



Promoting gender equality in the Department of Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal

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Abstract

For many years, women worldwide have continued to experience discriminatory practices both in the workplace and in society. One of the discriminatory practices faced by women is their exclusion in leadership positions. Post-1994, the South African government has promulgated several different legislative frameworks and policies to redress gender equality, discrimination and empower women. Despite the government efforts, there seems to be a common consensus among scholarly researchers that gender inequality still prevails in the South African workplace After twenty-nine years of democracy. Against this background, the present study aims to promote gender equality in the South African workplace by focusing on the Department of Public Works. A quantitative research will be conducted to collect data so that information can be quantified and subjected to statistical treatment to support or refute “alternate knowledge claims. The study will be conducted in the Department of Public Works. Given the total population of about 200 employees, the sample size of 132 was selected using simple random sampling. However, the data was were collected from 124 through an online survey (questionnaire). The reliability and validity of the measuring instrument were measured through a pilot study. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social, version 27.0. The study concluded that the factors such as women empowerment, organisational culture, leadership commitment and organisational structure were the most important factors that contributed to reducing gender inequality in the Department of Public Works. Also, the results revealed that gender equality impacted employee retention and performance significant in the Department of Public Works. On the contrary, the study found no significant relationship between gender equality and employee job security. This study provides a better knowledge of the discriminatory practices against women, especially those in leadership position in the Department of Public Works. Therefore, the study will service as an important tool for promoting gender equality in the Department of Public Works and other Departments in South Africa. The study recommends that organisations, including the Department of Public Works implement gender balance policies and practices to help reduce gender inequality.

Keywords Department of Public Works, discrimination, gender, gender equality, South Africa, women

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List of Acronyms and Meaning

DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
EEA	Employment Equity Act
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EP	Employee Performance
ER	Employee Retention
GE	Gender Equality
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
LC	Leadership Commitment
PEPUDA	Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
WE	Women Empowerment

Chapter One: Introduction And Background

1.1 Introduction

For many years, women worldwide have continued to experience discriminatory practices both in the workplace and in society. For instance, Sinden (2017) postulates that women continue to be victims of discriminatory practices not only in South Africa but across the world. When commenting further, Musetsho, Isac and Dobrin (2021) confirm that gender inequality is an international phenomenon that several democratic nations are yet to eradicate permanently. Evidence shows that after 1994, the government of South Africa promulgated many different legislative frameworks and policies to redress gender inequality discrimination and empower women (Musetsho et al., 2021). However, there seems to be a common consensus among scholarly researchers (Daniela Casale, 2021; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Bangani, 2020) that gender inequality still prevails within the workplace and society After twenty-nine years of democracy. Therefore, the study aims to eliminate gender inequality in South African organisations, using the Department of Public Works as the case study organisation.

This chapter provides primary information about the study by offering a better understanding of gender inequality in South Africa and beyond. The chapter included background to the research problem and gaps in previous research. Moreover, it outlines the purposes, objectives, and questions that support the investigation. Also, the significance of the study is stated in the chapter. Furthermore, it includes the research methodology and structure of the research project.

1.2 Background to the research problem

The term "gender" has been defined as "two or more sub-divisions that are distinct from each other, including male and female" (Oakley, 2016, p.44). On the other hand, gender equality is perceived as a social structure where males and females share the same opportunities and challenges about their role in the economic and domestic state (Lloyd-Jones, Bass, & Jean-Marie, 2014). Therefore, gender inequality is when a person of a different gender is not treated equally. According to Belingheri, Chiarello, Fronzetti Colladon and Rovelli (2021), gender equality is a global issue that marginalises, affecting economic growth and societal development. Amirkhanyan, Krawczyk and Wilamowski (2021) also concur that the persistent gender inequalities in advanced and less developed countries continue to gain attention from economists, policymakers, and the general public. According to Dahal, Joshi and Swahnberg

(2022), gender inequality and violence are not new phenomena since women in Nepal continue to face several inequalities and domestic violence.

Within the South African context, there is no doubt that the country fails to address social, political and economic challenges, including gender inequality, discrimination, high unemployment, poverty violent crime and corruption. Among this challenges, “gender inequality in the workplace seems to be the biggest obstacle against women’s career development and freedom from discrimination” (Musetsho et al., 2021, p.71). As stated above, gender inequality persists in South Africa in many aspects of life, from the workplace to participation in the economy, as well as race, culture and religion. It has become increasingly important for organisations to demonstrate their commitment to reducing gender imbalance in recent years. Gender inequality in South Africa is dated back to the apartheid era, when black women, in particular, were excluded from the labour market (Hills, 2015). A report by Statistics South Africa (2018) indicates that women constitute 43.8% of the labour force. The statistics suggest that men continue to hold the majority of leadership positions in many aspects of society, especially in management positions.

According to Cold-Ravnkilde (2019), South Africa is perceived as having a progressive constitution for promoting gender equality as compared to other countries. Vyas-Doorgapersad and Bangani (2020) agreed with Cold-Ravnkilde (2019) that, in South Africa, gender equality is a human right where everyone is afforded equal opportunity. For instance, the Constitution Act 108 of 1996 proposes the establishment of a democratic society of government committed to eliminating gender inequality in the society or workplace through the prohibition of racial, gender, and all forms of discriminatory practices. Moreover, other legislative instruments, including the National Gender Policy Framework and a Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities, were introduced to achieve this constitutionally entrenched right. Evidence reveals that since 1994, different laws and interventions were implemented by the government to transform the South African workplace (Goko 2013 cited in Nhlapo 2019).

Nevertheless, a report by the Public Service Commission (Nhlapo & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2016) reveals that women empowerment programmes initiated by the government did not significantly promote gender equality. According to the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), “women mostly occupy lower levels where earnings and power to influence decisions are equally less” (Nhlapo & Vyas-Doorgapersad 2016:171–172). Besides the various reports, empirical research (Daniela Casale, 2021; Haylock-Loor & Guevara, 2023)

reveals that gender inequality keeps rising, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it valid to conclude that the government legislative frameworks, policies and other interventions failed to address gender inequality in the South African landscape. Given this, this study explores the elements that influence gender equality in order to give recommendations to the government, employers and policy-makers regarding strategies to achieve gender equality within the organisation.

1.3 Research problem

In South Africa, gender discrimination, especially against women, persists in the workplace after twenty-nine years of democracy. Musetsho et al. (2021) argue that gender inequality still prevails, although the South African Constitution plays a greater role in redressing and liberating previously disadvantaged groups, particularly women. For instance, evidence shows that South African women earn 28% less than men (Head, 2018). According to Cold-Ravnkilde (2019), contestations in the work environment and organisational restructuring processes impede the promulgation of gender-based policy in the South African workplace. Empirically, it has been found that although several studies were conducted on gender inequality, there is little research regarding how circumstances and solutions help mitigate gender-based discrimination (Belingheri, Chiarello, Fronzetti, Colladon & Rovelli, 2021). Moreover, this study observed that although the Department of Public Works has implemented several policies and procedures to eliminate unfair discrimination and gender inequality, these phenomena still exist.

1.4 Research aims

This study investigates the factors that promote gender equality, using the Department of Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal as the case study organisation. Moreover, this study aims to contribute to women's empowerment and gender balance in the South African workplace.

1.5 Research questions

The following research questions are formulated:

- 1.5.1 What factors reduce gender inequality in the Department of Public Works?
- 1.5.2 What is the impact of reducing gender disparity in the Department of Public Works?
- 1.5.3 What are the advantages of reducing gender inequality for future generations?

1.6 Research objectives

The objectives that support the study are stated below:

- 1.6.1 To identify the factors that reduce gender inequality in the Department of Public Works;
- 1.6.2 To evaluate the impact of reducing gender disparity in the Department of Public Works;
- 1.6.3 To recognise the advantages of reducing gender inequity for future generations.

1.7 The rationale for/motivation of the study

Mackett (2020) found that the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened gender inequalities in many countries, including South Africa. Moreover, Mackett (2020) points out that South Africa's labour market, social security frameworks, and corruption have exacerbated gender inequality. According to Mdleleni, Mandyoli and Frantz (2021), although different interventions and efforts were made toward addressing gender balance in the South African labour market, gender inequality still prevails, especially among women in leadership positions. A study by Mokoale (2017) also states that despite the government has introduced several legislative frameworks, policies and interventions to transform institutions, organisations and the labour market post-1994, gender inequality still prevails in the workplace. This suggests that the government's policies, legal frameworks, and interventions have failed to address gender inequality in the workplace and society. For this reason, this study is required to promote gender equality within the South African workplace.

1.8 Contribution of the study

Minimising gender inequality in the public sector is important because it promotes equal opportunities, equal duties, and rights for all employees in the public sector. Furthermore, policies aimed at reducing gender inequities will boost women's economic participation by strengthening and providing possibilities or jobs for them, resulting in a higher proportion of women in the workforce. This entails bringing more women into the workforce and allowing men and women to share work, duties, and responsibilities in an equitable manner. Gender inequality has an economic impact, and we pay the price every day when we don't achieve gender equality. Women perform the majority of unpaid care labour in South Africa, and unpaid care work costs the South African economy roughly six times more than the paid economy. Evidence reveals that South African women faced multiple challenges in the workplace, including gender inequality (Masenya, 2023). Therefore, this current research acts as a vital tool for addressing gender inequality or disparity in the Department of Public Works. When completed, the study will help achieve gender balance in the public and private sector organisation, including the Department of public work.

Although the Constitution and Employment Equity Act were introduced to promote gender equity through the elimination of unfair discrimination and labour practices, gender inequality still prevails in the workplace. Therefore, this study will help shape policy-making concerning gender equality in the workplace. Thus, the study will be a valuable resource for organisations in developing policies to prohibit gender inequality.

Also, the study seeks to investigate the factors that promote gender equality in the workplace. Therefore, it helps expand the knowledge of gender equality and inequality. Theoretically and empirically, the findings will help better understand gender inequality and equality.

1.9 Summary of the research methodology

This study adopted the positivism to investigate the factors that promote gender equality. Positivism relied on because it concerns objectivity, which is associated with quantitative research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). This paradigm helped the researcher to discover absolute knowledge about the factors that promote gender equality in the organisation. Descriptive study was carried out to adequately describe the research phenomenon and research respondents (Singh, 2014). The descriptive research helped the researcher to obtain information on the current state of the factors that promote gender equality. The quantitative research method was used to collect and analyse numeric data. The target population of the study was estimated at 200, including directors, managers, and employees for the Department of Public Works. The simple random sampling techniques will be used to select only 132 employees in the Department. The data will be collected using questionnaires. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire will be determined using Factor Analysis and Cronbach's coefficient alpha.

1.10 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation comprised six (6) chapters:

- **Chapter one- Introduction and background**

Chapter one describes the background to the research problem and statement of research problem. It also highlights the research aims, motivation of the research, research questions, research objectives, significance of the research, summary of the research methodology, and structure of the dissertation

- **Chapter two-Literature review**

The chapter reviews literature that exists on gender equality and inequality. The chapter focusses on the definition of keywords, discussion of the legislative frameworks that promote gender equality, factors that contribute to gender inequality, factors that promote gender

equality, the impact of reducing gender disparity and advantages of reducing gender inequity for future generations. The latter part of the chapter presents the theoretical framework that support the study

- **Chapter three- Research methodology**

The chapter describes the research design and methodology, questions and objectives. It describes, among other things, the research paradigm, research design, research strategy and location of the study. Also, the target population, sampling strategy, data collection tool, reliability and validity of the measuring tool, data analysis and ethical considerations have been described in the chapter.

- **Chapter four-Research findings**

This chapter presents the research findings through the data collected from the respondents. The data were analysed with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The interpretation of the data was done by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

- **Chapter five-Discussion of findings**

This chapter discusses the key findings obtained from the study. The discussion of the findings will be supported by existing literature

- **Chapter six- Conclusion and recommendations**

The conclusion and recommendations of the study are presented in chapter five. The chapter also includes the limitations and directions for further studies.

1.11 Chapter summary

The chapter provides an adequate understanding of gender equality and sets the tone for the research project. It, inter-alia, described the background of the research problem and the statement of the problem. Also, the chapter outlined the research aims, questions, objectives, motivation for the study and significance. Additionally, the chapter summarised the research methodology adopted to investigate the subject matter. It concluded with the outline or structure of the dissertation. The following chapter reviews the literature that relates to gender inequality.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Although the current South African government has implemented different legal reforms, policies, and other interventions to promote gender equality, these interventions or measures have materialised to nothing as women remain bound and oppressed in the workplace. Therefore, this chapter reviews the empirical and theoretical literature on gender equality and inequality. The chapter begins with defining key constructs (gender, gender equality and inequality) that serve as the foundation for the research. Also, it reviews the legal frameworks or laws in South Africa that prohibit discrimination and promote gender equality. The review further includes the causes and consequences of gender inequality, factors that promote gender equality, the impact of reducing gender disparity, and the advantages of reducing gender inequity for future generations.

2.2 Definition of key terms

To provide a better understanding of what this study is all about, it is imperative first to define the key terms or variables. As mentioned, the study investigates the factors that promote gender equality within the South African workplace. Therefore, the constructs such as gender, gender inequality and gender equality must be adequately defined and contextualised.

2.2.1 Definition of gender

Academic experts, policy-makers and human rights activists have shared varied ideas and views about what constitutes gender. The definition of gender has generated different debates because of human rights issues. This implies that gender is controversial, especially in this modern era. The term “gender” has been defined into two or more subdivisions, which are distinct from each other, such as masculine and feminine or male and female (Oakley, 2016). According to Lindqvist, Sendén and Renström (2021), gender presents woman/man, although gender is not a binary variable. As a social construct, gender differs from society to society and can be altered over time.

2.2.2 Definition of gender equality

Gender equality is a social structure where women and men share equal opportunities and challenges regarding their roles in the economic and domestic states (Lloyd-Jones et al., 2014). Therefore, gender inequality refers to unfair treatment or the creation of an intimidating environment in the workplace that stems from gender-based belief systems (Lloyd-Jones et al.,

2014). This leads to unequal conduct towards men and women, which involves a deficiency of a fair return for the effort made (Cotter, 2017).

2.3 South African legislative frameworks that promote gender equality

Since the democratic election, the new South African government initiated different legislative mechanisms and policies to address gender inequality and discrimination. The Constitution Act 108 of 1996, Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, Commission on Gender Equity Act 39 of 1996, Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000, Women Empowerment and Gender Equity Bill of 2013; Black Economic Empowerment, Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003 are the main laws that promote gender equality in South Africa (Mokoele, 2017; Nhlapo & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2016).

2.3.1 Constitution Act 108 of 1996

The Constitution of South Africa is the supreme law that surpasses all other laws. According to Sinden (2017), eliminating gender inequalities and discrimination has been the government's objective to achieve through the Constitution. The South African Constitution is one of the world's proactive constitutions, which promotes equality (Musetsho et al., 2021) Chapter 2, Bill of Rights, "outlines fundamental human rights to be enjoyed by persons living in South Africa, namely: freedom of association, equality, respect, human dignity and the right to strike" (Nunoo, 2020). Section 9(2) of the Bill of Rights states that:

equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) 1996, p.5).

Section 9 (3) further provides that everyone, irrespective of gender, is equal before the law. Section 9(3) prohibits "indirect and direct discrimination on the following grounds: gender, race, pregnancy, marital status, religion, social origin, culture, belief and birth" (Nunoo, 2020, p.17). A study by Sinden (2017) reveals that the Constitution adopted strategies toward building a democratic society where everyone, including men and women, have equal opportunities.

2.3.2 Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998

According to Nunoo (2020), EEA is the key South African statute that deals explicitly with equality in the workplace. EEA aims to achieve equality in the workplace by promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment by eliminating unfair discrimination and

implementing affirmative action measures to redress the imbalance of the past (Nunoo, 2020). The EEA recognises that due to the apartheid regime policies, there are imbalances and gender disparities in the workplace. These gender disparities created disadvantages for certain groups of people, especially women (Musetsho et al., 2021). Likewise, Espi et al. (2019) pointed out that EEA was promulgated post-apartheid to rectify the injustices of the past. Thus, the primary object of the Act is to achieve gender equity by eliminating unfair discrimination and implementing affirmative action measures. Sinden (2017) suggests that organisations must participate in employment equity measures and take the responsibility to create an equal workplace environment for everyone, especially women.

2.3.3 Commission on Gender Equity Act 39 of 1996

The Commission for Gender Equality Act 39 of 1996 was introduced to give effect to section 187 (3) of the Constitution. This Act was passed into law to promote gender equality, offer advice, and make recommendations to the parliament on matters that affect gender equality and the status of women. The Commission is obliged to submit an annual employment equity report to the Minister of Employment and Labour as per section 33 of the EEA. Additionally, the Commission is required to develop, facilitate, and supervise educational programmes to inform the public about gender equality matters (Sinden, 2017). Section 187(1) of the Constitution further requires the Commission to ensure respect for gender equality and protect, develop, and attain gender equality.

2.3.4 Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000

Furthermore, the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) was introduced to help eliminate unfair discrimination against, especially people living with disabilities. According to Nunoo (2020), the PEPUDA prohibits discrimination and promotes gender equality in the South African workplace. The Act prevents and prohibits unfair discrimination and harassment in the workplace to protect human rights and promote gender equality. The Act is one of the common legal statuses that aimed to rectify the oppression and injustices that took place during the apartheid regime. It prohibits gender inequalities and unfair discriminatory practices in various spheres of society (Musetsho et al., 2021).

2.3.5 Women Empowerment and Gender Equity Bill of 2013

The Women Empowerment and Gender Equity Bill was also introduced to mitigate gender inequality in South Africa. This bill reflects section 9 of the Constitution, which aims to create

gender balance in South African organisations and society. Given the concerns about a lack of women's empowerment and gender equality, this legal framework was introduced to empower women so as to increase their representation in strategic leadership positions and structures (Musetsho et al., 2021).

2.3.6 National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality

In addition to the above legislative frameworks, the government established the policy framework known as 'South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality'. The Presidency proposed the framework to strategise the vision of gender equality and how unfair discrimination can be eliminated. It deals with guidelines for South Africa as a nation to rectify the injustices created by the apartheid regime policies by implementing new effective treaties and frameworks to promote equality for both men and women (Hills, 2015). The framework ensures that practical steps to achieve gender equality are monitored and become the center of all structures, institutions, and government programs within South Africa.

2.4 Causes of gender inequality in the workplace

Women face inequity at work, according to (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015), because different types of gender-based violence are perpetrated against women. Such as sexual harassment, pay disparities between men and women, and vacancy disparities, to name a few. According to Yaish and Stier (2009), a comparison of data from different countries indicates that women were discriminated against in the past. They were also underemployed and did not have the same opportunities as men. In comparison to today's data, earlier data shows very few women employed. Given the wide spread of discrimination and gender gap in the workplace, many scholars have decided to identify the root causes of gender inequality. For instance, Zhu (2021) investigated the causes and solutions of gender inequality in the workplace and found that the main causes of this phenomenon include sexism, the influence of patriarchy and traditional culture, and the lack of education. Another study suggests that the causes of gender inequality stem from HR-related decision-making and HR practices, including leadership, structure, strategy, culture, and organisational climate (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Some of the causes of gender inequality are discussed as follows.

2.4.1 Organisational structure

Organisational structure is the level of hierarchy and chain of command that provide explains organisational functions or tasks (Wang & Zhou, 2019). According to Porter and Lawler

(1965), organisational structure is the enduring characteristic that reflects the distribution of various departments, positions, and relationships in an organisation. For Mintzberg (1980), organisational structure is the division of labour of an organisational mission into many distinct tasks and then coordinating all these tasks to accomplish the organization's mission in a unified way. Stamarski and Son Hing (2015) advocated leaders communicate what the organisation's priorities are to all employees. Therefore, it can be suggested that leaders are important as they affect the other organisational structures, processes, and practices. Underrepresentation of women in leadership is more likely to occur because most organisational structures favour men at the expense of women (Ostroff et al., 2012). According to Gelfand, Raver, Nishii and Schneider (2013), organisational structure and processes can contribute to personal discrimination in HR practices. In their model, Gelfand et al. (2013) demonstrated that HR practices and organisational structure give room for gender inequalities in organisational structures.

Babic and Hansez (2021) claim that although governments and organisations have introduced several laws and interventions to promote equal opportunities for men and women, women remain the minority in decision-making positions. According to Babic and Hansez (2021), one of the barriers to discrimination against women is the nature of the organisational structure. Babic and Hansez (2021) postulate that the structure of most organisations prohibits women from holding some top management positions. Babic and Hansez (2021) add that the glass ceiling affects most women from rising to higher level positions in an organisation. Another study reveals that the organisational environment, including the structure is based on traditional gender roles which prevents women from assuming leadership positions (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023).

2.4.2 Organisational strategy

Strategy is the method or procedure where an organisation attempts to meet its objectives (Grant, 2010). The strategy has been found to contribute to inequality in an organisation when it serves the interest of only a few people (Hunter et al., 2001). In their study, Gelfand et al. (2013) state that HR strategy and practices are capable of contributing to personal discrimination, hence affecting the fight against gender equality. A study by Gartzia (2021) suggests that gender equality is constrained by organisational strategies shaped by the gender gaps and stereotypes. On the contrary, Nhlapo and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2016) observe that human resource strategy in most organisations, including the public sector, eliminates gender gaps in employment opportunities. According to Nhlapo and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2016), an

organisational strategy that supports gender equality requires that both male and female workers are not unfairly discriminated against in human resource practices such as recruitment and selection, promotion and career development.

2.4.3 Organisational culture

Cultural climate or organisational culture is the most debated concept in business and psychology. Organisational culture refers to a dynamic system of implicit and explicit rules, norms and values established by groups or organisations to ensure survival (Schein, 1990). A study by Bajdo and Dickson (2001) reveals that organisational culture practices such as low power distance, gender egalitarianism, high humane orientation and performance orientation positively correlated with gender equality. Organisational culture represents the collectively held beliefs, norms, and values organizational members hold (Schein, 2010). A study by Gelfand et al. (2013) reveals that organisational culture CAN contribute to discrimination, leading to gender inequality.

Stamarski and Son Hing (2015) point out that there is institutional gender bias within organisational culture, resulting in gender inequality. It has been argued that culture originates from the founder's values of the organisation and assumptions about the appropriate way of doing things, which are learned from dealing with challenges over time (Ostroff et al., 2012). The founders and leaders are the most influential in forming, keeping, and altering the organisational culture over time (Hartnell & Walumbwa, 2011). Organisational culture can breed gender inequalities if it constrains people's ideas of what is possible (Swidler, 1986). Thus, when people encounter problem in the organisation, the organisational culture provides only a certain realm of behavioural responses.

It has been suggested that, for instance, in organisational cultures marked by greater gender inequality, women are not afforded equal promotion opportunities in those organisations (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). When discriminated against, they may be less likely to imagine that they can appeal their outcomes. Furthermore, an organisational culture that emphasises concerns with meritocracy, can lead organisational members to oppose HR efforts to increase gender equality. Thus, when people believe that outcomes ought to go only to the most deserving, they quickly fall into the trap of believing that outcomes currently do go to those most deserving (Son Hing et al., 2011). Therefore, people assume that men deserve to be in top management positions and women deserve their subordinated status at work (Castilla & Benard, 2010).

Furthermore, employees who are concerned about merit-based outcomes are more likely to oppose affirmative action and diversity initiatives for women (Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley & Zanna, 1998; Hing, Sakr, Sorenson, Stamarski, Caniera & Colaco, 2023), especially when they know that discrimination occurs against women in the absence of such policies (Son Hing, Bobocel & Zanna, 2002). Thus, a particular organisational culture can influence the level of discrimination against women in HR and prevent adopting HR policies that would mitigate gender discrimination. In a more recent study, Zhu (2021) contends that culture values men productivity as compared to female productivity.

2.4.5 Sexism

Sexism is the primary reason behind the discrimination against women in the workplace. Cope (2016) argued that sexism explains the persistence of the ceiling among women and the limited promotion opportunities of women to top management positions in the workplace. Zhu (2021) points out that most female employees are sometimes subjected to more stringent requirements not related to the work, including age, height, and appearance. Regarding recruitment, most organisations fail to appoint married and infertility females because they believe that women cannot balance their family and workplace responsibilities (Zhu, 2021). This sexism contributes to women's low participation in the workplace. For instance, Khuzwayo (2016) discovers that in South Africa only 18% of the respondents were women. This implies that more men occupied senior and top management positions in the South African workplace than women.

2.4.6 Lack of education

Throughout the world, many women have been excluded from higher education. According to Zhu (2021), in this contemporary era, even women with higher education are still in lower positions in most organisations. It has been found that although higher education has been expanded in the 20th century, inequalities of access still prevail in most countries. Zhu (2021) argues that the inequality in education sector occurs as a result of selective education system. For instance, most students from previously disadvantaged socio-economic and cultural backgrounds are often denied admission into certain schools. Kapur (2019) postulates that females have been discriminated against in access to education as compared to their male counterparts. Ngwoke (2020) states that gender inequality in education prevents women from participating in competitive and lucrative jobs due to their poor educational qualifications needed for appointment in certain positions.

2.5 Factors that promote gender equality

Gender equality can be achieved through several means. Some of these factors that promote gender equality in the workplace are discussed as follows.

2.5.1 Access to education

Among the factors that promote gender equality, education plays a relevant role (England, Bearak, Budig & Hodges, 2016). Education is considered the solution for women in all positions in an organisation. According to Terjesen, Aguilera and Lorenz (2015), previous studies have highlighted the effects of education on gender wage gaps by exploring the gender differences in skills and college admission. Zhu (2021) argues that society can eliminate gender inequality and improve women's awareness of self-worth by adjusting to formal education. Anyalebechi (2016) postulates that gender equality can only be achieved if women and men are afforded the same right to education and do not succumb to humble positions. Hence, it is recommended that governments, higher education institutions and practitioners prepare non-discriminatory curricula and implement anti-discriminatory policies and gender-focused programmes to grant all men and women access to education.

Unterhalter, Longlands and Peppin Vaughan (2022) also proposed the need for governments and policy-makers to develop policies on practices for transformation changes that recognise women's rights and gender equality in education. Guerrero and Guerrero Puerta (2023) made similar suggestions that to reduce gender inequality in educational institutions, equitable opportunities should be offered for all students.

2.5.2 Compliance and enforcement of existing laws

The government can promote gender equality by ensuring compliance and enforcing the existing laws. In South Africa, different legal statutes have been introduced for promoting gender equality. To achieve gender equality, the government promoting imposed economic penalties on firms with a wage discrimination between women and men. These legal actions and laws forced many organisations to increase the representation of women across all occupational categories and levels in the organisation (Gartzia, 2021). According to Hausmann, Hidalgo, Bustos, Coscia and Simoes (2014), the passage of gender equality laws is slowly yet steadily increasing women's participation in the workplace. From the above, although government policies and laws have contributed to reducing gender inequality, they have not been successful without challenges such as compliance.

2.5.3 Stable and active organisational structure

It is recommended that companies create a stable and active organisational structure to develop gender-focused policies and practices consistent with structural principles. A study by Gartzia (2021) suggests that promoting gender equality requires creating a stable and active organisational structure. To promote gender equality, family-friendly policies and practices must be aligned with the organisational structure (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015).

2.5.4 Women empowerment

According to Bayeh (2016), women's role in different dimensions of sustainable development is not adequately reflected in society. Bayeh (2016) points out that the political system in Ethiopia is, by and large, reserved for men alone. Thus, women's rights are not properly protected to enable them to participate in the various issues within society. The author proposes that unless women are empowered, and gender equality is achieved, Ethiopia cannot achieve sustainable development. Contrary to the above findings, Lwamba, Shisler, Ridlehoover, Kupfer, Tshabalala, Nduku and Snilstveit (2022) observed that interventions supporting women's empowerment and gender equality produced positive effects. Lwamba et al. (2021) found that women empowerment leads to overall equality between men and women, enhancing a person's ability to make choices and live a meaningful life.

Kim, Fitzsimons and Kay (2018) suggest that recently, women empowerment programmes gained the attention of the cultural community as a solution to gender inequality. These days, most organisations must modify their recruitment and selection process to accommodate women. It is believed that women empowerment programmes improve the status of women by increasing their political participation in society. Anyalebechi (2016) argued that in Nigeria, more women had been appointed to leadership positions in government due to empowerment programmes. On the contrary, Rafat and Salama (2016) argued that compared to men, women are often promoted to less impactful and influential positions although their educational endeavours. South African women have historically been marginalised and disadvantaged on many fronts (Conyon & He, 2019). According to Zhuwao, Ngirande and Setati (2019), although, with time, women will be given equal employment opportunities, there still exist some barriers between employers' perceptions concerning gender diversity still exist some barriers between employers' perceptions concerning gender diversity.

2.5.4 Leadership commitment and accountability

Mousa, Skouteris, Boyle, Currie, Riach and Teede (2022) found that leadership commitment and accountability are central to successfully implementing organisational strategies that

elevate women to strategic leadership positions. Mousa et al. (2022) point out that building an inclusive culture begins with leadership commitment, recognising and eliminating career barriers that limit the potential and advancement of women in the workplace. According to them, inclusive leadership seems very critical toward facilitating organisational change.

Ibrahim, Stadler, Archuleta and Cofrancesco (2018) also advocate that successful and sustainable gender-focused interventions need leadership commitment, such as financial resources, organisational support, and transparency in the recruitment and selection process, to mention a few.

Besides leadership commitment and support, accountability is important in promoting inclusive behaviours. Columbus, Lu, Hill, Fields, Davids and Melnitchouk (2020) proposed that those in leadership positions with power should develop performance metrics and integrate them into the existing organisational structures. It is suggested that senior managers take more active steps to hold their members accountable for inclusivity across different units in the organisation.

2.5.5 Cultural climate and organisational readiness

Research (Carr, Gunn, Raj, Kaplan & Freund, 2017; Laver, Prichard, Cations, Osenk, Govin & Coveney, 2018) suggests that implementing gender equity policies and practices can help eradicate gender inequality in the workplace. According to Mousa et al. (2022), reducing the career barriers confronting women necessitates gender dynamics inside the organisation. Mousa et al. (2022) contend that the organisational dynamics are rooted in the corporate culture that determines how women are positioned along the organisational hierarchies when implementing policies for gender equity in leadership. Mousa et al. (2022) point out that although interventions were introduced to alter cultural dynamics, women still experience discriminatory practices in the workplace. Given the above, Mousa et al. (2022) suggest that the traditional or normative heroic leadership approach could be more viable in maintaining the status quo of men and women.

2.6 Impact of reducing gender disparity in the workplace

Organisations can derive several benefits from gender parity. Some of these benefits of gender equality in the workplace are discussed as follows.

2.6.1 Employee retention

According to Nasir, Ashraf and Riaz (2019), talent retention is becoming the most challenging task for most organisation. Therefore, to keep a business running, it is imperative to retain

highly talented employees. It is generally believed that firms that are not gender equal are more likely to lose the best talent to other competitors, irrespective of their brand or image worldwide. The above assertion is aligned with the assumption of the demography theory, which states that high gender diversity contribute to high employee turnover (Ali, Metz & Kulik, 2015). According to them, organisations can reduce employee turnover by increasing gender diversity and implementing gender-friendly policies and practices. According to World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report (2022), women are likely to leave the organisation if they do not see themselves in leadership positions. Therefore, offering women flexible jobs and the opportunity for managerial positions in an organisation will help the organisation retain them in the long run.

2.6.2 Increase in organisational productivity

According to Wu and Cheng (2016), a more equally distributed work between men and women in the workplace will increase productivity, depending on the firm's size and the calibre of employees. In their study, Hsu and Lawler (2019) discovered that gender diversity negatively impacted employees' productivity. Thus, when there is gender balance, employees are more motivated to increase their output, leading to an increase in the firm's productivity.

2.6.3 Increase in employee performance

In their study, Setati, Zhuwao, Ngirande and Ndlovu (2019) found that gender diversity and gender balance have positive effects on employee performance due to teamwork spirit and social cohesion. Dilrukshi and Ranasinghe (2021) also discovered a negative effect of gender inequality on employee performance due to occupational stress. Other findings revealed that organisational politics and employees' perception of fairness negatively impacted employee performance (Babarinde, Ojo, Omoyele & Aigbedion, 2022). In a similar study, Hsu and Lawler (2019) point out that high-risk task complexity situations promote gender diversity, increasing organisational performance. By contrast, low task complexity job levels have no significant effect gender diversity and work performance. It has also been established that gender diversity among women in middle management positions inspired them to create an equality management policies (Ali & Konrad, 2017), thereby increasing the firm's performance.

By contrast, the literature review shows scarce research findings that reflect the relationship gender diversity and firm performance (Hoobler, Masterson, Nkomo & Michel, 2018; Post & Byron, 2015; Velte, 2017). Contrary to the above assertion, Ferrary and Déo (2023) pointed

out that some research findings have shown that gender balance or equality can enhance team performance. According to Ferrary and Déo (2023), firms with balanced diversity, especially at the middle management and staff levels, perform better than those with imbalanced diversity. The findings by Ferrary and Déo (2023) are consistent with Van Knippenberg, De Dreu and Homan (2004), who discovered that gender balance in workplace groups influences the group processes, increasing the group and organisational performance. From the Human capital theory point of view, a firm that practices discrimination may be punished by the market forces by starving them of the talented workforce, ultimately resulting in poor performance (Becker, 1957).

2.6.4 Increase competitive advantage

According to Ferrary and Déo (2022), gender diversity or equality increase a firm's competitiveness by fostering innovation and creativity. Ultimately, gender equality creates value for firms by integrating a diverse workforce whose skills and expertise are rare, scarce, and imitable. A study revealed that gender diversity positively impacted team effectiveness, leading to a sustainable competitive advantage (Ferrary & Déo, 2022).

2.6.5 Job security

Globally, the economic pressure on organisations forced them to focus their attention and policies on employee job security in a way that improves organisational performance (Lucky, Minai & Rahman, 2013). According to Aishwarya (2021), job security represents a state of having a secured job. By contrast, Menéndez-Espina, Llosa, Agulló-Tomás, Rodríguez-Suárez, Sáiz-Villar, Lasheras-Díez and Boada-Grau (2020) argued that job insecurity is the fear of losing one's job. In their study, Gaunt and Benjamin (2007) discovered that traditional men experience greater job insecurity compared to women. Menéndez-Espina et al. (2020) also confirms that compared to men, women experienced more insecurity under precarious working conditions.

Zainol, Samsuri, Rahimah, Arifin, Hussin and Mohamad (2019) recommended that implementing policies that empower women, including managing gender balance, family-friendly workplace practices and job security, will help eliminate gender imbalance.

2.7 Theoretical framework

From the theoretical standpoint, this study recognises that adopting the Social Role Theory will enhance the existing literature debate regarding women's rights and gender balance in the workplace and society. According to Eagly and Wood (2012), the Social Role Theory provides

a better understanding of the stability and changes in gender roles and relationships with behavioural sex differences. Eagly and Wood (2012) argued that women's roles have changed over the years as they occupy strategic positions in organisations. The assumptions of the Social Role Theory support gender equality where both men and women share the same resources and participate in community affairs. Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, and Corrigan (2000) point out that women are now becoming more like men, having freedom, occupying leadership positions, and obtaining power in both the workplace and society. Alexander and Welzel (2007) also acknowledge that the right and freedom of women to acquire power places greater equality with their counterparts in skill development and standard of living.

Biddle (1979) advocates that the Social Role Theory explains the social responsibilities and social relations of men and women, where certain behaviours are linked with specific social positions. Trauth (2013) concurs that researchers often use this theory to differentiate between men and women. Broderick (1998) shares a similar opinion that the Social Role Theory is useful for explaining continuous to achieve the outcomes, including performance. The theory best fits this study because it allows one to analyse how behaviours and choices of gender balance policies and family-friendly workplace practices in organisations. Aminah (2007) states that the Social Role Theory increases women's psychological well-being, thereby promoting gender equality.

2.8 Chapter summary

The chapter contains existing research findings on gender equality and inequality in organisations. The literature review suggests that gender inequality still prevails in the South African workplace after twenty-nine years of democracy. The review reveals sexism, organisational culture, lack of education, to mention a few, as the barriers to gender equality in most organisations. It has been established that reducing gender disparity leads to improved employee performance, organisational productivity, employee retention and competitive advantage.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discussed the research design, methods and approaches that best address the research questions. In this chapter, the research paradigm, design and strategy were discussed. Also, the chapter described research location, target population, sampling procedures and sample size, data collection, reliability and validity and data analysis. Additionally, it described ethical considerations that guide the research and research limitations.

3.2 Research paradigm

Researchers (Haigh, Kemp, Bazeley & Haigh, 2019; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016) state that research paradigm represents the belief and the framework with assumptions regarding ontology (an individual's view social reality and what is known about that reality), epistemology (a person's worldview of the nature of knowledge), research methodology (approach to constructing knowledge) and axiology (beliefs about the role of values and morals in research). For Babbie (2014, p.31), paradigm provides "logical frameworks within which theories are created". Khatri (2020) sees research paradigm as the theoretical or philosophical ground for the research work. According to Kankam (2019), four research paradigms are applied: pragmatism, interpretivism, positivism, and post-positivism. However, this study was firmly rooted in the positivist approach.

Positivism concerns objectivity, which is associated with quantitative research (Scotland, 2012:10). The primary object of positivism is to discover absolute knowledge about objective reality. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019, p.135), positivism is a philosophical stance where the investigator works "an observable social reality to produce law-like generalisations". Positivism relies on the "hypothetico-deductive approach to test the link between the research variables (Likewise, Park, Konge & Artino, 2020:253). Park et al. (2020:253) argued that positivism is highly objective in investigating certain events or situations. This study adopted positivist philosophy because it relies on the deductive method to interpret the research findings, as in this study. Also, positivism was adopted because its philosophies and assumptions are aligned with quantitative research, as in this case.

3.3 Research design

According to Asenahabi (2019), research design reflects the researcher's ideas. It serves as the blueprint for the entire research in choosing the methods and how the data should be analysed. The descriptive research design was conducted to provide a better understanding of the study

under investigation. Descriptive research provides a better and more adequate description of an event (Shekhar Singh, 2014). This type of research is conducted when the primary goal is to accurately and adequately describe a phenomenon. Conversely, Freitas, Bufrem and Breda (2016) advocate that descriptive research goes beyond a mere description of the event to provide an in-depth explanation of a specific event. Descriptive study, according to Rahi (2017), aims to describe the current state of the research phenomenon. Atmowardoyo (2018) also confirms that descriptive research is used when the goal is to provide an accurate picture of an event through a detailed description. The descriptive research design was used to describe how gender equality could be promoted in the Department of Public Works.

3.4 Research method

The quantitative research method was used to collect statistical about the subject matter under investigation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). It is argued that quantitative method is useful in building upon existing theories (Kotrlík, Williams & Jabor, 2011). The quantitative research method is associated with the assumptions of positivist paradigm, which states that investigator is independent of what has been investigated. Many researchers use this approach to measure reality objectively. The quantitative research methods was used because it offers a better understanding the data collected. Also, the quantitative research method was used because the data collected can easily be interpreted.

3.4 Research location

The study was conducted at the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works. The Department is situated on 191 Prince Alfred Street, Pietermaritzburg. The Department's vision is to promote inclusive economy by providing sustainable infrastructure development and property management. The Department was selected for this study because it is the first time this study is conducted. Another reason for choosing the Department was as a result of its leadership challenges of accelerating the development of women in strategic positions.

3.5 Target population

Rahi (2017) and Sekaran and Bougie (2019) defined population as the specified group of respondents that the investigators intend to draw inferences from. The target population for this study included the employees working in the Department of Public Works. The target population is approximately 200, including Directors, Managers, and Employees. However, only women will participate in the study.

3.5 Sampling strategy

Sampling involves selecting a unit of the target population (Rahi, 2017). Due to the nature of the investigation, probability sampling was the most suitable method. Probability sampling gives all the respondents an equal chance to be involved in the study (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Rahi, 2017). In probability sampling, a total sample has an equal chance of being chosen (Iliyasu & Etikan, 2021). Simple random sampling was utilised to give the respondents the same probability of participating in the study. Thomas and Suresh (2011) argued that simple random sampling helps to reduce sample bias. Simple random sampling was used because it offers high-level reliability regarding the generalisation of the research findings (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

3.6 Sample size

A sample constitutes a unit of analysis (Suresh, et al., 2011). Thus, it represents the portion of the target population that the researcher intends to draw inferences from. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) suggest that it is impossible to collect data samples from the total population. Therefore, researchers have suggested that the sample frame is the appropriate source for selecting the sample size. Sample frame is a list in the target population that is selected for an analysis. In this study, the sample frame included all employees at leadership positions in the Department of Public Works. The study applied the 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval. The formula below was employed to determine the sample size.

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2}}{1 + \left(\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2 N}\right)}$$

Where:

N = population size

e = Margin of error

z = z-score

P = population.

Therefore, by applying the formula above, the appropriate sample size for this study was 132.

3.7 Data collection instrument

Questionnaire was used to collect the data. It contains a list of items used to elicit certain responses or information from respondents (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In this study, a self-administered questionnaire was used because it promotes anonymity, which can lead to more truthful or valid responses. Another advantage of a self-administered questionnaire is that it ensures a high response rate. The questionnaire was structured into four sections, namely:

- **Section A-** Bio-data of the respondents;
- Section B- Factors that reduce gender inequality;
- Section C- The impact of reducing gender disparity;
- Section D- The advantages of reducing gender inequity for future generations

The measurement scale adopted this study was the Likert scale. There are different types of Likert scale but the 5-point Likert scale was used, ranging from strongly disagreed (5) to strongly agreed (1).

3.8 Reliability and validity of the questionnaire

Reliability represents the extent to which the results can be reproduced when the research is repeated under the same conditions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). There different tools for measuring reliability of the data but the Cronbach's alpha was used. The Cronbach's alpha scores range between 0 and 1, with perfect reliability equaling 1, and no reliability equaling 0. It is recommended that the Cronbach's alpha scores of 0.70 and above is considered as reliable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). On the contrary, Griethuijsen, Eijck, Haste, Brok, Skinner and Mansour (2014) noted that the coefficient of 0.60 and beyond is considered acceptable. This study adopted the recommendation by Griethuijsen et al. (2014). Table 3.1 shows the reliability of the questionnaire before the final data collection.

Table 3.1 Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Variables	Total Items	Number of Items Removes	Cronbach's alpha
Gender equality	9	1	0.800
Women empowerment	8	0	0.724
Organisational culture	7	0	0.778
Leadership commitment	6	0	0.871
Organisational structure	3	3	0.952
Employee retention	7	0	0.819
Employee performance	5	0	0.833
Job security	6	2	0.744

The variables measured in the study had reliability that exceeded the recommended score ($r = 0.70$). Therefore, there was no reliability issue in this study. Organisational structure had the most reliability scores ($r = 0.952$), closely followed by leadership commitment ($r = 0.871$), employee performance ($r = 0.833$), employee retention ($r = 0.819$), gender equality ($r = 0.800$), organisational culture ($r = 0.778$), job insecurity ($r = 0.774$) and women empowerment ($r = 0.724$).

On the contrary, validity assesses what the measuring instrument is intended to measure (Russell, Odell & Coulson, 2011). The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using the Oblimin rotation and Component Matrix was performed to determine the validity of the questionnaire. Watkins (2018) states that EFA is used to identify the latent variables that parsimoniously show the covariation of a set of measured variables. Dabbagh, Seens, Fraser and MacDermid (2023) claim that EFA assesses the relationship between items on the measuring instrument and the factors measured by the measuring instrument. According to Knekta, Runyon and Eddy (2019), EFA allows the investigator to examine or confirm the relationship between the research items. It is recommended only items with loadings > 0.30 should be retained. On the contrary, Burton and Mazerolle (2011) state that the minimum loading should be 0.50 or higher to be considered good. However, this study considered items with loadings > 0.30 .

Furthermore, the sampling adequacy was measured using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity. KMO measures the suitability of the data for the factor analysis (Dabbagh et al., 2023). Its scores range between 0 and 1, where: 0.00 to 0.49 unacceptable;

0.50 to 0.59 miserable; 0.60 to 0.69 mediocre; 0.70 to 0.79 middling; 0.80 to 0.89 meritorious; and 0.90 to 1.00 marvelous. Bartlett’s test of Sphericity provides a chi-square outcome that must be statistically significant. Table 3.1 shows the EFA.

Table 3.1: Validity – exploratory factor analysis

Items	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
GE1	.990							
GE2	.711							
GE3	.998							
GE4	.932							
GE5	-.050							
GE6	.150							
GE7	.932							
WE1		.855						
WE2		.957						
WE3		1.000						
WE4		.957						
WE5		.963						
WE6		-.125						
WE7		-.125						
WE8		-.992						
OC1			.991					
OC2			.876					
OC4			.991					
OC5			.530					
OC6			.991					
OC7			.558					
LC1				.849				

LC2				.849				
LC3				.331				
LC4				.985				
LC5				.999				
LC6				.829				
OS1					1.000			
OS2					.802			
OS6					.598			
ER1						.745		
ER2						.325		
ER3						.994		
ER4						.994		
ER5						.994		
ER6						.243		
ER7						.813		
EP1							.622	
EP2							.805	
EP3							.609	
JS1								.957
JS2								.693
JS3								.941
JS4								.553
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.								
a. 8 components extracted.								

The items highlighted in different colours were removed from the questionnaire because they did not meet the recommended value (0.30).

3.9 Data analysis

Data analysis becomes an important tool for decision-making in this modern era. According to Mohammadiyeh and Purhasani (2020), data analysis offers the framework for summarising and interpreting data. Although different statistical tools have emerged for analysing quantitative data, SPSS 29.0, was used. Ong and Puteh (2017) argued that most quantitative researchers use SPSS because it is user-friendly. Also, Field (2017) confirms that SPSS is more usable than other software. The SPSS was used in this study because of its graphical user interface. Thus, SPSS was used to generate graphs and diagrams for easy analysis.

3.10 Ethical considerations

This study obtained the full approval from the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). The ethical considerations contained in this study are:

- **Anonymity:** The anonymity of the data was protected by not including the respondents personal information such as ID, address, contacts and names in the dissertation.
- **Harm:** There was no risk connected with the study.
- **Privacy and confidentiality:** The data collected were stored on the researcher's laptop. Only the supervisor was allowed access to the data. Also, the respondents were assured that the data collected were purely for academic purposes.
- **Informed consent:** Prior approval was obtained from the Department of Public Works. An informed consent form was made available to all the respondents. The informed consent contained important information about the research project, including the research method and benefits of participation in the study. The informed consent form contained a clause that assured the respondents about the purpose of the study.
- **Voluntary participation:** No incentives were offered to the respondents to induce them. Thus, the participation was voluntary.
- **Plagiarism:** The secondary data and reading material cited in this study were properly acknowledged and referenced.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the discussion of the research methods used to answer the research questions. The study adopted positivist philosophy because it relies on the deductive method to interpret the research findings. Also, the descriptive research used to provide an accurate

picture of the subject matter detailed description. The quantitative research methods was used to provide a better understanding the data collected. The target population for this study included the employees working in the Department of Public Works. Simple random sampling was utilised to select 132 respondents for the study. A pilot study was conducted to measure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The SPSS was used to analyse the data. The ethical considerations addressed in this study included anonymity, harm, privacy and confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation and plagiarism.

The following chapter presents the research findings.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter involves data analysis and the discussion of the research findings. An online survey was administered to the respondents at the Department of Public Works. The questionnaire was captured on Google Form and the link was sent to 132 respondents in the organisation. Although all the respondents have completed the online survey, only 124 of them were fully completed. The remaining 8 surveys/questionnaires were not adequately completed. Hence, these uncompleted questionnaires were removed. The analysis was based on only the valid questionnaires, 124. SPSS was used to analyse the data. The research objectives are to: to identify the factors that reduce gender inequality, to evaluate the impact of reducing gender disparity, and to recognise the advantages of reducing gender inequity for future generations.

The active and none-active response rates are presented in the section below.

4.2 Active and none-active response rates

Table 4.1 shows the results of the active and none-active response rates.

Table 4.1 Active and none-active response rates

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Response rate	124	93.9
None-response/invalid rate	8	6.1
Total	132	100

From Table 4.1, the number of active respondents was 124, which constituted 93.9%, while the non-respondents or invalid responses were 8, which accounted for 6.1%.

4.3 Respondents bio-data

Table 4.2 showed the results of the respondents' bio-data.

Table 4.2 Respondents bio-data

Items	Bio-data	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	71	57.3
	Female	53	42.7
Age	26-30 years	6	4.8
	31-35 years	13	10.5
	36-40 years	17	13.7
	41-45 years	44	35.5
	46-50 years	29	23.4
	Above 50 years	15	12.1
Race	African	105	84.7
	Indian	12	9.7
	Coloured	1	.8
	White	6	4.8
Highest qualification	Diploma	26	21.0
	Postgraduate Diploma	21	16.9
	Bachelor's Degree	46	37.1
	Honours/BTech	22	17.7
	Masters	8	6.5
	Doctorate	1	.8
Position occupied	Lower management	38	30.6
	Middle management	59	47.6
	Senior management	24	19.4
	Top management	2	1.6
	Other (Please specify)	1	0.8
Work experience	1-5 years	8	6.5
	5-10 years	35	28.2
	11-15 years	37	29.8
	More than 15 years	44	35.5

The results indicated that while males constituted 57.3% of the respondents, females accounted for 42.7%. Hence, males represented most of the respondents. The findings could imply a gender imbalance in the organisation. In other words, it could be argued that more males were available during the data collection process than females. Despite the above assumptions, these research findings could be useful to policymakers and the Department in drafting recruitment and selection policy. After twenty-nine years of democracy, gender inequality still prevails in the South African workplace (Daniela Casale, 2021; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Bangani, 2020). Statistics South Africa (2018) reports that women constitute only 43.8% of the labour force.

Furthermore, empirical research (Daniela Casale, 2021; Haylock-Loor & Guevara, 2023) reveals that gender inequality is on the rise, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, 4.8% of the respondents were between the ages of 26-30, 10.5% were between 31-35, 13.7% were between 36-40, 35.5% were between 41-45, 23.4% were between 46-50 and 12.1% were above 50 years. From the findings, the majority of the respondents were between 36-45 years. This implies that the respondents in the Department fall within the working-age population or adult population. Therefore, the results could be used by policymakers, government and the Department in making policy decisions regarding recruitment and selection as well as promotion into leadership positions. According to Zhu (2021), most workers, especially women, are often discriminated against based on age, physical appearance, etc.

Also, the result indicated that Africans constituted 84.7% of the respondents, Indians accounted for 9.7%, Coloureds represented 0.8% and Whites constituted 4.8%. It is clear that Africans constituted the greatest proportion of the employees in the Department of Public Works. These findings suggest that After twenty-nine of democracy, some forms of discrimination and imbalances still exist in the workplace. Thus, there is a lack of diversity and equal representation of employees from different racial groups in South African public sector organisations. The results could shape policy-making, formulation and implementation toward the representation of racial groupings in organisations.

In addition, the results demonstrated that 21% have a Diploma, 16.9% have a Postgraduate Diploma, 37.1% have a Bachelor's Degree, 17.7% have Honours/BTech, 6.5% have a Masters and 0.8% have Doctorate. The level of education in the Department of Public Works was very low since only a few have Masters and Doctorate. Therefore, the low level of education in the Department could impact performance negatively. The results collaborated with the existing studies. Zhu (2021) states that many people perceive that their inability to participate in further education and technological training impacted the efforts towards achieving gender balance in the organisation.

About 30.6% occupied lower management positions, 47.6% were in middle management positions, 19.4% occupied senior management positions, 1.6% occupied top management positions and 0.8% occupied other positions. Given the findings, it is clear that only a few of the respondents were in senior and top management positions as compared to those in lower and middle management. Hence, there is a lack of equality in the Department regarding the

positions occupied by the employees. The findings have some managerial implications for management to take adequate measures to ensure equality in the organisation.

Besides, 6.5% had 1-5 years, 28.2% had 6-10 years, 29.8% had 11-15 years and 35.5% had more than 15 years of work experience. Based on the results, it is evident that most respondents had more work experience in the Department. It could imply that the participants had enough knowledge and understanding of how things are done in the Department.

The reliability and validity scores are presented below.

4.4 Measuring validity of the questionnaire

In most quantitative research, the validity is determined when a self-constructed instrument is used. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the EFA using a Rotated Component Matrix was used to validate the research instrument. Table 4.3 depicts the results.

Table 4.3 Measuring validity of the questionnaire- Component Matrix

Items	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
GE5	.537							
GE2	.507							
GE4	.450							
GE3	.335							
GE1	.334							
WE3		.801						
WE4		.734						
WE2		.727						
WE5		.701						
WE1		.642						
OC2			.855					
OC4			.806					
OC3			.719					
OC6			.729					
OC5			.667					

OC1			.606					
LC5				.900				
LC2				.864				
LC3				.859				
LC4				.848				
LC6				.819				
LC1				.763				
OS2					.830			
OS3					.731			
OS1					.482			
ER6						.857		
ER4						.659		
ER3						.614		
ER5						.555		
ER1						.493		
EP2							.805	
EP1							.622	
EP3							.609	
JS1								.753
JS4								.675
JS3								.647
JS2								.530
Eigenvalue	16.90	2.28	2.08	1.37	1.32	1.00	0.86	0.83
% of Variance	47.75	8.0	5.89	3.88	3.73	2.82	2.50	2.34

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 8 components extracted.

The results suggested the items retained for the data analysis were greater than 0.30. The results showed that 8 factors could be extracted for the analysis. It has been found that 5 items loaded well at Factor 1 and accounted for 47.75% of the variance. These 5 items belong to Gender Equality (GE). Therefore, Factor 1 is called Gender Equality. Also, 5 items loaded perfectly at Factor 2 and accounted for 8% of the variance. The 5 items belonged to Women Empowerment

(WE). Hence, Factor 2 may be named as Women Empowerment. Furthermore, 6 items loaded well at Factor 3, accounting for 2.08% of the variance. The 6 items were linked to Organisational Culture. Hence, Factor 3 may be named as such. Besides, at Factor 4, 6 items loaded perfectly, accounting for 1.37% of the variance. These 6 items belong to Leadership Commitment (LC). Given this, Factor 4 may be called Leadership Commitment. Also, at Factor 5, 3 items loaded well, accounting for 1.32% of the variance. The 3 items belong to Organisational Structure. Hence, Factor 5 may be called Organisational Structure. At Factor 6, 5 items loaded perfectly and accounted for 1% of the variance. The 5 items belong to Employee Retention (ER). Therefore, Factor 6 may be termed Employee Retention. The results further indicated that 3 items loaded well at Factor 7, accounting for 0.86% of the variance. The 3 items belonged to Employee Performance (EP). Therefore, Factor 7 may be named Employee Performance. Lastly, at Factor 8, 4 items loaded perfectly, accounting for 0.83% of the variance. Hence, Factor 8 may be named Job Security.

The 8 Factors explained 76.81% of the variance of the questionnaire. Statistically, this study had no validity issue, as most of the loadings exceeded the threshold (0.30).

4.5 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett’s test of sphericity

Table 4.4 shows the results of the sample adequacy.

Table 4.4 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett’s test of sphericity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.921
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4140.703
	Df	703
	Sig.	<.001

The results suggested that the measure of sample adequacy (MSA) was 0.921 (marvelous), which is significant at 1%. Statistically, the sample size was adequate for the study. Therefore, there was no validity issue in this study.

4.6 Measuring the reliability of the questionnaire

Table 4.5 contains the reliability scores for each variable.

Table 4.5 Reliability test - Cronbach's coefficient alpha

Constructs	Number of Items	Number of Items Deleted	Cronbach's alpha (<i>a</i>)
Gender equality	5	-	0.663
Women empowerment	5	-	0.930
Organisational culture	6	-	0.873
Leadership commitment	6	-	0.948
Organisational structure	3	-	0.647
Employee retention	6	1	0.806
Employee performance	3	-	0.696
Job security	4	-	0.930

From Table 4.5, the results showed reliable scores for the various constructs measured. The lowest Cronbach's alpha score was 0.66 (for gender equality), while the highest was 0.95 (for leadership commitment). The items that measure gender equality, women empowerment, organisational culture, leadership commitment, organisational structure, employee retention, employee performance and job security have met the threshold (0.60). Therefore, there was no reliability issue in this study.

The following section describes the results using frequency analysis.

4.7 Frequency analysis

Frequency distribution is one of the commonest statistical tools for organising data. It is an organised tabulation or graphical representation of the items in a particular category on the measurement scale. The results are presented below.

4.7.1 Gender equality

Table 4.6 shows the results regarding gender equality.

Table 4.6 Gender equality

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
The Department of Public Works has a fair remuneration policy for men and women	3(2.4%)	-	3(2.4%)	107(86.3%)	11(8.9%)	3.99
The Department has implemented strategies to close any gender pay gap	8(6.5%)	9(7.3%)	15(12.1%)	80(70.2%)	5(4.0%)	3.58
I am satisfied that men and women are promoted to leadership positions in the Department	21(16.9%)	34(27.4%)	19(15.3%)	43(34.7%)	7(5.6%)	2.85
I am satisfied that the Department offers flexible working hours	6(4.8%)	13(10.5%)	13(10.5%)	90(72.6%)	2(1.6%)	3.56
I am satisfied that unconscious biases are prevented and a culture of fairness is promoted to reduce gender equality in the Department	3(2.4%)	19(15.3%)	6(4.8%)	91(73.4%)	5(4.0%)	3.61

Approximately 2.4% strongly disagreed that the Department had a fair remuneration policy for men and women, another 2.4% neither agreed nor disagreed that the Department had a fair remuneration policy for men and women, 86.3% agreed that the Department had a fair remuneration policy for men and women and 8.9% strongly agreed the Department had a fair remuneration policy for men and women. Also, 5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the Department had implemented strategies to close any gender pay gap, 7.3% disagreed that the Department had implemented strategies to close any gender pay gap, 12.1% neither agreed nor disagreed that the Department had implemented strategies to close any gender pay gap, 70.2% agreed that the Department had implemented strategies to close any gender pay gap and 4% strongly agreed that the Department had implemented strategies to close any gender pay gap.

In addition, 16.9% strongly disagreed that they were satisfied that men and women were promoted to leadership positions in the Department, 27.4% disagreed that they were satisfied

that men and women were promoted to leadership positions in the Department, 15.3% neither agreed nor disagreed, 34.7% agreed that they were satisfied that men and women were promoted to leadership positions in the Department and 5.6% agreed that they were satisfied that men and women were promoted to leadership positions in the Department.

About 4.8% strongly disagreed that they were satisfied that the Department offered flexible working hours, 10.5% disagreed that they were satisfied that the Department offered flexible working hours, another 10.5% said they neither agreed nor disagreed that the Department offered flexible working hours, 72.6% agreed that the Department offered flexible working hours, while 1.6% strongly agreed that the Department offered flexible working hours.

Lastly, 2.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed that unconscious biases were prevented and a culture of fairness was promoted to reduce gender equality in the Department, 15.3% disagreed that unconscious biases were prevented and a culture of fairness was promoted to reduce gender equality in the Department, 4.8% indicated that unconscious biases were prevented and a culture of fairness was promoted to reduce gender equality in the Department, 73.4% agreed that unconscious biases were prevented and a culture of fairness was promoted to reduce gender equality in the Department and 4% strongly agreed that unconscious biases were prevented and a culture of fairness was promoted to reduce gender equality in the Department.

The descriptive statistics showed that results of the individual items exceeded the minimum threshold. (3.00). This implies the individual items that measured gender equality were statistically significant and could be adopted by researchers in similar studies.

The next section describes the results of women empowerment.

4.7.2 Women empowerment

The results concerning women empowerment are shown in Table 4.7

Table 4.7 Women empowerment

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
There is a special person around me	4(3.2%)	47(37.9%)	19(15.3%)	52(41.9%)	2(1.6%)	3.01
I can share joys and sorrows with other	3(2.4%)	49(39.5%)	27(21.8%)	42(33.9%)	3(2.4%)	2.94
I received emotional support from co-workers and managers	7(5.6%)	37(29.8%)	25(20.2%)	54(43.5%)	1(0.8%)	3.04
There is a special person who always comforts me	5(4.0%)	47(37.9%)	29(23.4%)	41(33.1%)	2(1.6%)	2.90
I can share my problems with others	10(8.1%)	51(41.1%)	25(20.2%)	38(30.6%)	-	2.73

About 3.2% strongly disagreed, 37.9% disagreed, 15.3%, 41.9% agreed, and 1.6% strongly agreed that a special person was around who always provided them the needed support. Additionally, 2.4% strongly disagreed, 39.5% s, 21.8% neither agreed nor disagreed, 33.9% and sorrows and 2.4% strongly disagreed that they shared their joys and sorrows with others. Also, 5.6% strongly disagreed, 29.8% disagreed, 20.2% neither agreed nor disagreed, 43.5% agreed and 0.8% strongly agreed that they got the emotional support needed. In addition, 4% strongly disagreed, 37.9% disagreed, 23.4%, 33.1% agreed and 1.6% strongly disagreed that their co-workers always comforted them. Finally, 8.1% strongly disagreed, 41.1% disagreed, 20% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 30.6% agreed they talked to friends and managers when faced with problems. Moreover, the mean scores for items 1 and 3 were significant, while items 2, 4 and 5 were insignificant.

The following section describes the results that relate to organisational culture.

4.7.3 Organisational culture

The results of the influence of organisational culture in reducing gender inequality in the Department are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Organisational culture

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
The Department's policy on organisational culture promotes equality and diversity	1(0.8%)	15(12.1%)	7(5.6%)	96(77.4%)	5(4.0%)	3.72
The organisational culture makes employees comfortable in dealing with an unfamiliar situation	8(6.5%)	31(25.0%)	22(17.7%)	61(49.2%)	2(1.6%)	3.15
Cooperation and trust between departments and employees in the municipality are normal	7(5.6%)	33(26.6%)	24(19.4%)	60(48.4%)	-	3.10
I am satisfied that the managers try to support employees to advance	5(4.0%)	32(25.8%)	17(13.7%)	65(52.4%)	5(4.0%)	3.27
Mistakes are tolerated in the Department	6(4.8%)	55(44.4%)	19(15.3%)	43(34.7%)	1(0.8)	2.82
New recruits are supported to adapt quickly to the job and the team	1(0.8%)	21(16.9%)	21(16.9%)	80(64.5%)	1(0.8%)	3.48

Information from Table 4.8 revealed that 0.8% strongly disagreed that the Department's policy on organisational culture promoted equality and diversity, 12.1% disagreed that the Department's policy on organisational culture promoted equality and diversity, 5.6% said they neither agreed nor disagreed that the Department's policy on organisational culture promoted equality and diversity, 77.4% agreed that the Department's policy on organisational culture promoted equality and diversity and 4% strongly agreed that the Department's policy on organisational culture promoted equality and diversity.

Also, 6.5% strongly disagreed that the organisational culture made employees comfortable in dealing with an unfamiliar situation, 25% disagreed that the organisational culture made employees comfortable in dealing with an unfamiliar situation, 17.7% believed that they

neither agreed nor disagreed that the organisational culture made employees comfortable in dealing with an unfamiliar situation, 49.2% agreed that the organisational culture made employees comfortable in dealing with an unfamiliar situation and 1.6% strongly agreed that the organisational culture made employees comfortable in dealing with an unfamiliar situation.

Furthermore, 5.6% strongly disagreed, 26.6% disagreed, 19.4% neither agreed nor disagreed, 49.2% and 1.6% strongly agreed that there were cooperation and trust between departments among employees in the organisation. Moreover, 4% strongly disagreed that the managers tried to support employees to advance in their career and job, 25.8% disagreed that the managers tried to support employees to advance in their career and job, 13.7% neither agreed nor disagreed that the managers tried to support employees to advance in their career and job, 52.4% agreed that the managers tried to support employees to advance in their career and job and 4% strongly agreed that the managers tried to support employees to advance in their career and job.

Besides, 4.8% strongly disagreed that mistakes were tolerated in the Department, 44.4% disagreed that mistakes were tolerated in the Department, 15.3% believed that they neither agreed nor disagreed that mistakes were tolerated in the Department, 34.7% agreed that mistakes were tolerated in the Department and 0.8% strongly agreed that mistakes were tolerated in the Department.

Lastly, 0.8% strongly disagreed, 16.9%, another 16.9% neither agreed nor disagreed, 64.5% agreed and 0.8% strongly agreed that new recruits received supports from the organisation. The results further suggested that the individual items that measured organisational culture had mean scores exceeding the threshold (3.00), except with item 5.

4.7.4 Leadership commitment

The results of the contribution of leadership commitment in reducing gender inequality in the Department are shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Leadership commitment

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
The leaders in the Department show commitment to promoting gender equality	8(6.5%)	27(21.8%)	31(25.0%)	52(41.9%)	6(4.8%)	3.17
The leaders set high performance standards for all employees	4(3.2%)	29(23.4%)	14(11.3%)	72(58.1%)	5(4.0%)	3.36
I am satisfied that the leaders sets good examples by the way they behave	3(2.4%)	35(28.2%)	18(14.5%)	62(50.0%)	6(4.8%)	3.27
The leadership in the Department encourages employees, groups and team members to express ideas	4(3.2%)	25(20.2%)	21(16.9%)	70(56.5%)	4(3.2%)	3.36
I am satisfied that the leadership listens to employees ideas and suggestions	4(3.2%)	34(27.4%)	19(15.3%)	64(51.6%)	3(2.4%)	3.23
The leaders encourages work group members to solve problems together	1(0.8%)	28(22.6%)	14(11.3%)	78(62.9%)	3(2.4%)	3.44

About 6.5% strongly disagreed that the leaders in the Department showed commitment to promoting gender equality, 21.8% disagreed that the leaders in the Department showed commitment to promoting gender equality, 25% said that they neither agreed nor disagreed that the leaders in the Department showed commitment to promoting gender equality, 49.1% agreed that the leaders in the Department showed commitment to promoting gender equality and 4.8% strongly agreed that the leaders in the Department showed commitment to promoting gender equality. Also, while 3.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 23.4% disagreed, 11.3% neither agreed nor disagreed, 58.1% agreed and 4% strongly agreed that the leaders sets high performance standards for all employees.

In addition, 2.4% strongly disagreed that the leaders set good examples by the way they behave, 28.2% disagreed that the leaders set good examples by the way they behave, 14.5% neither

agreed nor disagreed that the leaders set good examples by the way they behave, 50% agreed that the leaders set good examples by the way they behave and 4.8% strongly agreed that the leaders set good examples by the way they behave.

Besides, 3.2% strongly disagreed that the leadership in the Department encouraged employees, groups and team members to express ideas, 20.2% disagreed that the Department encouraged employees, groups and team members to express ideas, 16.9% neither agreed nor disagreed that the Department encouraged employees, groups and team members to express ideas, 56.5% agreed that the Department encouraged employees, groups and team members to express ideas and 3.2% strongly agreed that the Department encouraged employees, groups and team members to express ideas.

Moreover, 3.2% strongly disagreed that the leadership listened to employees' ideas and suggestions, 27.4% disagreed that the leadership listened to employees' ideas and suggestions, 15.3% neither agreed nor disagreed that the leadership listened to employees' ideas and suggestions, 51.6% agreed that the leadership listened to employees' ideas and suggestions and 2.4% strongly disagreed that the leadership listened to employees' ideas and suggestions.

Lastly, 0.8% strongly disagreed, 22.6% disagreed, 11.3% neither agreed nor, 62.9% and 2.4% strongly agreed that the leaders encouraged work group members to solve problems together. The analysis further suggested that the items that measured leadership commitment were significant since the mean scores exceeded the threshold (3.00).

4.7.5 Organisational structure

Table 4.10 shows the results of the impact of organisational structure on gender equality.

Table 4.10 Organisational structure

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
There is a gender-balance in each department in the Department	45(36.3%)	29(23.4%)	7(5.6%)	43(34.7%)	-	2.39
The staff in the Department are involved in decision-making	4(3.2%)	33(26.6%)	25(20.2%)	62(50.0%)	-	3.17
Disciplinary actions in the Department are done in accordance with the law	2(1.6%)	19(15.3%)	11(8.9%)	87(70.2%)	5(4.0%)	3.60

It was found that 36.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed that there was a gender balance in each department, 23.4% disagreed that there was a gender balance in each department, 5.6% neither agreed nor disagreed that there was a gender-balance in each department and 34.7% agreed that there was a gender-balance in each department. Furthermore, 3.2% strongly disagreed that the staff in the Department were involved in decision-making, 26.6% disagreed that the staff in the Department were involved in decision-making, 20.2% neither agreed nor disagreed that the staff in the Department were involved in decision-making and 50% agreed that that the staff in the Department were involved in decision-making. Lastly, 1.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that disciplinary actions in the Department were done per the law, 15.3% disagreed that disciplinary actions in the Department were done per the law, 8.9% neither agreed nor disagreed that disciplinary actions in the Department were done per the law, 70.2% agreed that disciplinary actions in the Department were done per the law and 4% strongly disagreed that disciplinary actions in the Department were done per the law. The results further showed that among the 3 items that measured organisational structure, item 2 and 3 were significant, while item 1 was insignificant.

4.7.6 Employee retention

The results of the impact of gender equality on employee retention are shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 Employee retention

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
I am satisfied toward the current job	5(2.4%)	13(10.5%)	8(6.5%)	93(75.0%)	7(5.6%)	3.71
There are rewards and recognition for high achievements in the Department	10(8.1%)	59(47.6%)	13(10.5%)	39(31.5%)	3(2.4)	2.73
Co-workers and managers often appreciate the work I do	5(4.0%)	14(11.3%)	9(7.3%)	82(66.1%)	14(11.3%)	3.69
Work-life balance is supported by the Department	5(4.0%)	20(16.1%)	11(8.9%)	87(70.2%)	1(0.8%)	3.48
I am satisfied with the working environment in the Department	14(11.3%)	30(24.2%)	12(9.7%)	67(54.0%)	1(0.8%)	3.09

The results showed that 2.4% strongly disagreed, 10.5% disagreed, 6.5% neither agreed nor disagreed, 75% agreed and 5.6% strongly agreed that their current job was satisfactory. Furthermore, 8.1% strongly disagreed that there were rewards and recognition for high achievements in the Department, 47.6% disagreed that there were rewards and recognition for high achievements in the Department, 10.5% neither agreed nor disagreed that there were rewards and recognition for high achievements in the Department, 31.5% agreed that there were rewards and recognition for high achievements in the Department and 2.4% strongly agreed that there were rewards and recognition for high achievements in the Department.

Also, while 4% strongly disagreed, 11.3%, 7.3% neither agreed nor disagreed, 66.1% agreed and 11.3% strongly agreed that their fellow workers and managers appreciated the work they do. Moreover, 4% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the Department supported work-life balance, 16.1% disagreed that work-life balance was supported by the Department, 8.9% neither agreed nor disagreed that the Department supported work-life balance, 70.2% agreed the Department supported that work-life balance and 0.8% strongly agreed that the Department supported that work-life balance.

Lastly, while 11.3% strongly disagreed , 24.2% disagreed, 9.7% neither agreed nor disagreed, 54% agreed and 0.8% agreed that the working environment was safe. All the questions, except question 2 were statistically significant.

4.7.7 Employee performance

The results of the effects on gender equality on employee performance are depicted in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 Employee performance

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
I have the tools and resources to do the job	4(3.2%)	32(25.8%)	21(16.9%)	65(52.4%)	2(1.6%)	3.23
Supervisor listen to employees' issues	8(6.5%)	33(26.6%)	13(10.5%)	65(52.4%)	5(4.0%)	3.21
The working hours allow the employees enough time with family	3(2.4%)	19(15.3%)	16(12.9%)	85(68.5%)	1(0.8%)	3.50

The results indicated that while 3.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 25.8% disagreed, 16.9% neither agreed nor disagreed, 52.4% agreed and 1.6% strongly agreed that they had the tools and resources to perform the job. Furthermore, while 6.5% strongly disagreed, 26.6% disagreed, 10.5% neither agreed nor disagreed, 52.4% agreed and 4% strongly agreed that their supervisors listened to their suggestions. Also, while 2.4% strongly disagreed, 15.3% disagreed, 12.9% neither agreed nor disagreed, 68.5% agreed and 0.8% strongly agreed that the working hours allowed them to attend to family matters. In addition, the mean scores for the various items showed a high level of significance. Therefore, the items that assessed employee performance were statistically significant.

4.7.8 Job security

The results of the effects of gender equality on employee job security are shown in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Job security

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
I will be able to keep my present job as long as I wish	6(4.8%)	22(17.7%)	31(25.0%)	63(50.8%)	2(1.6%)	3.27
I am confident that my job will be there as long as I want	6(4.8%)	35(28.2%)	45(36.3%)	34(27.4%)	4(3.2%)	2.96
I am secured in my job	6(4.8%)	24(19.4%)	43(34.7%)	47(37.9%)	4(3.2%)	3.15
Regardless of economic conditions, I will have a job at the Department	7(5.6%)	17(13.7%)	51(41.1%)	46(37.1%)	3(2.4%)	3.17

The results suggested that while 4.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 17.7% disagreed, 25% neither agreed nor disagreed, 50.8% agreed and 1.6% strongly agreed that they would keep their present job as long as they wish. Furthermore, 4.8% strongly disagreed that they were confident that their job would be there as long as they wanted, 28.2% disagreed that they were confident that their job would be there as long as they wanted, 36.3% neither agreed nor disagreed that they were confident that their job would be there as long as they wish, 27.4% agreed that they were confident that their job would be there as long as they wish and 3.2% strongly agreed that they were confident that their job would be there as long as they wanted.

Also, 4.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 19.4% agreed, 34.7% neither agreed nor disagreed, 37.9% strongly agreed and 3.2% agreed that they were secured in their job. Finally, 5.6% strongly disagreed, 13.7% disagreed, 41.1% neither agreed nor disagreed, 37.1% agreed and 2.4% strongly agreed that regardless of economic conditions, they will have a job at the Department. The analysis of the mean scores revealed that all the items that measured job security, except item 2, were very significant.

4.8 Descriptive statistics

The perceptions of the respondents about the variables assessed in the study were evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5.

Table 4.14 Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	95 % Confidence Interval		Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
Gender equality	3.52	3.14	3.63	0.60298	1.00	5.00
Women empowerment	2.93	2.77	3.08	0.86953	1.00	5.00
Organisational culture	3.26	3.13	3.39	0.73419	1.00	5.00
Leadership commitment	3.30	3.15	3.46	0.87111	1.00	5.00
Organisational structure	3.05	2.91	3.19	0.79978	1.00	5.00
Employee retention	3.50	3.37	3.62	0.69323	1.00	5.00
Employee performance	3.32	3.17	3.45	0.76545	1.00	5.00
Job security	3.13	2.99	3.29	0.84485	1.00	5.00

As reflected in Table 4.14, gender equality had the most score (Mean = 3.52), closely followed by employee retention (Mean = 3.50), employee performance (Mean = 3.32), leadership commitment (Mean = 3.30), organisational culture (Mean = 3.26), job security (Mean = 3.13), organisational structure (Mean = 3.05) and women empowerment (Mean = 2.93). The results suggest that all the variables this study measured, except women empowerment, were statistically significant. This implies that the respondents had positive perceptions toward gender equality, organisational culture, leadership commitment, organisational structure, employee retention, employee performance and job security. These findings contradict previous studies (Ostroff et al., 2012; Starnski & Son Hing 2015; Zhu, 2021). In their study, Starnski and Son Hing (2015) argued that different types of gender-based violence are perpetrated against women. According to Zhu (2021), in most organisations, the culture recognises male productivity compared to female productivity. The underrepresentation of women in strategic leadership occurs because of the discriminatory policies implemented by the owners, especially men (Ostroff et al., 2012). Organisational structure that supports gender discrimination reduces the chance of women being appointed to top management positions in organisation.

The results in Table 4.14 are graphically presented in Figure 4.1.

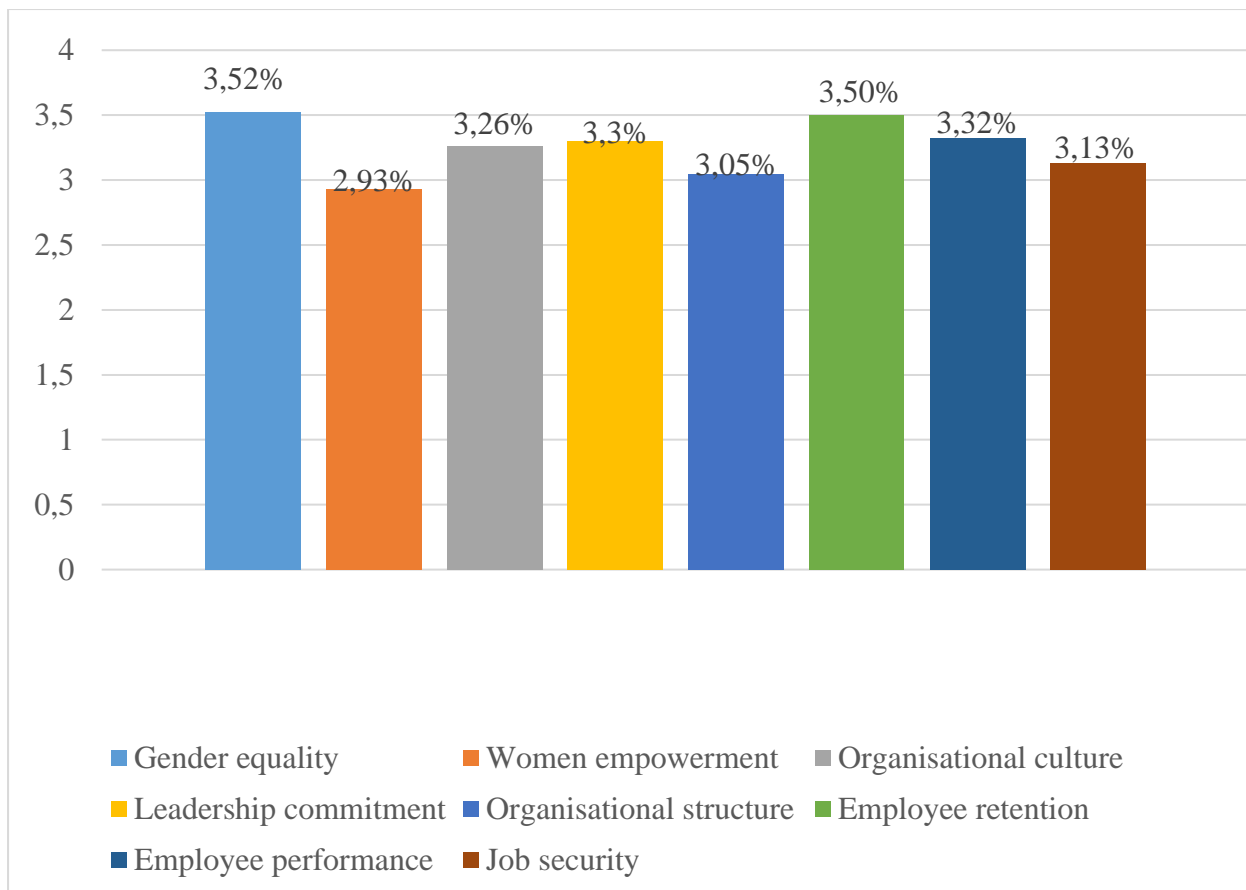


Figure 4.1 Descriptive statistics

The results imply that although there is a strong effort toward reducing gender inequality in the Department, there is room for improvement in all of the variables, though varying degrees.

4.9 Inferential statistics

The study further employs inferential statistic to provide better understanding of the results. These statistical tools used are discussed as follows.

4.9.1 Pearson’s correlation

The Pearson’s product-moment correlation was performed to analyse the intercorrelation between the variables in the study. The correlation coefficient is a statistical measure that provides a link between variables (Janse, Hoekstra, Jager, Zoccali, Tripepi, Dekker & van Diepen, 2021). The coefficient (r) ranges between -1 to 1 and is dimensionless. Janse et al. (2021) state that the interpretation of the strength of the correlation coefficient is based on the rule of thumb. In most cases, the p -values are interpreted as $p < 0.05$ (significant value) and $p > 0.05$, (insignificant) value. The results are shown in the Tables below.

Table 4.15 Factors that reduce gender inequality in the organisation

Variables	r/ p	1	2	3	4	5
Gender equality	<i>r</i>	1.000				
Women empowerment	<i>r</i> <i>p</i>	0.574 0.000*	1.000			
Organisational culture	<i>R</i> <i>P</i>	0.566 0.000*	0.772 0.000*	1.000		
Leadership commitment	<i>r</i> <i>p</i>	0.575 0.000*	0.698 0.000*	0.882 0.000*	1.000	
Organisational structure	<i>r</i> <i>p</i>	0.503 0.000*	0.648 0.000*	0.786 0.000*	0.812 0.000*	1.000

*** p < 0.01**

Objective 1 aimed to identify the factors that reduce gender inequality in organisation. The results showed that the relationship between gender equality and women empowerment ($r = 0.574$, $p < 0.01$) was moderate. These findings are inconsistent with existing research. According to Bayeh (2016), women's role in different dimensions of sustainable development is not adequately reflected in society. Bayeh (2016) points out that the political system in Ethiopia is, by and large, reserved for men alone. Thus, women's rights are not properly protected to enable them to participate in the various issues within society. The author proposes that unless women are empowered, and gender equality is achieved, Ethiopia cannot achieve sustainable development. Khuzwayo (2016) discovered that about 79.4% of managers in senior management positions in the South African landscape were male, while only 18% were women. A similar study also confirms that most societies still have negative perceptions towards women in the workplace (Zhu, 2021). Contrary to the above findings, Lwamba et al. (2022) observed that interventions supporting women's empowerment and gender equality produced positive effects. Lwamba et al. (2021) also found that women empowerment leads to overall equality between men and women, enhancing a person's ability to make choices and live a meaningful life.

Also, the relationship between gender equality and organisational culture ($r = 0.566$, $p < 0.01$) was positively moderate. This implies that organisational culture plays an important role in

reducing gender equality in the Department. Cultural climate or organisational culture is the most debated concept in business and psychology. Organizational culture is a dynamic system of implicit and explicit rules, norms and values established by groups or organisations to ensure survival (Schein, 1990). A study by Bajdo and Dickson (2001) reveals that organisational culture practices such as low power distance, gender egalitarianism, high humane orientation and performance orientation positively correlated with gender equality. According to Mousa et al. (2022), how the organisational dynamics are embedded in the corporate culture requires reframing how women are positioned along various hierarchies within the workplace.

Also, the relationship between gender equality and leadership commitment ($r = 0.575, p < 0.01$) was positively significant. This explains that gender inequality in the organisation can be reduced through leadership commitment. The results are supported by existing research. Mousa et al. (2022) found that leadership commitment and accountability are central to successfully advancing women's interest in leadership positions. Mousa et al. (2022) believe that building an exclusive culture begins with leadership commitment, recognising and reducing career difficulties that limit the promotion of women into leadership positions. Ibrahim et al. (2018) propose that successful and sustainable gender equality interventions require commitment, such as financial resources, organisational support, transparent recruitment and selection process, promotion and rewards for individuals.

Finally, the relationship between gender equality and organisational structure ($r = 0.503, p < 0.01$) was moderate. The analysis of the findings revealed that women empowerment, organisational structure was a critical success factor that promote gender equality in the organisation. Organisational structure is the organisation's anatomy that provides foundation within which the organisation functions (Wang & Zhou, 2019). It has been found that women who belong to gender-segregated associations in organisations (Brass, 1985) have limited access to information, less status, and fewer promotion opportunities (McDonald et al., 2009). According to A study by Gartzia (2021), promoting gender equality requires creating a stable and active organisational structure. Stamarski and Son Hing (2015) recommend that to promote gender equality, family friendly HR policies should be aligned with the organisational structures.

Table 4.16 The impact of reducing gender disparity in the Department

Variables	r/ p	1	2	3
Gender equality	<i>r</i>	1.000		
Employee retention	<i>r</i> <i>p</i>	0.505 0.000*	1.000	
Employee performance	<i>r</i> <i>p</i>	0.526 0.000*	0.733 0.000*	1.000

* **p < 0.01**

Table 4.16 shows a moderated positive intercorrelation between gender equality and employee retention ($r = 0.505$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that one of the impacts of promoting gender equality is that it leads to employee retention. It has been found that women have a higher tendency of quitting their jobs than their counterpart. One of the reasons cited was the problem with work-life balance (Tiwari, 2017). A study reveals that women are likely to leave if they do not see themselves in leadership positions within a company (World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report, 2022).

Furthermore, there existed a moderate intercorrelation between gender equality and employee performance ($r = 0.526$, $p < 0.01$). This means that promoting gender equality leads to an increase in employee performance. Setati et al. (2019) discovered that gender diversity and ethnic diversity positively impacted employee performance. Dilrukshi and Ranasinghe (2021) postulated that gender discrimination affects employee performance by mediating occupational stress. Also, it has been found that organisational politics and employees' perception of organisational fairness negatively impacted employee performance (Babarinde et al., 2022). Similarly, Hsu and Lawler (2019) point gender equality positively contribute to an improvement in employee and organisation performance. By contrast, the literature review shows scarce research on the impact of gender inequality on performance (Hoobler et al., 2018; Velte, 2017).

Table 4.17 below shows the results of the advantages of reducing gender inequity for future generations.

Table 4.17 The advantages of reducing gender inequity for future generations

Variables	r/ p	1	2
Gender equality	<i>r</i>	1.000	
Job security	<i>r</i> <i>p</i>	0.284 0.000*	1.000

* $p < 0.01$

There existed a weak moderate positive relationship between gender equality and job security ($r = 0.284, p < 0.011$). This implies that one of the advantages of reducing gender inequality for future generations is that it leads to job security. Globally, the economic pressure on organisations forced them to focus their attention and policies on employee job security in a way that improves organisational performance (Lucky et al., 2013). Aishwarya (2021) posits that job security represents a state of having a secured job. In their study, Gaunt and Benjamin (2007) discovered that traditional men experience greater job insecurity than women.

4.8.2 Linear regression

According to Ali and Younas (2021), regression is one of the commonest statistical tools employed by quantitative researchers to analyse the relationship between variables. Statistically, the interplay between dependent and independent variables is stated as: $y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x + \varepsilon$

Where:

β_0 = standard value of y when x is equal to 0;

β_1 = regression coefficient

ε = random error component and signifies imprecision of regression.

There are four primary aims of regression, including to describe, predict, estimate and control. There are different kind of regression, such as linear, logistic and multiple regression. However, the linear regression was computed.

Table 4.18 Linear regression - Factors that reduce gender inequality

Independent variables	R	R-squared value	Adjusted R-squared value	F	Beta	T	P
	0.624 ^a	0.389	0.369	18.949			<.001 ^b
Women empowerment					.323	2.847	.005
Organisational culture					.030	.172	.863
Leadership commitment					.304	1.823	.071
Organisational structure					.024	.186	.853
Constant					-	10.212	<.001

The results showed that the R-squared scores was 0.389 and the adjusted R-squared score was 0.369. This means that the model (women empowerment, organisational culture, leadership commitment and organisational structure) predicts 38.9% of the variations in gender equality. The results indicated a positive significance level ($p < 0.01$). The results of the standardised Beta and p-values for women empowerment and gender equality ($\beta = 0.323$, $p < 0.01$) were statistically significant. A study shows that women empowerment programmes play decisive roles in helping women to solve organisational problems (Kim et al., 2018). In Nigeria, a study by Anyalebechi (2016) reveals that more women hold leadership positions due to the presence of women empowerment programmes.

Also, the relationship between organisational culture and gender equality ($\beta = 0.030$, $p < 0.01$) was statistically insignificant. This implies that organisational culture had no significant effect on reducing gender inequality in the Department. The findings are also supported by Swidler (1986), who argues that organisational culture breeds gender inequalities since most corporate cultures limit people's ideas of what is possible.

Furthermore, the results indicated the relationship between leadership commitment and gender equality ($\beta = 0.304$, $p < 0.10$) were positively correlated. Mousa et al. (2022) point out that building an inclusive culture begins with leadership commitment, recognising and eliminating career barriers that limit the potential and advancement of women in the workplace. Ibrahim, et al. (2018) also acknowledged that successful and sustainable gender-focused interventions need leadership commitment, such as financial resources, organisational support, and transparency in the recruitment and selection process.

Lastly, the relationship between organisational structure and gender equality ($\beta = 0.024$, $p > 0.01$) was insignificant. Mousa et al. (2022) suggested that reducing the career barriers confronting women necessitates gender dynamics inside the organisation. Mousa et al. (2022) contend that the organisational dynamics are rooted in the corporate culture that determines how women are positioned along the organisational hierarchies when implementing policies for gender equity in leadership. Mousa et al. (2022) recommended that the traditional or normative heroic leadership approach could be more viable in maintaining the status quo of men and women.

Table 4.19 Linear regression - The impact and advantages of reducing gender disparity in the Department

Independent variables	R	R-squared value	Adjusted R-squared value	F	Beta	T	P
	0.571 ^a	0.325	.309	19.302	-	-	<.001 ^b
Employee retention					0.260	2.361	.020
Employee performance					0.473	3.544	<.001
Job security					-0.192	-1.791	.076
Constant					-	8.032	<.001

Table 4.19 shows that the R-squared value was 0.325, while adjusted R-squared value was 0.309. Thus, the results imply that the model (employee retention, employee performance and job security) predicts 32.5% of the variations in gender equality. Evidently, the results indicated a positive relationship between all the variables measured in the study ($p < 0.01$). Employee retention and gender equality ($\beta = 0.260$, $p < 0.05$) are positively significant. Employee retention remains a major concern for most organisations (Aqil & Memon, 2019; Mabaso et al., 2021). As discussed previously, Forum’s Gender Gap Report (2022) states that more women would resign from their positions and organisations if they do not see themselves in leadership positions within a company.

Also, the results suggested a positive relationship between employee performance and gender equality ($\beta = 0.473$, $p < 0.01$). Contrary to this finding, Hsu and Lawler (2019) discovered that gender diversity has a negative effect on productive workforce. Thus, when there is gender balance, employees are more motivated to increase their output, leading to an increase in the firm’s productivity and performance. On the other hand, it has been established that gender

diversity among women at middle management positions encouraged them to improve the firm's performance (Ali & Konrad, 2017).

The findings further showed that the interplay between job security and gender equality ($\beta = -0.192, p > 0.01$) is positively significant. Menéndez-Espina et al. (2020) found that compared to men, women experienced more insecurity under precarious working conditions. Coron and Schmidt (2022) also confirmed that most women feel more insecure in the labour market than men. However, Coron and Schmidt (2022) concluded that the literature on subjective job insecurity contradicts the effect of gender on job insecurity.

4.8.3 Analysis of variance – ANOVA

Kim (2017) argues that ANOVA is the most common statistical method used to analyse the difference between and within group variances. It uses the statistic F, which represents the ratio between and within group variances. ANOVA was computed to assess the effect of the respondents bio-data on the dependent and independent variables (gender equality, women empowerment, organisational culture, leadership commitment, organisational structure, employee retention, employee performance and job security). The results are presented as follows.

4.8.3.1 ANOVA: Bio-data differences in gender equality

Table 4.20 displays the results of the bio-data differences in gender equality.

Table 4.20 Bio-data difference in gender equality

Bio-data	F	P
Age	1.437	0.216
Race	0.335	0.800
Education qualification	1.249	0.291
Position	2.130	0.081**
Working experience	3.088	0.030**

* $p < 0.05$

The results indicated no statistical difference concerning the respondents perceptions in terms of age ($F = 1.437, p > 0.01$), race ($F = 0.3335, p > 0.01$) and educational qualification ($F = 1.249, p > 0.01$) concerning the promotion of gender equality. By contrast, a statistical difference occurred among the respondents with respect to the positions occupied ($F = 2.130, p < 0.05$) and working experience ($F = 3.088, p < 0.05$) regarding gender equality.

Therefore, to determine where the difference is in terms of positions occupied and working experience, the Post-Hoc Test was performed.

Table 4.21 Post-Hoc Test – position and working experience difference in gender equality

Bio-data	Categories of bio-data	N	Mean
Positions occupied	Lower management	38	3.53
	Middle management	59	3.43
	Senior management	24	3.64
	Top management	2	4.50
Working experience	Other (Please specify)	1	3.00
	1-5 years	8	3.45
	6-10 years	35	3.64
	11-15 years	37	3.28
	More than 15 years	44	3.63

The results revealed that while the respondents at the lower, middle, senior and top management positions believed there was a conscious effort toward promoting gender equality in the Department, those in other positions felt otherwise. Also, the results indicated that while the respondents who had 1-5, 6-10 and more than 15 years of work experience assumed gender equality in the Department, those with 11-15 years of work experience had less belief about gender equality.

4.8.3.2 ANOVA: Bio-data differences in women empowerment

Table 4.22 shows the results of the bio-data differences in women empowerment.

Table 4.22 Bio-data differences in women empowerment

Bio-data	F	P
Age	0.404	0.845
Race	0.115	0.102
Educational qualification	0.702	0.623
Position	1.869	0.120
Working experience	0.783	0.505

* $p > 0.05$

The results suggested no statistical difference among the respondents in relation to age ($F = 0.404, p > 0.01$), race ($F = 0.0115, p > 0.01$), educational qualification ($F = 0.702, p > 0.01$), positions occupied ($F = 1.869, p > 0.01$) and work experience ($F = 0.783, p > 0.01$) in terms of women empowerment.

4.8.3.3 ANOVA: Bio-data differences in organisational culture

Table 4.23 depicts the results of bio-data differences in organisational culture.

Table 4.23 Bio-data differences in organisational culture

Bio-data	F	P
Age	0.771	0.573
Race	2.442	0.068**
Educational qualification	1.317	0.261
Position	1.255	0.291
Working experience	1.352	0.261

* $p < 0.10$

The results revealed no statistical difference among the respondents in terms of age ($F = 0.771, p > 0.01$), educational qualification ($F = 2.442, p > 0.01$), positions occupied ($F = 0.291, p > 0.01$) and work experience ($F = 0.261, p > 0.01$) regarding organisational culture. However, there was a statistical difference among the respondents' perceptions in relation to race ($F = 0.068, p < 0.10$) regarding organisational culture. Hence, Post-Hoc Test was performed to assess the statistical difference.

Table 4.24 Post-Hoc Test – Race differences in organisational culture

Bio-data	Categories of bio-data	N	Mean
	African	105	3.31
	Indian	12	2.78
	Coloured	1	4.00
	White	6	3.08

The results revealed that while Africans, Coloureds and Whites are more satisfied that organisational culture influenced gender equality, Indians were less convinced that organisational culture helps reduce gender inequality.

4.8.3.4 ANOVA: Bio-data differences in leadership commitment

The results of the bio-data differences in leadership commitment are shown in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25 Bio-data differences in leadership commitment

Bio-data	F	P
Age	1.041	.397
Race	1.213	.308
Educational qualification	1.563	.176
Position	2.240	.069**
Working experience	1.466	.227

As reflected in Table 4.25, there was no statistical variation concerning age ($F = 1.041, p > 0.01$), race ($F = 1.213, p > 0.01$), educational qualification ($F = 1.563, p > 0.01$) and work experience ($F = 1.466, p > 0.01$) regarding leadership commitment. Nonetheless, a statistical difference occurred in terms of the respondents positions ($F = 1.466, p < 0.10$) regarding leadership commitment. Therefore, Post-Hoc Test was applied to analyse whether the difference exists.

Table 4.26 Post-Hoc Test – Race differences in leadership commitment

Bio-data	Categories of bio-data	N	Mean
	Lower management	38	3.37
	Middle management	59	3.13
	Senior management	24	3.53
	Top management	2	4.58
	Other (Please specify)	1	3.00

Information from Table 4.26 shows that while the respondents at the lower, senior and top management believed that leadership commitment contributed to reducing gender inequality, those in middle and other positions believed otherwise.

4.8.3.5 ANOVA: ANOVA: Bio-data differences in organisational structure

Table 4.27 shows the results of the bio-data differences in organisational structure.

Table 4.27 Bio-data differences in organisational structure

Bio-data	F	P
Age	1.332	0.255
Race	2.338	0.077**
Educational qualification	1.253	0.289
Position	0.898	0.468
Working experience	1.649	0.182

From Table 4.27, the results revealed no statistical difference among the respondents in terms of age ($F = 1.332, p > 0.01$), educational qualification ($F = 1.253, p > 0.01$), positions occupied ($F = 0.898, p > 0.01$) and work experience ($F = 1.649, p > 0.01$) regarding organisational structure. Nonetheless, a statistical difference in the respondents' perceptions in relation to race ($F = 2.338, p < 0.10$) regarding organisational structure. The Post-Hoc Test was performed to assess the difference, and the results are shown in Table 4.28.

Table 4.28 Post-Hoc Test – Race differences in organisational structure

Bio-data	Categories of bio-data	N	Mean
	African	105	3.12
	Indian	12	2.56
	Coloured	1	4.00
	White	6	2.89

The results revealed that while Africans and Coloureds were more convinced that organisational structure had a strong effect in reducing gender inequality, Indians and Whites were less convinced.

4.8.3.6 ANOVA: Bio-data differences in employee retention

Table 4.29 demonstrates the results of the bio-data differences in employee retention.

Table 4.29 Bio-data differences in employee retention

Bio-data	F	P
Age	0.458	0.807
Race	2.121	0.101
Educational qualification	0.671	0.646
Position	1.925	0.111
Working experience	0.521	.669

*** $p > 0.05$**

In Table 4.28, the results indicated no statistical difference among the respondents concerning age ($F = 0.458, p > 0.01$), race ($F = 2.121, p > 0.01$), educational qualification ($F = 0.671, p > 0.01$) positions occupied ($F = 1.925, p > 0.01$) and working experience ($F = 0.521, p > 0.01$) in relation to employee retention.

4.8.3.7 ANOVA: Bio-data differences in employee performance

Table 4.30 depicts the results of the bio-data differences in employee performance

Table 4.30 Bio-data differences in employee performance

Bio-data	F	P
Age	0.845	0.520
Race	3.098	0.029**
Educational qualification	1.136	0.345
Position	2.161	0.078**
Working experience	0.486	0.692

*** $p < 0.10$**

The results showed no statistical difference among the respondents in terms of age ($F = 0.845, p > 0.01$), educational qualification ($F = 3.098, p > 0.01$) and working experience ($F = 0.489, p > 0.01$) regarding employee retention. In contrast, there was a statistically significant difference in race ($F = 3.098, p < 0.05$) and positions occupied ($F = 2.161, p < 0.10$). Therefore, to determine where the difference lies in race and position, Post-Hoc Test was used, and the results are depicted in Table 4.31.

Table 4.31 Post-Hoc Test – Race differences in employee performance

Bio-data	Categories of bio-data	N	Mean
Race	African	105	3.39
	Indian	12	2.97
	Coloured	1	2.00
	White	6	2.83
Positions occupied	Lower management	38	3.33
	Middle management	59	3.16
	Senior management	24	3.57
	Top management	2	4.00
	Other (Please specify)	1	4.33

The results showed that while Africans were more convinced that gender equality improved employee preference, Indians, Coloured and Whites believed otherwise. Also, the results suggested that while respondents within the senior, top and other management positions were more convinced that gender equality improved employee performance, those in lower and middle management positions were less satisfied that it improves employee performance.

4.8.3.8 ANOVA: Bio-data differences in job security

Table 4.32 depicts the results of the bio-data differences in security

Table 4.32 Bio-data differences in job security

Bio-data	F	P
Age	0.445	0.816
Race	1.271	0.288
Educational qualification	1.596	0.166
Position	2.130	0.081**
Working experience	0.210	0.889

* $p < 0.10$

The results showed no statistical difference among the respondents in terms of age ($F = 0.445$, $p > 0.01$), Race ($F = 1.271$, $p > 0.01$), educational qualification ($F = 1.596$, $p > 0.01$) and working experience ($F = 0.210$, $p > 0.01$) regarding job satisfaction. On the contrary, there was

a statistically significant difference in position ($F = 2.130, p < 0.10$) regarding job satisfaction. Therefore, to analyse where the difference is, Post-Hoc Test was performed.

Table 4.33 Post-Hoc Test – Race differences in job security

Bio-data	Categories of bio-data	N	Mean
Positions occupied	Lower management	38	3.06
	Middle management	59	3.03
	Senior management	24	3.39
	Top management	2	4.00
	Other (Please specify)	1	4.50

The results indicated that while respondents within the senior, top and other management positions believed that gender equality increased employee job security, those in lower and middle management positions believed otherwise.

4.8.4 Sample t-test

Sample t-test is a type of parametric test that measures how significant the difference is between the 'means' of two different groups - males and females (Liang, Fu & Wang, 2019). There are various sample t-tests, but the paired sample t-test was used. This test is used when the variable in one group is paired with another variable.

Table 4.34 Paired sample t-test: Gender difference in all the variables

Variables	T	Df	P
Gender equality	-26.981	123	0.000***
Women empowerment	-15.449	123	0.000***
Organisational culture	-21.887	123	0.000***
Leadership commitment	-19.928	123	0.000***
Organisational structure	-17.882	123	0.000***
Employee retention	-26.112	123	0.000***
Employee performance	-21.006	123	0.000***
Job security	-18.127	123	0.000***

* $p < 0.01$

The results showed a statistical difference in perceptions of males and females concerning gender equality, women empowerment, organisational culture, leadership commitment, organisational structure, employee retention, employee performance and job security. Therefore, the Post-Hoc Test was applied to analyse the difference, and the results are shown in Table 4.35.

Table 4.35 Post Hoc Test: Gender difference in all the variables

Variables	Categories of Gender	N	Mean
Gender equality	Male	71	3.64
	Female	53	3.36
Women empowerment	Male	71	3.07
	Female	53	2.74
Organisational culture	Male	71	3.32
	Female	53	3.16
Leadership commitment	Male	71	3.39
	Female	53	3.20
Organisational structure	Male	71	3.17
	Female	53	2.89
Employee retention	Male	71	3.54
	Female	53	3.44
Employee performance	Male	71	3.47
	Female	53	3.12
Job security	Male	71	3.26
	Female	53	2.97

The results showed that while males were satisfied with gender equality in the Department, females were less satisfied. Also, while males believed that women's empowerment contributed to reducing gender inequality, females believed otherwise. Furthermore, although males assumed that organisational culture contributed to eradicating gender inequality, females were less convinced. In addition, while males were more convinced that leadership commitment reduced gender inequality, females were less convinced. Besides, it was found that while males were satisfied that organisational structure helped reduce gender inequality, females were less

satisfied. It was discovered that while males strongly believed that gender equality improved employee retention, females believed otherwise. Again, the results indicated that while males perceived that gender equality improved employee performance, females did not perceive that it influenced employee performance. Finally, while males argued that gender equality increased employee job security, females did not believe so.

4.9 Chapter summary

The Pearson's correlation suggested a positive relationship between the dependent variable (gender equality) and independent variables (women empowerment, organisational culture, leadership commitment, organisational structure, employee retention, employee performance and job security). For instance, a moderate positive relationship occurred between women empowerment programmes and gender balance in the organisation. Also, the relationship between gender equality and organisational culture was statistically significant. In addition, there was a positive association between gender equality and leadership commitment. Besides, a moderate positive relationship between gender equality and organisational structure. A moderated positive relationship further occurred between gender equality and employee retention. A weak positive relationship occurred between gender equality and job security. The linear regression results showed that while women empowerment and leadership commitment contributed toward promoting gender equality, organisational culture and structure had no statistical influence on reducing gender equality.

The following chapter provides the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the conclusion and recommendations of the study. Also, it highlights the limitations of the study. The conclusion and recommendations of the study are aligned with the results as per each research objective.

5.2 Summary of the research findings

The research findings are organised per the objectives outlined above.

- **Objective 1: Factors that reduce gender inequality**

The first objective aimed to identify the factors that reduce gender inequality in the organisation. In order to address this objective, study analysed whether the factors such as women empowerment, organisational culture, leadership commitment and organisational structure contribute to reducing gender inequality. The descriptive statistics revealed that all the variables this study measured, except women empowerment, were statistically significant. This implies that the respondents had positive perceptions toward gender equality, organisational culture, leadership commitment and organisational structure. The Pearson's correlation results suggested a moderate positive relationship occurred between gender equality and women empowerment. Also, there existed a moderate positive association between gender equality and organisational culture. A moderate positive correlation further occurred between gender equality and leadership commitment. Besides, a moderate positive association existed between gender equality and organisational structure.

Besides, a moderated positive relationship between gender equality and employee retention. The results of linear regression showed an insignificant relationship between women empowerment and gender equality. Moreover, the relationship between organisational culture and gender equality was insignificant. However, the relationship between leadership commitment and gender equality was significant. Furthermore, the relationship between organisational structure and gender equality was insignificant. The overall findings suggested that women empowerment made the most considerable contribution to reducing gender equality and followed by leadership commitment. By contrast, organisational culture and structure had no statistical impact on reducing gender inequality.

- **Objective 2: Impact of reducing gender disparity**

The second objective evaluated the impact of reducing gender disparity in the Department. The constructs, including employee retention and performance, were assessed to achieve this objective. The results of the descriptive statistics indicated that the items that measured that employee retention and employee performance were statistically significant. Pearson's correlation indicated a moderated positive association between gender equality and employee retention. Furthermore, the results revealed a moderate positive relationship between gender equality and employee performance. Concerning the linear regression, the relationship between employee retention and gender equality and performance and gender equality were statistically significant. This implies that gender equality positively impacted employee retention and performance in the Department.

- **Objective 3: The advantages of reducing gender inequity for future generations**

The third objective analysed the advantages of reducing gender inequity for future generations. Therefore, to achieve this objective, the relationship between gender equality and job satisfaction was examined. Pearson's correlation results showed a weak positive correlation between gender equality and job security. By contrast, the linear regression indicated a positive interplay between gender equality and job security.

5.3 Recommendations of the study

The following recommends stemmed from the results presented above.

5.3.1 Improve job security

Many employees are more concerned about their job security in this modern economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the problems (i.e., job loss, unemployment, income and salary loss) facing employees, leading to job insecurity. The study found that gender equality did not significantly impact employee job security. For this reason, the study recommends that the Department and other organisations implement policies and measures to ensure employees' job security. The researcher believes organisations, including the Department of Public Works, take necessary steps to protect employees from losing their jobs. From a psychological point of view, employees should be assured that their jobs are secured irrespective of the economic conditions.

5.3.2 Implement gender balance policies and practices

Gender imbalance is a complex issue worldwide due to organisational structures and recruitment practices. This study also confirms gender inequality among the respondents within

the organisation. About 36.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed that there was a gender balance in each department/unit and 23.4% disagreed that there was a gender balance in each department/unit. In light of the findings, the researcher recommends the need for gender balance in the organisation. The Department must ensure that recruitment and selection processes target men and women. Thus, equal employment opportunities should be given to men and women. The Department should remove employment barriers that limit appointments, especially for women into leadership positions.

5.3.3 Reward and recognise high achievers

Studies have shown that gender pay inequality remains one of the critical issues facing employees, especially women, in the workplace. The results indicated a vast disparity in the rewards and recognition systems within the Department of Public Works. For instance, 8.1% strongly disagreed that there were rewards and recognition for high achievements in the Department and 47.6% disagreed that there were rewards and recognition for high achievements in the Department. Against this background, the study recommends that the Department reward and recognise high achievers or performers to help reduce gender equality. The rewards systems and recognitions should not be limited to gender but based on the employees' contribution to the organisation.

5.3.4 Encourage tolerance for mistakes

Mistake tolerance constitutes an aspect of workplace risk that allows organisational employees to make mistakes without fear of being reprimanded. Unfortunately, this study found that there was no tolerance for mistake in the Department. About 4.8% strongly disagreed that mistakes were tolerated in the Department and 44.4% disagreed that mistakes were tolerated in the Department. Per the findings, the study recommends some level of mistake tolerance in the Department. The researcher is of the view that if employees understand that mistakes are acceptable, they will be encouraged to take initiative. Therefore, if people are allowed to make mistakes, they will review and understand what went wrong.

5.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The first limitation of this study was the scope or geographical location. The Department of Public Works was chosen as the case study organisation. Therefore, the implication is that the results could be limited to this organisation. Given this limitation, it is recommended that future studies involve employees from more than one Department. The second limitation was the research method adopted. Thus, quantitative research provides less insight into the thoughts,

feelings and opinions of the subjects or respondents about an event. In light of this, the researcher suggests that future studies consider adopting mixed-method research.

5.5 Chapter summary

The study identified factors contributing to reducing gender inequality in the Department of Public Works, including women empowerment, organisational culture, leadership commitment, and organisational structure. Also, it was found that gender equality impacted employee retention and performance significantly in the organisation. However, it was discovered that gender equality and employee job security are statistically insignificant. The following recommendations were made: improve job security, ensure gender balance, reward and recognise higher achievers and tolerance for mistakes.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Research Title: Promoting gender equality in the Department of Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal

Section A: Bio-Data

This section of the questionnaire contains items that relate to the bio-data of the respondents such as gender, age, race, educational qualification, position occupied and tenure.

Please indicate your selection with an [X].

A1. What is your gender?

1	Male	
2	Female	
3	Other	

A2. Which age group do you belong to?

1	20-25 years	
2	26-30 years	
3	31-35 years	
4	36-40 years	
5	41-45 years	
6	46-50 years	
7	Above 50 years	

A3. What is your race?

1	African	
2	Indian	
3	Coloured	
4	White	
5	Other (please specify)	

A4. What is your highest qualification?

1	Diploma	
2	Postgraduate Diploma	
3	Bachelor's Degree	
4	Honours/BTech	
5	Masters	
6	Doctorate	
7	Other (please specify)	

A5. Which management level do you occupy?

1	Lower management	
2	Middle management	
3	Senior management	
4	Top management	
5	Other (Please specify)	

A6. How long have you been working in this institution?

1	1-5 years	
2	6-10 years	
3	11-15 years	
4	11-15 years	
5	More than 15 years	

Section B: Gender Equality

The following statements require information about gender equality. Please on the scale of 1-5, indicate your agreement with each statement. The weight-scoring are: Strongly Disagree (SD) =1; Disagree (D) = 2; Neither Agree nor Disagree (NA/DA) = 3; Agree (A) = 4; and Strongly Agree (SA) = 5.

No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Gender Equality						
GE1	The Department of Public Works has a fair remuneration policy for men and women					
GE2	The Department has implemented strategies to close any gender pay gap.					
GE3	I am satisfied that men and women are promoted to leadership positions in the Department.					
GE4	I am satisfied that the Department offers flexible working hours					
GE5	I am satisfied that unconscious biases are prevented and a culture of fairness is promoted to reduce gender equality in the Department					

Section C: Factors to Reduce Gender Inequality

The following statements require information about your understanding about the factors to reduce gender equality in the Department of Public Works. Please on the scale of 1-5, indicate your agreement with each statement. The weight-scoring are: Strongly Disagree (SD) =1; Disagree (D) = 2; Neither Agree nor Disagree (NA/DA) = 3; Agree (A) = 4; and Strongly Agree (SA) = 5.

No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Gender Equality						
Women Empowerment						
WE1	In this Department, a special person is around when I am in need					
WE2	There is a special person with whom I can share joys and sorrows					
WE3	I get the emotional help and support I need from co-workers and management in the workplace					
WE4	I have a special person in the workplace who is a real source of comfort to me					
WE5	I can talk about my problems with my friends and managers					

Organisational Culture						
OC1	The Department's policy on organisational culture promotes equality and diversity					
OC2	The organisational culture makes employees comfortable in dealing with an unfamiliar situation.					
OC3	Cooperation and trust between departments and employees in the municipality are normal					
OC4	I am satisfied that the managers try to support employees to advance					
OC5	Mistakes are tolerated in the Department					
OC6	New recruits are supported to adapt quickly to the job and the team					
Leadership Commitment						
LC1	The leaders in the Department show commitment to promoting gender equality					
LC2	The leaders sets high performance standards for all employees					
LC3	I am satisfied that the leaders sets good examples by the way they behave					
LC4	The leadership in the Department encourages employees, groups and team members to express ideas					
LC5	I am satisfied that the leadership listens to employees ideas and suggestions					
LC6	The leaders encourages work group members to solve problems together					
Organisational Structure						
OS1	There is a gender-balance in each department in the Department					
OS2	The staff in the Department are involved in decision-making					
OS 3	Disciplinary actions in the Department are done in accordance with the law					

Section D: impact of Reducing Gender Disparity

The following statements require information about the impact of reducing gender disparity in the Department of Public Works. Please on the scale of 1-5, indicate your agreement with each statement. The weight-scoring are: Strongly Disagree (SD) =1; Disagree (D) = 2; Neither Agree nor Disagree (NA/DA) = 3; Agree (A) = 4; and Strongly Agree (SA) = 5.

No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Employee Retention						
ER1	I am satisfied toward the current job					
ER2	I enjoy high level of satisfaction in performing my job					
ER3	There are rewards and recognition for high achievements in the Department					
ER4	Co-workers and managers often appreciate the work I do					
ER5	Work-life balance is supported by the Department					
ER6	I am satisfied with the working environment in the Department					
Employee Performance						

EP1	I have the tools and resources I need to do my job					
EP2	My supervisor actively listen to my issues and suggestions					
EP3	The working hours allow me enough time with family and time to pursue other strong interests					

Section E: Advantages of Reducing Gender Inequality for Future Generations

The following statements require information about advantages of reducing gender inequality for future generations. Please on the scale of 1-5, indicate your agreement with each statement. The weight-scoring are: Strongly Disagree (SD) =1; Disagree (D) = 2; Neither Agree nor Disagree (NA/DA) = 3; Agree (A) = 4; and Strongly Agree (SA) = 5.

No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
	Job Security					
JS1	I will be able to keep my present job as long as I wish					
JS2	I am confident that my job will be there as long as I want					
JS3	I am secured in my job					
JS4	Regardless of economic conditions, I will have a job at the Department					

Thank you for the participation in this study

Appendix B: Ethics Approval Letter



07 October 2023

Faith Sanelisiwe Lukele (220045353)
Grad School of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear FS Lukele,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00006091/2023
Project title: Promoting gender equality in the Department of Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 30 August 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

This approval is valid until 07 October 2024.

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

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

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: September 2023

Greetings,

My name is Faith Sanelisiwe Lukele, a master's student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the Graduate School of Business and Leadership. My email address is 220045353@ukzn.ac.za and cell phone number is 0648807977. Dr Bhasela Ylezo is my supervisor, who is also located at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the Graduate School of Business and Leadership. My supervisor's email address is Yalezob@ukzn.ac.za.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research into **"Promoting gender equality in the Department of Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal"**. investigate the factors that promote gender equality within the Department of Public Works in Kwa Zulu-Natal. Moreover, this study aims to contribute to women's empowerment and gender balance in the South African workplace. The study is expected to include 132 research participants from the Department of Public Works, KwaZulu-Natal. The survey method will be used to collect the data from the respondents. The data collection process will involve the following procedures. A written permission will first be obtained from the UKZN Humanities And Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee to allow the researcher to contact the participants via email. After obtained the approval, the survey (questionnaire) and Informed Consent Form will then be placed on the Google Form and the link will be sent to the respondent through their emails. The duration of your participation if you choose to participate and remain in the study is expected to be approximately three weeks. The study is not funded by any individual, group or organisation.

The study does not involve any risk and/or discomfort. I hope that the study when completed will create the following benefits, namely: contributes to promoting gender equality through the elimination of unfair labour practices; enhance women participation in decision-making; and increase the demographic representation of women in the Department of Public Works. Moreover, the study will add to the existing knowledge on gender equality. The study does not involve any further procedure or treatment.

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

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the contact details above or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban 4000 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Your participation in the study is voluntary and by participating, you are granting the researcher permission to use your responses. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in the study. Your anonymity will be maintained by the researcher and the Graduate School of Business and Leadership and your responses will not be used for any purposes outside of this study.

All data, both electronic and hard copy, will be securely stored during the study and archived for 5 years. After this time, all data will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the study, please contact me or my research supervisor at the numbers listed above.

Sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the researcher.

Faith Sanelisiwe Lukele

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I,have been informed about the study entitled **“Promoting gender equality in the Department of Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal”** by Faith Sanelisiwe Lukele. I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

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

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

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on 220045353@ukzn.ac.za/0648807977

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

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix D: Turnitin Report

Faith Final Submission 17 12 23

ORIGINALITY REPORT

12%

SIMILARITY INDEX

11%

INTERNET SOURCES

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STUDENT PAPERS

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