked as a manager. Although the 10 other participants indicated that they had other experiences, the researcher chose them because of their roles in management, their supervisory experiences and their previous team leadership positions (see Figure 3).

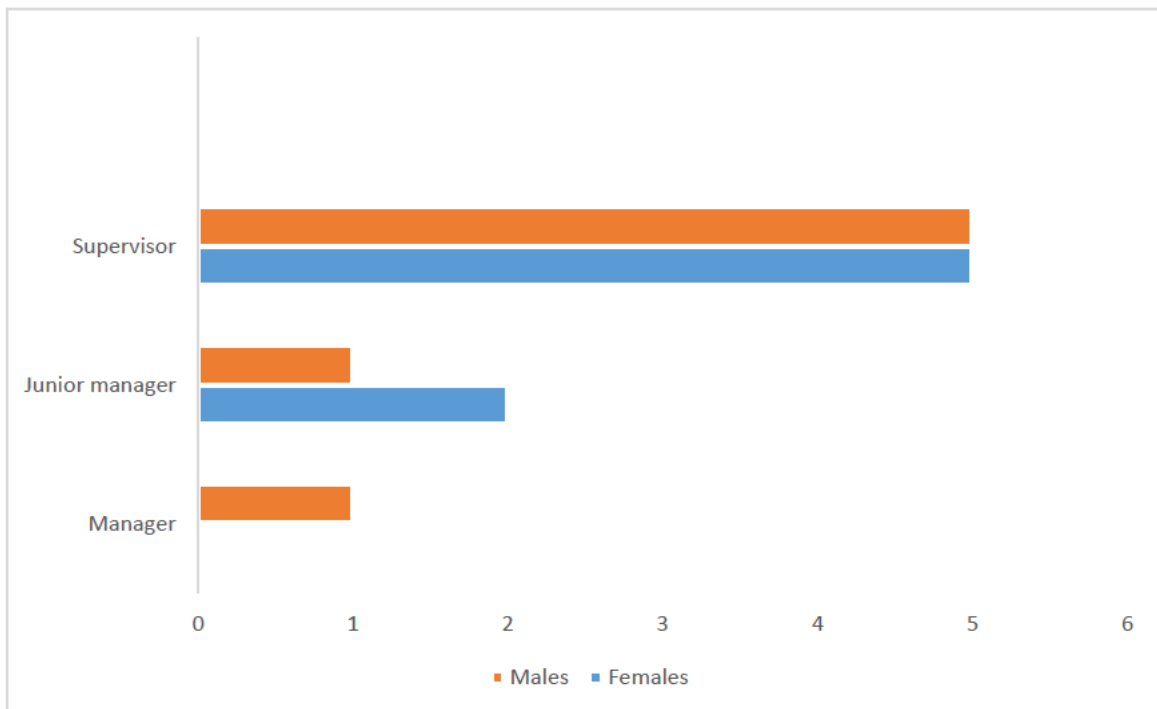


Figure 3. KwaZulu-Natal Department of Employment and Labour (Port Shepstone Office) Previous Work Experiences of Respondents, by Gender (2022)

According to Figure 3, of the 14 respondents in this study, there was 1 male with management experience, 2 females and 1 male with previous junior managerial experience, and 5 females and 5 males with working experience as supervisors.

### **4.3 Presentation of Research Findings**

This section of the research presents the results in accordance with the research objectives.

#### **4.3.1 Objective One**

Determine the factors or challenges that impact women's participation in leadership positions at the Department of Employment and Labour at Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal.

Objective one sought to determine the challenges that impacted women's participation in leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour at the Port Shepstone office in KwaZulu-Natal. Participants A, C, M and N responded that during the post-apartheid regime in South Africa, cultural norms and gender roles were the main barriers to women participation in leadership positions in government. The challenges were that irrespective of women's qualifications and experiences in leadership, their voices were still not taken seriously when it came to decision making.

Participant M responded that social norms manipulated women to see men as their born leaders and these norms tended to discourage women from seeing themselves as leaders. Participant M also stated that women have trust issues among themselves, which allows men to purposefully designate particular and selected women with the intention of manipulating them and portraying them as incapable of holding high leadership roles. She also stated that it was more difficult for women in administration to hold top senior management roles, even if they possessed the appropriate qualifications and expertise. In short, women remain mainly in junior and middle management positions, with men holding most senior management positions.

To quote Participant N:

Respect other people no matter the positions they are in, and working together comes a long way. You know when you make a mistake it is important to own up to that mistake and not try to cover it up. The most useful thing that this job teaches you is to be patient because when you go out you meet different people from different backgrounds. You must address them in a common language and not use big terms because some people are not educated, so you must be flexible. When we were doing advocacy, we went to the rural areas and we met people, some of them couldn't even read and write, so that was quite challenging on its own and then we had to write and explain everything to them so that we were able to capture them in the system. The majority of those people were women which made me realize that women's challenges come from their home environments to their workplace. My work teaches me a lot about diversity, and I am now aware that some people do not know about the work we do. So, you must think outside the box to be able to assist them. ... Women empowerment is about treating men and women equally. Well, they all say that we are equal but when it comes to somethings you see that men are treated a bit differently to women who are in power, and men are respected more than when a woman is in charge (Participant N, 2023).

Participant N also mentioned that a culture of levirate amongst South African blacks often discriminates against women's power or their leadership positions. She argued that the Department of Employment and Labour needed to establish a women's empowerment programme because the majority of women that are in leadership positions were raised under gender roles that only gave males a right to inherit or make decisions. Participant N contended that the Department should harness the power toward proactive change with its women empowerment initiative.

The study also investigated the main gender issues that specifically affected women.

To quote Participant D (2022), "As we all know that lot of women are in leadership positions, this raises questions about how South Africa's democracy should address the misdistribution of resources, power and income." Participant D further contended that many women come from rural environments in South Africa. In these rural areas, traditional values (including patriarchy) are inculcated in them and they are often forced into accepting male dominance. She further argued that this may be one of the

factors contributing to the challenges that women in leadership positions encountered in the Department of Employment and Labour in the Port Shepstone office in KwaZulu-Natal. In general, men coming from such rural areas have this patriarchal dominance engrained in them such that they believe that their decisions are final and they think that they can overrule the decisions of women in leadership positions.

Participant D noted that in spite of patriarchy, women empowerment has played a big role and women are now treated equally like men. Therefore, there were many women who were in power and in control now in the work environment in the Port Shepstone office of the Department of Employment and Labour. However, there was still the need for some improvement on the participation of women in leadership positions in the Department. Participant D stressed that women in the Port Shepstone office in the Department must know their rights, and act appropriately on these. She did not rule out the importance of men playing a big role in gender equality in the Port Shepstone office of the Department of Employment and Labour. Participant D also argued that women still faced challenges in leadership positions because some men did not want women to tell them what to do in the work environment.

To quote Participant M (2023):

I still think that, there's a significant gap between male and female employees in management. ... when it comes to performing duties, men and women are equal, and as a female I conduct inspections as well as a male inspector ... and we strive for the best. ... When it comes to gender equality and empowerment, females need to be given more opportunities in leadership positions in the work environment.

Participant M also said that females faced discrimination that hindered their career progression and many still struggle to obtain and maintain senior leadership positions in the Port Shepstone office of the Department of Employment and Labour. She argued that there was a sense of unconscious bias among men and women that affected decision making and hindered the promotion of women to leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour in the Port Shepstone office. Consequently, women are underrepresented in leadership positions. This underrepresentation further discouraged other women from pursuing such positions. She further contended that she was working closely with many inspiring and dedicated

female leaders, but that much work still needed to be undertaken to change the traditional gender roles and stereotypes that created the bias against women in leadership roles.

Participant M said that “there are still many stereotypes and expectations about what a leader should look and behave like, and these often do not align with traditional roles and expectations placed on women” (Participant M, 2023). She added that a worse scenario was that educated women who participated in leadership positions were regarded as women who had no respect for males, while the community tended to believe that independent women were stubborn and disrespectful to man.

Participant M further added:

Participating in a leadership position in this Department is not always easy for me because of the way I was raised in my community in the Province of Limpopo where women in leadership positions were regarded as being disrespectful toward males. It sometimes creates nervous breakdown when I have to make a speech or a presentation. I feel shy even to stand-up and support other women’s suggestions in the presence of my male colleagues during leadership meetings. However, some days are better than others because at least now I am working with different people with different backgrounds from mine. However, harassment and hostile work environments deter women from pursuing leadership positions. Another thing is that women are subject to insufficient training and development opportunity, they lack a female role model and this makes it difficult for women to envision themselves in similar positions. Women still find it difficult to stand up for their decisions against male leaders because of the way women were raised where the male’s voice was regarded as the one that should be listened to and adopted. It is not that women are not capable; we’ve seen many women doing very well in other leadership positions because women are born with a skill of multitasking. Unfortunately, their abilities at multitasking are used against them when they apply for the leadership positions. It is sad too that sometimes the women’s ages and their dependents (children) are viewed as obstacles before consideration is given to their promotion to a leadership position (Participant M, 2023).

On the other hand, Participant F shared their perspective on the factors and challenges that impact women's participation in leadership positions at the Department of Employment and Labour at Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal. She noted that the lack of respect for different people with different cultures and the historical nature of the country (especially during apartheid) have made it difficult for many people to accept gender equality. Nonetheless, given the increasing awareness of gender equality in the country at large and the better education that many women have acquired in South Africa in the last decade (2010s), many of them are finding it increasingly easy to position themselves in leadership positions even in the Department of Employment and Labour in the Port Shepstone office.

Participant I complained that women have a push-down syndrome where women did not support one another; instead, women fought for recognition at the expense of other women. Participant I said that "women faced challenges to navigate workplace politics and these resulted in significant barriers to networking and building relationships with key stakeholders that limited the opportunities for their advancement" (Participant I, 2022). She further added that women experienced workplace bullying and harassment that required proactive steps such as seeking out women as mentors, building strong relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, and supporting and advancing themselves collectively as a group. Consequently, women leaders in Department of Employment and Labour faced a variety of challenges that made it difficult for them to succeed and advance their careers. She contended that another problem that women faced was that they were not being recognized in leadership positions, and that they often engaged in personal issues when making decisions. Finally, Participant I expressed the view that women often used their age differences to subvert their younger colleagues in leadership positions instead of respecting them. She added that women colleagues did not like to take instructions from females in leadership positions.

Participant L said that males resist change given that some women are in leadership positions now. Men fear a loss of control in leadership and being at the head of state structures. Participant L contended that this was why men underestimated women's decisions and some of them did not take women in leadership positions seriously. In short, men in the Department of Employment and Labour felt that their decision making authority was diminished. Participant L stated that men in the workplace challenged

women if they took over a position that a male previously occupied. Moreover, these men are fast to highlight the weaknesses of women in leadership positions in the Department without supporting and assisting the constraints that female employees in leadership positions experience. He argued that because the state's employment equity provisions contributed to women in power as a result of their appointments to senior positions in government, their voices were not effective. Participants D, E, and G believed that women were discriminated against also on cultural grounds given that those in leadership were excluded in the decision-making processes at the Port Shepstone office of the Department of Employment and Labour.

Participant H, J, K and L supported Mphaphuli and Smuts' (2021) perspective that women faced sexual harassment in their work places and that some male leaders wanted sexual favours from women in order to be promoted to senior and higher leadership positions. Moreover, these four respondents (H, J, K and L) noted that the levels of harassment and assault on women in the workplace were also increasing. In this regard, it is critical to note that Malinga (2011) confirmed that the perpetrators of sexual harassment and assault on women in the workplace disregarded the victims' labour and work contribution. On the other hand, males were regarded as first-class employees for any employer (in this case, the Department of Employment and Labour) because they were largely free from the demands associated with childbirth, and more readily available than women in terms of time and location.

Respondents H, J, K and L agreed that some cultures still practised the norm that women should be based in household work and not in a productive labour force. Women were impacted negatively in the work environment given that men in some cultures were raised as leaders, with women submissive to them. This cultural tendency also played a vital role for men not listening to a women leader or taking instructions from them. Participant F contended that women should stand together, combine their voices against this evil of masculinity, and fight against being grounded and being taken for granted.

Participants A and C agreed that an individual's sense of gender equality or their sympathetic stance towards patriarchy largely depended on how parents raised them as children at home. In this regard, Participant I stated that men have a major role to play in supporting and encouraging capable women in leadership positions in the

Department of Employment and Labour (at Port Shepstone) to ensure service delivery and accountability. In this regard, Ahuja (2019) noted that in most countries, women have higher levels of illiteracy and years of schooling less than men. Participant K agreed with Ahuja (2019) that one of the main reasons a women leader is not taken seriously most of the time was because of the way girls were socialized and portrayed in society. In short, for Participant K, in some communities, societal norms are such that females are discouraged from leadership positions.

Participant J complained that it was very difficult to work with different stakeholders given that different departments had their own regulations and processes that needed to be followed. He said that excessive bureaucracy and rigid processes slowed down decision-making processes, and made it difficult to respond promptly to community needs in the Department of Employment and Labour even when women were in leadership positions. He highlighted how traditional leaders were not generally amenable to work with women leaders in government offices, thereby compounding the challenges and difficulties women leaders in the Department of Employment and Labour at the Port Shepstone office experienced. In short, Participant J highlighted that the hierarchical structures that limited the flow of information and ideas across different levels of the department impacted woman in leadership positions in Department of Employment and Labour.

Participant J (2022) expressed the view that women still faced many challenges in occupying their management and leadership positions because these were regarded as male jobs. He said he recently in 2022 attended a court hearing because a male employer assaulted one his female colleagues while she was on duty. Unfortunately, the female associate lost the case because she was alone against the employer's attorneys. He mentioned that there was also the perception that women needed to offer sexual favours to men to get senior managerial jobs. Sometimes women accuse men of sexual harassment to blackmail them and take advantage of the policies that protect women. At any given point in a woman's career, she is likely to experience one or more of these situations and/or challenges. At other times a working mother with a young child may be denied a leadership position that required travel from the office. This working mother is told that another candidate was more qualified, which is false. The real reason is that the employer assumed that because she has a young child, she will not want to travel on work assignments. Participant J further noted that

sometimes women are appointed to positions but they receive a lower remuneration than a male colleague who holds an equivalent position. Women (and particularly wives and mothers) in African societies who were employed in management positions in the public sector faced challenges as often society stigmatized them for being away from home on work-related assignments.

Given the discussion above, we noted that all participants blamed culture, norms, and tradition for the discrimination women experienced in leadership positions. They said that even women were not supportive of one another and preferred to support men's leadership over their own. Participant J said that women have the "pull-down" syndrome in that some women take their sparkle away from others, and they preferred a situation where men lead them.

To quote participant K:

People think that women are weak and that they try to solve matters emotionally. Thus, these people see women as weak and inferior. However, on some issues women are not always given the same respect as males in leadership positions (Participant K, 2022).

Participant L noted that women were judged by their supervisors and were compared with performances of males. These supervisors were quick to point out the difficulties women leaders faced without supporting and assisting them overcome their difficulties and challenges. Participant L further added that many female leaders faced unconscious bias and negative attitudes about their capabilities. The unconscious bias manifested themselves in how women in leadership positions acted, spoke and dressed, and these invariably had a detrimental effect on women in management and leadership positions within the Department.

To quote Participant C:

Consequently, women suffered from too much pressure, bad attitudes towards their colleagues, and trust issues that caused divisions in the Department. Fortunately, some officials support these women leaders in their official and personal work spheres, often causing unnecessary problems in the workplace including declines in work performance, high rates of absenteeism and sick

leave. Eventually, the women in leadership positions are disrespected and are not being taken seriously in the workplace (Participant C, 2022).

Participant C (2022) went on to state the following:

Secondly the lack of support and role models, and workshops for women participating in leadership positions limit the progression of women to executive or the highest leadership positions. Women participating in leadership positions are also isolated and are expected to be strong and lead like men without emotional attachments to their decision making. Moreover, the majority of women in leadership positions in the Department are not friendly to their colleagues. They always want to show their difficult side and enforce every decision they make. This is difficult for team building in the office because no one wants to support the women leader.

Lastly, some women are scared to apply for leadership positions in the Department because of the way women in leadership are treated. These women in leadership positions tend to lead unhappy lives, and are busy balancing work and family responsibilities with no time to socialize with others. Women in leadership positions are sometimes not supported by their Departmental colleagues, thereby making for increased challenges for women in these positions.

Participant N mentioned that no matter how many policies and laws are put in place, she still believed that it was just a matter of saying we, as women, are equal to men. She said that women were labelled as weak, emotional and inferior, and these unnecessary and apportioned characteristics limited women's participation in leadership positions because they doubted themselves. She added that women were scared to participate in executive meetings because their views were not seriously taken at these meetings.

The study also investigated the impact or difference that women's participation in leadership roles make to decision making at the Department of Employment and Labour in the Port Shepstone Office in KwaZulu-Natal.

Participants B, C, H, L and K stated that women are naturally strong and capable of raising children and that if women are given a chance, they will be successful in

leadership positions because they can achieve anything they put their mind to. Participant H was in favour of women in leadership positions because they were good at multitasking and organization, and had the ability to bring people together, in a loving and caring way. In this regard, Participant G stated the following:

Women participating in leadership positions bring diverse perspectives, enhance decision-making processes, and address a broader range of community needs. Women understand social issues better than men, and what can be done to solve social problems. Women leadership increases gender diversity and this is often correlated with better governance, improved collaboration and a more inclusive approach to policymaking. Women in leadership always prioritized social issues, health care, and education, thus contributing to a holistic and balance decision-making environment (Participant G, 2022).

In spite of these challenges, some women have overcome cultural barriers and have risen to leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour at the Port Shepstone Office, but this often meant that they faced cultural expectations in their leadership roles. The study then assessed institutional mechanisms and strategies put in place to encourage and support women's participation, and the structures that support women's access to decision making and leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour at the Port Shepstone Office.

#### **4.3.2 Objective Two**

Objective two sought to assess the institutional mechanisms and strategies put in place to encourage and support women's participation, and the structures that support women's access to decision-making and leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour at the Port Shepstone office. The aim of this objective was to find out if there were any structures or forums and policies that were in place to support women in leadership positions within the organization.

Participants A, B, and E said they were not aware of any policies and structures that were in place to support women in leadership positions within the Department of Employment and Labour. Participant C believed that the central state's policies of Affirmative Action and Employment Equity had greatly impacted gender equality and

had empowered women to participate in leadership positions. However, participants C and D confirmed that gender equity was in place in the Department. Participant D also mentioned that gender equity played a vital role as some women were empowered at the workplace. Participant G also agreed with participant D that the gender policies that were in place were contributing to the development and leadership of women, especially within the Department of Employment and Labour. He stated that the Department exercised the employment equity policy at all levels, because women also participated in executive positions in the Department. He noted that two of his former female colleagues were promoted to higher positions within the Department.

Participant L (2022) stated that:

Government must make the effort to raise women's capacity in expressing their problems and monitoring the degree of their participation in every sector. In addition, it must ensure that the gender issue is properly reflected in the preparation of every development plan, research, studies and implementation. It must also support the gender focal points in all sectors to ensure gender mainstreaming in their work, and intersectoral linkages in gender activities.

Participant L said that in the current South African democracy, one can change this whole perspective of males being leaders. He stated that it did not matter to him whether it's a male or female that is at a leadership position. He argued that what was important was to reach the specific goals that were set for the staff at the workplace. He further noted that the Department had recently recruited more females and this was indicative to him that the employment equity prescripts were finally put into practice. He admitted that the only thing left was to ensure that there were more females in team leadership and management positions.

According to the Employment Equity (2022) programme, the Department of Employment and Labour report in KwaZulu-Natal that includes all Labour Centres in KwaZulu-Natal showed that females occupied 25% of the top management positions and that males occupied 62.5%. Females held 41.7% of the senior management positions compared to males who held 40.3% of these positions. Females held 41.4% of the professional qualified and experienced specialist positions while males held 42.9% of these positions. Skilled technical and academically qualified workers, junior

management, supervisors, foremen and superintendents comprised of 42.8% females and 42.7% males. Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making comprised 44.3% females and 39.8% males. Unskilled positions were held by 44.6% females and 41.2% males. According to the EE (Employment Equity, 2022) report released in October 2022, females dominated 4,797 positions within the Department of Employment and Labour against 4,282 of males. This meant that females were 8.2% more than men in Department of Employment and Labour in KwaZulu-Natal (Employment Equity, 2022) (see Figure 4).

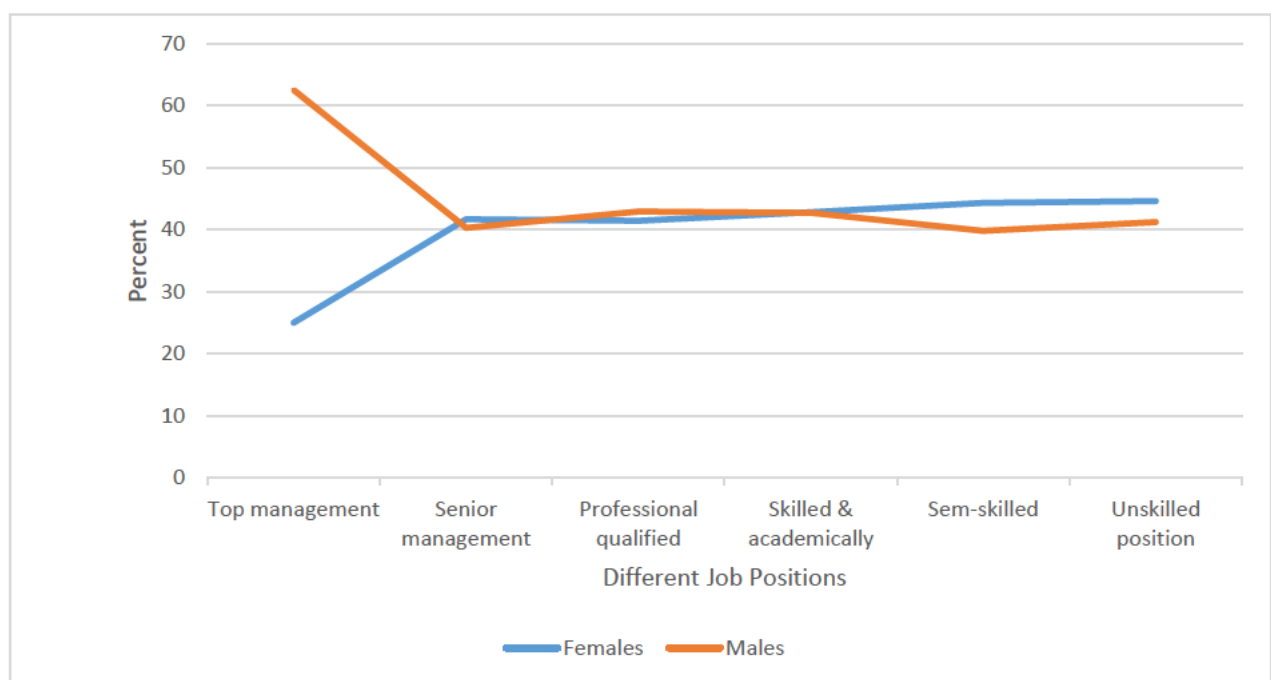


Figure 4. Employment Equity Report of Department of Employment and Labour, by gender in 2022

Figure 4 shows that women were underrepresented in the Department of Employment and Labour in leadership positions, especially in top management, but in the other decision-making positions of senior management both male and females were proportionally represented.

Participant B referred to the difficulties women faced in attaining decision-making and leadership positions. He noted that:

The Department has policies that include those relating to employment equity, human rights, access to affordable day care, and reproductive rights, all of which have a significant impact on women's capacities to advance in the workplace. Many female workers are also mothers, and their husbands and children place some strain on their chances of advancing to a position of leadership at work because they lack support from their family and they have considerable responsibility away from the workplace. Women's lack of confidence in their ability to succeed frequently leads to decisions that negatively impact their job chances. In this regard, examples include a perception of lower self-efficacy and communication style. Male stereotypes are significant hurdles to women's success (Participant B, 2022).

Participant H contended that there was no gender policy, coaching or mentorship programmes within the Department of Employment and Labour, and pointed out that the institution needed to address gender equality issues primarily at all levels. He said,

I think the department need to include a women's month and fathers' day celebration in their programmes. In our communities we have structures and that's only where women lead, but when it comes to government, I'm not sure (Participant H, 2022).

He suggested that one of the first things is to prioritize the interventions required for women's living, learning, and participation in leadership roles in government departments; this should not be done solely for compliance reasons, but rather with an understanding. Second, he observed that women were employed inside the Department, and that the state's Gender Policy Framework provided for equality within the public service and the development of skills that enable officials to promote gender equality in the workplace. He further noted that there must then be strategic focus areas that indicate the key interventions that must be undertaken in terms of addressing the Department's goals and issues to comply with the Gender Policy Framework requirement in the long-term.

To quote Participant H (2022):

Women's movements often push women issues of gender inequality in the workplace. However, these women's movements need to be consistent on matters of equality, harassment and women's empowerment because one of the principal impediments to their empowerment is harassment in the workplace. Harassment inhibits women from empowerment, and the women's movements need to be particularly mindful of this problem that women face in their attempts to secure decision making and leadership positions.

Fortunately, employers are now forced to take the issues of women empowerment seriously, and if there is the harassment of women employees, women may go to Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) or the Bargaining Council to open a case against the employer because the employer failed to protect the employee during harassment in the workplace.

This study investigated the nature of women's participation in leadership positions at the Department of Employment and Labour at the Port Shepstone office. Participants C and G responded to the question about the nature of women participation in senior or leadership positions. They said that the Department had almost an equal number of both genders in leadership positions. Participant G stated that two of his female colleagues were promoted to higher positions. Participant C mentioned that the Department prioritized employment equity and ensured gender-equal opportunities. He also referred to the role of affirmative action in supporting women empowerment in South Africa.

Participant E said that the implemented policies and legislation that enforce gender equality in the workplace is working in South Africa because now women are participating in leadership positions. However, males still dominated the leadership positions. Fortunately, the women movement empowered women because now men are responsive to what women say (Participant E, 2022).

Finally, in assessing the institutional mechanisms and strategies put in place to encourage and support women's participation, and the structures that support women's access to decision-making and leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour, participant K made the following comment:

In the municipality they even allocate a budget towards assisting youth development and women empowerment to ensure that women are developed. There is employment equity that demands that the employer submits a report to the Department of Employment and Labour every 5 years with the list of employees to ensure that gender is balanced within the company and/or government department. Government issued many policies that force all employees to allocate an equitable number of leaderships positions to women (Participant K, 2022).

This objective sought to establish if there were any structures or forums that facilitated gender equity at the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone. The results showed that the Department prioritized employment equity and ensured that gender-equal opportunities were always in place within the Department of Employment and Labour. The Gender Policy Framework also provided for equality within the civil service and the development of skills that enabled officials to promote gender equality in the workplace.

The study then sought to establish if there were any policy recommendation on the participation of women in leadership positions at the Department of Employment and Labour with an aim to provide policy recommendation.

#### **4.3.3 Objective Three**

Objective three aimed to provide policy recommendations on the participation of women in leadership positions at the Department of Employment and Labour, with particular reference to the Port Shepstone office. This objective sought to provide recommendations in terms of policies or suggestions on what needs to be done to support the participation of women in leadership positions.

All participants responded that communities and government needed to work together to educate youth and the whole community about gender issues. They said that if children had grown up with the knowledge that, regardless of gender, everyone is equal in the community, there will be more people supportive of women in decision-making and management positions. Thus, even at the workplace in the Department of Employment and Labour, women's voices will be recognized in decision making positions. However, Respondents H and J stated that with all the legislation that is in

place to protect and empower women, the situation seemed to be unfair to men. Participant H argued that women took advantage of these policies to further their employment promotion opportunities. They contended that in some instances, women used the legislation on harassment to blackmail their male colleagues to advance their employment positions. He also said that the Department needed to have an effective gender forum to educate and protect men and women in the workplace across all matters.

In this regard, Participant H stated the following:

First, the Department needs to introduce gender quotas to ensure that a required percent of women representation is met in decision making bodies, thus fostering more balance and a diverse leadership team. Even though employment equity is in place, more needs to be done to ensure gender balance in the Department. If the Department can introduce flexible work policies (e.g., working from home) these will accommodate women in leadership positions.

Second, the Department needs to consider the implementation of leadership programmes that are specifically designed to encourage and prepare women for leadership roles in the Department of Employment and Labour in offices such as the one in Port Shepstone. The Department also needs to consider family-friendly policies that encourage working women to bring their child/children to the workplace in an effort to increase the support systems to such working women and their families.

Third, the government should launch public awareness campaigns that challenge gender stereotypes in the workplace and promote a culture that values and supports women in leadership positions (Participant H, 2022).

To quote participant L:

Women empowerment relates to encouraging women to participate in all the different sectors and fields that are available in the workforce, while gender equality is where people are treated in the same way, regardless of how and what their gender is. Women need more support when it comes to fulfilling their roles in the Department of Employment and Labour (Participant L, 2022).

Participant G (2022) responded in relation to what needs to be done to support women participating in leadership positions and said that:

In a current situation or current environment, legislation plays a vital role to encourage women in the workplace. Women need to be empowered at a young age so that they are aware of the opportunities that are available to them as they pursue opportunities in senior management and leadership positions in the Department.

Participant G offered the following policy recommendations on the participation of women in leadership positions at the Department of Employment and Labour.

My view is that women have contributed a lot, but they do not get much-needed recognition or respect. Previously, men filled all the leadership roles. However, the leadership roles should not be given to someone based on gender but on their ability to execute that leadership role effectively (Participant G, 2022).

Participants were asked to make suggestions that they thought should be implemented and would contribute towards the attainment of women's empowerment and gender equality in their workplace.

All participants recommended that community structures were important and a vital form of intervention to develop women from a young age to be independent. Moreover, these community structures will assist both genders to respect one another regardless of gender differences ... They all suggested that if communities were aware of gender issues, it would be easy to educate boys and girls from a young age about gender issues and transformation changes within the work environment. Participant B, for example, stated that some of Department's programmes that were in place were not effective in rural areas. He suggested that these programmes must also target the rural areas where traditional cultures and norms dominated. Participant C recommended that the organization needed to be specific regarding employment equity in their workplace advertisements to ensure gender equality in the Department's work environment.

To quote participant E "think the Department needs to implement an antidiscrimination policy that will prohibit discrimination based on gender and ensure a fair and equal playing field for both men and women". I think a policy of inclusive decision making will

foster active and inclusive decision making from diverse perspectives. This must include women in policy development and community engagement that will give them a platform to present themselves at the traditional leader's committee meetings (Participant E, 2022).

Participant L suggested that:

Leaders need to be aware of the imbalance in gender equality and focus on ways to remove the biases and barriers that prevent women from being recognized and promoted. For example, gender stereotypes and limited opportunities like promotion to leadership positions that were offered to males were prejudicial to women. He recommended educating staff members and those in leadership positions about unconscious biases, and the need to provide workplace opportunities to both genders on an equal basis. Awareness about self-promotion, and providing support and mentoring opportunities to women were also possible to pave the way for fair and equal opportunities (Participant L, 2022).

Participant A said:

If we change the way employees often behave toward women leaders, we will change workplace cultures. This is something everyone can play a part in by supporting women to lead, rather than undermining their leadership style for being different. It also means challenging gender-stereotypical thinking. Statements like, 'women bosses are difficult to work with' and 'male leaders are less emotional' not only undermine women in general, but particularly women who are trying to lead in ways that differ from the stereotypical male norm (Participant A, 2022).

Participant B provided a detailed summation of how challenges facing women in leadership positions can be addressed, by stating:<sup>3</sup>

First, naturally males are the ones that are looked up to as providers and females are looked at as nurturers. This means that females provide care and support. In the workplace ... it will require us not to look at any male-based or

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<sup>3</sup> Participant E suggested the establishment of men's forums in the workplace to assist with gender issues and matters that men come across (in the workplace) to equip men to transform to gender diversity.

female-based roles, but just to consider the effective ability for a human being to be able to fulfil that role regardless of gender. Secondly, I think it better when a male is serving another male and a female serving another female. I say that because when it comes to execution of duties both genders have an instinct of understanding one another (Participant B, 2022).

Participant C on the other hand responded to this matter as follow:

I think the Department should implement transparent recruitment practices that will ensure transparency in the recruitment and promotion processes. This will reduce potential biases and create a fair and level playing field for women seeking leadership roles. If the Department implemented this, it will create opportunities for women to network with existing leaders, both within and outside the Department. It will also facilitate mentorship and knowledge exchange amongst women. The Department of Employment and Labour has systems and policies in place to take care of issues of gender but I've never come across issues that are different when it comes to male and female. Most of the issues that I came across were issues that affected both males and females. ... However, if female employees struggle to fulfil a particular role, that female should be assisted to fulfil that role instead of shifting that role to a male because that defeats the purpose of gender equality in the workplace. In short, the Department needs to help the female in management and leadership matters, as necessary, should the female encounter challenges or constraints at these tasks (Participant C, 2022).

Participant E suggested that the Department should introduce men forums that discuss gender equality issues and women empowerment so that most employees will understand matters related to gender transformation in the workplace and at the community level.

Participant E stated:

I can participate in gender transformation in the workplace, thus ensuring that all the duties that I perform are not specific to a male. If I feel that work tasks are more specific to a male, then I will try to involve the participation of women.

... It is important that people are regularly made aware of what roles or duties are available and need to be fulfilled for them to give everyone a fair and equal opportunity to try and fulfil that role (Participant E, 2022).

Participant K said that the institutional mind-sets are the most significant barriers and are a major reason that one does not see more women at the top levels of leadership and management. People make assumptions about women at work, and some leaders base these assumptions on the stereotypical roles of women in society. Often, women are limited in their advancement or, worse, are never given an opportunity because of bias.

On this matter of women leadership and their participation in management positions, Participant D contended as follows:

The Department has the Employment Equity Act and Affirmative Action measures in place to promote equal opportunities and the fair treatment for all employees in South Africa, in respect of their gender. These legislative measures aim to eliminate unfair discrimination and ensure that representation in the workplace based on the country's demographics, apply in all municipal and government entities. However, I think it the duty of the Department to ensure that these pieces of legislation are meeting their objectives and furthering gender equality goals. From a gender perspective, this would include evaluating gender equality strategies and integrating a gender perspective into all evaluation functions across the whole of the Department.

The above objective provided policy recommendations and suggestions to provide equality on the participation of women in leadership positions at the Department of Employment and Labour and concluded the findings of the study. In the light of the study's findings, it is concluded that while women have the potential and ability to be leaders to perform at the top level in the Department, the virious cycle of challenges against their leadership trajectory often constrain their success. Apart from internal factors among themselves, external factors such as social and cultural stereotypes, the problem of balancing reproductive and workplace functions, and lack of networking

have contributed significantly to constraining their leadership success. Putting women in leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour does not guarantee that women will have more influence over policy decisions or that women's rights and gender equality will be addressed in terms of government policies and programmes.

Women's voices and perspectives must be heard in decision making and in ensuring that services address both men's and women's needs and interests. The findings of this study reveal that the Department has yet to implement the necessary legislation and/or policies to institutionalize gender equality and guidelines related to work functions and responsibilities. The Department also needs to promote inclusivity in the policies that support equal representation, fostering a culture of respect, and providing opportunities for skills development. Moreover, gender mainstreaming is poorly understood in the Departments. This lack of knowledge and understanding must be addressed so that senior management can transition from policy vision to strategy and action. This study suggests that the Department should conduct gender-based studies to ensure equitable representation in addressing gender-based disparities, and to incorporate women's perspectives in decision making.

The Department should foster a culture that recognizes and prioritizes gender as a marginalized issue. Gender must not be recognized merely as women's issues. Policies must be continuously monitored and evaluated. Gender equity policies and programmes within the Department should not only aim to increase the number of women in leadership and management positions, but also uplift and empower women's leadership capabilities via training programmes. The next chapter focuses on the final conclusion to this study.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusion**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the research results together with the responses of the study's participants to the questions asked during face-to-face interviews that were held in Department Offices, one at a participant's home, and 1 at Scottsburg. The interviews collected data on the participants' responses to the research aim and objectives that constituted the basis for this research. This chapter presents the conclusions of the study. This is done through a brief analysis of the results for each objective of the research, and in terms of the research questions. This chapter also focuses on the contributions of this study to the wider topic of the challenges facing women in leadership and management positions in the Department of Employment and Labour at Port Shepstone in KwaZulu-Natal.

#### **5.2 Reiterating on the Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The overall aim of this study was to explore and identify gender-based challenges that women who held leadership and management positions encountered within the Department of Employment and Labour. The literature review related to the challenges and issues that impacted women in leadership positions. There were three critical aspects that were covered in this study: first, to identify the nature of women's participation in leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal. This was crucial considering the history of gender stereotypes and apartheid in South Africa which resulted in women's oppression and gender inequality, both in society and in the working environments. The second was to ascertain the impact or difference that women participation made to decision-making in the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal. Third, this study focused on the challenges or limiting factors that impacted on women's participation in leadership and management positions in the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal. It was of utmost importance to first gather information on the women experiences in leadership positions as this indicated how women were treated in the decision-making working

environment. This was done while considering the introduction of various legislation in South Africa that sought to advance gender balance and eliminate unfair treatment and discrimination, especially of women in the workplace.

The South African government introduced multiple laws and legislation in the postapartheid era to ensure that the gender imbalances of the past in the work environment were addressed in the new dispensation. However, three decades have passed to 2022/2023 and this sought-after balance has not yet been fully realized. The results of this study revealed that although the legislation for equality between women and men employees is available, the implementation of such legislation is taking longer than anticipated and that there is not much priority and will to enforce the legislation. In general, therefore, women apparently still faced historical gender stereotypes in decision-making, leadership, and management positions. Thus, this showed that although the legislation is available, it has not yet achieved the much-desired results.

In this study, interviews were conducted with 7 women and 7 men within the Department of Employment and Labour's Port Shepstone office in KZN. This study utilized the intensive research design and its focus on the collection of data using qualitative research techniques. The findings established that women were as proportionally represented as men in leadership positions in the Department. However, the women in the leadership and management positions in the Department still faced several gender-based challenges, and these included gender inequity, being disrespected, and gender stereotypes associated with patriarchy and customs associated with the majority of South African society. In short, women were not recognized as equal to their male counterparts; their views and decisions were subjected to male support and approval; meeting logistics did not take into consideration their domestic and family responsibilities; they faced unfair treatment and discrimination; and were undermined in the workplace. The literature revealed that traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes about the role and status of women in society were still prevalent and many women who were part of this system found it difficult to deviate from these cultural and traditional value-systems, and were ostracized. It is true that a male leader's voice is often heard and is adhered to while the female leader's voice is not always recognized.

In chapter one, the objectives of the study were outlined as follows: To understand the factors or challenges that impact on women's participation in leadership positions at the Department of Employment and Labour at Port Shepstone. The study found that women were well represented in leadership positions in this Department; however, in decision making, women in leadership and management positions were not taken seriously because of gender stereotypes. Furthermore, the respondents suggested that the Department needed to restructure its gender policies and programmes to be in line with current legislation and policies that supported women in leadership positions in the Department. Ahuja (2019, p.159) argued that:

In most societies, women lack experience in decision making and leadership in the public sector because girls, unlike boys, are socialized to play a passive role and have few opportunities to make decisions or develop leadership skills outside of the family context. In most traditional societies, girls are largely confined to homes and families where they are protected and raised to accept the decisions that parents, teachers, and other brothers make for them.

All respondents blamed the cultures, norms, and traditions for women's labour discrimination and exploitation. They stated that even women oppressed one another and that they preferred to support men's leadership over their own. One of the reasons why there were few women in positions of power was because of the lack of union among women themselves. Also, women compete for limited resources; they tend to see other women as a threat, and they envy one another. Marxists claimed that women are doubly alienated in capitalism due to the public/private division which confines their work as mothers and housewives to the home, while denying them full personhood, citizenship, and human rights.

In this regard, Participant M said that women were misled in the way they were raised, to respect men's decisions, to see men as their born leaders, and these women failed to see themselves as leaders. Participants D agreed that women were impacted by the way men were raised as leaders and women were required to be submissive to men. Participant D therefore argued that this situation played a role where some men chose not to listen to women leaders or to take instructions from them.

Participant N was of the view that many women were labelled as weak, emotional and inferior, and that this perspective limited women's participation in leadership because

they tended to doubt themselves. She added that the view was that the women were equal to men, but in reality men in positions of power were treated differently to women in positions of power, and that men tended to be respected more than when a woman in charge. In this regard, the literature revealed that traditional discrimination, social pressure, women's kindness to people's misconceptions about successful women, and men's tendency to prefer family-oriented wives were prevalent. The literature also revealed that women were even afraid that they were more talented than men, and they therefore avoided some demanding jobs. Moreover, many women were torn between work and family because they did not want to be housewives, but at the same time they were challenged to be superwomen (Qin, Rana & Way, 2008). Participant N said that women are not only discriminated against, but also undermined, assaulted and oppressed on daily basis, while Participant K contended that it was difficult for women working in male-based and male-dominated environments to be treated fairly, and as equals, in the performance of their duties. This study in the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone confirmed that women faced challenges that impacted their participation in leadership and management positions.

The second objective of this study was to assess the institutional mechanisms and strategies that were put into place to encourage and support women's participation, and establish what structures supported women in their access to decision making and leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone. The study identified the gap in the mechanisms and strategies that encouraged and supported women's participation in leadership and management positions in the Department. The majority of the respondents were not aware of any structures within the Department that supported women in leadership positions. For example, Participants C, K and H were not aware of any structures in place within the Department that supported women's participation in the leadership positions, but they were aware of the policies that were in place to support and enforce equality in the workplace. Participant C believed that the Affirmative Action and Employment Equity Policies were contributing greatly to the enforcement of gender equality that empowered women to attain leadership positions. Participant C contended that the Department exercised the Employment Equity Policy at all levels because women also participated in executive positions in the Department. He noted that two of his former female colleagues were promoted to higher positions within the Department.

The White Paper on Affirmative Action in South Africa was developed as a mechanism to achieve a representative and equitable public service sector across the national and provincial levels of government. Participant H said that the women's movement in South Africa highlighted harassment issues against women in society in general, and in the workplace, and the importance of respecting women, and their views and perspectives. Consequently, employers now take issues affecting women seriously, including women empowerment, harassment and unfair labour practices in the workplace. Moreover, the White paper on Affirmative Action sought to create an environment that encouraged and enabled those who were historically disadvantaged, or excluded due to unfair discrimination, to reach their full potential within the public service and contribute their diverse skills and talents to help improve service delivery.

The last objective was to provide policy recommendations on the participation of women in leadership positions in Department of Employment and Labour at the Port Shepstone office.

This study found that the Department worked within the confines of the South African Constitution and that it implemented all relevant legislation and policies, particularly as it related to its workforce. However, the participants in this research recommended that the Department needed to increasingly support women in leadership positions and encourage their participation in the management of the Department. Participant L suggested that the leaders need to be aware of the imbalance of gender equality, and focus on ways to remove the biases and barriers preventing women from being recognized and promoted. Educating both staff and leadership about the unconscious biases and allowing opportunities for both genders to be equally recognized is a start. Awareness about self-promotion and providing support and mentoring opportunities to women can begin to pave the way for fair and equal opportunities.

Participant E suggested that the Department should introduce a men's forum that can deal with gender equality issues and women empowerment so that most staff can understand matters related to gender transformation in the workplace and at the community level. Participant C suggested that the Department should implement or evaluate the working from home option as a support to women in leadership positions. Participant C also said that the Department should implement transparent practices that will ensure openness in recruitment and promotion processes. This will help

reduce potential biases and create a fair and level playing field for women seeking leadership roles. Participant A recommended that the Department should assist women in leadership positions to fulfil their roles, even if they seem to have difficulty in them. Participant N(2023) said that:

The Department should harness the power toward proactive change with its women empowerment initiative. This effort would help to promote the economic and social empowerment of women through the formation of self-managed and self-sustaining groups.

Participant H emphasised that the Department really needed to have an effective gender forum to educate and protect men and women in the workplace.

The study investigated women's experiences in leadership positions in the Department of Employment and Labour at Port Shepstone. In general, the study noted that women in leadership positions experienced discrimination and gender stereotypes that contributed to inequality in the workplace. In short, women faced barriers that limited them from participating in leadership positions. Moreover, the culture of ukungenwa (levirate marriage) and traditional hierarchies, given that the municipalities chosen in this study had traditional chiefs in leadership positions, limited females in their participation in leadership positions. The expectation that women were not meant for leadership roles also contributed to women's decisions in leadership not to be taken seriously, and in some instances, for women to be paid lower wages than men. While the general literature states that women are underrepresented in leadership positions, the finding of this study indicate that women are not so discriminated against in the Department of Employment and Labour. The literature on women in employment also revealed that a large salary disparity exists with male civil servants earning significantly more than their female counterparts in management/leadership positions. The literature also revealed that on the corporate side, despite a steady increase in the number of women in leadership positions, women still lag behind their male counterparts in leadership positions.

### **5.3 Recommendations of the Study**

This study revealed that women still face many challenges regardless of the policy and legislation implemented in The Department of Employment and Labour. The study found that the Department had introduced the necessary legislation and/or policies to institutionalize gender equality and to guide gender-related functions and responsibilities. There is a lack of knowledge about gender mainstreaming in the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone. The lack of knowledge and understanding has to be changed so that senior management in this Departmental office can move from vision, to policy, strategy and action.

The study recommends that workshops can serve as forums for policy proposals. There may be discussions about how to start a process that will result in practical policy recommendations regarding women in leadership positions and the challenges they face. This will be useful to the Department's officials. Most women have perspectives on what other policies they believe should be formalized to advance the transition of women into leadership and management positions. This is not to suggest that men should be excluded from policymaking. There are men who are feminists at heart, but the idea of leadership in workshops should extend beyond men and include women at all levels. Leadership should not be commanding, but rather facilitative.

The call here is for all officials, not just women in leadership, to be creative and innovative regarding the position of women in leadership and management roles. Given that the workshop should be particularly in the interest of women, it should be extended to stakeholders, including men, as necessary. Women's leadership is essential for societal change that involves challenging patriarchy that privileged sexual discrimination and inequality in the workplace. Workshops should strive for social justice, to care for everyone, for compassion, and to cooperate with everyone with empathy. Transformation will avoid a situation where the strong (males) think of themselves as superior to women, and the desire to control or dominate them. In short, everyone (men and women) should gain from these workshops and forums because women cannot progress and advance in isolation from their male co-workers. Workshops and forums must address the marginalization of women, and their value as part of addressing the matter of social justice in the workplace. What is crucial is

that all the discussions in the workshop and forums must be grounded in the ideal of justice for all.

The study therefore recommends that since some of the women leaders are afraid of failure, especially those who start their leadership trajectory path, there is a need to encourage them to work through the moments of self-doubts by commending them to ignore that inner voice that may discourage them from taking tough decisions, speaking up, and getting outside their comfort zone. Second, neither trying to act like a man guarantees success for a women leader, nor allowing her “feminine” qualities to stand in the way of getting things done, is recommended. The study also recommends women leaders to stay focused on departmental goals. Lastly, since women leaders often lack the support of other female workers or leaders, there is a need to establish women-based networks, networking events, as well as online forums. These should be designed to support and promote one another in terms of the women empowerment policy, create a women leadership platform, and network in order to let women share their success and challenges in their leadership practices. Such activities will motivate those women who have dreams to become leaders and those who wish to hold management positions.

The study established that traditions and gender stereotypes were the main barriers for women who engaged in public processes and who wished to be promoted into leadership and management positions in the Department. Women were still expected to remain within the domestic sphere and they expected to encounter barriers when they entered the public sphere of work. From this study and the literature review, the researcher became aware that women were poorly represented in top management and leadership positions in the Department, and in the public sector generally. Women support programmes, awareness campaigns and policies that encouraged women in leadership were largely absent in government and in the Department of Employment and Labour, especially in the Port Shepstone office. Given that women leaders often lacked the support of other female-based workers or leaders, there was the need for establishing women-based networks, and networking events as well as online forums to support and promote one another. One of the ultimate goals of the study was to help women use their experiences, initiatives and an improved gender perspective to leverage their own social involvement in the workplace in the Department. Therefore,

the presence of women in decision-making positions is vital in the Department and in local government in order to represent other women and address these issues.

To conclude, based on the findings of the study, the following statements can be made: In the Department of Employment and Labour, the participation of women in leadership and decision-making positions is proportional to the number of men in such positions. However, men dominated decision-making in the Department, especially at the top management level within the Department. The lack of women's representation and participation has thus been attributed to several factors and constraints.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

Leedy and Ormrod (2016) advocated that a good researcher acknowledges weaknesses or limitations of their research project that may cast doubt on the research results and conclusions. They asserted that there was no such thing as a perfect research project and an ethical researcher did not pretend that his or her research project was perfect. On this note, the limitations of this research project are acknowledged. The number of women and men occupying leadership positions as well as non-managers within the Department of Employment and Labour was minimal, and this factor limited the possibility of obtaining a large numbers of study participants. To enable generalization, other government departments within the Province can contribute to such a study in the future. This study was conducted in the Department of Employment and Labour in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal. Thus, the findings did not comprise other government departments within this Province. Given that the study was confined to one Department in one location (namely, Port Shepstone), it is important that such a study be conducted on a larger scale.

#### **5.5 Areas for further research**

This study concentrated on women in leadership positions in a specific government department, namely the Department of Employment and Labour at the Port Shepstone office. However, men were part of the participant group for the purpose of their views and discussion on the topic of study. On the same note, a similar study should be conducted in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, more special in the rural areas to gain an unique view from women who are still within the ambit of traditional leaders. Furthermore, outside of South Africa, different countries can be investigated on the

same subject, and include the challenges that impact men in leadership positions. The goal of this would be to continue adding to the existing body of knowledge on gender-based challenges that both male and female leaders of various organizations and sizes faced.

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## Appendix 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Student: Busisiwe Qunneth Lushaba: No. 204513238

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Topic: The experiences of women in leadership positions in local government: A case study of Department of Employment and Labour Port Shepstone

Preamble: The research involves a mini-dissertation in partial fulfilment of the Degree of Masters in Social Policy. With this process of data collection through interviews, the researcher is bound by approved ethical considerations with the University of KwaZulu-Natal and permission to record the interviews will be sought from participants and all of them will be duly acknowledged.

### Part 1: Standard Participants' Biographical Data

#### Question 1

What is your gender? 1

What is your gender?	1	2
	Male	Female

#### Question 2

Which age group do you belong to?	1	2	3	4	5
	Less than 25 years	25-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	More than 55 years

**Question 3**

Which race do you belong to?	1 African	2 Asian	3 White	4 Coloured	5 Other
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**Question 4**

What is your highest qualification?	1 Less than matric	2 Matric	3 Matric with one- or two-years qualification	4 Undergraduate degree	5 Honour's degree	6 Master's degree or higher
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**Question 5**

How many years have you been working for the Dep of Employment & Labour	1 0-1 year	2 2-4 years	3 5 -9 years	4 10-20 years	5 More than 20 years
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**Question 6**

What was your previous occupation/job?	1 Manager position	2 Senior Manager	3 Junior manager	4 Other
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**Question 7**

How long were you employed in your previous job?	1 0-1 year	2 2-4 years	3 5 -9 years	4 10-20 years	5 More than 20 Years
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**PART 2: PREVIOUS JOB/OCCUPATION BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCES**

- What are some of the most useful and valuable lessons you have learnt from your previous job/occupation?
- What are some of the least useful and least valuable lessons you learnt from your previous job/occupation?
- What are some of those unique issues that stood out for you in your previous job/occupation?
- How would you say these influenced your career progression?
- Are there any other aspects of your previous job/occupation you wish to share?

**PART 3: CURRENT JOB/OCCUPATION**

- What is your job title?
- Which positions have you held over this period?

- What have been your main job roles and responsibilities over the period?
- What are your current job roles and responsibilities?
- What are some of the most useful and valuable lessons that you have learnt and continue to learn in your current position?
- What are some of the least useful and least valuable lessons you have learnt from your current position?
- What are some of those unique issues that stood out for you in your current position?
- How would you say these will influence or have influenced your career progression?
- Any other aspect of your current position that you wish to share?

#### **PART 4: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER**

- What is your own broad understanding of gender?
- What is your own understanding of the differences between women's empowerment and gender equality?
- What is your overall reflection of both women's empowerment and gender equality in South Africa currently?
- What would you say about overall women's empowerment and gender equality policies and legislative frameworks in South Africa currently?
- Would you say there is a coherent and progressive women's movement in South Africa currently?
- If yes, what are your views and opinions about the women's movement in South Africa today?
- Would you say there is a coherent and progressive men's movement in South Africa today?
- If yes, what are your views and opinions about the men's movement in South Africa today?

- In what ways do you think the women's movement has positively or negatively contributed to the gender transformation agenda in South Africa today?
- In what ways do you think the men's movement contributed positively or negatively to the gender transformation agenda in South Africa today?
- What are your ideas of the role of women and men respectively in the women's empowerment and gender equality agenda – that is, in regards to the gender transformation agenda?
- Any other aspect you wish to share on women's empowerment and gender equality in South Africa today?

## **PART 5: WORKPLACE ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES ON GOVERNMENT**

In view of your broad understanding, views, and opinions above, and focusing on your workplace, the Department of Employment and Labour, please answer the following questions. • What do you believe are the main gender issues affecting women specifically?

- What do you think are the main gender issues affecting men specifically?
- Would you be able to select at least one case in point, demonstrate it, and explain in detail some of the said gender issues?
- What is your view/opinion of women in decision-making and leadership positions in your workplace?
- What is your view/opinion of women in decision-making and leadership positions in local government in general?
- What is your view/opinion of men in decision-making and leadership positions in local government in general?
- Explain your observation and experiences of the (i) women-to-women relations, (ii) women-to-men relations, (iii) and men-to-women relations (iv) men-to-men relations in your workplace
- What is your view/opinion of men in decision-making and leadership positions in your workplace?

## **PART 6: INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

- How would you describe your organizational culture in relation to gender?
- Is there a gender unit/department in your workplace?
- What is the staff complement at this unit/department in your workplace?
- What is the post level of the head of this unit/department in the workplace (middle or senior management)?
- What is her/his main job functions?
- Is there a workplace women's forum at your workplace?
- Is there a workplace men's forum at your workplace?
- Is there any coaching and/or mentorship programme at your workplace?
- Is there a workplace gender policy in your workplace?
- What are the other gender transformation related programmes at your workplace?

## **PART 7: CONCLUDING CONFIRMATORY QUESTIONS**

- Would you say there exist barriers for achieving women's empowerment and gender equality in your workplace?
- If yes, what would you point to as the main barriers to achieving gender transformation in your workplace?
- What are some of the suggestions you think should be implemented and would contribute towards the attainment of women's empowerment and gender equality in your workplace?
- Which roles and responsibilities would you wish to assume in terms of your own personal contribution towards gender transformation in your workplace?
- Do you think entrenching women's empowerment and gender equality in community structures and forums are important? If yes, why?"
- Please offer suggestions on how community structures and forums could drive gender transformation at the municipalities or local government sphere?

**Thank you very much.**

## Appendix 2 OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Student: Busisiwe Qunneth Lushaba: No. 204513238

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Topic: The experiences of women in leadership positions in local government: A case study of the Department of Employment and Labour at Port Shepstone

Preamble: The research involves a mini-dissertation in partial fulfilment of the Degree of Masters in Social Policy. With this process of data collection through observation, the researcher is bound by approved ethical considerations at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to observe the participants during its organisation's meeting, and all participants will be duly acknowledged.

Observation related to questionnaire	Excellent	Good	Poor	Extremely poor
How females react to male leader decisions?				
How males react to females' decisions				
Do females react the same as the react on male leader				
Do males react the same to				

female as react on male leader				
How do males respond to female suggestions?				
How does female respond to male suggestions?				
Do females support one another in decision making?				
Do males support one another in decision making?				



UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Busisiwe Qunneth Lushaba, student number 204513238. I am a Master's degree candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College. The title of my research is The experiences of women in leadership positions in local government: A case study of the Department of Employment and Labour Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal. The aim of the study is to understand the impact on women's experiences in leadership positions. To assess institutional mechanisms and strategies put in place to encourage and support women's active participation, that is, the level of institutional readiness with regard to practices, policies and structures that support women's access to decision-making and management positions at the Department of Labour Port Shepstone. I am interested in interviewing and observation on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary, you have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participation in the research. You will not be penalized for.

- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will be take about an hour.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file for 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement (separate sheet will be provided for signature)

I can be contacted at: School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban. Email: [204513238@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:204513238@stu.ukzn.ac.za) :Cell number : [REDACTED]

My supervisor is Professor Sagie Narsiah, who is located at School of Social Sciences, Howard College Campus, Durban of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email [SagieNarsiah1@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:SagieNarsiah1@ukzn.ac.za)

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: [hssre@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hssre@ukzn.ac.za) Phone number +73122608350/4557/3587

In the event of any problems or concerns/ questions you may contact the researcher at (provide contact details) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

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KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

[Tel:227 31 2604557](tel:227312604557)- Fax: 27 31 2264609

Email:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview: Yes / No

Video-record my interview: Yes / No

Use of my photographs for research purpose: Yes / No

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

.....  
.....

## DECLARATION

I **Thabisile Jili** hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

In the event of any problems or concerns/ questions you may contact the researcher at (provide contact details) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

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Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview: Yes / No

Video-record my interview: Yes / No

Use of my photographs for research purpose: Yes / No

SIGNATURE                      OF                      PARTICIPANT \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE                      OF                      WITNESS \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(where applicable)

SIGNATURE                      OF                      TRANSLATOR \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_