

Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming on the appointment process of senior management: A case study of the Office of the Premier in Limpopo Province, South Africa

By

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Declaration

I, Ellah Nkhensani Ngobeni, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for any degree at any other university or institution. The thesis does not contain other persons' writing unless specifically acknowledged and referenced accordingly.

Signed (Student):Ngobeni EN..... Date: ..22/02/2024.....

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ARDC	Association of District Councils of Zimbabwe
APAC	Asia Pacific
BPFA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CCPR	Convention on Civil and Political Rights
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEER	Commission for Employment Equity Report
CMI	Chartered Management Institute
CPSE	Central Public Service Enterprise
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
CSR	Centre Social Research
DoL	Department of Labour
DPSA	Department of Public Service & Administration
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EEA	Employment Equity Act
EE	Employment Equity
EEP	Employment Equity Plan
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EIGE	European Institute of Gender Equality
ERC	Equal Remuneration Convention
EU	European Union
GAD	Gender and Development
GoR	Government of Rwanda
HR	Human Resources
IBR	Independent Business Review
ILO	International Labour Organizations
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEC	Member of Executive Council
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NA	National Assembly
NCOP	National Council of Provinces

NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PSC	Public Service Commission
PSR	Public Service Regulation
RCT	Role Congruity Theory
SADC	South African Development Community
SMS	Senior Management Service
TA	Thematic Analysis
UCAZ	Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFP	United Nations Population Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Scientific Cultural Organizations Documents
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPSC	Union Public Services Commission
U.S.	United States
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States of America International Development
WEF	World Economic Forum
WEFGGR	World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report
WGEA	Workplace Gender Equity Agency
WID	Women and Development
WPTSPS	White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service
ZILGA	Zimbabwe Local Government Association

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Abstract

The challenges of inequality in South Africa's workplace are compounded by the legacy of the system of apartheid and colonialism. Gender inequality continues to exist even during the new dispensation despite the existence of national, regional and international legislation to address inequality. This study evaluated the extent of the implementation and enforcement of employment equity policies on the appointment of senior management officials at the Office of the Premier. The study adopted a feminist qualitative approach to collect data. The sample of the study comprised males and females in the Office of the Premier. Non-probability purposive sampling to identify and select Deputy Directors, Directors and Chief Directors was used as these categories of employees are in the pipeline and poised to take different senior management positions. Data was collected using interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. Due to my position as the Chief Director working in the Office of the Premier, I relied on the process of reflexivity to question and analyse any biases I may have had in the process of collecting and analysing the data. Reflexivity is a process of continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgement; and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process. Collected data was analysed using thematic analysis. Ultimately, findings and recommendations from the study were shared with the Institutional Development Support Branch in the Office of the Premier for implementation by all sector departments in the Limpopo Provincial Administration.

Keywords: Employment equity, gender, gender equality, gender inequality, gender mainstreaming.

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

This section presents the background, problem statement, the significance of the study, definitions of operational terms relevant to the research, the aims and objectives that the study sought to achieve and the research questions that were relevant to the study.

1.1. Background to the study

South Africa and Limpopo Provincial Government in particular continue to face challenges of gender mainstreaming at the Senior Management Service level despite the existing national and provincial pieces of legislation and directives. The Employment Equity Act of 1998 aimed at promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination to redress the employment imbalances of the designated groups. South African Cabinet Decision 85(A) of 2005, the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013, and the existing policy reform to address gender inequality in the public service are amongst measures to redress the imbalances of the past. Musetho, Isac and Dobrin (2021) affirm that the South African government implemented different legislative mechanisms to address gender inequality in the workplace, discrimination, and the empowering of women. These measures and policies are not yielding the expected results, hence the Province and the Office of the Premier are still struggling to comply with their own approved Employment Equity and Human Resources Plans.

Adisa, Gbadamosi and Adekoya (2015) contend that unfair treatment, discrimination and gender representation in employment are the challenges confronting women working in male-dominated occupations in a patriarchal setting. Mcilongo and Strydom (2021) concur and contend that historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the workplace and influenced career opportunities afforded to women in the public sector. Gender Mainstreaming as a globally accepted strategy established in the Beijing Action Platform in 1995 has the ambition to transform the norms and behaviours that create inequalities (Lut and Lombardo, 2014), and to promote gender equality in the recruitment process in the workplace. Therefore, gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach and a means to achieve the goal of gender equality.

Mainstreaming ensures that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities including policy development, planning, resource allocation, implementation and monitoring of programmes (UNWomen, 2021).

Dube and Dziva (2014) argue that women are marginalized and relegated to peripheral positions and decision-making as a result of ineffective implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies. On the other hand, there are some arguments from other scholars that gender mainstreaming is a contested concept and process, as there are competing definitions.

Gender discrimination and violation of women's inherent rights and freedoms make headlines all over the world (Zia, 2018) and thus necessitate further research through the use of mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming, according to the International Labour Organization (2017), is not about adding a "woman's component" or even "gender equality component" into an existing activity but is a means of bringing the experiences and interests of both women and men onto the development agenda.

United Nations (2014) asserts that gender equality is an essential expression of human rights and that women's rights are human rights. It is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. The attainment of gender equality is not an end itself or a compliance issue but a prerequisite for sustainable development (United Nations Population Fund, 2018). The United Nations (2013) identified gender equality (Goal 5) as one of the Sustainable Development Goals that should be prioritized. It does not mean that women and men have become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities should not depend on whether one was born male or female (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2017). UNPF (2018) posits that gender equality requires equal enjoyment by women and men, and this is supported by section 2 (Chapter 2) of the Bill of Rights in the Republic of South Africa Constitution of 1996.

The Women and Development and the Gender and Development debate agenda, necessitated gender mainstreaming as a gender equality strategy endorsed by the Fourth World Women's Conference held in Beijing China in 1995 (Tu, 2015). All states affirmed their commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to improve

the status of women (Commission for Gender Equality, 2014). This was after the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), an international bill of rights for women adopted in 1979. CEDAW was followed by many other gender equality agreements such as Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5), and South African Development Community Protocol on Gender (United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

Article 12- Representation in the South African Development Countries, indicates that States Parties aimed that by 2015 at least 50 percent of decision-making positions in the public and private sectors would be held by women. To achieve this would include the use of affirmative action measures as provided for in Article 5 (SADC, 2013). However, this target was never reached. Furthermore, the World Economic Forum (2018) shows that no country in the world will manage to eliminate the gap between men and women by 2030 as per the set international agreed targets (WEF GGIR, 2018) and Ford (2019). The problem with the appointment of members of the Senior Management Service (SMS) is not unique to South Africa. Hodges (2017) posits that in countries like Saudi Arabia and India, women are faced with diverse obstacles that inhibit their advancement. Stamarscki (2015) contends that gender inequality in many countries is a complex phenomenon that can be seen in organizational structures, processes and practices.

The problem is evident as presented by Farida (2016) who indicates that the global participation rate of women in national parliaments was 24.1 percent in 2013 and 42.2 to 61.3 percent in ten countries in 2014 (International IDEA, 2014). Women Heads of State improved from 8 in 2013 to 11 in June 2019. Inter-parliamentary Union and United Nations Women (2019) reported that only 24.3 percent of all parliamentarians were women as of February 2019 which demonstrates a slow increase of 11.3 percent from 1995. The report presented by the United Nations Women, in November 2018, found only three countries in the world to have attained 50 percent or more women in parliament (Patel, 2017). The Global Gender Index (2018) revealed that women held under a quarter (24 percent) of senior roles across the world in 2018 which is a decrease from 25 percent in 2017. However, Patel (2017) argues that gender parity in the cabinet does not guarantee progress for women, in particular, the public service.

Catalyst (2020) posits that women are over-represented in support functions like administration, while men tend to be concentrated on leadership functions. In 2020, it was reported that in the United States of America, 40 percent of human resources Directors are women, compared to 17 percent of Chief Marketing Officers and 16 Percent of Chief Information Officers. The table below shows the proportion of women in senior leadership per region. Africa is leading, followed by Eastern Europe and Latin America respectively. Women in Business (2021) presented the status in 2019 on the proportion of women in senior management roles which grew to 29 percent globally. The argument as well as the world discourse by different scholars and studies on this matter are the reality that faces the world, and it should be confronted (Catalyst, 2020).

Table 1: Proportion of women in senior leadership per region

Region	Percentage of Women in Senior Management
Africa	38%
Eastern Europe	35%
Latin America	33%
Eastern Europe	30%
North America	29%
Asia Pacific (APAC)	27%

Source: Catalyst: 2020

Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden referred to as Nordic countries lead the world in closing the gender gap through the implementation of different interventions that address gender inequality (World Economic Forum-Global Gender Gap Index, 2018, and Wood, 2018). Countries that have made progress in terms of the composition of the senior management in the Public Service or Public Administration institutions are Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and South Africa.

There is improvement in women in leadership roles. However, it is only visible in the private sector and excludes the public sector which has been greatly neglected for decades in South Africa where the study focused on the Department of Public Service and Administration. Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) argue that in this sector there is little improvement in the appointment of female senior managers. Hence, the report of the Department of Public Service and Administration was criticized by the South African Portfolio Committee in Public Administration in Parliament in 2017 as

highlighted by Nhlapo and Vyas-Doorgapersad, (2016) who state that the empowerment of women is not happening in any significant or meaningful way in the department. Women mostly occupy lower levels where the power to influence decisions is diminished. A comparative study on how different countries implement gender mainstreaming for purposes of gender equality in the recruitment process of senior management, whereby developed and underdeveloped countries were selected for this purpose was done. As already discussed, the Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was a key source of gender equality in the world.

Only four Nordic countries, namely; Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden lead the world in closing the gender gap through the implementation of Mandatory Parental Leave and quotas (World Economic Forum-Global Gender Gap Index, 2018). The lessons learned from the successes of Ireland are that gender equality is a collective effort that requires political will and, the availability of tools such as legislation, gender budgeting and quotas. On the other hand, Marinossdottir & Erlingsdottir (2017) posit that women in Ireland took power and created alternatives to make invisible realities of women visible.

The Public Workforce Data Report (2017) shows that out of 60 percent of New Zealand's overall public service workforce, women held 53 percent of senior management posts in 2020. Leal (2018) argues that New Zealand reached 50 per cent of women's representation in the public service due to the development, launching and implementation of the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan in July 2018 and the commitment displayed by both Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and the Minister for Women, Julie Anne Genter. Clearly, political will plays a critical role in ensuring gender representation and balance. The World Economic Forum (2018) reported that the United States of America was ranked 51st in terms of gender equality out of 149 countries due to the failure of an adequate number of states to ratify its Equal Rights Amendment which was introduced in 1923 and later repealed in 1982 (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2013).

In Rwanda, women make up 68 percent in parliament (Eweniyi, 2018) and occupy 54 of the available 80 parliamentary seats (New Times Rwanda, 2019). This is an encouraging example for other African countries. Nader (2017) asserts that progress in Rwanda is a result of the Rwandan government taking steps to promote gender equality

and women empowerment. Eweyini (2018) argues that Rwanda is a world leader for women in politics even though no woman has managed to become president. The successful implementation of these policies, laws and programs left an impact on women's lives (Nader, 2017).

In 2018, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced 50 percent representation of women in cabinet in addition to appointing Sahle-Work Zewde as the president. According to Global Citizen (2018), this effort would restore peace and stability. Kedijang (2018) argues that if patriarchy is to be dismantled in governance; there is a need to go beyond enshrining gender equality in the constitution. Quffa (2016) postulates that gender inequality is a challenge facing all societies in both first, second and third-world countries.

At the national level in Zimbabwe, Section 17 of the Constitution states that there must be full gender balance and visible participation of women in all spheres of government (Public Service Commission, 2015). However, the table below shows the status of women in the top positions in the Zimbabwe Public Service paints a different picture for a three-year period.

Table 2: Share of Women in the Top Positions in the Public Service, 2013-2015						
	2013		2014		2015	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Commissioners	4	3	4	3	4	3
Permanent Secretaries	10	27	10	21	12	29
Principal Directors	9	27	7	27	12	39
Directors	78	211	68	173	80	209
Deputy Directors	107	346	104	314	132	385

Source: Zimbabwe Public Service Commission, 2016

Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) assert that in South Africa, gender equality is a constitutional human right whereby women are afforded the same status as men. However, it has been over twenty (20) years since the promulgation of the Employment Equity Act of 1998, but the country still lags in promoting equal employment opportunities and fair treatment in senior management positions (Commission for Employment Equity Report, 2017-2018). Kayi (2013) asserts that there was heavy anticipation that the dawn of a democratic South Africa in 1994 would usher in a golden age of the eradication of discrimination against women at workplaces in terms of section

195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. To effect the requirements of the national, regional and international gender equality legislation; the African National Congress (ANC) 2007 adopted a 50/50 Gender Equity Policy which was later institutionalized in the public service through the Cabinet Decision of November 2012.

Kedijing (2018) is of the view that the Gender Equality Policy of the governing party has not significantly improved the position of women in society. In 2007, the Limpopo Provincial Government set a target to increase the recruitment of women from 32 percent to a maximum of 50 percent at the SMS level by 31 March 2009. The South African National Assembly passed the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill in November 2013. Section 7(1) calls for 50/50 representation and meaningful participation of women in decision-making structures. The President of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, for the first time, appointed 50 percent of women in the executive on 29 May 2019 when he unveiled his cabinet (Fleming, 2019). Despite efforts made by the President on gender equality, in the public service and administration, the Commission of Employment Equity (CEE) Annual Report 2016-2017 (DoL, 2018a) revealed that more than two-thirds of employees (66.7 percent) at the senior management level were men, while females only account for 33 percent.

Since 2010, many countries introduced measures for incorporating gender equality in their respective policies (European Community, 2010). It should be noted that a society's well-being depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream. Every individual and all people regardless of their gender are entitled to participate in economic, social, cultural and political development in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized (UN Women (2012). This requires all groups, particularly the most vulnerable, oppressed and discriminated against due to their femininity, to have equal employment opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

South Africa's success in bringing about gender equality has perhaps been most visible in executive decision-making, particularly in national and provincial parliaments like most countries in the world (Makgale and Chibwe (2019). The World Bank (2019) indicates that globally, in 2019, South Africa fell within the top ten countries with the highest proportion of seats held by women in national parliament. Makgale and Chibwe

(2019) further state that in 2009 in South Africa, 43 percent of Members of Parliament and 41 percent of Ministers were women and 5 of 9 Provincial Premiers were women while at provincial legislature women stood at 41 percent.

Parliamentary Monitoring Group (2021) posit that before 1994, the South African Parliament had only a 2.7 percent representation of women. People Assembly (2020) states that, during the Sixth Parliament, women Members of Parliament accounted for 48.4 percent in both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. It is a dramatic improvement in women's representation post-1994. Parliamentary Monitoring Group (2021) presents women's representation in the democratic South African Parliament (1st-6th Parliament) for both the National Assembly and NCOP in the table below:

Table 2: Women's representation in the South African Parliament

Parliament of RSA	6th	5th	4th	3rd	2nd	1st
% of Women MPs in the National Assembly	48 Percent	40 Percent	43 Percent	33 Percent	30 Percent	27.7 Percent
% of Women MPs in NCOP	36 Percent	28 Percent	30 Percent	41 Percent	17 Percent	*

Source: from NA and NCOP Table Sections

A comprehensive report by the Department of Public Service and Administration (2021) reported the employment equity status of senior management in the country as well as per provinces as of the 31st March 2021 through the table below:

Table 3: Employment Equity in the South African Public Service as of March 2021

PROVINCE	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Eastern Cape	578	
Female	256	43.03

Male	331	55.63
Free State	502	
Female	135	36.78
Male	367	62.67
Gauteng	1094	
Female	345	36.84
Male	749	51.67
Kwazulu Natal	888	
Female	283	46.78
Male	605	52.04
Limpopo	658	
Female	189	40.03
Male	469	58.42
Mpumalanga	375	
Female	101	36.86
Male	274	61.68
North West	328	
Female	132	39.29
Male	196	58.33
Northern Cape	226	
Female	82	35.96
Male	144	63.16
Western Cape	370	
Female	160	42.78
Male	210	56.15

Source: DPSSA Employment Equity Report of 2021

It is evident from the table above that in the South African public service, women are still underrepresented in all nine (9) provinces since men occupy over fifty percent of the positions. However, the report presented above shows hope that the equity target of 50/50 percent representation is likely to be achieved in the 4 provinces of the Eastern Cape (43.03 female and male 55.63), Kwazulu Natal (46.78 female and 52.04 male), Limpopo (40.03 female and male 58.42), and Western Cape (42.78 female and 56.15).

Equity in Limpopo and the Western Cape Provinces is above 40 percent and if they do not regress, they might reach the 50 percent equity target. The other 5 provinces that are trailing behind can improve if they can benchmark with other provinces on the strategies adopted and implemented to reach the current status. The 50 percent target can be reached by 2030 or even earlier by all provinces provided the pace is improved and sustained and with all the measures in place, and commitment to gender mainstreaming

(Sebola, 2017). The legacy of apartheid and the patriarchal system continue to contribute to the problems that are associated with women's under-representation in gender mainstreaming.

In 2019, only the Department of Social Development out of the 12 Limpopo Provincial Departments had attained or exceeded 50 percent. The Department of Social Development has 55 percent women in Senior Management Service and it continues to comply with the employment equity target while the Office of the Premier is at 39.28 percent (Office of the Premier Transversal Human Resource Report, 2019).

The Office of the Premier is not the only one in Limpopo Province struggling to reach the 50 percent target at its Senior Management Service (SMS) level. The equity status of all Limpopo Provincial Departments which have not been improving is reflected in the tables below from 2020 until 2022. The situation might mean the recruitment policies and Employment Equity Policies are flawed or there are deliberate efforts by those responsible for the final appointments to disregard them.

For the years 2014-2021, the Limpopo Office of the Premier did not reach 40 percent women representation (equity target) as the percentages were stagnant between 33 and 39 respectively. However, during 2020 and 2021, the status started improving due to the willingness and preparedness of the Director General, Mr Nape Nchabeleng to enforce gender mainstreaming which could assist the province to meet the employment equity target as required.

Table 4: SMS EMPLOYMENT EQUITY STATUS FOR ALL PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS IN LIMPOPO AS AT JUNE 2020

Department	Female	Percentages (%)	Male	Percentages (%)	Total
Office of the Premier	27	42.2	37	57%	64
Education	20	32.8	41	67.2	61
Agriculture & Rural Development	18	47.4	20	52.6	38
Treasury	20	40.8	29	59.2	49
LEDET	16	40.0	24	60.0	40
Health	36	43.9	46	56.1	82
Transport & Community Safety	11	28.9	27	71.1	38

Public Works, Roads & Infrastructure	12	36.4	21	63.6	33
COGHSTA	21	42.0	29	63.6	50
Social Development	14	51.9	13	48.1	23
Sport, Arts & Culture	8	40.0	12	60.0	19
TOTAL	199	40.0	299	60.0	497

Limpopo Office of the Premier: 2023

Table 5: EMPLOYMENT EQUITY STATUS FOR ALL PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS AS AT JUNE 2021

Department	Female	Percentages (%)	Male	Percentages (%)	Total
Office of the Premier	29	46.0	34	54.0	63
Education	20	32.3	42	67.7	62
Agriculture & Rural Development	14	48.3	15	51.7	29
Treasury	20	41.7	28	58.3	48
LEDET	16	38.1	26	61.9	42
Health	35	44.3	44	55.7	79
Transport & Community Safety	12	32.4	25	67.6	37
Public Works, Roads & Infrastructure	12	37.5	20	62.5	32
COGHSTA	20	42.6	27	57.4	47
Social Development	14	48.	15	51.7	29
Sport, Arts & Culture	5	26.3	14	73.7	19
TOTAL	197	40.5	290	59.6	487

Limpopo Office of the Premier: 2023

Table 6: EMPLOYMENT EQUITY STATUS FOR ALL PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS AS AT JUNE 2022

Department	Female	Percentages (%)	Male	Percentages (%)	Total
Office of the Premier	27	43.5	35	56.5	62
Education	22	34.9	41	65.1	63
Agriculture & Rural Development	16	50	16	50.	32

Treasury	18	42.9	24	57.1	42
LEDET	16	38.1	26	61.9	41
Health	30	43.5	39	56.5	69
Transport & Community Safety	14	40.0	21	60.0	35
Public Works, Roads & Infrastructure	9	31.0	20	69.0	29
COGHSTA	17	43.6	22	56.4	39
Social Development	14	51.9	13	48.1	27
Sport, Arts & Culture	8	40.0	12	60.0	20
TOTAL	190	41.4	269	58.6	459

Source: Limpopo Office of the Premier, 2023

It is evident from the three tables above that the mainstreaming of gender as a way of gender representation in the Limpopo Office of the Premier has been between 42 to 46 percent while males were 54 to 56 percent respectively. However, with two provincial departments that have above 50 percent female representation shows that the 50 percent equity target is achievable.

The researcher views the South African government as committed to implementing policies to promote women's representation in the workplace. However, the government has yet to reach its target of 50% female representation at management level. Men are still appointed to a significant proportion of executive positions in the public service, and women are the minority in higher positions (Kahn and Motsoeneng, 2014).

The question remains as to why even after so Although many countries have promulgated measures of legislation and policies, there are still fewer appointments of women into senior positions. This matter lacks adequate publicity and a shortage of evaluation and evidence to guide programmes is prevalent. In many countries such as Morocco, Cuba and China, culture, traditions and historical background take centre stage of all the different barriers to the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming in the appointment of women in higher posts. Thus, despite all measures that have been put in place, the transformation agenda of appointing men with impunity to senior positions remains a challenge.

1.2. Problem Statement

Employment equity/gender representation at the senior management level is a worldwide problem. In South Africa, particularly in the Limpopo Province, progress on meeting the employment equity target and gender representation at the senior management level is slow. The recommendation of who should be appointed remains the responsibility of the Recruitment and Selection Committee while the final approval or decision for this level in line with the delegations issued by the Minister of Public Service and Administration is granted by the executive authority, who in this case are the Ministers, Premiers and Members of Executive Council (MECs). Chapter 9 institutions such as the Public Service Commission (PSC), Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) and Public Protector are only tasked with oversight functions focusing on investigations after the damage has been done instead of putting measures in place to monitor the recruitment processes. The Department of Employment and Labour has the mandate to impose a penalty of R1,5 million on institutions that do not comply with the Employment Equity Act, of 1998. However, the issue of gender representation or 50/50 percent gender equity is not covered by the mandate of this institution. The absence of visible evidence of penalties imposed on government departments concerning gender inequality necessitated an evaluation of the missing link between the coordination and monitoring mechanisms in existing employment policies and processes that are followed in the recruitment and selection of senior managers.

1.3. Aim of the study

The study evaluated the extent of employment equity (gender mainstreaming) in its implementation and enforcement in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier, Limpopo Provincial Government.

1.4. Study objectives

To achieve the above aim, the specific objectives of this study were:

- 1.4.1. To establish the extent of implementing employment equity policies (gender mainstreaming) in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier in the Limpopo Province.
- 1.4.2. To evaluate the extent of enforcement of employment equity policies (gender mainstreaming) in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier in the Limpopo Province.

1.4.3. To establish the nature of the problems that prevail in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier in the Limpopo Province.

1.4.4. To suggest and provide various measures that could improve employment equity (gender mainstreaming) on the appointment of senior managers in the Office of the Premier in the Limpopo Province.

1.5. Research Questions

The study answered the following questions:

1.5.1. To what extent are employment equity policies implemented in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo?

1.5.2. To what extent are employment equity policies enforced in the process of appointing senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo?

1.5.3. What is the nature of the problems encountered during the appointment of the senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo?

1.5.4. What measures could be implemented to improve adherence to employment equity policies (requirements) in the appointment of senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo?

1.6. Significance of the study

Since a research of this nature has not been conducted in the Limpopo Provincial Government, this study adds a new scientific body of knowledge on the appointment of members of senior management in the public service and the challenges thereof. The study would also add value to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Programme Goal 5 on Gender Equality for all countries to achieve gender parity by 2030. The study will positively contribute to social transformation in gender equality and women empowerment with a clear intent to transform historical gender imbalances and achieve 50/50 percent of Employment Equity (EE) targets. The study will further assist in informing policy positions by the law-making bodies to review and enforce the implementation of the existing gender equality legislation.

1.7. Definition of operational terms

1.7.1. Equity

Hasa (2016) defines equity as the quality of being fair and impartial. In this study, equity refers to a situation when men and women are treated fairly and impartial when senior management posts are advertised and filled.

1.7.2. Equality

Equality denotes the provision of the same resources to all people. Surbhi (2017) states that equality is the state of being the same when it comes to status, rights, and opportunities. Similarly, Hasa defines equality as the state or quality of being equal. Men and women should be treated equally when opportunities arise.

1.7.3. Feminism

Feminism is the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. Kristof (2012) indicates that it is the theory of political, economic, and social equality of the sexes and it is for this reason men and women should be treated equally politically, economically and socially regardless of their gender through gender mainstreaming initiatives.

1.7.4. Gender Equality

The United Nations Population Fund (2018) defines gender equality as a process of being fair to women and men. The World Health Organization (2017) states that gender equality means that men and women have equal power and equal opportunities for financial independence, education and personal development. Patriarchy is the result of a primitive belief system upheld by many patriarchists who still believe that women should always be subordinate to men in society, hence this also affects their appointment opportunities.

1.7.5. Gender mainstreaming

According to the International Labour Organization (2017), gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women or men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as those of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and

programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men can benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated in the public service.

1.8. Outline of chapters

This study is divided into the following five chapters

Chapter One: Introduction

The chapter presents the background that unravels the gaps in gender mainstreaming, the problem statement, the significance of the study, definitions of key operational terms relevant to the research. The chapter also indicates the aim and the objectives that the study sought to achieve and the study's research questions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews existing literature on the concept of gender mainstreaming aimed at improving gender equality in the appointment of senior management in the public service. The chapter also highlights what other scholars found about causes of gender equality in the appointment of women at senior management positions internationally, regionally, nationally and provincially. Additionally, it discusses laws governing gender mainstreaming including strategic approaches to gender mainstreaming and progress made by selected countries thus far. The chapter further reflects on the challenges facing the public service in the implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives to clarify the previous research, identify gaps for further research and recommend how the research problem in this study can be addressed.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

Literature regarding the theories that are relevant to the study namely; Social Construction, Standpoint, and Intersectionality are reviewed to show how they inform and guide the study. The recommendations from different scholars are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

Chapter four outlines the research approach, research design, population and location of the study, sampling procedure, positionality and reflexivity. The chapter also indicates

data collection and analysis methods, ethical considerations, establishing trustworthiness of data and credibility of the findings and concludes with the chapter summary.

Chapter Five: Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation

Chapter four presents biographical information of research participants, age, gender, level of qualification, years in the post and department. The chapter also presents data that was solicited from the participants based on questions that address the four objectives that the study seeks to achieve. The collected data was analysed using a thematic data analysis process. Data was analysed through indicating what other scholars' views are and their interpretation and understanding of views to respond to study objectives.

Chapter Six: Overview, Summary of Findings and Recommendations

This chapter articulates the answers or responses to the research questions about all the objectives of the study. It also indicates how the aim and objectives are related to the study and the contribution thereof. The chapter further states the new knowledge discovered by the current study. It also highlights the limitations and makes recommendations based on the study findings. Finally, the chapter provides a general study conclusion and indicates the lessons learnt from the research.

1.9. Summary

This chapter presented the background, problem statement, significance of the study, and definitions of operational terms relevant to the research. The chapter also discussed the aim and the objectives and the research questions. The chapter concluded by outlining the chapters that constitute this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the existing literature on the concept of gender mainstreaming in the appointment of senior management in the public sector. The section also highlights what scholars have found about causes of gender equality in the appointment of women at senior management positions internationally, regionally, nationally and provincially. The chapter explores laws governing gender mainstreaming and the strategic approaches to the process. The chapter reviews data from academic journals, business research and government reports, statistical data, and academic research reports and media releases. Further, the section reflects on the challenges facing the public service in the implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives to understand previous research, identify gaps for further research and recommend how the study's research problem can be addressed. Theories that are relevant to this study are social construction, feminism, standpoint, and intersectionality. These theories are reviewed to display how they inform and guide the study.

2.2. Conceptual Framework

The United National Development Programme (UNDP) (2015) argues that gender is a central organising principle of society that cannot be fully understood without being conceptualised and contextualised appropriately. Gender as described by The United Nations Human Rights (2014) point out that gender should be understood in the context of gender identity which reflects a deeply felt and experienced sense of one's gender, which may or may not conform with the biological sex one is assigned at birth. Siukola and Huma (2017) argue that the gender perspective shows that equality is a formidable factor that affects people's lives across age, class, ethnicity, or level of education. Tu (2017) states that gender equality relates to equal participation of women in decision-making. Dunavolgya (2016) questions the low female participation in senior positions in private and public spaces. Adeosun and Owolabi (2021) argue that over the years, gender disparity has been attributed to males' physical and biological structure, making them benefit more than women. This assumption is incomplete if it excludes behaviour attributes assigned to both genders even if they are inappropriate.

This study is based on the concept of gender as a socially constructed definition of women and men determined by the roles tasks, and functions attributed to women and men in society (Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020). Equality between men and women is a fundamental guarantee of basic human rights (United Nations Human Rights, 2014). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP (2015) argues that gender equality is an essential developmental goal vital to accelerating sustainable development amongst humans. Karimi (2016) affirms that gender mainstreaming as a major strategy for promoting gender equality. The Fourth World Conference of Women in 1995 provided for the mainstreaming of critical areas of concern through the incorporation of policies, structures, programmes and processes.

The South African Development Community (2015) defines gender mainstreaming as the intervention aimed at ensuring that concerns and experiences of women are identified in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of transformative policies and programmes in all spheres of life. Similarly, the Council for Europe (2017) defines gender mainstreaming as the re-organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels. The Council for Europe was instrumental in developing the concept of gender mainstreaming by preparing a conceptual framework and a methodology for mainstreaming the gender equality perspective effectively and visibly.

The South African Department of Environmental Affairs (2016) adopted the definition of gender mainstreaming as defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council. It requires institutions to thoroughly assess the implications for women and men of any planned action, including the legislation policies or programmes at all levels. The United Nations Population Fund (2018) defines gender equality as a process of being fair to women and men. The World Health Organization (2017) states that gender equality means that men and women have equal power and equal opportunities for financial independence, education and personal development. Gender inequality is the result of a primitive belief system upheld by many patriarchists who still believe that women should always be subordinate to men in society. Consequently, this affects women's appointment opportunities.

The International Labour Organization (2017) defines gender mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women or men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as those of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres. Such a strategy would allow women and men to benefit equally and inequality would not be perpetuated in the public service. It is evident from the United Nations Economic and Social Council (2010) that the goal of gender mainstreaming seeks to capture the key concepts of design, implementation, evaluation and monitoring which are suitable for use in projects and programmes at all levels.

Vyas-Doorgapersad (2017) contends that gender mainstreaming constitutes, a clear example of policy succession or policy adaptation, prompted by the desire to overcome the limitations of existing policies. Sebola (2015) states that it is based on this conceptual clarification that gender mainstreaming can be a workable solution for the challenge of gender inequality in the appointment of senior personnel in the public service. Ngomane (2017) posits that the gender equality effort is informed by the third feminist wave in the 1990s that calls for women to be appointed to senior positions in employment today as a global issue. Gender mainstreaming could be used effectively and progressively to achieve and promote equality in the appointment of women at senior management positions in addressing challenges of gender representation. The Office of the Status of Women (2013) states that the process of identifying gender gaps and alleviating women's concerns and experiences is integral to the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all sectors of life to ensure that equality is achieved.

The generic concepts of the definition of gender mainstreaming focus on how policies and programmes are developed, implemented, monitored as well and evaluated to cover both men and women. The European Institute for Gender Equity (2020) argues that gender mainstreaming is not a policy goal in itself, but a means to achieve gender equality between women and men and a necessary condition for the achievement of the European Union objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion.

Institutional structures for advancing women's affairs exist in several countries. For example, in South Africa there is the Ministry of Women, Youth and Persons Living with Disabilities and Commission for Gender Equality (CGE). Zimbabwe created the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, and in Rwanda there is the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. All these institutions are responsible for gender issues in their key performance areas. The Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Gender Mainstreaming Policy (2016) also indicates that gender mainstreaming seeks to create a value system in which equality is a core value, critical, and a must for both women and men.

In South Africa, the failure of the existing structures to perform as expected might be due to a lack of enforcement strategies and consequence management although there seem to be political will and support. Olsson (2016) argues that gender mainstreaming is the central approach to enforcing the current gender inequality.

The Council of Europe (2020) argues that gender mainstreaming should be a strategy for policy-making that considers both genders' interests instead of being one-sided. The Council of Europe also argues that when decision-makers and employees understand the practicalities of gender mainstreaming as a strategy; they are much more likely to abandon the narrow focus on women, but broadly consider both genders. Tu (2017) indicates that in the past, gender mainstreaming tendency only focused on women's issues and men were hardly mentioned in gender-related issues. However, Siukola & Huma (2017) argue that effective implementation of gender mainstreaming requires the fulfilment of certain measures or mitigating factors that government institutions should consider to ensure that there is political commitment, visible and measurable goals, and the development of a plan for implementing gender mainstreaming in all policy areas. The absence of or lack of consequence management for transgressors might create a comfort zone for administrators in implementing gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming requires the broadening of women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making. However, Olsson (2016) argues that leadership is critical because, without it, the much-needed strategic form of gender mainstreaming will not be possible as it demands consistent and demanding decisions on the implementation. This does not replace the need for targeted women-specific policies programmes, and legislation; nor does it do away with the need for gender units or focal points (European

International Gender Equality and International Labour Organization, 2022). Zhou and Chen (2019) argue that gender equality is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of societies including decision-making, and when the aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured.

2.3. International Perspective on Gender Mainstreaming

Ghorfati and Medini (2015) observes that women have been fighting for equal rights to vote during the first feminist wave, and have also been contending or struggling to surmount the right to equality in the workplace. Banaci (2018) asserts that these battles have been tough, and atrocious, and are still persistent to this day. Simialarly, Rincon, Gonzales and Barrero (2017) contend that the presence of women, in both spheres of the world of work, has undergone substantial changes in recent decades.

The Department of Environmental Affairs (2016) argues that the Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and the South African Development Community Declaration paved the way for countries in the world to set up institutions that would be responsible for the achievement of the aims of the Women and Development Agenda. Article 11 sets out measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment and to ensure the same criteria for selection in employment (UN Women, 2016).

The Gender Gap Report of 13 July 2022 by the World Economic Forum states that the Gender Gap in economic participation matters will take years to close (World Economic Forum, 2022). The leading causes are the low female participation in the labour market and women's underrepresentation in managerial positions (Vilches, 2020). Jones and Shinnars (2020) argue that the year 2020 was a key time to reflect on gender efforts and progress globally as the year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

UN Women (2021) shows that some progress on women's rights in national parliaments has been achieved. Stewart (2010) also argues that there is a belief that there has been significant progress towards attaining the goal of promoting gender equality and

empowerment in the world. However, the report is silent on the improvement made in the public sector worldwide because it only focuses at the political sphere.

Nhlapo & Vyas-Doorgapersad (2016) disagree with the Department of Public Service and Administration in South Africa which indicates that there is significant progress towards attaining the goal of promoting gender equality and empowerment of women in Africa as many women occupy lower ranks where the power to influence decisions are diminished. Siukola & Huma (2017) argue that the gender perspective is used for better administration, promoting gender equality whilst eliminating discrimination and improving relations in the workplace. De Silva de Alwis and Martin (2018) contended that many countries are peaceful and prosperous when women have full and equal opportunities, but the question remains as to what happens if they cannot make an impact.

The inter-parliamentary Union and United Nations Women (2019) reports that only 24.3 percent of all parliamentarians were women as of February 2019 which demonstrates an increase of 11.3 percent from 1995. Patel (2017) states that in the United Nations Women Statistics in November 2018, only three countries in the world attained 50 percent or more women in parliament. The Global Gender Index in 2018 revealed that fewer women in 2017 held a lower percentage compared to 2018 senior roles across the world.

Patel (2017) further argues that gender parity in the cabinet does not guarantee progress for women in public service. The progress on women's representation is slow globally; 36 percent of senior managers in private and public sectors are women while the presence of women on corporate boards as leaders is even more limited (WEFGGGR, 2021). There are different views about the status of gender equality on the appointment of women at the senior management level in the public sector because of the lack of information on the subject and seldom no reports. The proportion of women in senior management roles globally grew to 29 percent in 2019, the highest number ever recorded and it remained the same in the year 2020 (United Nations, 2020 and Women in Business, 2021).

The goal of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) calls upon State Parties to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women based on sex and is considered the most comprehensive national agreement on the basic human rights of women within political, cultural, economic and social life (de Silva de Alwis and Martin, 2018). De Silva, De Alwis and Martin (2018) identify what constitutes discrimination against women as: “Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made based on sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status based on human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other fields”.

This section of literature review focused on profiling the extent of implementing employment equity policies (gender mainstreaming) in the appointment process of senior management across countries. The enforcement of non-compliance, the nature of the problems that prevail in the process, suggestions and provisions of various measures that could improve employment equity (gender mainstreaming) provincially, nationally and the whole world were interrogated.

2.3.1. First World Countries

Most First World countries, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Nordic countries (Finland, Iceland Sweden, Norway) have employment equity or equal employment opportunity policies in place. However, their policies do not address gender mainstreaming or employment equity on the appointment of senior management.

2.3.1.1 United States of America

In the United States of America, there is an Equal Employment Opportunity Act which prohibits job discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex or national origin. The law applies to all types of work situations including amongst others hiring, promotion, training and benefits. Apart from the act, the country also has the Equal Pay Act of 1963 which made it illegal to pay men and women working in the same positions different salaries (U.S. Department of Interior, 2020). Affirmative Action in the country sets up procedures designed to eliminate unlawful discrimination among applicants (Legal Information Institute, 2022). In this regard, the United States of America affirmative action applies to applicants seeking admission to an educational programme or for

professional employment who cannot be discriminated against based on race, colour, creed or national origin.

What is not explicit from the two pieces of legislation indicated above is the implementation of gender mainstreaming on the appointment process of senior management at the highest institutions of both the public and private sectors respectively while women remain underrepresented at all levels (Paustian-Aderdahl *et al*, 2014). In 2016, the representation of women was 16,6 percent of the managerial positions in the country major companies of the United States of America (Rincon, Gonzalez and Berreto, 2017).

England, *et al* (2020) reveal that there is a slowdown in the progress towards gender equality in the United States of America. The World Economic Forum (2018) reported that the United States of America was ranked 51st in terms of gender equality out of 149 countries, and 53 out of 153 in 2021. There is also a dominant discourse that some of the first-world countries are patriarchal as they are seldom ruled by women. Rincon, Gonzalez and Berreto (2017) contend that data show the scarce presence of women in management positions in the U.S.A and further indicate that the major obstacles faced by women to reach leadership positions are gender stereotypes and, the glass ceiling. Women are confronted with a set of invisible and impenetrable barriers as they get closer to the top positions in the corporate hierarchy (Ngomane, 2017; Rincon, and Berreto, 2017).

The United States Department of Labor has two agencies which deal with the monitoring and enforcement of the implementation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as an independent body is responsible for the promotion of federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against job applicants. The commission guards against the discrimination of employees of different spheres through administrative enforcement who might be discriminated against based on race, colour, religion, sex, (including pregnancy and related conditions, gender identity and sexual orientation), national origin, age, disability or genetic information. The State University of New Jersey (2023) states that the other oversight body called the Government Accountability Office which is the arm of Congress assists with audits, evaluation and investigations on

diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility so that it meets the constitutional responsibilities of the federal government for the American people.

The Office of Human Capital is the premier human capital partner leading the Department of Interior's HR strategic planning policies, solutions, and oversight and guidance to further the Department's overall mission of the appointment of the best talent (U.S. Department of Interior, 2020). However, literature is silent on the impact of the work of these agencies as far as the implementation of gender mainstreaming is concerned and there are no records on this issue. Therefore, it is a challenge to measure or confirm enforcement of the status of gender mainstreaming implementation in America.

On March 8, 2021, President Biden signed Executive Order 14020 establishing the first-ever Gender Policy Council (GPC) and calling on the whole of the U.S. government to pursue a comprehensive approach to advance gender equity and equality (U.S. Department of State, 2022). As a follow-up, the United States of America issued the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality charged with the mandate of integrating and advancing gender equality throughout the U.S. Furthermore, the strategy will advance the rights and full participation of women and girls in ensuring that they are represented at the level of decision making. However, there is still a perception that the U.S. holds women back in the civil service when it comes to occupying higher positions.

The United States of America is continuously facing gender mainstreaming challenges both in the public and private sectors due to the failure of an adequate number of states to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment which was introduced in 1923 and later repealed in 1982. De Silva de Alwis and Martin (2018) posit that since the adoption of the Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1979, 189 countries have ratified the CEDAW, while the USA is conspicuously absent from the 186 States Parties including seven other countries which are Iran, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Palau and Tonga. The action by the USA not to ratify CEDAW puts it outside international standards for its anti-discrimination efforts and weakens it on an international level.

De Silva de Alwis and Martin (2018) reveal that a contributing factor to the growing gender gap in the USA is the lack of governmental and societal support for working women and racial challenges. The remarks by former President Trump used during the debate on equal pay that women will earn the same wages as men if they “*do as good a job*” cement and display scepticism towards public policy on wage discrepancies (de Silva de Alwis and Martin (2018). Of the twenty-five executive orders signed by former President Trump, none of them addressed equal pay for equal work and this is an indication that the USA does not consider workplace gender equality as human rights.

Paustian-Anderdahl *et al* (2014) state that one reason behind women's underrepresentation in senior positions in big organizations including the civil service in the United States is the undervaluation of women's effectiveness as leaders. To improve employment equity (gender mainstreaming) on the appointment of senior management De Silva de Alwis and Martin (2018) propose that the USA should consider ratifying CEDAW as it was in the task team of its development (U.S. Government Accountability Office (2023).

2.3.1.2. United Kingdom

The United Kingdom does not have a constitution that enshrines the principles of gender equality, and issues of gender mainstreaming are fragmented and disconnected from the general policy and agenda with no or little evaluation taking place (European Institute of Gender Equality, 2022). The UK gender equality machinery operates at the national level, despite some differences between the instruments in place in England and Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The European Institute of Gender Equality (2022) further states that Wales and Scotland are covered by the Equality Act of 2010, but they have their gender mainstreaming arrangements, whereas Northern Ireland has its structures, arrangements and methods for gender equality which includes its Gender Equality Strategy (2006-2016) and the Statutory Duty on Equality mandated by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act of 1998.

However, the European Institute of Gender Equality (2022) alleges that the 2010 Equality Act is the key legal instrument for equality in the U.K., banning unfair treatment and helping to achieve equal opportunities in the workplace (EIGE, 2022). The report by the European Institute of Gender Equality (2022) is a confirmation that it is indeed a

fragmented and disconnected general transformation policy agenda. There is slow progress of mainstreaming gender issues in the United Kingdom in addition to the fragmented policies. There is a gap in the Act since it only deals with and focuses on gender reassignment and is silent about equity on the appointment of women senior managers in the public service. EIGE (2022) indicates that the Equality Act of 2010 of the United Kingdom draws together previous equality and anti-discrimination legislation with a shift from gender equality to a concept of equality that spans all dimensions of discrimination creates a challenge as certain dimensions might be excluded due to the exclusion of gender in their definition in the Equality Act.

The Chartered Management Institute (2022) found that women make up nearly half, 48 percent of the United Kingdom's working population but males still dominate workplace management and leadership roles. The International Women's Day (2022) called on the government and employers to take concrete steps to tackle the continuing underrepresentation and gender divide within the UK workplace.

The Government Equality Office (2019) contends that women in the United Kingdom are more likely to work in lower-paid sectors of the economy, whereas men tend to work in higher-paid sectors in certain parts of the world. Women dominate other positions as they tend to work in lower-paying posts or jobs while they are underrepresented in leadership positions in most countries. The statistics presented by the Government Equality Office (2019) about the status of women in the public service are unreliable because they differ depending on the research conducted.

In 2016, women in management positions in major companies in the United Kingdom were 27% (Rincon, Gonzalez and Barreto, 2017). Interestingly though at political decision-making levels, the participation of women is also lower by 5 percent than that of men. The Government Equality Office (2019) indicates that in 2017, women represented 37.9 percent of managerial positions (which includes managers, directors and senior officials in addition to those with managerial responsibilities in other occupations). If these figures are a true reflection of what is on the ground, there is hope that the equity target of 50 percent women would be reached in the year 2030 although it is difficult to define the categories as provided.

The United Kingdom is confronted with challenges as far as women's advancement is concerned. Some of these challenges are women's commitment to family responsibilities and male stereotyping. The UK government should be transparent and formalise the process of the existing gender equality policies to address barriers from perpetuating the discrimination of women. It should also ensure that under-reporting on the status of women in the public service is addressed.

2.3.1.3. New Zealand

Section 73 of the New Zealand Public Service Act 2020 spells out the good employer requirements. Employers are required to develop policies including equal employment opportunities which promote diversity and inclusiveness that recognize the appointment requirements of women. It also mandates the ensuring of the achievement of pay equity between females and males (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2020). The UN Women (2016) observes that New Zealand has Equal Employment Opportunity legislation in place and continues its commitment to gender equality and improving outcomes for women through its involvement in Planet 50-50 by 2030 'Step it Up for gender equality'. Public Workforce Data Report (2017) indicates that out of 60 percent of New Zealand's overall public service workforce, women held 53 percent of senior management posts in 2020 from 4 percent in 2013.

Leal (2018) argues that New Zealand reached 50 percent women representation in the public service due to the development, launching and implementation of the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan in July 2018 and the commitment displayed by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and the Minister for Women, Julie Anne Genter. Political will plays a critical role in ensuring gender representation/gender balance. Siukoa and Huma (2017) states that political will is key for effective implementation of gender mainstreaming and that it should be a political issue where the results are visible.

Standerton-Gammon (2014) notes that New Zealand being the first country to grant women the right to vote, features women in several powerful roles, two women have held the position of prime minister so far and around one-third of members of parliament are women. The Global Gender Gap Report of 2016 ranked New Zealand in the 9th place out of 144 countries, yet the research conducted by the recruitment HR Firm, Randstad's Work Monitor on gender equality in the workplace and the Human Rights

Commission's tracing equality at workplaces, put New Zealand in the bottom ten globally (GGGR, 2016). Jacksonstone & Partners (2019) argue that it is difficult to concur with research reports because there are different ways in which gender is measured in the world. For example, the Global Gender Gap Report (2019-2020) uses economic power, education, political participation and health factors, hence these contrasting views. Jacksonstone & Partners (2019) suggests that New Zealand has put in place measures to ensure that recruitment processes of senior management are as free from unconscious bias as possible.

The UN Women (2016) is of the view that New Zealand is proud to continue its leadership role in gender equality in the international community and it is an active participant in annual international meetings focused on the advancement of women. It maintains a strong and consistent voice for women's rights and advancement globally. New Zealand's term on the UN Security Council offers an opportunity to contribute to the Council's efforts to address the gendered impacts of conflict and the role of women.

However, New Zealand's gender mainstreaming efforts are hindered by the Employment Relations of 2000 which is silent on gender mainstreaming (Shaw, 2019). Otherwise, in terms of the New Zealand public service context, some commentators believe that Equal Employment Opportunity legislation, policies and practices have been a positive contributor to women's advancement.

2.3.1.3.1. Causes of gender inequality in New Zealand

Gender equality in New Zealand is also perpetuated by sexism that affects women through their preferences that are shared by where they grow up and the sexism they experience in the place they choose to live (Charles and Guryan, 2018). Arquilla and Villiers (2021) acknowledge that sexism creates inequality between different sexes and genders, and therefore, government institutions must ensure consistency when implementing gender transformation.

Jacksonstone and Partners (2019) posit that unconscious bias contributes to the continued discrimination against qualified and capable women as compared to more conscious prejudice and discrimination. Dunavolgya (2016) observes that a similar pattern is exhibited in countries with different cultures such as the United Kingdom,

Germany, Japan, and China, Turkey, Sweden and South Africa. Dunavogya (2016) indicates that in these countries, both men and women believe that men are more likely to be successful managers than women, but men endorse such beliefs to a greater extent than women.

Glazerbrook (2016) posits that there are many talented women in the world. Presently, they are a resource that is being underutilized and wasted talent. Herry (2023) argues that gender-diverse workplaces can produce a range of professional and cultural experiences-skills and approaches resulting in improved performance.

2.3.3. Nordic Countries

The NIKK Information on Gender (2018) states that in Nordic countries, there is legislation governing equal pay (Denmark-Equal Pay Act, Finland-Act on Equality between Women and Men Section 6, Gender Equality Act Section 19, Iceland-Gender Equality Section 19, Norway-Gender and Discrimination Act Chapter 4 Section 26a and Sweden-Discrimination Act Chapter 3 Section 8) respectively. Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden are viewed and reported to be leading and top performers in the world in the gender gap through the implementation of quotas at the political level and mandatory parental leave (World Economic Forum-Global Gender Gap Index, 2018 and Wood, 2018). In the Nordic countries, the situation of women's representation in decision-making positions is generally better than the rest of the European countries with Norway standing out in this regard at 41 percent, Sweden at 36 percent, Finland 30 at percent and Iceland at 16 percent (Rincon, Gonzalez and Barreto, 2017).

The existing Nordic legislation makes these countries leaders in the world in gender representation at the senior management level. Sanandaji (2018) contends that the common view is that Nordic gender equality reflects the social welfare policies, and advertises and promotes these policies.

Kliger (2021) states that Sweden's government has declared itself a feminist government, as it has 91.7 percent legal frameworks that promote, monitor and enforce laws against discrimination. However, the boardrooms and business sector on the other hand is still a male-dominated field. Sweden also participated in the 'Nordic Model' of the national machinery for gender equality and the development of Gender

Mainstreaming that South Africa also modelled. Aleskog (2021) reiterates that the success of Sweden is because of the strong cultural, historical and linguistic ties with Nordic countries' influences.

Since 1994 the country has long been a promoter of gender equality as the overarching that everyone has the right to work. Sanandaji (2018) posits that in Sweden, strong progress has been made in the public sector as more women than men currently hold management positions, in politics, 46 percent of Swedish members of parliament are women, while the proportion in other Nordic countries is around 40 percent. However, it is very difficult to confirm the information provided as there is no evidence in the literature to support the above statement.

There are structures responsible for the enforcement of the legislation, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the Gender Equality Ombudsman, and The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman (NIKK Information on Gender, 2018). What has been raised with regards to these institutions is that some, such as the Danish Institute for Human Rights do not have supervisory authority to check compliance or monitor, but only provide guidance and support to employers and submit reports on their gender equality efforts annually including pay gap difference.

The NIKK Nordic Information on Gender (2018) states that the pay gap difference between the sexes which is 14.3 percent is the biggest obstacle to achieving gender equality in the Nordic countries due to the segregated labour market where men and women work in different institutions, occupations and different positions. Savage (2019) points out that other challenges facing the Nordic countries of gender representation are the stereotype syndrome, working hours to boost flexibility and unconscious bias when appointments are made.

Sadandaji (2018) is concerned about the Nordic public sector monopolies, tax, welfare and family policies along with ineffective gender quotas. Sadandaji claims that these combine to create the Nordic glass ceiling for women in reaching leadership positions.

2.4. SECOND WORLD COUNTRIES

2.4.1. Russia

Russia has a constitution adopted in 1993 under section 19(2) which guarantees equal rights for women and men regardless of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, official status religion, convictions, and membership of public associations (Berlina, 2021). The country also ratified all international legally binding and non-binding documents regarding gender equality and human rights including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Millennium Goals (UN Women, 2014).

Berlina (2021) posits that in Russia, equal employment rights are guaranteed to all employees notwithstanding their nationality in all spheres of government. In 2017, the Government of the Russian Federation approved the National Strategy of Action for Women 2017-2022, gender quotas and the draft Federal law called “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Freedoms for Men and Women, Equal Opportunities to their Implementation”. Korniakova *et al* (2020) argue that all these proposed measures were met with a negative conclusion and the bill was shelved. Korniakova *et al* (2021) further indicates that the second attempt to submit the draft law on hiring, promotion and salary also faced considerable resistance from different structures, the nationalist, Orthodox and parental communities.

This fierce criticism from conservative circles for whom the word “gender” itself is associated with something negative. Zakirova (2014) posits that despite these gains above, studies found that gender mainstreaming in Russia has not been effective in all aspects of policy and programming due to amongst others, a lack of systematic work on elimination of gender inequality.

As an effort to enforce and ensure equal representation or gender balance of women and men at different levels of political power and gender quotas were introduced. The Commissioner for Gender Equality in Russia who operates like a department and the Ombudsman monitors the observance of the principle in a particular area considering gender discrimination on an individual context (Korniakova *et al*, 2021). However, it is difficult to deduce what and how gender mainstreaming policies enforce compliance.

The role of the existing structures is solely to monitor the observance of gender policies and not to enforce them.

Zubacheva (2018) highlights that some major challenges of gender inequality (gender mainstreaming) in Russia are that feminists remain weak and unpopular, which partially explains the widening of gender gaps. Korniakova *et al* (2021), Rozhanovskaya and Patrini (2020) assert that there is a widespread perception of inequality as a norm in Russia so that the women victims of oppression in the workforce may not even notice the discrimination.

Suggested measures are that Russia should give special attention to gender inequality both from the side of the public administration institutions and other structures of civil public control. The Department of Social Welfare should deal with women's issues gender needs assessment, monitoring and gender-responsive programmes.

2.4.2. The People's Republic of China

Women's rights are a global issue, and in China, women are still faced with gender bias in the workplace (Dasgupta, Matsumolo and Xia, 2015). Compliant Papers (2021) argues that no country in the world is yet to achieve gender equality as women around the world continue to battle discrimination in their workplaces, and accordingly, gender mainstreaming may be a solution.

Dasgupta, Matsumolo and Xia, (2015) posit that at an international level, the Chinese government's commitment to gender equality was articulated at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. Zhang and Hunag (2020) indicate that since 1990, several legislation and laws echoed the goal of gender equality and committed that China shall strengthen the protection of women as per Article 48 of Chapter 2 of the Republic of the China Constitution. Stauffer (2019) notes that China enacted different laws aimed at governing gender equality and prohibiting discrimination. The laws stipulate that unless the state or government accept women to perform certain types of jobs which are unsuitable for them, employers cannot recruit women for such jobs because of gender stereotypes.

However, Laney (2019) observes that despite all the existing employment promotion laws, China is facing serious challenges of discrimination against women. Various institutions, with men-only advertisements showing bias for the male gender, have been recorded. In 2018, approximately one-fifth of China's civil service advertisements specified a preference for male over female applicants. The Human Rights Watch (2018) raised a concern about discriminatory job advertisements whereby in 2017, a total of 32 percent and 19 percent in 2019 specified "men only", "men preferred" or "suitable for men" were done.

Stauffer (2018) gives an example regarding this discrimination as when the Ministry of Public Security advertised 33 posts of which 27 specified "men only" making the Ministry the most human rights violator. The Human Rights Watch (2018) acknowledges that in job advertisements targeting women, many employers include discriminatory marital status and physical attributes such as weight and height which have nothing to do with the job requirements. Webster and Rosseau (2019) remark about the continuous job discrimination while the Chinese Law succinctly prohibits employers from asking women about their marital or family status as well as agreeing not to have children as one of the employment conditions.

The Government of China has a legislative framework to deter gender discrimination in the workplace, and in recruitment, "Law of the People's Republic of China on Promotion of Employment" (Dasgupta, Matsumolo and Xia, 2015). However, discrimination practices continue to take place and the Human Rights Watch (2020) provides reasons that are part of the exclusion of women from their job advertisements such as "frequent overtime work" "heavy workload" and "frequent travel" and only one percent of the advert state the preference for women. The observation is that the Chinese government's inclusion of these requirements in job advertisements is tailor-made to exclude women from applying for senior positions.

China's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) jointly with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme People's Court and several other central government authorities issued a Circular in 2019 on Further Regulating Recruitment Activities to Promote Equal Employment for Women (Laney, 2019). It prohibits discriminatory practices in hiring female candidates including specifying

gender requirement or gender priority in hiring advertisements, restricting female applicants based on gender, asking female applicants about their marriage and children status, restricting childbirth as a condition of employment and raising qualifying standards only on female applicants.

In China, interviews are conducted by the Appointment Boards established for each line department. However, discretionary appointments allow political leaders to appoint candidates of their own choice from both inside and outside the public service. The Human Rights Watch (2018) raised a concern about the failure of the President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping to protect women or end this practice. The other major challenge in China as far as recruitment is concerned, is the lack of political leadership in which one of the Ministries violated the laws by specifying a preference for men in its job advertisement without any consequence. Qui (2015) observes that in China, gender mainstreaming at a high level could create more publicity opportunities for China's First Lady in advancing both her policy and personal aspirations. This practice excludes ordinary women from accessing the same opportunities.

The Human Rights Watch (2023) notes that the main enforcement agencies such as local bureaus of human resources and social security and bureaus of industry and commerce rarely proactively investigate companies and institutions that violate relevant laws, and their responses to the complaints lodged are irregular and inconsistent. Sometimes the Bureaus only order these institutions which published gender discriminatory advertisements to remove or change the advertisement on rare occasions.

Zhou and Chen (2019) state that there are complex factors contributing to gender inequality in China, including cultural, political, historical and other factors that have a traditional origin while others have emerged in recent years. Secondly, the existing laws and regulations are deficient to protect and promote females' human rights. However, Qiu (2015) argues that China is increasingly transforming itself from what is called a "game player" to a "game maker" about gender equality and women empowerment. The Human Rights Watch (2018) proposes that the Chinese authorities should act now and enforce existing laws to end government and private hiring practices that blatantly discriminate against women.

2.4.3. India

The constitution of India is the source of fundamental rights. Article 16 of the Constitution of Indian is one of these fundamental rights provided to the citizens. The article states: “There shall be equal opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State”. However, Manglic (2019) argues that gender equality in India is a topic of concern because it deals with the rights of women and men whose rights have continuously been infringed. Diamant (2022) adds that traditional gender norms and “Son Preference” still hold sway in the country. In 2013, India was ranked 121 out of 131 countries on female labour force participation in the world. Deb (2015) notes that the Human Development Report of 2013 compiled by the United Nations Development Programme classified India as the worst place in the South-Asian Region for gender inequality for women in the labour market. Jayachandran (2014) also states that according to the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report (WEFGGGR) of 2021, India was ranked 112 of 153 countries, and 140 out of 156 in 2021, becoming the third-worst performer in South Asia.

The Government of India (2017a) reported that, as of 31 March 2016, the operational Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) employed over 1.23 million people which exclude contractual workers compared to 1.29 million in 2014-15, showing a decline of 4 percent. Accordingly, this decline was significant because women were already underrepresented in the Central Public Sector Enterprise, especially when compared to the national average of 26.9 percent for the female labour force (Government of India (2017a). Pradhan (2014) commended the increase in the share of women in managerial or executive posts provided the statistics are a true reflection of the status of women managers that are available in many countries in the world.

Geete (2016) observed that the percentage of women employed by the Centre for Public Service Enterprises (CPSE) in middle-level positions who are supervisors also declined within three financial years. This has a significant contribution for succession in the senior management positions. The trend is in line with what is reported that other systemic issues are compelling or causing women to leave the labour force, known as a “leaking pipeline”. This is an important issue given that the government prefers to fill top posts in public sector enterprises with internal candidates. A positive trend in India is an

increased percentage at the supervisors' level i.e., from 6.82 percent in 2015-2016 to 9.8 percent in 2016-2017 (Geete, 2016). These statistics, however, do not reflect the position or status of female senior management in the public sector of India which will inform the facts, status and effective conclusion of the current study.

Pradhan (2014) asserts that there is consensus that despite the existing legal provisions, women are often deprived of their basic rights, subjected to low-paid, marginal jobs, excluded from the decision-making in both politics and economy and not acknowledged as contributors to the family and society as a whole. Qadir (2017) argues that while gender inequality in many arenas has been on the agenda of social research and activism for decades, gender inequality in organizational leadership has been sadly overlooked, Deb (2015) points out that the UNDP's Human Development Report of 2013 categorized India as the worst place in the South Asian region as far as women rights are concerned. The assessment of secondary sources indicates that data about Indian female senior managers is non-existent, reflecting the lack of attention to gender mainstreaming in society. Qadir (2017) posits that 2 women per 100 economically active men take administrative and managerial positions in India.

In 2021, women held only 10 per cent of management positions or roles in India while the neighbouring countries registered 8 percent in South Korea, 6 percent in the Russian Federation and 4 percent in Pakistan respectively (Catalyst, 2022). Pradhan (2014) contends that women are adequately represented in the workforce, but hardly present in managerial positions. Qadir (2019) reports the Centre for Social Research (CSR) revealed that women continuously face the problems of inequality in every field whether it is in government or non-government organizations because men always think that women cannot be good leaders or managers.

2.4.3.1. Gender Inequality in India

Pradhan (2014) states that the origin of gender inequality has always been male dominance. Jha and Nagar (2015) note that the reality of gender inequality in India is very complex and diversified because it exists in every field such as employment opportunities. India is ranked 132 out of 187 countries in the gender inequality index-lower than Pakistan at 123 (The Human Resource Development Report, 2013). The report also states that all countries in South Asia, except Afghanistan, were a better

place for women than India, with Sri Lanka (75) topping them all. The report further highlights that in India, the sex selection phenomenon which led to gender inequality has been in place since 1980.

Ngomane (2017) supports the view that inequality in India is perpetuated by natality where preference is given to certain genders and masculinity is given priority. Jha and Nagar (2015) adds that this is problem in many male-dominated societies that manifests in the form of parents wanting their newborn to be a boy rather than a girl. Pradhan (2014) further argues that Employment inequality is another factor women often face more than men when it comes to employment as well as promotion at work. Masculinity and femininity find their contestation from families and the failures to implement gender mainstreaming. Pradhan (2014) states that this is exemplified by males getting priorities for better work opportunities than their female counterparts. Job reservation is rife in India and Hays (2021) indicates that most occupational structures remain gendered while women still dominate clerical support roles. The women's absence in parliament according to the opposition parties is a belief that women are born to do household tasks and manage children and families (Hays, 2021).

Pradhan (2014) asserts that the contributing factors to gender inequality in India relate to economic employment inequality whereby women are not able to move up into higher-paid positions as quickly as men. Men hold authority over female members and inherit properties and assets. Cultural practices where boys inherit everything and are viewed as giving additional status to their family exacerbate gender inequalities. However, the situation is different in other countries such as South Africa where there is equal pay for equal salary levels or ranks regardless of gender.

The International Labour Organization survey recommends that India must reverse the trend of falling women's participation in the job market if it is to achieve its ambition of double digits growth (World Bank, 2017). There is also a need for India to ensure that women who are already in employment are given equal opportunities for career advancement like men. There is a perception that women are considered the "greatest hindrances" in career advancement that includes having a skills gap or knowledge in a specialized area, returning to work after a career break or maternity leave and lack of internal motivation are some of the attributes associated with such perceptions.

2.4.4. Cuba

Edwards (2017) posits that women in Cuba have faced a fight for rights throughout Cuba's history. However, the UN Women (2019) asserts that the Cuban government has in terms of the approved Cuba Constitution in 2019 committed to gender equality in all areas of life and non-discrimination. Despite this commitment, Wadley (2015) postulates that women's representation in the Cuban Communist Party (Governing Party) was only about 7 percent in 2013. This is displayed through the evaluation of gender equality systems which are not applicable in other countries. However, Wadley (2015) states that the worrisome issue is the fact that employed women in Cuba do not hold positions of power, be it political or administration senior positions.

Cuba appears to have made great strides toward gender equality as it was ranked third in 2015 in the world in terms of most female representation in the country's governing body (Wadley, 2015). Edwards (2017) argues that although there have been improvements in gender equality, there are still barriers that women are facing, and therefore, gender mainstreaming efforts, if they exist, might fail due to Machismo and Latino culture that is rooted in Cuban society. There is visible progress in Cuba both at the political level and in the civil service because the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments is 53,4 percent while women in management positions stand at 38.1 percent as of 2021 (UN Women, 2021).

Wadley (2015) further highlights that women in Cuba are educated in impressive numbers and they are also well-represented in fields such as professors, doctors, and economists. However, the official statistics do not tell the whole story as data might be manipulated depending on what the particular study aimed to achieve. In 1980, Cuba signed and ratified CEDAW but little is reported on the progress made as far as the implementation of gender mainstreaming is concerned despite the commitment made after the approval of the new constitution in 2019. Rose (2015) highlights that Cuban laws grant women equal access to public leadership positions but "Machismo culture" prevails.

2.4.4.1 Causes of gender inequality in Cuba

The common cause of gender inequality in Cuba is the culture of "Machismo" which is more common in Latin American countries (Wadley, 2015). Rose (2015) states that

Machismo culture impacts the way women are treated by Cuban men. Moss (2020) adds that women are relegated to stereotypical domestic roles. Rose (2015) further posits that Machismo encompasses a view that men should be strong, aggressive, proud, and dominating whereas women should be hyper-feminine, passive, and dutiful and this machismo attitude hinders the societal progress of women. Wadley (2015) posits that Machismo is deeply embedded in Cuban society and indicative of deeper, institutionalized gender inequalities as well. Machismo culture is defined as a sense of masculine pride, an exaggerated form of manliness that theoretically provides men entitlement in many spheres of life and Latin America. Fong (2021) states that there is a belief that men should display both practical and symbolic dominance relative to women.

Wadley (2015) reiterates that the machismo mentality ensures that men receive an advantage and the upper hand. The internalized machismo has led to the employment of more men over women in higher-paying jobs, thereby giving men more power. The existing discrimination and oppression of women contradict Article 42 of the Constitution of Cuba, 1976 which states: "All people are equal before the law, receive the same treatment from the authorities, enjoy the same rights and opportunities without any discrimination for reasons of sex, gender, gender identity ...or any other condition or circumstances" (Cuba Constitution, 2019). The same Article further enumerates other dimensions of discrimination such as the "Right to just remuneration" and Equality regardless of gender. Despite these constitutional guarantees, Wadley (2015) alleges that men earn more than women in the same professions such as doctors and professors.

Hernandez-Truyol (2017) claims that the other cause of gender inequality in Cuba is what they call (Latina/o) culture which requires not only certain behaviour but also embraces the appropriate gender roles which are feminine and that women in Cuba are the carriers of culture or depository of cultural values. Diaz (2019) highlights that other limitations prevalent on gender mainstreaming and female advancement in Cuba society are evidenced by two situations, namely; traditional roles for women and men and insufficient female access to top-level management positions.

Zvobgo (2015) suggests that women themselves should take an active role in changing their disadvantaged position by improving themselves academically and transforming their situation. Hernandez-Truyol (2017) proposes that women should work hard to break the barriers to achieve fair, equal chances and opportunities to occupy higher positions than men.

2.4.5 Regional Perspectives

Chiputwa and Qaim (2016) observe that gender issues in Africa have never been the same ever since the concept of sustainability was introduced over the years and this is because of gender connotations and inclusivity. Moodley, *et al*, (2019) notes that gender inequality in Africa remains high, and progress towards gender mainstreaming has stagnated if not slowed. Despite some gains, African women continue to face some grim facts (The World Bank, 2014).

2.4.5.1. Rwanda

Rwanda has become a pioneer and a role model for its dedication to, and progress made on gender equality and women empowerment. It is one of the global leaders in gender equality progress in Africa (Albert, 2018). In 2017, the World Economic Forum ranked Rwanda as the fourth-best country in closing the gender gaps, second behind Nordic countries (World Economic Forum, 2017). Nader (2017) asserts that the Rwandan government maximized gender mainstreaming through the participation of women in advancing economic status by introducing several policies, laws and programmes such as Vision 2020, the National Gender Policy, the Gender Mainstreaming Office and the Forum for Rwandan Women Parliamentarians.

The United Nations Development Programme (2018) highlights that the Government of Rwanda (GoR), with the United Nations (UN) as a key partner, have been pursuing gender equality since 1994 whereby the participation of Rwandan Women was facilitated by a constitutional mandate and the work of the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. During the 2013 Rwandan Parliamentary general elections, a record-breaking of 64 percent seats were won by women candidates (Nyirasabimana, 2018) and (Albert, 2018). The Republic of Rwanda (2019) reports that the increased participation of women in parliament is a result of Rwanda's conducive environment that allows equal participation of both women and men in the decision-making of the state.

Furthermore, women's representation in parliament has influenced and positioned the adoption of gender-responsive laws and oversight of their effective implementation (The Republic of Rwanda, 2019).

The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the Gender Monitoring Office, the National Women's Council as well as the Rwandan Forum have specific mandates but with complementary roles in the advancement of gender equality and women empowerment (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2021). The Revised National Gender Strategy of 2023 is the enforcement of non-discriminative laws and other gender-related legal instruments with a focus on the discrimination against certain parts of society (teen mothers) to ensure their social integration.

Unfortunately, the considerable representation of women in the Parliament (64 percent) does not reflect the reality in local governments as there are visible imbalances in favour of men (Nyirasabimana, 2018). Rwanda's political will to promote gender mainstreaming is also visible through its commitment to at least 13 regional and internal conventions and protocols which resulted in significant positive strides in gender equality and women empowerment (Albert, 2018).

A survey conducted by the Labour Force in 2017 found that there were 34.1 women and 65.9 percent of men in senior positions in the public service which is opposite to the numbers in parliament (Republic of Rwanda, 2019). As such, Rwandan public service should enforce the implementation of the gender responsiveness that was adopted to promote gender equality including gender mainstreaming. The other political leadership displayed in Rwanda is the African Gender Award for promoting women's political empowerment and Information and "Women in Parliament" in 2013 which was received by the Rwandan President. However, Cooper-Knock (2016) advises that there should be a balance between the political and administrative spheres of government so that the systems put in place are not sabotaged.

Ramparsad (2019) states that an enabling environment is inextricably linked to the overriding factor of political will whereby internal actors play a major role in the success of projects, without this political will of internal actors, the projects will ultimately be ineffectual. Notably, the 30 percent equity target set for women in Rwanda is lower than

what is contained in the SDG 2030. However, one of the successes or lessons learned from Rwanda is the encouragement provided to women to feel comfortable in speaking up, for their voices to be heard, and for all senior management to have gender results incorporated into their Performance Management and Development (PMDs) illustrating their commitment to gender mainstreaming.

2.4.5.2. Zimbabwe

Throughout the world, power relations prevent women from participating in the structures that govern their lives including equal employment at all levels (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2020). Equal employment at all levels can be achieved through the implementation of gender mainstreaming. The United Nations (2010) is of the view that although women make up about half of the voters/electorates, have the right to vote, and hold positions in offices in all countries and the world in general, they continue to be underrepresented mostly in national parliaments and public sectors.

Tarinda (2019) posits that the Constitution of Zimbabwe is the supreme law, and it was amended in 2013 to be in line with the government's gender equity targets and to provide various changes including the recognition of women's rights. Tarinda (2019) also acknowledges that the Constitution of Zimbabwe guarantees and recognizes the rights of both women and men to equal opportunities in all spheres of government. Tarinda (2019) further states that Zimbabwe is a signatory to, and has ratified, several regional and international protocols, treaties, conventions, and other instruments promoting gender equality in general which include:

- Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1991)
- Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)
- Equal Remuneration Convention (ERC)
- Dakar Platform for Action
- Beijing Declaration of 1995
- SADC declaration on Gender and Development with its addendum on Prevention and Eradicating of violence against Women and Children (1997) and
- The Millennium Declaration of 2000.

Several countries have followed suit in a quest to comply with the Beijing resolutions. However, Chinyani (2010) contends that despite all these measures, Zimbabwean

society, in general, is characterised by gender inequality differentiation and discrimination.

Maphosa, Tshuma, and Mavisa (2015) argue that inequalities are manifested in consistently low representation of women in leadership and decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors. There are contrasting views (Tarinda, 2019) of the view that Zimbabwe has made significant strides in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment, particularly over the past four years (Tarinda, 2019). However, The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (2020) disagrees indicating that in 2019, there were low levels of representation of women in all the selected public offices in Zimbabwe as the country is still having less than 30 percent of managers in the public sector like many countries which set lower targets in their gender equality strategies and policies.

UN Women (2019) confirms that there are institutional arrangements in Zimbabwe that include the establishment of a robust national gender mechanism supported by amongst others, the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, Gender Focal Persons, National Gender Commission, and the National Gender Policy and other institutions. Affirmative Action was put in place in 1992 which was meant to raise women to leadership positions by giving them priority over men (Hlatywayo and Hlatywayo, 2014). Despite all the conventions, treaties, measures and policies that Zimbabwe is signatory to, challenges facing women are deeper than what is being reported. However, Zimbabwe is still ranked 154 out of 188 countries and 126 out of 159 by the Human Development Index, 126 out of 159 by the Gender Inequality Index and 50 in the world on the Global Gender Gap despite all these measures (Tarinda, 2019).

The argument put forward Nyamazana (2019) argues that the challenge of gender mainstreaming policies in Zimbabwe lies with lack of implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. There are calls on men to support gender mainstreaming not necessarily for women's sake, but for true and sustained development. The ZILGA Gender Policy (2022) states that too few women are occupying senior managerial positions in Rural and Urban Councils and the administrative structures of the Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZILGA), Urban Councils Association of

Zimbabwe (UCAZ) and Association of District Councils of Zimbabwe (ARDC). Rincon, Gonzalez & Barrero (2017) observes that women dominate the middle and lower levels like in many countries, but they fail to attain positions in the top levels when opportunities arise.

At the national level in Zimbabwe, Section 17 of the Constitution states that there must be full gender balance and visible participation of women in all spheres of government (Public Service Commission, 2015). However, numbers of women in the top positions in the Zimbabwe Public Service for the three years (2014, 2015, and 2015) trailed at less than 100 with men above three hundred.

Kampilipili (2018) notes that the South African Development Countries Gender Protocol was amended to advance equality and equity for women in employment and equal pay for women and men performing similar work as well as eradicate all forms of employment discrimination. Kampilipili (2018) also highlights that Malawi and South Africa were the only countries that were yet to sign the amendment. However, the World Economic Forum Report (2019) predicts that it might take the world more than 200 years to address gender equality in the economic participation of women.

The UN Women (2019) suggests certain strategies to address the challenges of the underrepresentation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwe such as the amendment of employment policies to ensure that women and men have equal access to employment opportunities. This needs serious discourse despite these progressive laws to support gender equality because the challenge remains the implementation and the translation of these laws into tangible gains for women. Other researchers argue that there are many gender policies in place in many countries. However, there is a need for training on gender issues as well as the political will to enforce the existing policies. The situation can only change if all stakeholders (men and women) join the effort to address this challenge.

As has already been mentioned in this study, recruitment policies, human resources development programmes that target women, gender balance on the appointment of selection and interview panels have a major influence in ensuring that women are considered for senior management positions so that there is gender balance and that

women and men have equal remuneration for equal work. In Zimbabwe, these interventions and strategies can only be feasible if women are ready for the challenge as confirmed by the Deputy Commissioner of Zimbabwe Civil Service Commission, Mr Steven Ngwenya when giving an oral reply before a Parliamentary Portfolio Committee in 2014. He stated that the government's efforts to attain gender balance in the civil service are being hampered by the unwillingness of female civil servants to take up senior positions that take them away from their families. Some husbands do not want their counterparts to take up senior positions, whilst some women do not want to apply for higher positions because it requires boldness to fight against the belief system characterised by patriarchy.

2.4 5.3. Kenya

In Kenya, Mutuma (2022) indicates that women remain underrepresented in management and leadership positions and their positions are likely to lead to a wage gap between male and female employees of comparable experience, qualifications and training. Luchuma (2017) posits that the first independent Constitution of Kenya of 1963 discriminated against women and favoured personal laws.

Mutuma (2022) posits that on the 27th of August 2010, Kenya promulgated a new constitutional dispensation, which was hailed as the “second republic”. Chapter 2(19), Bill of Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is an integral part of Kenya’s democratic state. Section 20(2) states: “Every person shall enjoy the rights and fundamental freedoms in the Bill of Rights to the greatest extent consistent with the nature of the right or fundamental freedom. Chapter 24 of the Kenya Constitution (Luchuma, 2017) states: “Every person is equal before the law and has the rights to...” and Article 27(4) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 then spells out the rights of all people including the marginalised (National Gender and Equality Commission, 2013). The constitution does not differ from other countries in the world as it spells out the rights of all but gender inequality still persists.

Frosina and Mwaura (2016) confirm that Kenya is a signatory or party to several key international women’s human rights agreements including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing

Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on gender equality.

The extent of effective or ineffective implementation of employment equity policies (gender mainstreaming) in Kenya was evident when in 2017, parliament had three women elected and eighteen nominated to the Senate. Three women were elected as governors, 98 were elected to the Country Assembly and 599 were nominated in fulfilment of the two-thirds gender principle at the County level (Ministry of Public Service and Gender, 2019). The Ministry of Public Service and Gender (2019) further reported that other sectors in Kenya fared much better with women. The obvious indicator of gender inequality in Kenya is the small number of women in decision-making positions and other national governance structures.

The National Gender Equality Commission (2013) states that in Kenya's public service, relevant performance contracting sensitization on gender mainstreaming was considered key in all the operations within institutions. The second one is compliance with the two-thirds gender principle in the workplace. The later indicators focus on employment, recruitment and promotions in the institutions, addressing historical discrimination against women in terms of access to employment and decision-making positions. Ponge (2013) indicates that of concern is the fact that in Kenya, women continue to be grossly marginalized in many areas of society, especially in the spheres of leadership and decision-making. The UN Women (2020) indicates that only 30 percent of those employed in public service are women while 72 percent are at lower levels. Looking at the percentages of the total number of all women and not only senior managers explains the extent of implementation of gender mainstreaming thus far.

Mutuma (2022) observes that some of the major factors contributing to delayed promotion of women which top the list are organizational barriers, education training and leadership experience. Nigam (2014) concurs with the fact that in Kenya women face a myriad of barriers that are historical and social-cultural in nature in their quest to participate in management and leadership positions. Kirai (2014) adds that career progression is hampered by gender stereotypes, social cultural beliefs, organizational structures and individual characteristics.

Mutuma (2022) argues that measures of eliminating the barriers to women's career progression are continuously monitoring gender policy, strengthening the awareness campaigns within institutions and mentorship training to all women to defeat gender stereotypes. These measures emanated from the study findings on "Women's participation in management and leadership positions in the public service in Kenya, Closing the Gender Gap". Kirai (2014) asserts that there should be effective culture change and policy shift at the national level to redress the gender imbalance in career progression for women that currently exists and provide an environment where women can develop and realize their potential. However, the argument remains of whether political leaders are committed to championing gender mainstreaming in the appointment process of administrators (senior management) in their respective countries.

Most countries, including South Africa, Rwanda, and Namibia have Ministries of Gender, one would expect to see visible progress on gender mainstreaming in the appointment of senior management in the public service (Sudan Democracy First Group, 2018).

Despite these commitments, gender inequality remains a major obstacle to sustainable development. Democracy First Group (2018-2022) argues and highlights that key gender concerns include limited participation of women in leadership and decision-making at all levels and discriminatory practices on accessing employment in the public service. Sudan Democracy First Group (2018-2022) adds that key challenges to realizing gender mainstreaming include lack of allocation of resources, limited awareness in government and reliable data collection process.

2.4.5.4. Morocco

Hanasi, & Hites (2017) states that the Moroccan Constitution guarantees and commits to address gender discrimination between men and women. However, the UNDP (2019) observes that there is no major progress in equity status at the senior management level in Morocco. Non-discrimination in employment is mandated by law, but some provisions still prevent women from working in the same industries as men (The World Bank, 2018). Although the Morocco constitution establishes the principle of equality and

thus guarantees the exercise of gender equality for women and men, the participation of women in senior management positions remains low as per the statistics released by UN Women (2023) showing that women senior managers were 12.9 percent in 2023.

Zhou and Chen (2019) confirmed that women were still discriminated against and underestimated in the labour market and many of them have to give up their rights and opportunities when they face the dilemma of work and personal life. The UNDP (2016) also reported that Morocco still faces a variety of challenges regarding women's empowerment, gender disparities in access to economic assets, decision-making and opportunities in the economic and social spheres remain blunt, as illustrated by its low ranking in Gender Inequality Index (113 out of 188 countries).

Zhou and Chen (2019) indicate that culture and traditions are major discrimination categories that restrict women's progress such as unequal access to education, gender segregation and other social norms. In Morocco, men are still perceived as the providers and protectors of the family by their capacity to provide for family needs and being economically active (ILO, 2015). This suggests that women's place will always be in the kitchen performing house chores and taking care of children.

The Embassy of Morocco (2021) continues to intensify its efforts to bolster gender equality by doubling women ministers compared to the previous government. **Seven Moroccan women formed a government as opposed to only four ministers in the previous one.** The World Economic Global Gap Index ranked Morocco 143 out of 153, suggesting that the country still has a long road to travel despite making considerable progress in terms of gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2020).

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Aya Benazizi (2022) indicates that the Morocco government approved the National Committee on Gender Equality and the Advancement of Women which seeks to promote gender equality and women's advancement in all diverse spheres. It approves the New Committee to Boost Gender Equality. However, this committee does not only focus on enforcing gender mainstreaming but all women's issues. Literature is silent on the other oversight bodies Morocco has to monitor, investigate and enforce the implementation of gender mainstreaming. The UNDP (2016) states that stringent social norms and culture play a critical role in shaping the patterns of occupational segregation

and the division of labour. Moroccan female workers are concentrated in agriculture and the industrial sector but under-represented in the services sectors.

The World Bank Report (2015) reveals that women have not benefitted from the structural changes that have taken place since 2000 in Morocco. The country has experienced a strong expansion of high-productivity sectors such as finance and business services, whilst female participation is extremely low. Women have instead remained clustered in low-productivity sectors which absorb the bulk of the employment at the national level. The World Bank (2015) concurs that more women occupy lower and middle management positions or occupations.

Quardi (2019) indicates that Morocco faces barriers to gender mainstreaming due to discriminatory laws that limit any progressive initiatives. Ennaji (2021) asserts that Morocco is a patriarchal society where males are the decision makers and women are not treated equally to men. Castillejo and Tilley (2015) concurs adding that patriarchal norms are prevalent in Morocco because women are seen as subordinate to men. Quardi (2019) says conservative mindsets that see women as inferior to men discriminate against women and do not accept women as leaders. These conservative mindsets continue to dominate Moroccan society Morocco sets a lower target for women's representation in senior management positions, hence it might take years to reach the required target of 50/50 percent.

According to the UN Women (2021), Morocco should develop 66.7 percent legal frameworks if it needs to improve. In 2021, the proportion of women in managerial positions stood at 12.8 percent with no data for senior and middle management. The grey area relates to the difference between middle, senior management and managerial posts.

2.5. South African perspective

Meyer (2014) observes that the apartheid era caused severe pain through racial segregation, injustice and inequality to the majority of South African people. Larson (2019) also notes that the majority-led government of the National Unity inherited a country in which gender disparities were deep, and women, particularly in the black population, faced many disadvantages and discrimination through apartheid,

entrenched poverty and patriarchy. The Commission for Gender Equality (2018) indicates that South Africa became a signatory of the main international conventions relating to gender equality and the protection of women as follows:

- Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) ratified in 1995;
- Beijing Platform for Action which was ratified in 1996;
- Millenium Declaration and Millenium Development Goals (MDGs ratified in 2000);

South Africa also ratified the Regional Gender Equality Commitments, namely; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of Women in Africa ratified in 2004 and the SADC Protocol on Gender Equality in Africa ratified in 2004 (Commission for Gender Equality, 2018). The Commission for Gender Equality (2018) further states that in line with some of these conventions, protocols and treaties, South Africa has developed a range of legislation which addresses specific issues linked to equality (gender mainstreaming). With all these measures, South Africa does not have a genuine reason for not addressing and improving gender representation in the recruitment of senior managers in government.

Bangani and Vyas-Doorgepersad (2020) observe that although South Africa has made great strides in gender equality, gender representation is still below the 50 percent mark for positions that come with a great deal of influence. This implies that the 50/50 percent equity target may not be achieved by 2030 as per Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Programme.

As a way to improve gender equality in South Africa, the mainstreaming of gender was identified as a key process for instituting change to the new South African democracy. Makgale and Chibwe (2019) note that South Africa ratified the Beijing Platform for Action, an agenda towards female empowerment, and made a firm commitment to the mainstreaming of gender within the public service. South Africa's success in bringing about gender equality has perhaps been most visible in the area of political level particularly in national and provincial parliaments like the majority of countries in the world (Makgale and Chibwe (2019). The World Bank (2019) indicates that South Africa fell within the top ten countries with the highest proportion of women in national

parliament. Parliamentary Monitoring Group (2021) posit that before 1994, the South African Parliament had only a 2.7 percent representation of women. The People Assembly (2020) states that, during the Sixth Parliament, women Members of Parliament accounted for 48.4 percent in both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces This is a dramatic improvement in women's representation post-1994.

2.5.1 Legislative Framework, structures governing gender Mainstreaming (equality) in South Africa

Kanjere and Ngwakwe (2017) state that the South African government enacted and introduced several pieces of legislation and policies that were meant to address the injustices of the past. The legal framework for the recruitment and selection is provided for amongst others by the Constitution of the Republic of South, 1996, the Public Service Act, 1994 read in conjunction with the Public Service Regulations, 2016, the Labour Relations Act, 1995, the Employment Equity Act 1998, White Paper on Human Resources Management and the SMS Handbook of 2000.

2.5.1.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996)

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is the supreme law and the foundation of democracy in the country and its supremacy can be derived from specific provisions such as human rights, and the advancement of designated groups such as women as they have been previously disadvantaged (Mokhele, 2016). Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) state that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides for the establishment of one sovereign state committed to achieving gender equality between men and women.

The Bill of Rights is the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa because it enshrines the rights of all people in the country and affirms the democratic values of amongst others, equality and human rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Section 9(1) to (4) of Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, (Act No. 108 of 1996), states: (1) "Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law", 2."Equality includes the full and equal

enjoyment of all rights and freedoms”, and 3. “The State may not discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds including amongst others, gender, sex, etc”. It is on this basis that Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad (2017) posits that in South Africa, gender equality is a constitutional human right whereby women are afforded the same status as men. However, this assertion is not what it is on the ground as per the reports and evidence from different studies.

The legal framework for recruitment and selection is provided by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, the Labour Relations Act, 1995, the Employment Equity Act, 1998 and the Public Service Act, read in conjunction with the Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003. The legislative frameworks governing the recruitment and selection of SMS members are clear and explicit on the process to be followed. Therefore, non-compliance is just a choice which is currently not punishable or lacks consequence to the violators.

Section 10 of the Republic of South Africa Constitution of 1996 under basic values and principles governing public administration also stipulates: “Public Administration must be broadly representative of South African people”. This clause confirms that gender mainstreaming should address the imbalances of the past in particular for women who were oppressed, and discriminated against when it comes to occupying senior management positions in the public sector. Meyer (2014) asserts that the apartheid system has caused severe pain, injustice and financial loss to the majority of people in South Africa, with women being the worst victims and vulnerable.

2.5.1.2 Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995)

The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 is the primary legislation governing labour relations and promoting fairness in the workplace, protecting and promoting employee rights and unfair labour practices (National Debt Review Center, 2022). The Labour Relations outlaws discrimination in the workplace and sets out clear and explicit measures aimed at protecting and promoting people who were previously disadvantaged referred to as “designated groups” in terms of the Employment Equity Act (Department of Labour, 1995). The act requires institutions to establish rules and guidelines for fair labour practices which also includes the right to be appointed to senior management positions.

This study sought to establish if indeed the Office of the Premier in South Africa complies with the provisions of the Act in recruiting and appointing senior managers. Van der Walt (2019) indicates that the meaning of discrimination is important to all who live in South Africa. Sections 9(3) and 9(4) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 states: "The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, beliefs, culture, language and birth". Section 9(4) stipulates: "No person may unfairly be discriminated directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3) National legislation must be enacted to prevent unfair discrimination".

2.5.1.3 White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1996

The White Paper set out the mandatory requirements and guidance on the steps which both national and provincial administrations should take to develop and implement affirmative action programmes (Van der Walt (2019). It sketches out accountability, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the programmes (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1996). The South African Government's desire to bring about gender equality in the public service (sector) as encapsulated in the White Paper of the Transformation of the Public Service stated that 30 percent of SMS posts should be filled or occupied by women by 1999.

Eight transformation priorities including affirmative action were set out in the white paper for government to be representative towards the vision of a public service which is representative, transparent, efficient, effective and accountable (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1995). Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) argue that South Africa strived to successfully implement the transformation priorities except for the ones that have to do with employment in the public service. Hence, service delivery remains that of recognising the plight of women in the employment of senior management.

2.5.1.4. White Paper on Affirmative Action of 1998

For decades, affirmative action has been deeply integral and deeply debated (Shafer, 2018). In South Africa, the first formalisation of affirmative action was through the

Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) aimed at (i) eliminating unfair discrimination (that is, in current employment and remuneration practices) and (ii) taking positive or affirmative measures to attract, develop and retain individuals from previously disadvantaged groups.

Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) observe that the South African government inherited a public service which was strongly influenced by discriminatory employment policies and practices based on race, gender and disability. Hence, the White Paper on Affirmative Action sought to redress the imbalances of the past. Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) note that despite all the policies in place, lack of proper implementation of gender mainstreaming was identified as a major challenge. In many countries such as Sweden, the United States of America and India, affirmative action was regarded as illegal and unlawful in many cases presented to the courts of law.

Gaile (2017) posits that the Affirmative Action Policy promotes diversity, stops gender stereotypes, and helps to break the glass ceiling at the workplace as far as the implementation of gender mainstreaming is concerned. Other scholars believe that affirmative action is discrimination in reverse as it does not address the challenges intended. Turley (2020) contends that what is discrimination to some is affirmative action to others because it is not implemented similarly and to all people equally. For example, in India, affirmative action is used in education for minority nationalists while in the USA is used for students' admission.

The South African Employment Equity Act, of 1998 was enacted to promote equal opportunities by eliminating unfair discrimination against women who are viewed as previously disadvantaged groups (South African Institute of Chartered Accountants, 2016). This captures the essence of the study focusing on the unfair discrimination of women as far as appointment to senior management positions is concerned.

All South African government departments are required to prepare Employment Equity Plans (EEP) in which numerical targets are set and measures to identify and eliminate discriminatory barriers and promote workplace diversity are designed. The plan has a definite timeline for the implementation of measures committed to, the fixed duration, for

example, over three to five years and report progress on an annual basis (Department of Labour, 1998).

According to the EEP, the Department of Labour has the right to enforce compliance with the Employment Equity Act. In case of non-compliance, the Department of Labour can impose a penalty, to “name and shame” transgressors as well as referring the matter to Labour Court.

Since there are adequate statutory measures to ensure equity and equality in the employment of women, there should be other compelling reasons and challenges for non-adherence to the gender mainstreaming on the appointment of senior management in the Office of the Premier. The current study sought to determine some of the causes of the disparity between legislation and practice. It has been over twenty years since South Africa promulgated the Employment Equity Act of 1998, but the country still lags in promoting equal employment opportunities and fair treatment at senior management as set out in EEP (Commission for Employment Equity Report, 2017-2018).

In 2022, the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs joined Social Development in meeting the 50/50 percent Employment Equity target and has an approved Gender Mainstreaming Policy in place. Nkabinde (2018) argues that there is simply no real political will and commitment in some departments to transform. Rose (2018) suggests that leaders with low ethics focus on compliance, as opposed to commitment in responding to the legislation. Rose (2018) argues: “Low Ethical Leaders often focuses on the quality and consistency of enforcement, as opposed to embracing shared values and sustainability of outcomes in deciding on how to respond to legislation including gender mainstreaming”.

Section 9(2) & (3) of Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) stipulates that equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights by both men and women. The section further states that the state may not unfairly discriminate - directly or indirectly- against anyone on one or more of the following grounds: race, gender, sex, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, culture and language. The Labour Relations Act of 1995 was introduced to promote fair labour practices in the workplace while the Affirmative Action and Employment Equity Act, 55 in 1998, was

introduced to promote the constitutional right of equality and the exercise true democracy in the workplace.

In 2007, South Africa developed the Head of Department's 8 Principles Action Plan (PAP) for promoting women's empowerment and gender within the Public Service. This was a measure of meeting the 50 percent target of women in senior management positions. However, Ngomane (2017) argues that the objectives of the plan have not been achieved due to a lack of monitoring and consequence management for non-compliance. The Head of Departments' 8 Principles Action Plan for promoting women's empowerment and gender within the Public Service is just a plan for compliance purposes because it has not yielded extraordinary results since its development. The tool lacks proper monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to track progress on the set equity target.

2.5.1.5. National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, 2002

The achievement of gender equality in South Africa is also supported by an institutional framework of policies and mechanisms that include the National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality and the Ministry for Women, Children and People Living with Disabilities attached to the Presidency (Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020). The main purpose of the Gender Policy Framework was to reflect South Africa's vision for gender equality, and how the country intends to realise the ideal of developing relevant laws, policies, procedures and practices for equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres (The Office of the Status of Women, 2002).

Despite the availability of legislation and measures, a report published by the Public Service Commission named "Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives in the Public Service" revealed that there are many challenges facing the public service, as women's representation in decision-making positions is still less than 39 percent nationally. Nkabinde (2018) argues that there is simply no real political will and commitment from leaders to transform.

On the other hand, Kanjere and Ngwakwe (2017) argue that success in gender equality will be achieved if women can actively avail themselves for promotional posts. Rarieya

(2016) observes that women tend to be less aggressive in applying for promotional posts compared to their male counterparts. The gender policy framework works towards the achievement of equality in terms of access to employment opportunities as well as equality of treatment by all employers (The Office of the Status of Women, 2002).

The Commission for Gender Equality (2018) suggests a need to restructure the national machinery and to amend South Africa's National Gender Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality of 2002 as it is outdated and fails to clarify the role of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. Accordingly, the framework is outdated as several laws and policies such as the Senior Management Service Handbook were enacted after 2002. Therefore, there is a need for it to be reviewed.

2.5.1.6. Senior Management Service Handbook (SMS) of 2003

The Senior Management Service Handbook was developed to encourage good practice in the recruitment and selection of members of the SMS, thereby assisting departments in appointing high-quality candidates (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003). This chapter 2 of the SMS Handbook is advisory in nature and must be read in conjunction with "A Toolkit on Recruitment and Selection" issued by the Public Service Commission. The SMS handbook also emphasized that recruitment strategies must be underpinned by the principle of employment equity (DPSA, 2018). This means that EE should always be the focus in trying to meet the set target. The first gap identified in this handbook is that it is outdated and needs to be reviewed. Kanjere and Ngwakwe (2017) argue that failure to provide uniform recruitment processes including generic questions, be it face-to-face or technical exercise, so that candidates are examined with one common tool to avoid subjectivity, can be open to abuse by panel members.

The second challenge is the non-utilization of competency assessment for appointments. The current competency assessment tool is used for developmental purposes whereby skills gaps are identified for training needs purposes so that specific capacity programmes can be arranged. Kanjere and Ngwakwe (2017) reiterate that this competency assessment process is unfair because even candidates or applicants who did not perform well in are recommended for appointments. The gender mainstreaming training and its emphasis are done when appointments are finalized.

2.5.1.7 Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013

The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality was enacted to give effect to section 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 stipulating: “Despite any other law, targets for women in all laws and policies on empowerment shall be at least 50 percent The Ministry of Women, Children and People Living with Disabilities (2013) assert that in so far as the empowerment of women and gender equality is concerned; the Bill calls for for 50/50 representation and meaningful participation of women in decision-making structures (Women Empowerment and Gender Bill, 2013).

The effort by the President of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, to appoint 50 percent of women in his cabinet (Fleming, 2019 and WEF, 2019) was an effort to respond to sections 7(1) and 7(2) of Chapter 3 of the Women Empowerment and Gender Bill, 2013. Despite the efforts made by the President on gender equality in the public service and administration, the Commission of Employment Equity (CEE) Annual Report 2016-2017 (Department of Labour, 2018a) revealed that more than two-thirds of employees (66.7%) of senior management level were men, whilst females account for 33 percent only. This confirms the assertion by Sithole and Dziva (2019) that the failure of many countries to comply with gender representation does not require additional or more legislation, but a paradigm shift from perpetrators being men who are in charge of decision-making in the workplace.

The Minister of the Department of Public Service & Administration, Ms Ayanda Dlodlo when giving a speech on SA news on the 30th of August 2021, reported that women make up 53 percent of public servants, but make up 33 percent of the senior management. As of July 2021, the public service workforce had 1 216 812 employees, and of those, 754 534 (62 percent) were women and 462 278 (38 percent) were men (Sebola, 2015). Sebola (2015) observes that this report indicates that the South African public service sector departments seemed to be overachieving in terms of set targets for women in Senior Management Service. Similarly, the South African National Department of Labour and Employment (2013) showed that from 2002-2012, South Africa demonstrated substantive progress in gender equality in top management services positions in which women benefitted.

Additionally, South Africa is ranked number four (4) in the global scale of women parliamentarians (Mamabolo & Sebola, 2014). However, Olifant (2015) argues that there is no likelihood of South Africa achieving gender equity targets as set out by the Millennium Development Goal.

Sebola (2017) states that the legacy of apartheid and the patriarchal system continue to characterize the problems that are associated with women failing to achieve equality with men in the country. Osituyo (2017) is of the view that women in administrative positions within the South African Public Service continue to increase but that at the management level, it does not increase in the same proportion as a result of inherent patriarchal norms and tendencies.

The Office of the Premier is not the only one struggling to reach the 50 percent target at its Senior Management Service (SMS) level. The equity status of all Limpopo Provincial Departments has not been improving. The situation might mean the recruitment policies and Employment Equity Policies are flawed or there are deliberate efforts by those responsible for the final appointments to disregard laws.

For the past eight years (2014-2021), the Limpopo Office of the Premier as a case study never reached 40 percent women representation (equity target) as the percentages were stagnant between 33 and 39 respectively. However, during 2020 and 2021, the status started improving due to the willingness and preparedness of the Director General to enforce gender mainstreaming which could assist the province to meet the employment equity target as required.

However, Dalton (2017) argues that despite the availability of gender inclusion policies in the world, there is evidence that there are huge gender mainstreaming implementation gaps in the appointment of senior management. The status reveals that there is a need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the existing policies.

2.6. Barriers to Successful Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming

Mendum, Paez and Njenga (2018) observes that gender mainstreaming as a strategy to address gender inequality in the recruitment and appointment process of senior

management in the public sector faces challenges such as limited knowledge about gender, beliefs and the inherent misconception that gender is designed to favour or support women only. Bangani and Vyas Doorpersad (2020) contend that the discrimination of women and poor representativeness in the workplace can be traced to traditional norms and cultural practices. Wood (2017) argues that gender inequality is as old as the history of the Bible where women are portrayed as secondary role players in God's plan for humanity. Klingorova & Harvlicek (2015) argue that inequality presents and manifests as one of the most prevalent forms of social differentiation and construction.

Ramtohul (2020) states that patriarchy remains an obstacle to the transformation of gender because it operates at all levels of society, conferring privilege and prestige on men at the expense of women.

Shi, Kay and Somani (2019) assert that while women are well-represented in public service, they are underrepresented at the top. Wood (2017) reiterates that the nature of control may differ, therefore, it is necessary to understand the system which keeps women dominated and subordinate and to unravel women's development systematically.

2.6.1. Patriarchy

Ade Paul (2021) contends that the ideology and practice of patriarchy in the twentieth century constitute a major impediment to women's enhancement and progress in the workplace. Patriarchy is one of the barriers to the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming in a social system of relationships, beliefs and values embedded in political, social and economic systems that structure gender inequality between men and women (Nash, 2020). Mathebula and Motsoeneng (2015) note that patriarchy is a system of male authority which oppresses women. Wood (2019) defines patriarchy as a hierarchical system of social organization whereby men hold positions of power over women. Ade Paul (2021) concurs and posits that women are victims of patriarchy and subordinate to men.

Dixit (2020) defines patriarchy in the context of intersectionality where concepts and theories of patriarchy are essential to capture the depth and interconnectedness of different aspects of women's subordination and account for the different forms of gender

inequality over time. Galizzi *et al*, (2023) view patriarchy as the systems of social, political and economic institutions and relationships structured via gender inequality where men and male precepts exclude or reduce the full participation of women. Dixit (2020) reiterates that patriarchy rests on defined notions of masculine and feminine which is held in place by ascribing female subordination to masculine authority and virility to the other.

Ade Paul (2021) argues that the idea and practice of patriarchy and gender representation justify the urgency to identify new insights into the subject matter of gender mainstreaming. Nowadays, the word patriarchy has taken a different signification as it is understood and generally used to mean male domination in both public and private sectors where women are usually subordinated in various ways. In the case of South Africa's public service nationally and provincially, patriarchy is prevalent where males are dominating at senior management level. Shakar (2021) observes that people live in a society where their behaviours, thoughts and emotions are shaped by patriarchal notion embedded in the societal structure.

Singh (2016) affirms that patriarchy is believed to have originated in the earliest times as a result of the biological constraints which did not allow women to perform the roles that are regarded masculine, and therefore, this dictates and shapes how appointment processes of SMS members are made. Thomson (2017) believes that the culture of Western societies has consistently distinguished between men and women and therefore, they are expected to behave differently. Wood (2019) concurs that harmful and traditional cultural practices contribute to women's being excluded from senior positions. These result in discrimination of women, hence gender mainstreaming intervention is critical.

The definition of patriarchy referring to 'the rule of the father' (Singh, 2016) is only applicable in the family setting, and therefore cannot be translated to refer to the head of a particular department. According to Dixit (2021), this assertion interconnects not only with each other to strengthen the structures of domination of men over women, but also highlights other systems of exclusion, oppression and/or domination based on real or perceived differences between humans.

Altay (2019) posits that patriarchy is the prime obstacle to women's representation and Ade Paul (2021) holds that patriarchy is man-made and not a natural practice. Pearl (2014) argues that India is one of the countries where it is the worst to be a woman and tops all other countries in the world due to its vast size and strongly rooted history in patriarchy. Shakar (2021) asserts that the situation in India describes a culture in which males as fathers or husbands are assumed to be in charge. Shakar (2021) further states that patriarchal norms and values in India are a result of caste and religious inequality that haunts the society. Dandamudi (2018) also provides an example of a case where women were refused to enter the Sabarimala Temple in Kerala where that case was brought before the Supreme Court of India in 2018 and the ruling was that all people (Hindu) regardless of their gender should enter the temple. This displays how strong patriarchy, culture, religion, gender discrimination and caste are deeply rooted in India.

A country ranked last in the World Economic Forum of Global Gender Gap Index for 13 consecutive years is Yemen. Women have been suffering from deeply entrenched gender inequality rooted in a patriarchal society with rigid gender roles and have been ranked as the worst for women out of 136 countries (Shakar, 2021).

Ade Paul (2021) suggests that the creation of women's movements and the promotion of their visions will drastically reduce or completely eradicate the unfair treatment and domination by men, fostering learning as far as gender mainstreaming is concerned. Wood (2019) contends that the roots of patriarchy are so deep, complex, evil, repressive and oppressive and as such, it is hard to disentangle or remove it, and therefore, it needs to be contested. Mathebula & Motsoeneng (2015) argue that patriarchy in a society can be an indicator of vulnerability, and can confine women to numerous types of exploitation, all operating from the realm and guise of patriarchy. One of the visible challenges in the non-enforcement of achieving equity targets in the public service is the responsibility of policy development and monitoring structure focusing on the submission of reports and not the implementation and impact of gender mainstreaming policies.

Ade Paul (2021) reiterates that to respond to various problems such as gender mainstreaming, male domination, and patriarchy, gender mainstreaming should be fully and effectively implemented. Although various scholars such as Mathebula and

Motseoneng (2015), Dixit (2016) Wood (2019) Ade Pal (2021) and Gazilli (2023) define patriarchy differently, there is consensus that it is a broad system of hierarchical organization that cuts across all societal spheres.

Kedijang (2018) argues that if patriarchy is to be dismantled in government, there is a need to go beyond enshrining gender equality in the constitution, to dismantling all discriminatory factors that keep unequal power between women and men intact. Ade Paul (2021) contends that this is the moment for a drastic change to be experienced as far as men-women relationships are concerned to completely uproot patriarchy, male dominance and female subordination retarding gender mainstreaming in the public space.

Chaka & Segum (2017) argue that the achievement of gender equality will give the feminine gender her inalienable right, and help the world to witness the representation of women that has been dominated by men.

2.6.2. Lack of Political Will

Marquette (2020) describes “political will” as the commitment of actors to undertake actions to achieve a set of objectives and to sustain the costs of those actions over time. Phahlane (2021) says political will means a demonstration and commitment by political leaders to address the challenges facing society or to fulfil a political pledge so that appropriate policy response can be pursued.

The understanding from the South African context is that the parliament is the highest law-making body in the country while the other three spheres of government namely; national, provincial and local implement those laws. Therefore, political will is relevant as it is the responsibility of the political heads to set the tone for gender mainstreaming to be implemented. Roberts (2017) observes that political will exists when decision-makers who have a common understanding of challenges on the formal agenda, are ready and committed to supporting what might be a problem and suggest a possible and effective policy solution.

Karimi (2016) posits that political commitment has to exist at both national machinery to deal with policy failure as well as exploring the approaches to policy support through identifying key and clear messages to the technocrats. Marquette (2020) concurs that without political will and buy-in from the key role players both within and outside the institutions, the success of gender mainstreaming projects such as the appointment of senior management in key positions in the public sector will be unachievable. Ramparsad (2019) argues that political will has a significant role in the availing of tools for the successful mainstreaming of gender.

2.6.3. Organizational Culture

Ipek, Ayta, and Gok (2015) defines organisational culture as a set of philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and explanations, holding the organization together or what constitutes the identity of an organization . Kalaichelvi *et al* (2017) assert that organizations with strong cultures perform better than others.

Utoif (2020) argues that the workplace has sometimes been referred to as an inhospitable place for women due to the presence of multiple forms of gender inequality . Women are perceived as not being assertive, and therefore not suitable for the target in gender mainstreaming processes. Starmaski and Hing (2015) claims that at workplace women experience negative psychological and physically; mental and physical health outcomes. Witkins (2017) says organizational culture is a “culture” of how organizations do things.

The Global Human Capital Trends Survey Report conducted by Deloitte (2016) assert that in 7000 businesses in the United States of America, businesses with an inclusive organizational culture are more likely to be innovative (Kambil, 2016). Etofi (2022) contends that a strong belief exists that planned gender mainstreaming is needed to address gender inequality in the appointment of senior management in the public service. The insistence on “how things are done here” perpetuates the challenges of gender equality when appointments are made through gender mainstreaming. Those in charge must lead by example.

2.6.4. Enabling Environment

Ramparsad (2019) argues that the enabling environment is inextricably linked to the overriding factor of political will and without the political buy-in from within and outside any institution, the success of gender projects is unachievable. United Nations developed an Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System aimed at supporting the efforts to create a working environment that embraces equality, eradicates bias and is inclusive of all staff members (United Nations, 2019).

Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2019) contend that in ensuring that gender relations in the public service are fundamentally transformed to empower all genders, there is a need to move beyond setting numerical targets. However, Ramparsad (2019) argues that while an enabling environment plays a vital role in the successful mainstreaming of gender in the public service, political will is the most influential component in the development (creation) of an enabling environment for the above to be visible.

Gender mainstreaming will not succeed without the necessary resources. The Department of Public Service and Administration (2007) requires national and provincial departments to avail resources (human, financial and physical) to advance gender equality through gender mainstreaming.

2.6.5. Resistance to change

Khan *et al*, (2017) maintain that managing and implementing change is a challenge in the transformation agenda as there will be resistance that affects the change process, delaying, or slowing down its beginning, and obstructing its implementation. Mergaert and Lombardo (2014) contend that individual and institutional resistance (implicit and explicit) contribute to the ineffective implementation of any planned strategy as a result of poor planning, communication and lack of commitment from all stakeholders, clarity on the gender transformation efforts and the purpose thereof. Lilja (2022) argues that resistance sometimes emanates from subordinate positions while at times dissent is carried out in solidarity with others. Ramtohul (2020) observes that political structures and processes continue to favour men to the detriment of women and that political parties have remained male-dominant at all levels.

2.6.6. Gender Stereotypes

Biondi (2017) states that gender stereotypes are generalizations about the gender attributes, differences, and roles of individuals and/or groups. Similarly, the United Human Rights (2014) notes that stereotypes are a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that ought to be possessed by members of a particular social group or the roles that are or should be performed by members of a particular social group. Wood (2019) states that stereotypical generalisations are passed on from one generation to the other in a society.

The United Nations Human Rights (2014) observes that gender stereotypes may cause their holder to make assumptions about members of the subject group. Ellemers (2018) states that across different domains, gender stereotypes implicitly impact the expectations people have about the qualities, priorities, and needs of individual men and women as well as the standards to which we hold them. MacNeill, *et al* (2015) argues that gender stereotypes not only influence how men and women are perceived when they are being selected for future careers but also impact how the work performed by men and women is rated and valued. Nazmul, *et al* (2016) assert that the stereotypes about female employees are that they are committed and efficient only for a short period and that they are generally not reliable, have health concerns and are vulnerable to sickness and therefore frequently remain absent from work.

MacNeill (2015) cites an experimental study where the evaluation of teachers' behaviour (promptness) during an online course was rated a full point higher when the instructor was identified by a male name instead of a female name. Buffington *et. al.*, (2015) also found gender stereotyping when comparing wages of men and women entering the labour market with equal qualifications and employed in similar job types. Trevino, Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, and Mixon (2015) state that throughout their careers, women are less likely to be selected for promotions and prestigious positions than men.

Gender stereotypes and gender are human rights concerns that limit women or men's capacity to develop their abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives (United Nations Human Rights, 2014). Gender stereotyping is wrong when it results in a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Adeosun & Owolabi (2021) posit that in Nigeria, women are assigned to the kitchen role. Artemyev

(2021) posits that in Russia, there is also a certain stereotype that women tend to be loyal, and less prone to corruption, so makes the Chief Executive Officers hire them more readily as Deputy Directors and in state positions.

Nyachien'a (2019) also posits that there is a weak coordination and monitoring mechanism at national level. Shankar (2021) states that gender in the workplace is an important area that relevant policies must be put in place to address common stereotypes experienced in many government institutions. Gradin (2018) suggests that occupational segregation within the workplace is still dominant. Ganitu *et al*, (2017) argues that institutional barriers and gender stereotypes are documented to propel occupational (gender-based employment) discrimination which works against the interest of women.

Wood (2019) argues that the church played a role in the formation and up-keeping of gender inequality and how it shaped and constrained gender equality through a stereotyping lens. is the church supports that men and women are not equal while men are superior. Nazmul, *et al* (2016) observes that women have little or unequal access to employment and that an insignificant number of women occupy key decision-making positions.

2.6.7. Glass Ceiling

Although globalization and equal employment have created opportunities for female managers, they are still underrepresented in the corporate ladder and this is prevalent in the Middle East where women's employment shows evidence of reaching the glass ceiling (Marinakou, 2015). Fosuah *et al*, (2017) indicates that glass ceiling perceive women as substandard than men. Ganiyu *et al*, (2018) state that the idea of glass ceiling was first introduced by Marlin Loden in 1978 as a metaphor for the invisible and artificial barriers that block women from climbing up the ladder to senior management positions and also impede the promotion of women to decision-making positions.

Ngomane (2017) defines the glass ceiling as an unseen and unreadable barrier that prevents women from climbing the corporate ladder regardless of their qualifications or achievements. This has been women's battle for liberation since the last century as captured by the three waves of feminism. Nazmul *et al* (2016) view glass ceiling as a

situation where the career advancement of a qualified person within the hierarchy of an organization is halted at a particular level because of some form of discrimination. However, Ganiyu *et al* (2018) observe that women's under-representation in top leadership positions has been a barrier that is holding women back from attaining managerial positions in the workplace. Ragusa and Groves (2021) and Ngomane (2017) argue that the glass ceiling barrier is visible, however, it only becomes more apparent when women have to attain top positions in companies and the public sector because leadership is viewed as masculine rather than a genderless face.

2.6.7.1. Factors Causing the Glass Ceiling

Fosuah *et al* (2017) highlight numerous factors contributing to women being underrepresented in top management or senior management in public service positions. Fosuah *et al* (2017) reiterate that one of these factors is societal prejudices. That is, women spend a lot of time with husbands and children at home instead of time-consuming, recruitment practices, job assignments, mentoring, and succession planning that will create opportunities for career advancement in the workplace.

Adom-Asamoah and Adarkwa (2020) highlight that some women feel that starting a family causes a glass ceiling in itself by halting their career success. The Human Rights Watch (2018) that recruitment process in some countries such as China's civil service are gender discriminatory because advertisements specify a preference for male over female applicants. This shows that job advertisements play a critical role whereby the criteria for recruitment and selection processes favour men over women for leadership positions (institutional policies or practices are deliberately designed against women). Fosuah *et al* (2017) indicate that differences in personal characteristics such as fear, pride, lousiness, rudeness, callousness, time mismanagement, negligence, gossip, toughness, lack of self-confidence and loss of concentration hold women back from occupying senior positions in organizations.

The human resources management policies that are developed in organizations should make room for women to participate in decision-making processes. Marinakou and Charalampous (2017) argue that although there is clear evidence of the importance of women in leadership positions, research still shows that women are still underrepresented in management and leadership roles. The absence of women in

senior management positions demonstrates that organisations still fail to notice that leadership nowadays has new requirements that are a turbulent, constantly changing environment which requires specific skills and requirements that can be found in both men and women.

Ngomane (2017) cites the family socialisation as a factor that perpetuates female oppression and discrimination which prevents women from moving to higher posts later on in their careers. Ganiyu *et al* (2018) highlights the traditional and cultural inhibitions fostered by parents and duly strengthened by socialization as being responsible for few women in leadership positions. The value that is placed on a boy child makes him assume that he is better and more important than the girl child. Ngomane (2017) argues that boys are socialised with superiority complex. For example, in India boys are given special. The term “Natality”, is a preference given to boys over girls. Pradhan (2019) argues that this is a male-dominated society is manifested in that parents want their newborn to be a boy rather than a girl. Similarly, in Nigeria, women contend with many discriminatory cultural practices such as “Son-preference” among others.

stopGaniyu *et al* (2018) posit that in recognizing the difficulty generated by the glass ceiling, women have to realize that to crack it, they need to advocate and support each other in advancement efforts. Similarly Jones (2014) indicates that ironically, it is disheartening to find that women feel threatened by their women counterparts and more often are the major critics and impediments to other women. This scenario is referred to as “queen bee syndrome” in management. Dexler (2013) argues that women in managerial positions try to sabotage those in lower positions. Ganiyu *et al* (2018) affirm that given the disparity of women at the top echelon in organizations, it is equally possible that fewer women in senior positions make it to the top. Dexler (2013) observes that women join hands with men to sabotage other female employees at the junior level and engage in severe criticisms projecting them as poor candidates for top management positions and thus promoting the interest of the men’s club. Douglad and Porcher (2012) argues that what is more concerning is the fact that even if a female executive struggles and breaks the glass ceiling, she often finds herself trapped in a secondary form of glass ceiling glass cliff which is more precarious. Glass is a phenomenon where women are likely to be promoted to higher positions during the times of crises and set for failure,

Ganiyu *et al* (2018) states that the causes of the glass ceiling are questionable and its impacts are very visible and undeniable and the biases experienced by women are readily obvious. Ganiyu *et al* adds that the mechanisms underlying these prejudices remain impermeable. The International Labour Organization (2015) is concerned that despite some promising improvements, gender inequality remains in the workplace. The ILO further observes that increasing gender equality achieved in educational and work experience attainment has not stopped women from being concentrated in middle to lower-paid occupations. This echoes traditional gender stereotypes and opinions about women's and men's ambitions and capabilities. Ganiyu *et al*, (2018) state that in theory "nothing stops women from rising to the top position, but in practice women cannot rise in their chosen careers as men do".

2.6.7.1.1 Leader Preference

Goethals and Hoyt (2017) assert that changes in women's roles and leadership raise fundamental questions about how women lead and how their leadership is perceived. There are perceptions and arguments from different scholars that men's and women's leadership styles differ. Ngomane (2017) argues that women are regarded as multi-tasked, emotional, empathetic, strong, intuitive, compassionate, relationship-building, verbal, consensus-building, collaborative and gossipy. Although one cannot dispute some of the perceptions referred to above, this does not necessarily refer to all women as poor leaders. Men are seen as strong, arrogant, dominant, assertive, single-tasking, focused, competitive, stubborn, physical and self-righteous. Goethals and Hoyt (2017) add that another possible difference in women's and men's leadership traces to a distinction drawn from research in the 1940s exploring the roles that people play in groups. Some individuals tend to focus on completing group tasks while others spend more time addressing group member's feelings and emotional needs. Ngomane (2017) highlights that men are depicted as calculating, risk-taking, assertive, domineering, aggressive, decisive and having confidence in their leadership style. However, some men can do the opposite of what is perceived.

Ellesanmi (2018) argues that there is a dire need for substantive representation of women in decision-making positions. Bangani and Vyas-Doorgepersad, (2020) propose that leadership programmes targeting females should be designed to help women

develop their essential and critical leadership competencies and add to the skills gaps in men's leadership. Ellesanmi (2018) observes that competency assessment which aims at assessing someone's skill gaps is conducted by departments during the recruitment process but does not add value to the selection process. The challenge with this process accordingly is that, after the competency assessment process of the successful candidates, no formal training interventions are arranged to close the skills gap identified during the process.

Adeosun and Owolabi (2021) assert that the glass ceiling and gender stereotypes of women exclude women from many employments forcing them to be crowded or concentrated into the remaining occupations that are regarded as 'women's jobs'. Gyampi *et al*, (2017) state that in theory, any qualified person can rise the ranks at work and enjoy the perks that come with it, however, invisible barriers for women persist. Ngomane (2017) posits that the glass ceiling keeps people from getting certain jobs despite being well-qualified and deserving. Gyampi *et al*, (2017) give an example of the glass ceiling that can be seen in the Office of the President of the United States where there is no law preventing a woman from occupying that Office, yet that has not happened.

2.6.8. Recruitment & Selection Process

Luenendock (2021) defines recruitment as the process of finding and hiring the best and most qualified candidates for a job in a timely and cost-effective manner. Devi (2014) views recruitment as the process of having the right person in the place at the right time. Starnski and Son Hing (2015) assert that gender inequality in organizations is a complex phenomenon that can be seen in organizational structures, and processes. For women, some of the HR policies, decision making and their enactments affect their hiring, training, pay and promotion.

Hiring, retention and career advancement of women are a challenge, and the effective recruitment and selection process plays a critical role in ensuring that the workplace is representative of all people regardless of their gender (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Reuben *et al* (2014) add that implicit bias about women's and men's performance can contribute to discrimination and poor hiring decisions. Starnski and Son Hing (2015) argue that discrimination against women can be attributed to human resources policies

which are not gender sensitive and other HR-related decision-making. This is an accurate observation because even when there are employment equity plans in place in the Limpopo Province, there is a need to ensure that women who are already in employment are given equal opportunities for career advancement.

The South African Public Service Commission (2014) shared the characteristics of public services in developmental states as merit-based. That is, in recruitment into the service, one must write the entrance exams, and have qualifications, talent and capability. The South African Public Service Commission (2014) also shared recruitment experiences for China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mauritius, Philippines, Singapore, Botswana and Brazil. Hu (2016) posits that in China, public servants sit for exams to test general and specialized knowledge, and interviews to test the examinees' abilities in terms of analysis, decision-making, logical thought, language competence, improvised responses and organizational evaluations.

In South Africa, ministers are not involved in the appointment of public servants and they do not even sit in the interview panels. This limits political influence in appointments. The South African Public Service Commission (2014) indicates that the Independent Agency-Public Service Commission is responsible for appointments and interviews are conducted by the Appointment Boards established for each line department.

In South Africa, general conditions for appointments and other employment matters are handled in terms of Part 4 of Regulation 57 to 70 of the Public Service Regulations of 2016 (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2016). Mokhele (2016) states that in the South African public service, general conditions of appointment (recruitment and selection) for all members of senior management are guided by the provisions of the SMS Handbook of 2000 (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2016). The South African Public Service Commission (2014) contends that since 1994, the recruitment system has been open as promotion posts were advertised inside and outside the public service. Members of senior management are interviewed by the appointed panel members who conduct interviews, manage technical tests and candidates write competency assessments before the final approval by the Executive

Authority which is either the Minister or the Premier for different salary levels (Public Service Regulations, 2016).

The Public Service Regulations (2016) further outlines all the processes to be followed starting from how advertisements should be crafted, the composition of the Recruitment and Selection Committee, and the ranks or levels thereof, and any deviation from this is regarded as a transgression (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2016). However, in practice, 90 percent of the top management are technocrats with extensive knowledge and qualifications who are appointed from within the public service (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2014). As a consequence, ruling parties influence appointments, but the deployment of cadres has not undermined the meritocratic nature of the public service.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No. 108 of 1996 and other legislation emphasize representativeness in all spheres while the SMS Handbook (2001) stipulates how important recruitment is as an instrument for achieving employment equity by opening up the Public Service to all sections of society. Reuben, Sapienza, & Zingales (2014) argue that unconscious favouritism or prejudice against people (women and men's performance) contributes to discrimination and poor hiring decisions.

However, there are gaps in the handbook such as the unavailability of the common instrument that should be used during the interview process, and that competency assessment is only conducted for development and is not part of the scores. The assessment is conducted by different service providers which makes it very difficult to confirm the reliability of the results (Reuben, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2014). Both recruitment processes should make provision for gender balance or representation.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2019) states that gender bias is pervasive at work in Australia. Institutions create inequalities at every stage of the employment cycle and gender-based stereotypes affect which candidates get recruited for certain roles. Accordingly, these factors produce and sustain gender inequality from recruitment to selection and promotion. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2019) argues that decades of research have made one thing clear, gender biases are nearly always

present in employment decisions, subtly influencing the assessment of the preferred candidate for the job.

2.6.9. Lack of training and awareness on gender mainstreaming

Care (2023) asserts that one of the major causes of gender mainstreaming failure is the lack of gender awareness among women about their rights, and their ability to achieve equality in the prevailing cultural and social norms. These norms dictate women should be subservient to men. Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad, (2020) observe that apart from policies and practices, there are no specific programmes that target women as a separate interest group with specific interests and needs in recruitment, training, succession planning and addressing their practical needs. Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) propose that leadership programmes targeting females should be designed to help women develop their essential and critical leadership competencies required and identify the skills gaps for them to be confident when performing their day-to-day activities.

Rincon, Gonzaez and Berrito (2017) assert that it is essential to increase awareness in the corporate sector of all the advantages of increasing the participation of women in senior management positions. The intensification of measures aimed at improving opportunities for women's career development can accelerate change towards a situation of gender balance that would benefit all in society.

2.6.10. Cadre Deployment Policy

Mlambo, Zubane and Thusi (2022) define "cadre deployment" as the placement of committed members of the ruling party in critical positions to strengthen the party's power and influence. Cadre deployment is the process whereby as many positions as possible (not only in government but also in the security forces and state-owned enterprises) are filled either by the members or people loyal to the party's politics and agenda (JCL Forensic Services, 2021). Van Onselen (2021) and Nendi and Kok (2017) define cadre deployment as the appointment by government, at the behest of the governing party, or a party-political loyalist to an institution or body, independent or otherwise, as a means of circumventing public reporting lines as opposed to the state. Accordingly, the observations made from these definitions are that cadre deployment policy may indirectly supersede all other government policies, hence there is a myriad of

challenges as far as the appointment of senior management in the public service is concerned whereby merit is not an issue.

Shava and Chamisa (2018) concur that cadre deployment pushes for the appointment of party loyalists to high-ranking positions in the public service and that this practice results in political favouritism. This is a challenge in case some good women deserve to be considered for higher positions but are not politically connected. Sebake and Sebola (2014) point out that in South Africa, cadre deployment leads to amongst others, nepotism. Similarly, Kanyane (2014) argues that cadre deployment prioritizes allegiance above merit and even competence and thus people who are politically linked and, in many circumstances, although inept, are placed in top positions. Swanepoel (2021) highlights that from a moral perspective, cadre deployment has been associated with amongst others, nepotism, political meddling and favouritism and this requires some moral judgment to ascertain whether such conduct is right or wrong.

Gender mainstreaming in the appointment of senior management in the public service can only be effective in an environment where gender policies are not discriminatory despite the existing employment equity policies. Swanepoel (2021) states that in the South African public service, many decided cases were set aside due to a lack of commitment to implement employment equity policies. The courts ruled against incorrect implementation of the recruitment policies including Cadre Deployment. Swanepoel (2021) posits that in the case of *Mlokoti v Amatole District Municipality* and others where there was political interference in decisions relating to appointments by the municipality was declared unlawful and set aside.

Sebake and Sebola (2014) further posit that in the South African Public sector, cadre deployment has resulted in adequate performance, and so far it appears that it has paved the way for malpractice in the hiring of public officials, promoting, nepotism, and favouritism. Senior posts are commonly given with reduced qualifications to accommodate unworthy individuals who are politically identified, hence promoting nepotism in the workplace. Mlambo, Zubane and Thusi (2022) contend that cadre deployment was done to accommodate the candidates of preference, irrespective of the nature of the post's obligations. They argue that cadre deployment policy has blurred the thin lines between politics as a separate action and the administration of the public

sector as another action. Kanyane (2014) states that politically connected incompetent people are often deployed in public positions leading to a demoralized public service.

2.7. Strategic Approaches to Gender Mainstreaming

The European Institute of Gender Equity (2017) reveals that no set formula or blueprint for gender mainstreaming can be applied in every context. In practice, gender mainstreaming requires that gender equality considerations should be applied to all transformational issues including, but not limited to actions, interventions, policies, programmes and projects that are undertaken. There are gender audits/analysis, gender budgeting, tools of trade, implementation, monitoring and evaluation which the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (2015) referred to as the “Gender Mainstreaming Toolbox”. Sida (2017) stipulates that the Gender Tool Box gathers knowledge material and methods to support gender equality (mainstreaming) in the form of tools, briefs and thematic overviews.

The European Institute of Gender Equity (2017) argues that gender mainstreaming requires both integrating a gender perspective into the content of the different policies and the issue of representation of women and men in all dimensions need to be gender-responsive. Before such measures and strategies can be put in place, questions that need to be answered are: Why is gender mainstreaming necessary? What are the objectives of gender mainstreaming? Where will it take place? When will it take place? Through whom will it take place? (European Institute of Gender Equality, 2017). The “No size fits all approach” to gender mainstreaming is relevant as organizations and departments can decide on the approach to use on their projects and programmes.

Starmarski and Son Hing (2015) proposed that to reduce gender discrimination, organizations should focus on effective and efficient HR practices to reduce the level of sexism. Organizations should take a multifaceted approach consistent with the proposed model of gender mainstreaming (Starmarski and Son Hing, 2015). Ngomane (2017) argues that to achieve the 50 percent target of women in senior or management positions, the South African government developed a document called “The Heads of Departments’ 8-Action Plan for Promoting Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality in the Public Service”. The heads of departments are encouraged to include the

indicated eight steps in their departmental action plans to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality.

2.7.1. Meeting equity targets and women empowerment

Ensuring women's full participation in decision-making through the employment of 50 percent of women at all levels of the Senior Management Service is in line with the South African Cabinet Decision 85(a) of 2005. Therefore, the Limpopo Office of the Premier has an obligation as per the principle to ensure that people with disability fully participate. Heads of Departments at national and provincial departments are expected to report progress on the status of SMS members during Public Service Women Management Week (PSWMW) which takes place between the 27-31 of August annually (The Department of Public Service and Administration, 2012).

The current study will probably make a huge difference in capacity development for women's advancement and gender equality within the ambit of or in line with the South African Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013. Section 9 (1) stipulates that despite any other law, targets for women in all laws and policies on empowerment shall be at least 50% (Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill, 2013).

2.7.2. Proper Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming

Bangani and Vyas-Doorgepasad (2020) state that in terms of what is contained in the Public Service Commission Report in the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives in the public service empowerment of women is not happening in any significant or meaningful way in the departments. Bangani and Vyas-Doorgepasad (2020) point out that apart from policies and practices that affect all staff, there are no specific programmes that recognise women as a separate interest group with specific interests and needs, including recruitment, training and addressing the practical needs of women.

2.7.3. Succession Planning

Succession planning and management is an essential component of the broader talent management and human resource planning process. Priya and Sudhamati (2018) say succession planning has the overall goal of providing "the right leadership at the right place at the right time with the right skills". Obianuju, Ibrahim and Zubairu (2021) view

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succession planning as a deliberate and systematic process of ensuring the storage of valuable corporate knowledge needed for business continuity by identifying and grooming future leaders. It could replace current leaders when they die, retire or leave the organization. Succession planning involves an integrated, systematic approach to identifying, developing and retaining capable and skilled employees in line with current and projected business plans. The identification of key roles, employees with the right skills and positions that may need filling as and when the need arises, is important.

However, studies show that organizations fail to implement succession plans as they experience challenges during the planning part. Different scholars share how succession planning can benefit organizations if formalized, executed, or implemented effectively. This means that organizations might not have an excuse for failure to appoint women to senior management positions if programmes are in place. El Badawy *et al* (2016) contend that when succession is based on transparent and merit-based criteria it can serve as a great motivational tool among employees who can see a clear path to advancement within the organization. In turn, it empowers individual employees to work harder leading to increased job satisfaction. To effectively implement gender mainstreaming, a clear succession plan also encourages senior members to become mentors to younger employees as a deliberate strategy of transferring knowledge and expertise (Weisblat, 2018).

Best (2016) argues that a formalized succession plan enables the organization to properly measure the value each employee provides, and this makes internal promotion much easier. O'Shea (2021) believes that when old leaders retire, a new generation of leaders will be needed and a succession plan means that an organization is ready to deal with this inevitable reality. When these strategies are in place, it is easy for the organization to implement employment equity policies including gender mainstreaming.

Management of succession planning should incorporate coaching, and mentoring and involve the development of prospective successors or people within an organization who will apply for key positions in terms of the Public Service Act and Public Service Regulations (2016). As part of a broader human resource (HR) planning process or framework, succession planning is just one strategy that can help or support the

organization to address HR issues related to the ageing workforce; internal competency gaps and address Employment Equity (Office of the Premier, 2022).

Pandey and Sharma (2014) posit that Human Resource Management in any organisation today is struggling to maintain the workforce and faces two harsh realities which exist: the loss of experienced rich talent and changing trends in the talent market. Ineffective implementation of gender mainstreaming might exacerbate the inequality in the appointment of senior management in the public service. Pandey and Sharma (2014) argue that poor planning in forming a formal process for identifying, developing and retaining high-potential people within the organization results in key positions not being filled timely, key positions which seek to address employment equity being filled by external candidates, staff turnover at key positions, potential replacements never ready as they lack skills as well as not failure to retain qualified talent.

Allen (2018) states that women undervalue their talents and resist the technical stuff called “hard skills” and do not own their power to lead. This might be perpetuated by the historical background and gender roles assigned to women by society. Chavez-Arrieta (2023) argues that experience and internal knowledge are invaluable assets, and staff nurtured within the company are well-aligned with its culture and objectives. Therefore, a good succession planning programme aims to identify high-growth individuals, train them and feed the pipelines with new talent. If the government is serious about gender representation, this programme might be very handy to address any challenges.

The Office of the Premier (2023) asserts that succession planning at various levels, if removed, causes a significant loss in the organization, and great retention risk, for current and anticipated business goals and objectives. The Office of the Premier has a Succession Planning Policy in place approved in March 2023. It states that any person identified for succession planning must comply with the provisions of the Public Service Act, of 1994. The purpose of the Succession Policy is to identify and develop employees to prepare incumbents in key positions in cases of resignation, retirement, promotions, growth, expansion and creation of new positions. According to the UNPF (2018), the objectives of the policy are: Firstly, to identify and prepare high-potential and right people for the right positions at the times when they are needed. Secondly, to ensure the systematic and long-term development of individuals to replace key job

incumbents in senior management in line with the approved Employment Equity Plan for the Office as the need arises. Thirdly, to ensure continuity of specifically identified management leadership and technical competent performance ensuring that the objectives of the Office are achieved. Fourthly, to manage employee advancement as well as provide a continuous flow of talented people to meet the organization's management needs. In summary, the UNPF (2018) asserts that to ensure fairness; strategies and measures must often be available to compensate for women's historical and social disadvantages that prevent them from operating on a level playing field.

2.7.4. Flexible working arrangements

Balancing work and family responsibilities is one of the most challenging aspect for women seeking leadership positions, especially for those raising children on their own (Hess and Kelly, 2015). Azar, Khan and van Eerde (2018) assert that governments and other companies are progressively introducing work-balance policies to accommodate the well-being of employees. Women are usually the primary (if not only) parents caring for children and other family members during their peak years and spend time out of the workforce (Labor Statistics, 2016).

The public service in most instances is highly gendered and often seen as incompatible with good work-family life balance leading to problems with recruiting and retaining high-quality individuals (Williams, 2017; Monney and Jameson, 2018). The public service is highly regulated and has incompatible, outdated and gender-neutral policies which do not address current issues in the workplace.

2.7.5. Diversity Management and Diversity Training

Diversity Management, according to (Akkermans, 2016), refers to a set of practices to foster a diverse and inclusive corporate culture that is supportive of workers (men and women). Diversity does not only includes gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, education, religion, and disability but also work experience which is included in the diversity concept (Ricee, 2021). Since the corporate structure is often dominated by men, to promote equal participation in the workplace, institutions need to shift their organizational environment into a more diverse workplace that favours the inclusion of women.

Schoen and Rost (2020) argue that diversity practices help women overcome upward mobility barriers and enhance their advancement to upper management positions. Schoen and Rost adds that diversity training reduces the extent to which stereotypes and prejudices influence decisions in the workplace by raising awareness. Corell (2017) claims that diversity training will assist employers to be aware of how stereotypes generate gender bias in the workplace. However, the effectiveness of these programmes has been questioned by many scholars. Schoen and Rost (2020) argue that these programmes fail as they focus on short-term changes rather than long-term strategies.

2.7.6. Mentorship Programme

A significant gender imbalance in the public sector persists, and mentoring has been recognized as an important instrument in fostering women's careers. However, Meschitti and Smith (2017) state that the benefits of mentoring are taken for granted. Mcilongo and Strydom (2021) add that the slow progress in the transformation of organisations indicates the need for a structural-developmental approach to women's career advancement. Mcilongo and Strydom add that mentorship is one of the valuable affirmative tools that can be used to support women and groups that have been viewed as previously disadvantaged.

Dashper (2020) posits that many institutions are faced with an entrenched glass ceiling that limits career opportunities for women despite all employment equity measures that have been put in place after the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Several studies have identified mentoring as an important tool for women to reach upper management levels (Ziviani, 2020-2021). However, Dashper (2020) argues that while mentorship is beneficial for men and women, it is particularly important for women in overcoming gender-related barriers to upward mobility. Coetzee (2017) states that gender equality in the workplace remains a myth.

Kim *et al.* (2015) contend that one intervention that has yielded positive results in terms of the public service being an employer of choice, and retaining motivated, talented and committed staff, is mentoring. Smith (2016) concurs that as women face more barriers than men in the workplace, they have a greater need to be mentored to create a pool of

qualified and skilled employees. However, Mcilongo and Strydom (2021) contend that in the South African public sector, mentorship is “non-existent”. Due to this challenge, Singh (2017) observes that women in the public sector realise that they have to fend for themselves as they try to find their way to survive or advance in their departments.

Singh (2017) argues that transformation for organizations is merely about “ticking the box” and suggests organisations should find new mechanisms to eliminate the barriers that discriminate against women. Bosch (2017) proposes that human resources management in organisations should develop policies and interventions for women to manifest fairness in their respective organisations.

Mcilongo and Strydom (2021) propose that the public sector in South Africa should consider the outcomes of the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (Government Gazette, 2013), which include “equal representation and an increased participation by building females’ “capacity”. This bill provides further justification for exploring the significance of mentorship in supporting career advancement in the public sector.

2.7.7. Accountability, monitoring and evaluation

Bangani and Vyas-Doorgepasad (2020) posit that the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) ensures that all public service departments submit their gender mainstreaming and equality reports annually to the DPSA. The reports are assessed so that gaps in the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service can be identified. The DPSA has noted the lack of consequence management in various departments. This is a situation that should be remedied. Ngomane (2017) reiterates that lack of enforcement is a major weakness in the Employment Equity Act that make it overtly transgressed or ignored. Thomas *et al* (2018) argue that gaps in policies, implementation and impact of gender mainstreaming strategy, gender lenses and tools for assessing the impact of policies on women and other under-represented groups should be identified and remedies developed.

The argument by the Commission for Gender Equality (2017) is that gender equality should not only be statistics but there should also be equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation for both women and men in all spheres of public and private sectors. This view is one of many views that prompted this study. Many scholars

concur that men and women should be treated equally and fairly in the workplace to achieve the objectives of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the world. Caprino (2017) states that feminism - at its core- "is about the equality of men and women and not about sameness". Caprino (2017) states that it is critical to understand that "same" does not mean "equal" but it is about equal rights and equal access to opportunities.

The World Bank (2018) argues that addressing gender gaps might take longer than expected due to the slow pace at which gender mainstreaming is implemented in different countries. Chaka and Segum (2017) argue that the achievement of gender equality will help the world to witness the equal representation of men and women in professions that were previously dominated by men. Durojane, Okeke and Adenajo (2014) assert that the adoption of appropriate gender mainstreaming interventions can assist in closing gender inequality and improve the status of men and women in society.

2.8. Summary

The chapter discussed and reviewed the literature on gender mainstreaming on the appointment of senior management in the public service from an international and regional perspective point of view. The barriers to gender mainstreaming from various countries and the strategies that can be employed to improve gender representation were evaluated focusing on of women as a disadvantaged group.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

This chapter offers some theoretical perspectives relating to issues of marginality, oppression and positionality using the lens of feminism as an analytical tool. Specific issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression and alienation are addressed. Feminism, according to the International Women's Development Agency (2023) is all about all genders having equal rights and opportunities, respecting diverse women's experiences, identities and strengths, striving to empower all women to realise their full rights and it holds the view that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially.

Watson (2016) indicates that feminism is about freedom, liberation and equality and that it seeks to define, establish and achieve political, economic, social and personal equality of sexes. On the other hand, Caprino (2017) suggests that many men and women hate feminism as they fear that men will lose power, impact, authority, control and opportunities. Below are explanations of the foundations of feminist theory. Enyew and Mihrete (2019) argue that feminism is a diverse, competing and often opposing collection of social theories, that are concerned about the experience of women who were harmed, oppressed and discriminated against in the workplace.

3.2 Social Construction Feminist Theory

Vinney(2019) indicates that social construction feminist theory was introduced by sociologists Berger and Luckman (1966) as an attempt to come up with the nature of reality.

The social construction feminist theory focuses on gender as omnirelevant meaning that people can always be judged by what they do as a man or as a woman. It looks at the practices that create gender differences and presents the structure of gender as invisible. According to Makoba (2008), learning about the social construction of gender helps us to understand how gender is shaped and given meaning by the social structure of a society. Within the realm of feminism, the social relations of gender are ones in which women are treated as inferior and subordinate to men, and thus gender divisions are exploitative and oppressive. Berger and Luckman view knowledge as created by the

interactions of individuals within society which is central to constructionism, but concerned with the nature and construction of knowledge; how it emerges and how it comes to have significance for society.

The social construction of gender creates in each of us a self-image of who we are as females and males and how we should behave. From this perspective, the cognition that “I am a woman” functions to activate a woman’s entire experience of femaleness in society, and serves as a general schema that shapes women’s current and future activities (Worrell and Remer, 1992). In this study, the social construction of gender is understood clearly especially when one understands that women may be influenced by society to accept their inferior position in their communities.

From a constructionist perspective, women and men think and act in the ways that they do, not because of their role identities or psychological traits, but because of concepts about femininity and masculinity which refer to an individual’s gender in terms of maleness and femaleness respectively. Dixson (2021) argues that people adopt their culture and behaviours as a mirror image of what society expects of them. Every culture has its notions and concepts about management and leadership. Culture is a significant tool used to stifle the voices of those who are marginalized (Thobejane, 2003). It is on this basis that a feminist standpoint theory is brought into this work to understand matters of positionality, epistemology and paradigmatic shifts as far as women’s struggles and emancipatory praxis are concerned.

3.3. Feminist Standpoint Theory

The Feminist Standpoint Theory was coined by Nancy Hartsock in 1983. The theory promotes the principles of inclusiveness and justice (Disah & Hawksworth, 2016), and it emerged during the second wave of feminism thinking that espoused “Equal rights for men and women” (Bajracharya, 2018). The Feminist Standpoint Theory was propagated to create awareness of marginalized groups and offer ways to improve their position in society (Borland, 2016). According to Kelly (2017), the feminist thinking “Equal rights for men and women” is also referred to as “Political is personal” or “Private is Political”. This slogan expresses a common feminist belief that the experiences of women are rooted in their political situations and gender inequality. Halpern (2019) argues that Feminist Standpoint Theory is not new and began in the early 1970s and 1980s.

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Van Der Tuin (2016) asserts that standpoint's most important concept is that an individual's perspectives are shaped by his or her social and political experiences and that everyday experiences influence a person's perceptions. Borland (2016) argues that knowledge stems from a societal position and that the standpoint theory proposes that women and men create their own lived realities through experiences. Van Der Tuin (2016) further points out that the standpoint theory gives voice to marginalized groups by allowing them to challenge the status quo. This study will therefore evaluate the extent and nature of barriers from the standpoint of the participants that have been interviewed and their epistemology vis-à-vis their position regarding the topic under study.

Standpoint theory supports Harding's (2020) assertions that marginalized and oppressed individuals can help create more objective accounts of the world. Standpoint theories make basic principal claims that knowledge is socially situated, those belonging to marginalized groups are situated in ways that allow them to see more than those who are not (Halpern, 2019). The primary critique levelled at standpoint theory is that there is no way one can know whether any knowledge claims one acquired are true (Halpern, 2019). Some theorists criticize the standpoint theory in that the feeling of one person being part of the group cannot be generalized as everybody has different viewpoints.

However, this theory is more relevant to this study as it seeks to valorise the standpoint of those who are historically marginalized from the socio-economic mainstream. In the context of this study, it is women who are unsuccessful when it comes to promotion to leadership and strategic positions. This theory focuses on the marginalized and the affected women who are not considered for appointment to higher positions. In the section below, I discuss intersectionality theory which seeks to show the binaries between race, culture, class and gender, and how these are affected by marginalization, oppression and exploitation.

3.4. Intersectionality Feminism Theory

Intersectionality is a term that was propagated and later elaborated by the black feminist legal scholar, Crenshaw (1989). It explains discrimination as a consequence of the creation of prejudice by mutually reinforcing race, gender, class and sexuality (van der

Heever *et al* (2019). According to Crenshaw (1989), gender and race were seen as completely separate issues and studying them in isolation from each other made no sense. Crenshaw (2014) claims that women's lives are constructed by multiple, intersectional systems of oppression, as shown by the literature reviewed. For instance, a woman may face direct and indirect discrimination both as a woman and secondly, as a black woman and, as an oppressed class citizen.

Intersectionality theory opines that women experience oppression in varying configurations and varying degrees of intensity from multiple sources of oppression (Boston, 2017). Crenshaw (2017) reiterates that intersectionality is a lens through which one can see where power comes, collides, interlocks and intercepts. Intersectionality theory focuses on intersectional patterns of oppression that are not only interrelated but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society that include gender, class, ability and ethnicity. Vidal (2014) states that certain groups of women have multi-pronged problems in life that they may have to deal with. Hence there is no "one size fits all" type of feminism.

Intersectionality like any other theory has critiques. Kara (2017) argues that intersectionality as a means of understanding inequalities includes the idea that human lives cannot be reduced to single social categories such as ethnicity, gender, class and intelligence. Such categories of gender, ethnicity and social class are fluid and changing over time.

Catastasis (2014) states that identities and categories of difference are constitutive and mutually reinforcing, and therefore they need to be analysed simultaneously. Literature reveals that complexity will arise when the subject of analysis includes multiple dimensions of social life and categories of analysis. This paradigm has a direct link with this study, especially in the context of evaluating gender mainstreaming in the appointment of senior management personnel in any workplace.

This study also considers the approach of African Feminism because the research is in an African context. Adegbonam (2020) indicates that Africa has been subjected to imperialism and neo-colonialism because in most cases, the major political beliefs, values, social cultural ideas, norms, values practices, structures and institutions

introduced by the respective colonial imperialist powers were not dismantled after independence. Feminism in Africa emerged during anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles leading to the development of African women coming together to fight both gender oppression and colonialism at the same time. Feminism in Africa revealed gender exploitation and exposed men's power in public life, the economy, politics and society.

However, some African activists labelled feminism as 'un-African' and more oriented toward Westernization. This occurred when issues relating to customs and traditions undermined African women's land and property rights, violence against women in public and private spaces, and gender-based inequalities in education, health, and economic and political power which are not fully tackled in Western feminism (Gaidzanwa, 2011. Thobejane (2003) And Maqubela (2004) raise issues of hegemony in which African women believe that Western academics and activists want to incorporate them into "a movement defined by extreme individualism, by militant opposition to patriarchy, and ultimately, by a hostility to males". The Western conceptualisation of feminism does not accommodate the African context due to the differences in the social, cultural and political affairs of African women.

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3.5. Radical feminism

Lewis (2020) states that radical feminism is a philosophy emphasizing the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, or more specifically, the social domination of women by men. Historically, radical feminism was a specific strand of the women's movement that emerged in Europe and North America in the late 1960s, that calls for a reordering of society in which male supremacy is eliminated in all contexts. Radical feminism represents one of the types of feminist theories founded on the attitude that society is based on patriarchal grounds, in which women are marginalized and discriminated against in all spheres of society (Vukoicic, 2017).

Radical feminists believe that men benefit from the discrimination of women when it comes to the appointment of senior management in public service regardless of whether they deserve it or not (Dahlin-Jones, 2014). Wood (2017) contends that patriarchy is at its core evil, repressive and oppressive, and needs to be contested and exposed for what it is (Ridel, 2019). Radical feminism is based on the fact that gender

inequality is the basis of all inequality and oppression. The repression of women follows and occurs in the patriarchal patterns of male dominance over women. Vukoicic (2017) argues that radical feminism opposes patriarchy, not men, and therefore, gender mainstreaming policies for the recruitment process of senior management in the public sector should be transparent as they will not be against men.

Radical feminists believe that women can free themselves only when they have done away with an inherently oppressive and domi-patriarchal system. Radical feminists feel that there is a male-based authority and power structure that is responsible for oppression and inequality. As long as the system and its values are in place, society will not be able to be reformed in any significant way. Some feminists see no alternatives other than total uprooting and reconstruction of society to achieve goals.

Radical feminists seek to abolish patriarchy to liberate qualified women by challenging the existing social norms and institutions through the implementation of gender mainstreaming, hence a reminder by the Council of Europe (2023) that almost everywhere in the world, women are denied their rights because of their gender. It should be noted however, that women's rights should not be seen as special rights, but, they are human rights enshrined in international human rights treaties and other documents such as the right to freedom from discrimination. It is the view of Lewis (2020) that radical feminists should dismantle patriarchy rather than make adjustments through legal changes. Thobejane (2014) argues that radical feminism seeks to deconstruct all patriarchal relations in the world and usher in an egalitarian form of society.

In some ways, radical feminism is a reaction against liberal feminism. Radical feminists believe that liberal democracy barely scratches the surface and that the oppression of women runs deeper than public rights. That is, the problem is not simply changing the laws but giving equal rights to women: this problem goes to the heart of our social structure. Patriarchy perpetuates and promotes masculine interests and subordinate femininity. Radical feminists locate the cause of women's discrimination and oppression in patriarchal gender relations, as opposed to legal systems in liberal feminisms. Radical feminists argue that, because of patriarchy, women are viewed as the "other" to the male norm, and as such have been systematically oppressed and marginalized.

Mukhuba (2016) posits that the progress of women trying to gain control of their own identity reinforces the basic asymmetry between the terms “Masculine and Feminine”.

Patriarchy theory is not generally defined as a belief that all men always benefit from the oppression of all women, rather it maintains that the primary element of patriarchy is a relationship of dominance, where one party (men) is dominant and exploits the other for the benefit of the former. Radical feminism argues that women are fundamentally dissimilar to men and should work towards overthrowing patriarchy (Tracy, 2013). Accordingly, overthrowing patriarchy through the implementation of gender mainstreaming might not be an easy road if women are not supported and empowered. Adekoya (2017) believes that nature, not society, places women under men and any woman who intends to change the status quo jeopardises the future of the family as well as that of nature.

Radical feminism is criticized for ignoring progress that women have made in many areas such as work, and that the theory is unrealistic (Thompson, 2016). Koninovo (2018) remarked that Radical Feminism has become a smear campaign by people who do not want to see gender equality amongst men and women. Koninovo (2018) argues that it is a campaign that was started and perpetuated by people who have something to gain from inequality. Those who criticize the uprooting of patriarchy are those who cherish benefitting from the current state of inequality in the workplace. Radical feminists argue that women’s subordination is not rooted in relations of production as many contend, but in power relations (Makama, 2013).

Thobejane (2017) postulates that feminist movements from the First World and Second (North and South) have been at the forefront of the struggle to get rid of the issues of women’s subordination. In many societies, these movements shaped the world to critique patriarchy and deconstruct its knowledge claims in all disciplines. Higgs (2018) contends that patriarchy will continue to exist, as long as the inequality persists. This is supported by most feminists who believe that the position of women in the labour market is an important source of female disadvantage. Thobejane (2017) states that if feminism is to liberate women from the grip of patriarchy, it should address all forms of oppression.

3.6. Role Congruity Theory

Role Congruity Theory (RCT) was coined by Eagly and Karau in 2002, and it sought to examine prejudice toward female leaders. The theory proposes that a group of people is evaluated when characteristics are recognized as aligning with a particular group's typical social roles. The theory aligns well with the study on gender mainstreaming as it depicts women in their assigned roles as discriminated against when appointments to senior management positions become vacant. Spence & Buchner (2014) argue that masculinity becomes practical and preferred in many organizations or workplaces due to traits, personality behaviours, beliefs and some roles specifically assigned to the male gender in society.

Accordingly, this theory describes the perceived challenges facing women in different workplaces. Mills (2017) defines gender role congruence as the extent to which leaders behave in a manner congruent to gender expectations. If for example, women compete with men for leadership in management positions and conform to the role, they fail to meet the requirements of the leadership preference for authority (Mehta, 2014). Mehta (2014) asserts that if women conform to the female gender role, they fail to meet the requirements of the leadership role. The "one size fits all" approach for women during the recruitment and selection process is considered. Generally, the notion of women as weak managers compared to men is disputed (Zenger and Folkman, 2019) and such a perception is incorrect and unwarranted.

A role congruity theory of prejudice toward female senior managers or leaders proposes perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles. It is a form of prejudice to perceive women as less favourable than men when it comes to occupying senior management positions. Literature and research paradigms show that congruity occurs in a situation that heightens perceptions of congruity between the female and male leader. Dunavogya (2016) argues that women are prejudiced from being appointed to higher or senior positions because of gender stereotypes that put female leaders at distinct disadvantages by forcing them to deal with the perceived incongruity between the leader role and their gender role.

Paustian-Underdahl *et al.* (2014) argue that to the extent to which organisations transform from masculine perceptions of leadership to a feminine outlook, the

preconceived idea will accordingly be decreased/reduced, and if not minimized towards females and thus, more women will reach leadership posts. This study describes and accentuates Role Congruity Theory (RCT) on the perceptions and challenges facing women in achieving senior leadership positions and roles. The key concepts are stereotyping the 'double bind', the 'glass ceiling', Social Role Theory, prejudice, leadership and Role Congruity Theory.

Despite the availability of pieces of legislation, women in South Africa experience barriers as far as employment in senior management positions is concerned. Fajardo *et. al* (2017) posit that women are as determined as men to reach senior leadership positions, and have shared perceptions of gender equity in both the private and public sectors which is the aim of this study.

3.7. SUMMARY

This chapter critically analysed different theories about gender and marginalization. Different schools of thought regarding feminism were highlighted to center discussions about women's empowerment through gender mainstreaming especially in echelons of power. Role congruent theory forms the lens through which this project is explored to unravel the challenges facing gender mainstreaming, specifically in the public sector.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology (the approach, research design, and research methods) that was followed in response to the research questions used to achieve the study objectives. The population, study location and the ethical considerations that ensure the upholding and adherence to high ethical standards that are expected in research are discussed in this chapter. (Adedoyin (2020) states that research is a well-structured inquiry about the phenomenon, to ascertain facts and innovation of logical conclusions. Grover (2015) posits that research in simplest terms is searching for knowledge and searching for truth or a systematic study of a problem through a deliberately chosen strategy which starts with choosing an approach to prepare a blueprint (design). Research methodology can be understood as a way to systematically solve or answer the research problem or essentially the process of studying how research is done scientifically.

4.2. Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was used in the study since it provides a greater opportunity for a feminist sensitivity to the problem (Bryman, 2016). Maree (2017) views qualitative research as the exploration and understanding of a central phenomenon. Grover (2015) states an approach means a plan and the procedure for research that encompass the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The research approach was selected as an inquiry process of understanding where a researcher develops a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of participants about gender mainstreaming on the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier-Limpopo Provincial Government. Following Maree (2017) recommendations, the study was conducted in a natural setting.

Adedoyin (2020) is of the view that qualitative research deals with gathering and interpreting non-numerical data to understand human and social environment and it usually targets micro-level of social engagement. The approach helped in experiencing the phenomenon, determining what participants think, feel and experience about gender mainstreaming (employment equity policies) in the appointment process of senior management at the Limpopo Office of the Premier. The study focused on issues of

discrimination, marginality, oppression and positionality of women using the lens of feminism as an analytical tool in advancing to leadership positions. However, MacNabb (2017) states that feminist research is not exclusive to women, but it is often done-with an emancipatory emphasis on women and that research must be conducted within institutions that are still patriarchal. Following Maree's (2016) advice, the selected research approach investigated meanings, interpretations, symbols, processes and relations of social life.

Adedoyin (2020) states that despite that qualitative research does not have a peculiar theory or paradigm coupled with no differentiated group of techniques to itself, the following are the features of qualitative research: Firstly, it has research questions just like others, but incorporates a variety of topics. Answers to research questions are provided except for hypotheses and that is what the researcher followed. Secondly, it concentrates on participants' understanding of meanings and social life in a particular context. Participants' experiences gave sense to the problem explored. Thirdly, there exists a direct relationship between the objective and theoretical structures of the research. Fourthly, it is grounded in an inclusive approach and final results are not primarily meant for generalization. Finally, data is collected from interview notes, observations, and documents such as brochures, pamphlets and leaflets.

Babbie and Mouton (2018) distinguish qualitative from quantitative research approaches conducted in a natural setting. Qualitative research approaches seek in-depth descriptions and understanding of actions and events, and the researcher is the main instrument during the research process.

4.2.1. Philosophical Worldviews

The researcher opted for the interpretivism paradigm because the social realities of people are influenced by their experiences and the social context within which they exist (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). Philosophical worldviews are the basic components of a research approach which assist researchers to ensure that when they choose a particular research approach, it necessitates matching research designs and methods. Grover (2015) states that philosophical worldviews originated from epistemology considerations which determine a paradigm as per the philosophical orientation of the research approach. Epistemological considerations are approached from several

categories based on the nature and structure of the knowledge (Grover, 2015). Constructivism and transformative philosophical worldviews are relevant to this study.

The constructivist worldview, according to Creswell (2014), believes that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences and meanings directed toward certain objects and things. The research relies on the participants' views of the situation being studied. The questions are broad and general for the participants to construct meaning of the situation forged in the discussions or interactions with other persons. Constructivist researchers focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants. The generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with the human community and from data collected in the field. It is evident that the constructivist worldview does not go far enough in terms of advocating an action agenda to help the marginalized. That is why the transformative worldview was incorporated in this study.

The transformative worldview includes critical theorists, participatory action researchers, marxists, feminists, and racial and ethnic minorities. It holds that research enquiry should be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever levels it occurs. The research contains an action agenda for reform to change the lives of participants, and the institutions in which individuals work or live. Issues that should be addressed are empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression and alienation. The transformative worldview provides a voice for the participants and raises consciousness whilst advancing the agenda for change to improve lives. This worldview is integrated with the philosophical assumptions that construct a picture of the issues being examined, the people to be studied, and the changes that are needed such as feminists' perspectives on inequities based on gender, race and socio-economic class resulting in asymmetric power relations. In this research, policy issues related to realizing social justice for women in context or knowledge about oppressive situations for women are explored.

This philosophical worldview focuses on the needs of groups and individuals in our society that may have been marginalized or disenfranchised so that the issues of power, social justice, oppression and discrimination can be addressed (Creswell and

Creswell, 2018). The study has issues such as oppression, domination, empowerment and inequality that are discussed because women have been affected when it comes to their promotion to higher positions. For the researcher, this philosophical worldview is more relevant to this study. Haddadi *et al* (2017) indicate that the transformative worldview arose from researchers who felt that the constructivist stance did not go far enough in advocating an action agenda to help marginalized people, and this means that this research contains an action agenda for change (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Grover (2017) shares important principles of transformative worldview as follows: Firstly, the research focuses on the lives of people who have been traditionally marginalized whereby life and processes are key instead of methods and generalizations. In this case, a group who have been affected or ignored by gender mainstreaming is the focus of the study. Secondly, the research focuses on inequalities and therefore, it provides reasons for inequalities and recommendations and suggestions as to how these could be addressed.

From the moment a person plans to conduct research, it is critical to include amongst others, the philosophical worldviews relevant to such a research approach and design.

4.3. Research Design

A research design is the actual framework of research that provides specific details regarding the process to be followed in conducting the research (Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree, 2014). Grover (2015) defines research design as the overall strategy that one chooses to attack the problem which requires the integration of different components of the study coherently and logically, thereby, ensuring to solve the problem efficiently. To formulate problems, clarify concepts and form hypotheses that had not been tested, the exploratory research design was used in this study. This research design was well suited to respond to the research questions appropriately and adequately. The design allowed the researcher to examine the the researcher selected participants that were knowledgeable about gender mainstreaming such as the members of the Employment Equity Consultative Forum for the Office of the Premier. A lot of research on gender mainstreaming as a concept has been conducted in many settings except at the provincial department in the public service. The study was conducted at an individual institution/unit, in this case, the Limpopo Office of the Premier in South Africa.

The research design assisted in using multiple sources of data replication and convergence so that the researcher could be confident that findings were reliable. The study focused on policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

4.4. Positionality and Reflexivity

The researcher assumed the position of an insider researcher who chose to study a group to which she belonged. The planned study involved women's empowerment and advancement as per the public service prescripts. For the study to be credible, the researcher needed to clarify her roles (positionality). In this regard, the gender mainstreaming strategy on the appointment process of senior management is derived from the researcher's beliefs and views, legislation and policies. Bourke (2014) asserts that positionality is determined by where one stands and should be reflexive about the implication of the method, values and knowledge it generates. On the other hand, the position of Brydon-Miller (2014), is that researcher positionality affects every phase of the research process from the way the question or problem is initiated, constructed, designed and conducted. Some scholars point out that whether a researcher is an insider or an outsider is an epistemological matter because the researcher's position about the participants has a direct impact on the knowledge that is co-created between them. (Dixon, 2018).

Given the above contrasting views on the concept of positionality, it is stated that if positionality refers to what researchers know and believe, then reflexivity is about what the researchers do with this knowledge (Hayfield and Huxley, 2014). Dixon (2018) defines reflexivity as a process of the researcher's continual reflection upon the research process as an idea of self-awareness to avoid being biased. Dixon (2018) further posits that reflexivity is important in qualitative research because there are many ways in which the researcher bias could affect the envisaged study, from the creation of data gathering tools, collecting the data, analysing and reporting it. This reflects the subjective nature of qualitative data and methodology.

In the context of this study, the insider researcher overcame and addressed the challenges that arose from the research process through delegation. For the study findings to be reliable and credible, the researcher adopted a participatory approach of

reflexivity by utilizing research assistants who were neutral while playing an observer role, taking notes and seeking clarity during workshops and dialogues. The planned dialogues and focus group discussions led to the development of complementary and divergent understanding of the study's situation, and provided a context where the researcher's values, beliefs, perspectives and assumptions of gender mainstreaming might have been hidden (Brydon-Miller, 2014). This initiative tried to reduce the perception that the researcher's questions were well-known and thus influenced participants with crucial information. The positionality of the research depicted the nature of the methodology utilized in the study.

Brydon-Miller (2014) argue that practitioner researchers tended to recognise and address themes as an inherent part of the research and to use reflexivity as a means to monitor the tension between involvement and detachment of the researcher and the researched as a means to enhance the rigour of the study and its ethics. Furthermore, Berger (2015) states that 'reflexivity is to situate the researcher as non-exploitative and compassionate toward the research subjects', thus helping to address concerns regarding the negative effects of power in researcher-participant relationships. Reflexivity helps to maintain the relationship between the researcher and the participants. The interpretation of the findings relied on cultural standards and work ethics. Reflexivity is an awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way this influences the object of the research to acknowledge the process and outcome (Berger, 2015). The researcher always guards against bias in this approach and used the experience which was a yardstick through which a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study relies on. Preventative approach/measures of utilizing research assistants addressed the anticipated challenge during the research process.

In summary, an insider researcher was objective in reporting the information in the study, and always used the advantage of being an insider researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the study topic the.

4.5. Location of the study

The study was conducted in the Office of the Premier Limpopo which is the northernmost province of South Africa. It is named after the Limpopo River which forms the province's western and northern borders. The capital and largest city in the province

is Polokwane (Formerly known as Pietersburg) which was founded on the 27th of April 1994. The province has five (5) Districts and twenty-one (21) Local Municipalities.

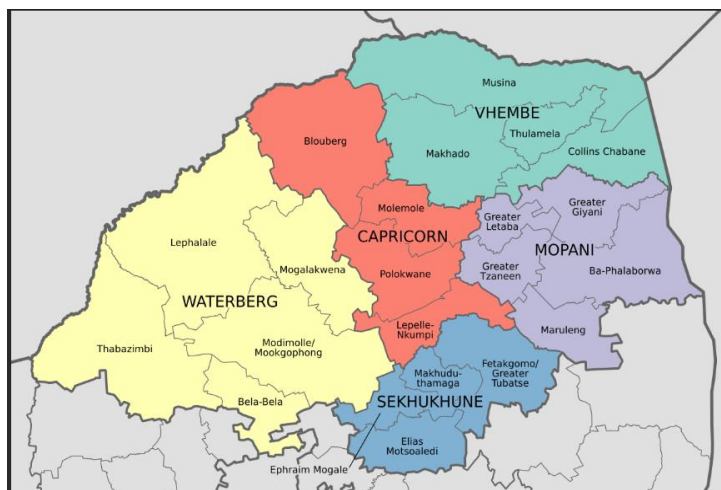


Figure 1: Source: GIS Office of the Premier-Limpopo Province

4.6. Population

Population refers to that larger group a researcher intends to learn about. Meredith (2023) defines population as individuals in the universe who possess the specific characteristics or set of entities that represent all the measurements of interest to the researcher. The study comprised women and men at the levels of Deputy Directors, Directors, and Chief Directors since they were the ones who could be in line for senior management posts as and when they become vacant because public servants rely on this opportunity for upward mobility. The population was of benefit to the researcher as it provided valuable information and experiences of gender inequality at senior management in the Office of the Premier in the Limpopo Province.

4.7. Sample

When using people, a sample can be defined as a set of participants selected from a larger population of the study. The researcher used non-probability purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, according to (Palinkas *et al*, 2015), is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree (2014) define sampling as a process that uses a small number of a population to represent the whole population.

This sampling technique was selected as it is time- and cost-effective to perform whilst resulting in a range of responses particularly useful in a qualitative research approach. A total of nine (9) employees were selected; Deputy Directors (5), Directors (2) and Chief Directors (2). Levels were selected from all four Branches of the Office of the Premier-Limpopo Provincial Government. Maree (2016) opines that there are no published guidelines or tests of adequacy for estimating the sample size required to reach saturation or rules for sample size as this choice depends on what research wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, and the problem to be addressed.

4.8. Data collection methods

Grover (2015) states that research methods are ways to get the information of the sample and are an integral part of the research design and can be collected in a variety of ways, and in different settings and sources. Methodologically, feminist research methods seek to remove power imbalances between research and subject. Feminist research is politically motivated in that it seeks to change social inequality and it begins from the standpoints and experiences of women (Brayton, 2019). The researcher used data collection methods that are discussed below to gather information: semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion as well as secondary sources. This process was done until data saturation was reached. The data collection methods are described in detail to justify their choice and to increase the possibility of replication by other researchers or in any other situation as suggested by Grover (2015).

4.8.1 Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing is the predominant mode of data collection and it often yields a rich body of qualitative information (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2015). Semi-structured interviews were chosen to complement the other methods to minimise non-responses and maximize the quality of data collected when compared to questionnaires. Qualitative interviews afforded the researcher opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection and explanation of the phenomenon in question. Interviews were relevant to the study as they elucidated subjectively lived experiences and viewpoints from the respondents' perspective on gender mainstreaming strategy in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo. Interviews also assisted the researcher to explore the complex phenomenon of gender mainstreaming that was

hidden or unnoticed due to the sensitivity of the topic. Participants provided accounts of their explanations and justifications for their actions and opinions.

The interviews were conducted in a conducive and neutral venue which was chosen by participants. The researcher ensured that the proposed interview strategies namely, interview structure, type and stance were followed to access the information on past events and valuable information and background on issues that cannot be efficiently accessed. The researcher kept the interview limited to the topics that were essential to the study to explore the research phenomenon in a face-to-face setting as well as follow-up where there was a need. The interview process was recorded through an audio recorder for accurate data capturing.

4.8.2 Focus group interviews

Maree (2017) states that the focus-group interview strategy is based on the assumption that group interaction will be productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information. The technique was selected because it is useful in obtaining detailed information about personal and group feelings, perceptions and opinions on the appointment of women senior managers to higher positions. The unstructured and spontaneous responses are expected to reflect the genuine opinions, ideas and feelings of the members about gender mainstreaming.

The researcher used focus group discussion which consisted of nine participants from the four branches of the Office of the Premier who were members of the Employment Equity Consultative Forum chosen based on their expertise on gender mainstreaming on the appointment of senior management. The advantage of this focus group was the fact that members were from the middle, senior and Executive Management of the Office. The focus group was used as it was relatively inexpensive and provided fairly dependable data within a short time frame as compared to individual interviews. Focus group was very effective and useful as time was limited and group members felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings. The above statement supports the long time taken (four months) to interview only nine participants.

4.8.3 Secondary data

Secondary data was key to the study as they shed light on the research topic of gender mainstreaming in the appointment of senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo Province and the plans put in place to address gender representation at this level. Maree (2017) and Sreejesh, Mohapatra, & Anusree (2014) state that written data may include existing data that is related to the research topic in question. This study obtained reports from the oversight bodies, namely; the Public Service Commission (PSC), Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) and the Department of Public Service and Administration, or archives, government publications, websites, and the internet. The following documents for three consecutive years that were requested in writing were the sources of data collected: the Strategic, Employment Equity, Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) Human Resource Plans, Annual Reports, Transversal Employment Equity Status, Equity Analysis/Progress on the Implementation of 8 Principles Action reports and circulars and not limited to advertisements of senior management posts.

4.9. Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis is the process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming and modelling data to discover useful information, informing conclusions and supporting decision-making (Xia and Gong, 2015). Bhat (2019) defines data analysis as the process used by researchers to reduce data to a story and interpret it to derive insights.

Collected data was analysed using thematic analysis (TA). This process helped to derive explanations for specific phenomena and gave the researcher an understanding of the research objectives by revealing patterns and themes in the data. The other purpose of qualitative data analysis is to interpret the data and the resulting themes to facilitate understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

4.10. Ethical Considerations

The protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is important in all research studies. In a qualitative study such as this one, ethical considerations have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process. The existing ethical guidance for undertaking qualitative research often

provides general guidelines rather than focusing on how to apply them in practice, particularly when interviewing a vulnerable group of women.

Ethical issues are concerns, dilemmas and conflicts that arise over the proper way of conducting research. Several ethical principles were considered throughout the study to ensure the upholding and adherence to high ethical standards.

4.10.1 Informed consent

Bless *et al* (2016) state that obtaining informed consent implies telling respondents about all possible investigation procedures which would be followed during the investigations, possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed or rendered to potential subjects. Respect for a person requires that subjects be allowed to choose what shall or shall not happen to them.

As a requirement in the Limpopo Provincial Administration, the researcher obtained permission from the Director General or direct consent from the participants who volunteered to participate in the study. Following, Maree's (2017), letters of consent were written and issued to participants before the commencement of the research so that they were conversant with what the study was all about and any possible risks involved. The participants knew or were aware before participating what their involvement would be and they were informed about all possible risks during the research process.

4.10.2. Voluntary participation

Creswell (2016) states that participation should be voluntary and no one should be forced to participate in any research or study. Accordingly, every participant in this study participated on their own will. Participants were made aware of their rights or choice to participate or terminate/discontinue their involvement in the research at any time during the participation. All participants completed consent forms before the research processes (interviews and focus group discussion) commenced.

4.10.3. Minimise the harm to participants

Babbie and Mouton (2018) advise that the research process should not harm or injure the participants being studied whether they volunteered for the study or not. The

researcher ensured that the information that could potentially embarrass them or jeopardise their personal safety, friendships, jobs and so forth was not disclosed or shared. The topics for discussion in this study could be very sensitive to individuals who could have been subjected to gender discrimination. The researcher ensured preparedness to handle instances where emotions could have been triggered and was on high alert for any symptoms and manifestations of emotions. In such cases, the researcher would have referred these participants to qualified psychologists in the Sub-Directorate: Employee Health & Wellness in the Limpopo Office of the Premier.

4.10.4. Anonymity and confidentiality

Maree (2017) highlights that maintaining confidentiality by ensuring that the data cannot be linked to individual participants by name is important. The researcher did not use the names of participants the study report or any of the research documents. Revealing or sharing participants' responses that might injure them in any way was totally avoided. The researcher assured the participants that their responses (information provided) would not be disclosed and would be treated with confidentiality. The participants were assigned alpha-numeric identification and they were assured that the data collected would only be used for the stated purpose of the research and that no other person would have access to the interview including the tape recorder that was be used.

4.10.5. Deception of subjects and/or respondents

Babbie and Mouton (2018) note that deception refers to misleading participants, deliberately misrepresenting facts or withholding information from participants. The researcher all forms of deception her interaction with respondents.

4.10.6. Establishing trustworthiness and credibility of the findings

The researcher took all the necessary measures to ensure that the results/findings of the study were trustworthy and reliable. The trustworthiness of qualitative designs is the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings between participants and the researcher. Another approach to clarifying the notion of objectivity as it is manifested in qualitative research was borrowed from a highly influential work of Lincoln and Guba as cited/quoted by Babbie & Mouton (2018) where four (4) criteria that enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research are discussed: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were followed as below.

4.10.6.1. Credibility/Trustworthiness

Babbie and Mouton (2018) state that credibility is the process of checking if there is compatibility between the constructed realities that exist in the minds of participants and those that are attributed to the results of the study. This can be achieved through the following procedures:

- i) Prolonged engagement stay-in the field namely; the branches where the participants are located. This process was done until data saturation was reached by using credible analysis methods through follow-ups on questions now well captured and seeking to clarify where responses were not clear during the data collection process.
- ii) Data credibility was also enhanced through triangulation on the sample size to represent a population through asking questions and using different methods to collect information about different points of view (Stumpfegger, 2017). Anney (2017) states that qualitative research credibility establishes whether or not the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and original views. Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement, and investment of sufficient time during data collection to have an in-depth understanding of gender mainstreaming in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier Limpopo as a case study. This process enhanced credibility.
- iii) The researcher persistently observed the participants as they were being interviewed, probed for clarity on issues raised and focused on elements that were most relevant to the problem. The researcher consistently pursued interpretations in different ways in conjunction with a process of constant tentative analysis. The use of a tape recorder assisted in documenting the findings as the researcher could not only rely on written notes which could get lost and tacit knowledge that might be forgotten during the process.

Two peer debriefing sessions with the same members of the population selected for both the interview and focus group discussion who had a general understanding of the nature of the study and where one could review perspectives, insights and also analysis well arranged. The data and the interpretation of the source of information that was

provided by the participants were checked to correct the errors, and intentionality of respondents, and to summarize what the first data analysis should be and the overall adequacy of the data in addition to what was provided by individual data points.

4.10.6.2. Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents (Anney, 2014; Babbie and Mouton, 2018). The researcher measured transferability by the standard of which the research was conducted, analysed and presented. Each process was reported in detail to enable an external researcher to repeat the inquiry and achieve similar results. This was done through the detailed recording of events and explanations, as well as collecting sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context, transferring (typing) responses and reporting them with sufficient detail and precision as proposed by Cuba and Lincoln as cited in Babbie & Mouton (2018). The second part of ensuring transferability was the fact that the researcher purposely selected locations and informants that differed from one another.

4.10.6.3. Dependability

Cope (2014) states that dependability is the stability of findings over time and it involves participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation and recommendations of the study such that all are supported by the data as received from participants of the study. Pandy-Wood (2014) asserts that "dependability" is when the findings are consistent and can be repeated. It was the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the findings were dependable by following the correct process and procedures that are generally accepted and commendable amongst academic circles; namely; keeping notes of (participants) stakeholder involvement meetings, focus discussion meetings and all versions of data collection tools.

4.10.6.4. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Anney, 2017). To enhance the confirmability of the initial conclusion, an audit trail consisting of raw data, analysis of notes taken during the focus group discussion/meetings, process and personal notes and the development of preliminary information to demonstrate how each decision was arrived at or made was

done (Pandy-Wood, 2014). Comparisons of the findings with other findings of similar studies to the current one and those who have used similar designs were done to attain confirmability. Ongoing fieldwork was conducted for two months to discuss provisional data analysis and deliberation with the participants so that they could confirm if the findings were an accurate and true reflection of their responses and the reality at hand.

4.11. Summary

This chapter described the research approach, research design, the position the researcher assumed, the location of where the study was conducted, the population and the sample selected. The data collection and analysis methods used for the study, ethical considerations that were observed to ensure the upholding and adherence to high ethical standards that are expected in research and criteria that enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the research findings were discussed.

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and interprets the results gathered from participants. A discussion of the results of the interviews and group discussion is dealt with in detail in this chapter. The study evaluated the extent of employment equity (gender mainstreaming) in its implementation, and enforcement in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier, Limpopo Provincial Government, as a coordinating department in the province.

Nine participants, two Chief Directors, two Directors and five Deputy Directors from the four branches in the office namely; Corporate Management, Institutional Development Support, Stakeholder Management Coordination and Performance Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation were selected and participated in the study. The categories sample selected were to share their knowledge and experience on gender mainstreaming in the appointment process of members of senior management service in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo Province. The selected participants are in the pipeline and are poised to take different senior management positions as and when they become available. This exercise was analysed using categories that have been developed by the researcher based on the study objectives and research questions and input categories of participants that emerged.

5.2. Biographical information of the research participants

The biographical information of the participants is presented in the table below.

Table 8: Represents the biographical information of participants

Participant	Gender	Age category	Occupation	Post-Experience	Number of years in the department	Level of qualification
1	Female	61	Chief Director	12	17	Masters Degree
2	Male	50	Chief Director	13	28	Masters Degree

3	Male	62	Chief Director	08	27	Masters Degree
4	Male	58	Director	10	10	Masters Degree
5	Male	49	Director	14	20	Masters Degree
6	Male	47	Director	07	07	Honours
7	Male	58	Deputy Director	06	37	Masters Degree
8	Female	47	Deputy Director	10	17	Diploma
9	Female	52	Deputy Director	15	21	Masters Degree

All nine participants were asked the same questions linked to the objectives. The researcher used hand coding for the data from a few individuals although the process was labourious and time-consuming. Data analysis proceeded firstly, from the more general procedure of analyzing the data; and secondly, the analysis was embedded within the narrative design employing restorying the participants' stories using setting, plot and activities. For this case study, descriptions and themes convey multiple perspectives from participants' settings or individuals used. This research occurred in a natural setting where human behaviour and events unfold. The themes and sub-themes established in the study were as follows:

Table 9: Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Objective 1: Extent of implementing EE policies on gender transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence or no implementation of EE plan • Tribalism, Nepotism and Discrimination. • Lack of political will • Cadre deployment
Objective 2: Evaluate the enforcement of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of compliance

EE policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No consequence management • Lack of understanding roles of PSC, HRC and Commission of Gender Equality
Objective 3: Nature of the problems encountered in EE implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The office is not exemplary in fulfilling roles • No succession plan for filling posts • Women leaders are not assertive.
Objective 4: Measures to improve adherence to EE policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building and mentorship • Mechanism to track women to senior management • Awareness of gender and discrimination issues.

5.3. Question 1 establishes the extent of implementing employment equity policies (on gender transformation) in the appointment process of senior management members in the Office of the Premier. The participants' oral transcripts were as follows:

Participant 1: *“Gender mainstreaming policies are not implemented but get spoken about when the Director General and the Premier appear at the Portfolio Committee during events such as 16 days of Activism Against Women and Women’s Days. Otherwise, gender mainstreaming is considered an operational activity that is not necessarily binding. Gender representation in the Office has in the past ten years hovered between 35-39 percent at SMS level and no one has been subjected to consequence management for non-compliance”.*

Participant 2: *“The Office of the Premier has sufficient Human Resource and Employment Equity Plans in place, and is fully and effectively implemented as women are well represented. The Employment Equity Manager and Employment Equity Forum are in place although there is no Gender Mainstreaming strategy or Policy in place to implement the plans. Updates on the employment equity status are presented during*

the Top, Executive Management Meetings, and shortlisting process to remind members of the goal to achieve a 50 percent equity target at the SMS level.”

Participant 3: “The Office does not seem to be committed to implementing the Employment Equity Policy as 50/50 percent Employment Equity target remains a dream. The interview panel deviates from the existing and approved Employment Equity Plan. When it is applied, it is partially done. For example, the Employment Equity Officer presents the Employment Equity status during the recruitment process, but the interview panel deviates as they sometimes have their preferred candidates. When enquired, the response will be that no women were meeting the requirements of the advertised posts. The Office does not have a Gender Mainstreaming Policy”.

Participant 4: “Employment Equity policies are not effectively implemented as the Office always goes against what has been planned in both the Human Resources and Employment Equity Plans. Recruitment and Selection Panels do not follow approved Employment Equity plans because they always deviate from the rule regardless of the plans stipulating the target group envisaged. They always pass the buck to the Executive Authority (Premier) who is responsible for approving the appointment of senior management. In addition, these policies do not yield the intended results as there is an element of tribalism and discrimination. Employees are appointed based on where they come from which is a serious concern. The panel is improvised to do the work assigned to it. For example, appointing people of their choice who are politically connected”.

Participant 5: “The available Employment Equity policies are applied in a selective and hapazard manner where it matters most. Sometimes it is a matter of preference as to who should be recommended for appointment because when a woman retires, the post is filled by men who are politically connected”.

Participant 6: “To the best of my knowledge, Employment Equity policies are ineffectively implemented as the majority of the candidates are from outside the Office while internal employees are overlooked. The Office does not have a Gender

Mainstreaming Strategy or Policy separate from the Employment Equity and Human Resources Plans”.

Participant 7: “The Employment Equity policies are not applied uniformly hence it is difficult to comply with the required 50/50 percent equity target. There is also inconsistency in the implementation of the existing Employment Equity Act. The Office does not have an approved Gender Mainstreaming Policy, but there are other relevant policies in place”.

Participant 8 (female Deputy Director): “There is inconsistency in the implementation of the Employment Equity Act. At times it is implemented, and in some cases not. The Office does not have a Gender Mainstreaming Policy which makes it difficult to comply with 50 percent gender representation. The Office also neglects the inclusion of the 8-Principles Action Plan developed by DPSA which requires national and provincial departments to comply and report to the department annually. Employment Equity policies and processes are not applied in the Office of the Premier, especially at Top Management.

Participant 9: “The Office is currently improving and performing well in gender mainstreaming due to the implementation of the existing employment equity policies as compared to the past where the bigger portion of senior management were mostly men. The Office also prioritizes the appointment of female candidates in most senior management posts. Over and above the Employment Equity Plan, the Office has recently approved a strategy wherein SMS posts vacated by designated groups, in particular females, are ring-fenced for females”.

Qualitative and evaluation data were useful in evaluating policy implementation because each provided detailed information about how policy was implemented or provided insight as to why certain things happened during implementation. According to participants’ responses, employment equity is not implemented as set out in EEP. When the Director General and Premier are invited to the Portfolio Committee, it seems like a talk show event or activity. Since there is no consequence management for non-compliance, the employment equity implementation is an operational occurrence that is not legally obligatory.

Although EE and HR Plans are in place, there are no critical implementation steps to follow gender mainstreaming strategy or policy. Top management meetings update and remind members of the 50-50 equity targets at the SMS level. Despite EE officers being allowed to present equity status during the recruitment process, the interview panel often have preferred candidates for the post advertised. Women are often found not meeting the requirements of the post.

The recruitment and selection panels deviate from the rules either through tribalism, discrimination or political connectedness. Preferential treatment is apparent when a woman is replaced by a politically connected male; internal employees are overlooked to give way to cadre deployment.

Changes to equity are slow because of the absence of implementing a gender mainstreaming policy in the Office of the Premier as well as the non-compliance to the 8 Principles Action Plan. The ring-fencing of designated groups such as females and disability groups posts is often done at level 13 which is an entry to the SMS level.

This finding is corroborated by Nkabinde (2018) who states that the failure to meet equity targets by the Office of the Premier confirms lack of political will and commitment to transform the province in terms of gender equality. The Premier ensured that gender representation of the Executive Council of the 6th Administration was more than 50 percent female and this displays that such efforts can be achieved at the administration level. Siukoa and Huma (2017) assert that political will is key for the effective and visible implementation of gender mainstreaming. The appointment of members of Senior Management Service (Levels 13-16) in the Office of the Premier is the responsibility of the members of executive authority. In the Office of the Premier, the power to appoint rests with the premier, and therefore the failure to meet the employment equity targets does not rest with the Director General as the Accounting Officer.

Karimi (2016) shares the same sentiments that political commitment has to exist at both the political and national level to deal with policy failure as well as identifying key and clear messages to the technocrats. Marquette (2020) concurs that without political will and buy-in from the key role players both within and outside the institutions, the gender

mainstreaming projects of senior management in the public sector are unachievable. The findings revealed that there are **no** consequences for non-compliance. The Executive Authority (Premier) has the mandate to approve or not approve the recommendations of the panel.

From the oral transcripts, it is evident that the Office of the Premier has employment equity policies and plans for the appointment of members of senior management. However, some have reservations about their ineffectiveness because of inconsistencies. In its application, discrimination occurs when a male replaces a female employee despite the required target being specific in the advertisement. Often nepotism, favouritism, preferential treatment and political interference reign supreme. In some cases, posts vacated by females are filled by males without advancing genuine reasons. This takes place despite the panel being made aware by Human Resources of the required gender for the particular posts.

The other finding also reveals that there is no transparency in the implementation and application of employment equity policies, and the recruitment process is only visible when completed. The deviation of the panel from the plans make some participants believe that appointments are based on political connected. This indicates that some participants believe there is nepotism and tribalism in the appointment of individuals to senior positions.

Participants' responses suggest that the selection panel deviates from the employment equity plan without any justification, and no consequence management is applied. Rincon, Gonzalez and Berreto (2017) concur with the fact that many of the gender obstacles facing women are not easy to identify and some require long-term measures and time to eliminate.

Therefore, the Office needs to avoid litigations from employees who might feel discriminated against. Internal employees often feel that it is their lack of political to the ruling party that prevents them from appointment. Participants also have the perception that there is no trust for internal candidates because external candidates while internal ones are overlooked. These problems are perpetuated by the appointed selection committee's deviation from the approved Employment Equity Plan.

Participants suggested that the absence of trust in internal candidates relates to prejudices, gender stereotypes, and organizational culture, coupled with political interference because external candidates are appointed while internal candidates are allegedly overlooked. Participants assume that the appointed recruitment and selection panels have their preferred candidates before the actual process commences. This explains the continuous deviation from the approved Employment Equity Plan of the Office of the Premier.

The organizational culture that effects a glass ceiling seems responsible for the lack of transparency in the of individuals to senior positions. Rincon, Gonzalez and Barrero, (2017) argue that women are confronted with a set of invisible and impenetrable barriers as they get closer to the top positions in the corporate hierarchy. Utolf (2020) also states that the workplace has sometimes been referred to as an inhospitable place for designated employees, particularly women due to the presence of multiple forms of gender inequality. As a result women are reserved, there are not assertive and become victims in the lack of implementation of gender mainstreaming processes. Starmaski and Hing, (2015) asserts that whatever affects women in the workplace is not objective.

Similarly, Mergaert and Lombardo (2014) contend that individual and institutional resistance (implicit and explicit) contribute to the ineffective implementation of any planned strategy which may as a result of poor planning, lack of communication and commitment from all stakeholders frustrate gender transformation efforts.

The findings also corroborate Sebake and Sebola's (2014) assertion that in South Africa, cadre deployment leads to nepotism. Kanyane (2014) also claims that cadre deployment prioritizes political allegiance above merit and even competence. The people who are politically linked are in many circumstances placed in top positions despite being inept. Swanepoel (2021) highlights that from a moral perspective, cadre deployment has been associated with nepotism, political meddling and favouritism. Participants 5, 6 and 7 claimed that employment equity policies are not effectively implemented and this hampers progress towards the achievement of the 50/50 equity target in the Office of the Premier..

Oral transcripts revealed that the three participants, two females and a man indicated that employment equity policies in the Office of the Premier are not effectively implemented. Whenever these policies are implemented, they are selective and not applied uniformly. The Gender Mainstreaming Policy is not in place and participants are of the view that its existence would make a difference.

The findings from the oral transcripts validated or corroborated by discrimination highlighted by Laney (2019) whereby despite all the existing employment promotion laws, women in China face serious challenges of discrimination. Various institutions advertise men-only jobs showing bias for the male gender. However, the difference between the recruitment process or practice in the Office of the Premier and China is that advertisements are not discriminatory to women and they do specify the target group. The Human Rights Watch (2018) raised a concern about discriminatory job advertisements whereby in 2017, a total of 32 percent and 19 percent in 2019 specified “men only”, “men preferred” or “suitable for men” were recorded.

Commented [IN5]: Indicate the country where this happened.

Participants do not trust the management as far as the recruitment process is concerned. This may cause low staff morale, poor performance and hopelessness about the prospects of promotions. Participants believe that the appointment of acquaintances without considering skills, knowledge and experience is unfair. Padgett *et al* (2019) contend that incompetent members becoming managers ultimately bring along undesirable issues for the organization.

The inclusion or incorporation of the 8-Principles Action Plan for women empowerment and gender equality might change how policies are implemented. Participants' stated that if the 8 principles are incorporated into the existing employment equity plans, there would be improvement in the recruitment processes in the Office of the Premier and the province as a whole. Participants were anxious that the exclusion of these principles could limit their chances of attaining to higher positions considering that they have served the Office of the Premier for between 11 to 20 years. Most have been on the same level for an average of 8 years.

However, the ineffective implementation of Employment Equity policies and plans is not caused by the non-inclusion of the 8-principles. Rather, it is the lack of commitment

from the Top Management as well as the absence of enforcement of the rules by the Department of Public Service and Administration as the custodian of policy development. Annually, departments are required to submit progress reports on the implementation of the principles but nothing is done when there are evident deviations. Ngomane (2017) contends that the ineffective implementation of policies particularly a 50/50 percent equity target is because SMS members do not report on gender mainstreaming and strict monitoring is done on an ad hoc basis.

Participants acknowledged that middle managers (Deputy Directors) are empowered to be ready as and when the posts become vacant through the retention and succession planning programme. However, panel members deviate from the approved Employment Equity and Human Resources Plans without any reasons or explanation and there are no consequence for their actions. One participant indicated that as long as the powers to appoint SMS members remain the responsibility of the Executive Authority who is the Premier, the status quo will remain.

The finding corroborates that by the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (2021) which indicates that the recruitment and selection process in the public service could be easily manipulated. The Parliamentary Monitoring Group goes on to say that the skills and competence of (human resource) personnel is a major concern as incompetent and unskilled candidates are appointed.

The results also revealed that the Employment Equity policies in the Office of the Premier do not yield the intended results due to tribalism. There is also a perception that the panel is corrupted so that it appoints candidates who are mostly politically connected. This perception is perpetuated by the continuous deviation from the approved Employment Equity Plan by the Recruitment and Selection Committee.

Similarly, in China, the recruitment process is based on merit-entrance examination, qualification, talent and capability. However, discretionary appointments allow political leaders to appoint candidates of their own choice, from both inside and outside the public service.

The South African Public Service Commission (2014) states that the public services in both China and Singapore are termed “cadre organisations” where membership and loyalty influence appointment. However, literature contends that in both countries, the ruling parties have ensured that those deployed are qualified. The point therefore is not whether a ruling party deploys its cadres to public service positions, but rather whether those deployed are qualified to perform the job.

The above findings concur with those by Jacksonstone and Partners (2019) who argue that unconscious bias of assuming that women are incapable of leadership roles can contribute to the continuous discrimination based on gender against qualified and capable women. Non-compliance to the Employment Equity policies should be punishable by law. Pradhan (2014) states that women often face gender inequality more than men when it comes to employment and promotion because they are more vulnerable to gender stereotyping. However, Glazerbrook, (2016) claims that there is an incredible number of talented and resourceful women who are underutilized and become wasted talent as a result.

Many participants thought they was discrimination regarding promotion to senior management service positions because of the continuous appointment of external candidates. Notably, most study participants are closed to retirement so they are no longer concerned about being personally promoted in the public service. They assume that posts will eventually be filled by politically connected candidates. Some participants are likely no longer fulfilled with their current positions because most of them are highly qualified. Out nine, seven participants hold Masters degrees and have many years spent in their current posts. They could be feeling that they might still be overlooked for future promotion.

Notably, some participants lacked understanding of gender-related and employment equity policies due to information sharing challenges in the Office of the Premier. This lack of understanding of policies was observed in interchangeable reference to the Employment Equity Act, Gender Mainstreaming, and the Human Resource and Employment Equity Plans.

Scholars such as Nader (2017) and Roland and Somaed (2017) assert that employment equity policies are implemented differently in countries. However, Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) argue that gender inequality persists in many organizations, due to lack of proper implementation regardless of whether the policies are in place or not. Kampilili (2018) highlights that in South Africa, some policies were amended to advance equality and equity for women and men in employment performing similar work as well as eradicating all forms of employment discrimination. Dalton (2017) corroborates participants' who indicated that policies are not effectively applied or implemented due to the evidence of gender mainstreaming implementation gaps in the appointment of senior management.

The above findings address the first research question that sought to establish the extent of implementation of employment equity policies in the process of appointing senior management in the Office of the Premier.

5.4. Question 2 captures Objective 2 that evaluates the extent to which employment equity policies are enforced in the appointment process of Senior Management employees in the Office of the Premier. Below are participants' responses

Participant 1: *"There is no enforcement of employment equity policies in the Office despite being the custodian and overseer of monitoring in the Province. The Employment Equity status is often presented to the Portfolio Committee on Quality of Life, Office of the Status of Women under Chief Directorate: Transformation, Top and Executive Meetings of the Office, and to oversight bodies such as the Department of Employment and Labour, Public Service Commission to the interview panel before each shortlisting process. However, the adherence to compliance is not done after the interview process. Hence, some employees are specifically appointed to ensure that the Employment Equity targets are met without following due process".*

Participant 2: *"Generally, there is no enforcement in the public service especially in the Office of the Premier. The oversight bodies such as the Department of Employment and Labour fail to invoke penalty clauses to the Office should they fail to comply. Although advertisements are specific for target or designated groups for particular posts, the secondment of particular individual discourages prospective candidates from applying".*

Participant 3: *“No enforcement regarding the implementation of Employment Equity policies in the Office of the Premier. The Institutional Development Support which comprises the Status of Women, under Transformation and the Chief Directorate, and Transversal Human Resource Management ensuring that the 50/50 Employment equity status is realized, is notable by the lack of consequences management for non-adherence to the rules. The Public Service Commission, Commission for Gender Equality and the Department of Employment and Labour fail the Office and the province as a whole through negligence to the oversight role”.*

Participant 4: *“There is no enforcement because positions advertised always state women and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply, but the results outcome are different. One would not know if the Office does not receive applications from women and people with disabilities or if such designated group applications are making it to the Top Management in the Office. It seems like there is something amiss or hidden in the process”.*

Participant 5: *“The Employment Equity policies are not enforced as appointment of SMS members is done by the Executive Authority. It seldom appoints as per the recommendations of the panel. Enforcement by the Department of Employment and Labour is not effective. One is not sure if it is because penalties are levelled from one government department to another government department. Sometimes enforcement is not happening in the Office as the responsible personnel is inconsiderate. The Employment Equity Consultative Forum is comprised of lower level officials without the powers to enforce recommendations or resolutions”.*

Participant 6: *“The enforcement of Employment Equity policies is not visible in the Office despite the presentations made to the Recruitment and Selection panel by the Equity Representative in the Office. Besides all these efforts, women continue to be sidelined when appointments are finalized. However, some strides have been made in appointing women SMS members in most positions in the 2022/23 Financial Year. However, a tug-of-war ensued among panel members when a preferred person for a position was a woman or a person who performed best was a woman. The women who enter these positions with ease are mostly politically connected. Usually, candidates are quickly*

interviewed after the closing date, memos of recommendations are generated quickly, and appointment letters are also issued quickly”.

Participant 7: “Employment Equity policies are not enforced unless the power that be is garnering support from a particular group. The management of the Office and the Branches: Institutional Development Support and Performance Coordination, Monitoring & Evaluation are not doing their part in enforcing compliance may be it is because of lack of consequence management”.

Participant 8: “There is enforcement as and when positions are advertised, it is always stated in the advertisement that women and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply. One would not know if the Office does not receive applications from women as they are not making it up to senior management positions or not. I suspect that there is something though”.

Participant 9: “There is an enforcement of the implementation of employment equity policies and plans to other departments. It issues directives to provincial departments to comply and submit reports on equity status. However, women are excluded from being appointed to senior management in the office due to the glass ceiling. There is enforcement as HR informs the panel members on the status of equity targets at that level. The Chairperson and Employment Equity Manager signed to confirm that the panel is aware of the required Employment Equity status and the equity target expected thereof. The Department of Employment and Labour enforces the implementation of the Act by imposing penalties”.

Before the researcher delves deeper into the analysis of participants’ responses, once the National Parliament has passed a law or policy has been published, it is up to National and Provincial Ministries and Departments to implement the law and/or policy. The ministries should continuously monitor adherence to policies and procedures. They should consistently enforce the consequences of policy evaluation to demonstrate the seriousness of compliance.

Unfortunately, most responses to this question showed that enforcement of employment equity is not done. The Office of the Premier serves as a custodian and overseer of

monitoring compliance in the province, but it is characterised by the absence of compliance. The oversight bodies fail to invoke a penalty clause should the Office fail to comply. The Public Service Commission, Commission for Gender Equality and Department of Employment and Labour fail the Office and the Province through negligence in the oversight role.

The appointment of the SMS members is done by the Executive Authority. Unfortunately, it is not happening fairly because of the inconsiderateness of the incumbent. The women continue to be sidelined when appointments are finalised. Women who manage to occupy these high positions are mostly the politically connected ones. In such cases, interviews are conducted quickly after the closing date, and recommendations are generated quickly for appointment.

Advertised positions often state that women and people with disability are recommended to apply, but the outcome of the interview contradicts the advertisement. The responses above show that two Chief Directors and two Directors were concerned about the Office of the Premier's failure to enforce the implementation of the employment equity policies despite the existence of all structures internally and the oversight bodies established in terms of Chapter 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The participants also believed that the challenges facing the Office of the Premier are many because the employment equity status is also presented to different structures inside and outside the Office. However, there is no commitment to comply and this jeopardises the chances of enforcement. The Department of Labour does not penalize other government departments when they do not adhere to employment policies. Participants believe that there is no enforcement of employment equity policies in the Office of the Premier. They no confidence in the recruitment process because women and people living with disabilities are not given the opportunity of getting higher management posts.

Most participants highlighted the absence of the enforcement of the implementation of Employment Equity policies because of lack of improvement in gender representation in the Office of the Premier. The oversight bodies, the Public Service Commission, Commission for Gender Equality and the Departments of Public Service and

Administration and Labour are not effectively performing their oversight duties and therefore fail the Office and the province as a whole.

Participants indicated that oversight bodies are not performing their roles. The lack of enforcement of employment equity policies is attributed to the ineffective performance of the Institutional Support Services and Performance Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee whose role is to ensure that other provincial departments implement and comply with the provincial and national legislation and policies. There are supposed to report to different structures such as the Portfolio Committees of Public Administration, Standing Committee of Public Accounts, Portfolio Committee of Public Accounts, Audit committee, Heads of Department Forum and Executive Council of Limpopo. The failure of these branches to do their oversight role according to the participants is due to lack of consequence management.

Participants revealed lack of understanding of the role of the Public Service Commission, Human Rights Commission and Commission for Gender Equality which have been established in terms of Chapter 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. These institutions do not have the powers or mandates to enforce compliance. They only investigate unfair conduct or treatment by national and provincial government related to alleged or suspected to be improper appointments and then submit a report to the respective departments to take appropriate remedial actions. Participants indicated that employment equity policies are not enforced in the Office of the Premier, the provincial departments and the country as a whole. This is unlike in China, the United States of America, and the Nordic countries where the oversight bodies enforce the gender mainstreaming policies.

Korniakova *et al*, (2021) points out that the Commissioner for Gender Equality in Russia operates like a department and the Ombudsman monitors the observance of the principle in a particular area considering gender discrimination in an individual context. However, there is no mention of how policies are then enforced. In South Africa, as with the case in Russia, it is difficult to understand the processes of enforcing gender mainstreaming policies because the role of the existing structures is just to monitor gender policies and not to enforce them.

In China, the main enforcement agencies such as local bureaus of human resource and social security, and the Bureau of Industry and Commerce rarely proactively investigate companies and institutions that violate relevant laws, and their responses to the complaints lodged are irregular and inconsistent (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

In the United States of America, The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is an independent body responsible for the promotion of federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against job applicants, and employees of different spheres through administrative enforcement who might be discriminated against based on race, color, religion, sex, (including pregnancy and related conditions, gender identity and sexual orientation), national origin, age, disability or genetic information (Department of Labor, 2023). The oversight body is called the Government Accountability Office which is the arm of Congress that assists with audits, evaluations and investigations on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility so that it meets the constitutional responsibilities of the federal government for the American people.

In Nordic countries, there are structures responsible for the enforcement of the legislation. For example, there is the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the Gender Equality Ombudsman, and the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman (NIKK Information on Gender, 2018). What has been raised with regards to these institutions is that some Danish Institute for Human Rights do not have supervisory authority to check compliance or monitor, but they only provide guidance and support to employers and submit annual reports on their gender equality efforts including pay gap difference.

In the current study, participants suggested that there is political interference because of the appointment of inexperienced and unskilled members of the Senior Management Service while those who are capable, experienced and skilled are left out. There is often horse-trading during the recruitment process between the panel members if the candidate who has been recommended is a woman. The non-appointment of women suggest that they are not good leaders and do not deserve higher positions.

The study findings confirm that non-enforcement of EE policies in the workplace at this level is prevalent. The employment equity target at the Office of the Premier never reached 40 percent for two decades and only improved in 2021 to be at 48 percent.

That is why Ellesanmi (2018) calls for substantive representation of women in decision-making positions in South Africa at national and provincial levels. Women are needed in the formulation of gender-related policies into the existing policies. Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad, (2020) also point out that in South Africa, gender equality is a human right whereby women are afforded the same status as men.

In the current study, most participants mentioned that employment equity policies are not being effectively enforced in the appointment of senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo. One participant mentioned that those in charge do not want to be responsible as they fear being blamed. Some participants indicated that employment equity policies are partially enforced or not enforced at all in the appointment process of senior management employees in government departments because whenever they apply for senior positions in the Office despite their adequate qualifications, promotion does not happen. This shows that in the South African public service, enforcement of employment policies is very difficult to implement. This is because the appointment of members of Senior Management Service rests with the Executive Authority who are the President, and Ministers at National and Premiers of relevant provinces. Therefore, the head of departments cannot impose on the above authority as to how appointments should be done in that space.

The ineffectiveness of the main oversight enforcement agencies corroborates with Human Rights Watch (2023) that mentions that in China, the existing local bureaus of human resource and social security and bureaus of industry and commerce rarely enforce the laws proactively to those companies and institutions that violate relevant laws. It is also mentioned that their responses to the non-compliance are irregular and inconsistent and sometimes the bureaus only order these institutions which published gender discriminatory advertisements to remove or change them and on rare occasions, these institutions are fined.

From the secondary data collected and analysed, it was observed that indeed the Office of the Premier issues circulars and directives to all provincial departments to comply with the employment equity target of 50/50 percent at the senior management level. The finding corroborates well with Rincon, Gonzalez and Verrero (2017) when they state that the major barrier that prevents qualified individuals from being promoted to

management positions in their organizations is a lack of commitment to monitoring legal compliance. The finding is also corroborated by Ngomane's (2017) assertion that lack of enforcement is a major challenge as the Employment Equity Act is transgressed or ignored willy-nilly.

Participants responses show that the Employment Equity Manager and the Employment Equity Consultative Forum exist for compliance as per the Employment Equity Act of 1998. They have no impact as they do not have the powers to direct the Premier not to align with the recommendations of the panel. If he/she decides to deviate, his/her decision to appoint will be in line with the approved Employment Equity Plan of the Office. Many participants highlighted that Employment Equity status is presented in different structures and meetings.

This finding is in line with the achieved targets in terms of gender equality. There is 48 percent female representation in senior management in the Limpopo Office of the Premier as of 2022. These figures are encouraging so far as employment gender equity is concerned. However, the issue of the inclusion of people living with disability remains a challenge.

5.5 Research question 3 relates to objective 3 which sought to establish the nature of the problems encountered during the appointment of the members of senior management service in the Office of the Premier. Below are participants' responses:

Participant 1: *"The Director General and the Executive Authority do not have confidence in women. They are anti-transformation when it comes to women's empowerment. There is no compelling reason why the Office of the Premier has for two decades failed to meet the 50 percent Employment Equity target, and not considered internal candidates first to boost their morale and motivation for a happy workforce. Lack of Succession Plan to fill critical posts by women to capacitate middle managers to gain experience, knowledge and skills remain a problem and a dream".*

Participant 2: *"Women have themselves to blame because when an SMS opportunity is opened and there is a potential woman, it is women who will be up in arms in discrediting another woman. This behaviour gives strength to men to make favourable*

decisions for themselves. Those who secretly crawl to the decision makers (men) dent other women's image and themselves to blame. Some women occupying top positions discourage women below by uttering statements that paint a picture of not wishing or wanting to climb the ladder (this may be done jokingly, but may hurt others). For example, when in meetings, a woman may raise a question or a comment- other women will whisper to show that the other woman is not informed or clever (they will be giggling or showing nasty facial expressions). An opinion raised is turned down by other women to discredit her. This makes other women who do not have a strong will shrink back and reluctantly express their views in meetings in the future. Pull-down syndrome is always found in women where subordinates team up to ensure that there is no delivery. Delay submission of reports, submission of incorrect information just to shame the other person. Do the minimum".

Participant 3: *"There is a perception that all SMS members are politically connected. Corruption is another ghost in the house as you have to bribe men by providing them sexual favours. Lack of transparency where advertisements of posts are coined to suit a particular person. Political interference in the selection processes of external people leads to appointments based on favouritism rather than qualifications or merit".*

Participant 4 indicated that *"Lack of clear succession plan does not create a pool of capable employees to fill the vacant funded posts as and when they become available. Mentoring and coaching for Middle and Senior Managers are irregular to encourage and do not prepare employees for more responsibilities and leadership positions. Hence, women employees are afraid to apply for these posts as they lack confidence, assertiveness and insufficient training".*

Participant 5: *"The Office of the Premier is not leading by example of using the illustration "Do not tell me, show me". Appointments are political and there is favouritism and nepotism as appointed Selection and Recruitment Panel deviate from the existing approved policies and plans. Failure by the Office to maintain the status once the 50/50 percent equity target is reached. Should this happen, it only lasts for 1 to 2 months and most SMS posts are occupied by men. There are skilled, experienced and qualified women employees internally who are ready for the job. To address this discrimination,*

women should also work hard instead of Employment Equity fighting for them and not trying to convince the panel during the interviews”.

Participant 6: *“The Public Service Act and regulations give more powers to the Executive Authority to appoint SMS members and Public Service Act and regulations contradict each other. The role of the National School of Government in preparing employees for SMS posts is invisible in its absence. There is no succession planning to give women the opportunity to contest SMS posts when ready. The recruitment and Selection Panel are not correctly constituted as most of the time there are no experts on particular posts being advertised, shortlisted and interviewed as per the core functions of the SMS posts. There is no monitoring of compliance of the Employment Equity policies in government generally. The consideration of external candidates even when the internal candidate qualifies remains a major obstacle to this issue”.*

Participant 7: *“The none-utilization of Economically Active Population-Tool of statistics assisting the Office to identify prospective applicants based on gender. The other problem is stereotyping where men see a woman as someone who cannot perform or do her job and this is attributed to the patriarchal society where we come from. Inconsistency with the compliance of Employment Equity targets.*

Another problem is giving political heads powers to appoint administrators. The interview panel goes to the shortlisting and interviews with preferred candidates and this reflects how appointments are made. Many SMS members are politically connected or politicians themselves who often cannot deliver as expected. The mindset of men who think they are better and superior in everything than women who are good at performing frontline work”.

Participant 8: *“Deputy Directors General, Chief Directors and Directors have preferences to some candidates specifically external applicants. For example, the appointment of a person without the requisite skills of writing official documents. This kills the morale of those who were in acting positions before such a person was appointed. The major challenges in the implementation of employment equity policies are:*

Firstly, political interference in the selection processes leads to appointments being based on favouritism rather than qualifications or merit and this makes it very difficult to determine how candidates are selected or why certain individuals are chosen over others. There are also perceptions that all SMS members are politically connected.

Secondly, political instability whereby cabals also affect the appointment process due to leadership challenges due to staff turnover of SMS members (government officials).

Thirdly, bureaucratic and inefficiencies whereby there is a slow decision-making process in case the Executive Authority does not go with the recommended candidates. The decision takes months or it comes back with the instruction that the post should be re-advertised.

Fourthly, nepotism is visible whereby family or personal connections play a role in appointments, leading to the selection of candidates who are not necessarily the most suitable for the posts.

Fifthly, the lack of a pool of candidates can lead to the appointment of individuals who do not represent the range of perspectives and experiences of the population.

Lastly, exclusion or discriminating employees who qualify, with unsuitable and irrelevant experience for the advertised posts and thus comrades appointed”.

Participant 9: *“The simple and straight forward answer to this question is that the Executive Authority does not take the issue of 50/50 percent gender representation seriously. Even though the pieces of legislation have been put in place to address unfair discrimination of women in the workplace, lack of communication and shared understanding of employment equity, male dominant organizational culture disadvantages women from occupying senior positions. Poor leadership commitment and inconsistency in the implementation of Employment Equity policies. The notion of assuming men as born leaders and women not is another hurdle to overcome.*

However, the Selection and Recruitment panel is failing the Office in responding to the call for gender representativeness in the public service for the SMS positions. The challenge is around the lack of commitment of selection panels where they deviate from the employment equity plans of the Office and no action is taken when the panel does the opposite. The Employment Officer just read the EE status for compliance purposes without any emphasis on the required gender for the particular post. Appointment of external people while the Office has women who can be considered looking at

qualifications, experience, and knowledge. The Office is inconsistent when applying the Employment Equity appointments. Advertisements are not specific in terms of the target group required for the advertised posts. Management in most instances passes policies to different units without understanding how those policy should be implemented, hence these challenges of non-compliance to gender representation”.

Participants' responses revealed that the Executive Authority does not have confidence in women, and does not encourage women's empowerment evident through the lack of a succession plan to fill critical posts with women. Other participants stated that women are to blame themselves to because they are often up in arms discrediting each other for forward mobility. Moreover, participants have the perception that SMS members are politically connected because there is lack of transparency on advertised posts since some external people are favoured without the requisite knowledge and skills.

Participants also revealed that there is no succession plan and that monitoring and coaching of middle managers are irregular. This does not prepare employees to be more responsible in leadership roles and as a result women lack confidence and assertiveness.

As a Schedule 1 department in the province, the Office of the Premier is not exemplary in complying with equity status as appointments are perceived to be more politically determined. Women empowerment takes a long time to implement due to gender stereotypes, prejudices and lack of trust. Participants pointed out the male-dominated culture in the Office of the Premier that makes it difficult for women to ascend to senior management positions.

Participants also highlighted that the Recruitment and Selection panel members are not correctly constituted because of the absence of experts in the interview panel. Furthermore, external candidates are often considered at the expense of internal candidates, exacerbating men's stereotypes and patriarchal habits. The administrators who are political heads have the power to appoint but unfortunately do not take 50-50 equity status seriously in the provincial government. There is a lack of communication and shared understanding of equity.

Participants 1 and 2 revealed that the Office the Premier does not continuously prepare its employees to be ready when the senior management posts are advertised due to a lack of succession planning, mentoring and coaching programmes. This makes some employs lack confidence in applying for the advertised posts. In addition, the Office of the Premier never conducts the Employment Equity Act sessions for employees to gain knowledge. The finding also revealed that the continuous consideration of external candidates by the Office of the Premier demoralizes internal employees.

The above findings are similar to those of Best (2016) who states that a formalized succession plan enables the organization to properly measure the value each employee provides, and that this makes internal promotion much easier. O'Shea (2021) indicates that when old leaders retire, a new generation of leaders will be needed and that a succession plan means that an organization is ready to deal with this inevitable reality. When succession strategies are in place, it will be easy for the Office of the Premier and the whole provincial administration to implement employment equity policies including gender mainstreaming.

Participants highlighted that there is no sharing of information and progress made on the implementation of the programmes such as succession planning, mentorship and coaching. This suggests that the Office of the Premier is not doing anything in this regard. Participants pointed out that if the programmes were implemented, they would change the status quo whereby prospective candidates would be readily available internally when posts are advertised instead of appointing external candidates. Some participants said there is a belief or perception by management that internal candidates are not good enough. Participants stated that if effectively implemented, a succession planning programme can assist the Office in considering internal candidates for appointment. This would boost the morale of the employees and save costs because these employees would not need any training as they are already conversant with the systems of how the department works.

Participants said they deserve to be promoted because they all have served the Office of the Premier for many years, they possess Masters Degrees but have remained in the same post levels for between 11 to 30 years. Others perceive that the inhibitors of

women's advancement/ or progress are women themselves as in most cases they pull other women down.

The above findings corroborate with the South African Public Service Commission (2018) which stated that political leaders often appoint candidates of their own choice, from both inside and outside the public service. Instead, the South African Public Service Commission stipulates that recommended candidates should go through a rigorous recruitment process and possess relevant competencies. The advertisement of all posts of the Office of the Premier should be in line with the directives from the Department of Public Service and Administration.

Most members of senior management in the Office of the Premier are politically connected due to the ruling party's policy of cadre deployment. Participant 3 added that in order for a woman to be appointed to a higher post, she has to perform some sexual favours to her male bosses. Notably, in the public service, including the Office of the Premier, there are sexual harassment policies and procedures that protect employees from sexual harassment.

The Office of the Premier is not leading by example for other provincial departments to emulate. The non-participating of organized labour in the appointment of members of senior management exacerbates the problem of unfair appointments because the candidates are assessed by the panel only. No one else monitors the fairness of the selection process as per the relevant prescripts. Some participants expressed reservations about panels which deviate from the employment equity policies and plans. Other participants said women are the inhibitors of their progress. A few participants stated that there are policy gaps in the recruitment processes because the Executive Authority appoints senior management instead of the Head of Department who is the Director General as per the Public Service Regulations, 2016. Participants highlighted gender stereotyping as another problem because males who are politically connected always get appointed for senior management posts. Women are perceived as lacking capacity and leadership skills.

Similarly, Stauffer (2018) contends that for organs of state to implement legislative frameworks to deter gender discrimination in the workplace, there should be succession

planning. Participants assume they are discriminated based on gender whenever they apply for senior positions in the Office of the Premier. This suggests the existence of a glass ceiling and gender stereotypes as referred to above.

Participants sounded disillusioned and no longer fulfilled in their current positions. Despite their high level of qualifications and the many years of experience, they have remained in the same positions.

Participants confirmed that the Office of the Premier has capacity building programmes designed specifically for women middle managers (Deputy Directors). This validates what Bangani and Vyas-Doorgepersad (2020) proposes that programmes that will target females such as coaching, mentoring and leadership programmes should be designed to help employes develop their essential leadership competencies and move up the ladder.

However, capacity building for middle managers cannot be a panacea because the Office of the Premier may still appoint external which will demoralize the internal candidates if the environment remains the same. Middle managers should therefore be included in the succession planning programme as this will change the way women are perceived as far as occupying senior positions is concerned. The finding corroborates Ngomane's (2017) who posits that most women who witness the difficulties faced by other women as they climb the corporate ladder avoid unnecessary stress by not applying for those higher posts. Similarly, Kanjere and Ngwakwe (2017) argue that success in gender equality will be achieved if women can actively avail themselves for promotional posts. Kanjere and Ngwakwe recommend that internal candidates should be considered for appointment if they have applied for such promotional positions. However, the responses of the female participants of the current study suggests that some women may have given up as far as applying for senior management posts is concerned due to discriminatory experiences they have encountered.

Lack of succession planning contributes to gender inequality in the Office of the Premier. This is evident in that females who have been employed in the Office for a 11-20 years have stayed in the same post levels for more than eight years. The application of gender equity policies is inconsistent and it favours some candidates at the expense

of suitably qualified and experienced ones. Goko (2013) argues that women deserve to be appointed and elevated to decision-making positions. Rose (2018) observes that leaders with low ethics focus on compliance, rather than on commitment in responding to legislation. Rose reiterates that an ethical leader often focuses on the quality and consistency of enforcement, rather than embracing shared values and sustainability of outcomes in deciding on how to respond to legislation including gender mainstreaming.

The appointment of external candidates is a problem when they are internal employees with relevant qualifications and experience. Stauffer (2018) contends that organs of state must implement legislative frameworks to deter gender discrimination at the workplace, and in recruitment through amongst others, the designation of responsibilities and succession planning. Participants' responses suggests that employment equity policies are not being effectively enforced in the appointment of senior management by government departments and by the Office of the Premier. Most participants mentioned discrimination based on gender, the appointment of external candidates, lack of succession planning, inconsistencies in the application of employment equity policies and lack of political will. Undoubtedly, all these problems negatively affect and even demoralise employees as indicated earlier on.

5.6 Research question 4 related to objective 4 where participants were interviewed on measures that could be put in place to improve adherence to employment equity policies in the Office of the Premier. Below are participants' responses in this regard:

Participant 1: *"The Office must introduce dedicated awareness sessions to all employees including supervisors, and Recruitment and Selection Panel members to share the objectives and benefits of the Employment Equity Act, 1998, and Gender Mainstreaming. Employment Equity Consultative Forum should be given more powers to enforce compliance; Senior management posts vacated by women should be filled by women; and women should prove that the posts allocated to them, deserve them through merit. In case of any deviation by the power that is, consequence management for non-compliance must be implemented.*

Lastly, there is a need to monitor the recruitment and selection process closely to ensure that they adhere to the policy and HR to advise if there are any deviations or discrepancies”.

Participant 2: “Capacity and Succession programmes to assist women gain experience and skills, and prepare them to take up leadership positions should be conducted. The Office should have an option of introducing Mentorship and Succession Planning Programmes to prepare women to assume leadership and more responsibilities positions if they are capable. Conduct awareness on gender mainstreaming in all branches and management meetings including Top Management to understand the objectives set out in the Employment Equity Plan of the Office”.

Participant 3: “The Office should create a dedicated fully-fledged Gender Focal Point separate from the existing arrangement of Service Delivery Improvement Directorate which is done on an adhoc basis. The Premier should instruct all other Members of the Executive Council to comply, include the item of compliance to equity target in their performance instruments, and that disciplinary measures on the part of the Recruitment and Selection panel that deviate from the approved Employment Equity should be taken. Secondly, there must be consequence management by either the Executive Authority or Provincial Legislature through the Portfolio Committee on Gender to those deviating from the approved Employment Equity Plan of the Office. Succession planning will be meaningful for all women if they are ready when employment opportunities arise”.

Participant 4: “Public Service Act and regulations should be reviewed as they contradict each other. A single act is needed so that it is specific and clear. There should be a conducive environment to look after the interests of women SMS members who are parents and guardians (breadwinners). There should be a commitment from the HoD for the appointments to be based on merit. The Office should create a unit to monitor and enforce compliance with the 50 percent Employment Equity target. Over and above, the Office should equip middle managers with skills to make sure that when there are vacant posts, they can fit seamlessly”.

Participant 5: *“The Office of the Premier should enforce compliance to Employment Equity Act targets by all provincial departments. The Premier has the power to instruct all Members of the Executive Council. Disciplinary measures should be taken by the Selection and Recruitment Panel when deviation from the approved Employment Equity Plan take place. Develop, and fully implement Gender Mainstreaming Policy, develop guidelines and standard operating procedures to ensure that employees understand the concept of gender mainstreaming as well as to reduce complaints and litigations. Middle managers (Deputy Directors) should be encouraged to further their studies. Succession planning and mentoring programmes will assist women employees who are invited for interviews”.*

Participant 7: *“The Office should also consider internal candidates who qualify or meet the requirements of the adverts or posts as it will serve as motivation, and there should be buy-in from the Executive Authority which is key in this process. Succession planning and mentoring of both Middle and SMS members should be considered. The Office should push people with capacity. Female MMS should see the vision of the Office so that they are available when they are needed or required for certain positions. Women need to apply when the posts are advertised”.*

Participant 8: *“The Office should lead by doing the right things, e.g. HR is the target as there are perceptions that they change the requirements when they have interests. The Executive Authority must be sensitized to Employment Equity policies and its obligations before a decision is taken. The Office of the Premier should direct members of the Executive Council during the signing of their Performance Agreement to comply and be conversant with the administration system of government. Organizational Risk, Integrity and Security should ensure that it does not recommend a candidate whose qualifications are still pending (suspend the appointment). Succession planning, mentoring, and training of panellists will probably improve the status of gender representation as well as help uplift females.*

Management should not recommend or approve in cases where the targeted candidate was not considered or recommended as per the EE Plan. Effective Retention Strategies for women in the workplace should be implemented, but this should not mean that

women automatically qualify for senior management positions. They should, however, meet all requirements for the positions and have/possess relevant skills”.

Participant 9: “Middle Managers should developed through a Mentorship Programme so that they are ready whenever there are vacancies. The Office through the EE Plan should ensure that women who were capacitated and developed are given the opportunities when they arise. The role of the Departmental Employment Equity Forum should be strengthened. Succession Planning and development of targeted programmes for designated groups are needed. The Office should also conduct advocacy of the EE policies in all meetings. e.g. Top, Executive Management and Staff Meetings. The management should make decisions and act on the reports that are submitted accordingly. The Office should create a Directorate to deal with specific programmes including gender issues”.

Participants’ responses show that the Office of the Premier should introduce dedicated awareness sessions for employees and supervision to share the objectives and benefits of EEA. The SMS positions vacated by a woman should be filled by women. The capacity and succession programmes should be established to assist women with skills and experience for leadership positions. There should be an awareness campaigns for gender mainstreaming.

The Office of the Premier should ensure all Members of the Executive Council comply with equity policies and there should be consequence management against transgressors. The Public Service Act and regulations and delegations should be reviewed to eliminate contradictions. The heads of departments should ensure that appointments are on merit. Disciplinary measures should be taken against Recruitment and Selection panels that consistently deviate from the approved EE Plans. Internal candidates who meet the requisite skills for a post should be considered for the SMS positions and female MMS should make themselves available when the opportunity arises.

The Office of the Premier should be exemplary to other provincial departments and be sensitive to HR targets and EE policies, Organizational Risk, Integrity and Security to suspend an appointment if the qualifications of the candidate do not meet policy

requirements. The MMS should be developed through mentorship programmes. Furthermore, the Employment Equity Forum and the Succession planning programme should be strengthened to address gender transformation.

In the current study, five participants indicated that women should undergo awareness sessions, mentorship and succession programmes to provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills on gender mainstreaming in the Office of the Premier and the government as a whole. This finding concurs with the contents of the Senior Management Service Handbook which maintains that women are historically less qualified than men, which automatically disqualifies them from being appointed to senior management positions (Department of Public Service Administration, 2003). Generally, men have had more advantages at the work place and therefore qualified women should be given opportunities of promotion.

Participants said that the Limpopo Office of the Premier must implement consequence management measures if employment equity policies are to be effectively implemented and employment equity status improved. These participants, (one Chief Director and two Directors) are highly qualified but have remained in the same post levels for more than eight years. Logically, such employees may opine that failure or partial implementation of employment equity policies should be regarded as punishable misconduct. However, consequence management can only be imposed on the panel members and not the Director General as he does not have the powers to appoint members of senior management, but the powers rest with the Executive Authority who in this case is the Premier who approves based on the recommendations of the Recruitment and Selection panel.

The two participants who are Directors mentioned that the Office of the Premier must establish a fully-fledged designated unit of Gender Focal Point if employment equity policies are to be effectively implemented or applied in the process of appointment of senior management. The creation of a unit may improve the implementation of employment equity policies since it will only focus specifically on gender-related issues instead of the current arrangement of being under the Directorate of Strategic Management. Furthermore, the province should have its act to guide the process and the current Public Service Act and regulations should be reviewed. Attention should be

given to the programme rather than done on an ad hoc basis as per the current arrangement. The finding corroborates the Department of Labour explicitly stipulating that failure by any employer to fully comply with the provisions of the Employment Equity Act, 1998 will leave the Department of Labour with no option, but to apply to the Labour Court to impose a fine or penalty for violation or contravention of the Employment Equity Act.

The JCL Forensic Services (2021) suggests that the problem facing the country on gender representation is that there is currently no legislation that can be brought into play to hold the government accountable for its blatant cadre deployment policies. Moreover, in government, no legislation recognizes the cadre deployment policy and if implemented, it will be contrary to the existing employment equity policies. However, the JCL Forensic Services (2021) contends that cadre deployment perpetuates how appointments are handled as departments are currently free to appoint whoever they like, in whatever positions they choose, regardless of whether or not any of the appointees are suitably qualified or experienced to handle their roles.

Kanyane (2014) argues that politically connected incompetent people are often deployed in public positions leading to a demoralized public service. The participants are critical to the Office of the Premier as a coordinating department to implement consequence management measures in terms of employment equity policies implementation. Unfortunately, highly qualified personnel have remained in the same post levels for more than eight years and this has a demoralizing effect. This finding concurs with the perceptions of MMS females who are on the verge of retiring. However, women should be empowered with the necessary skills since many are experienced, capable and skillful and can be coached and mentored to perform their assigned responsibilities effectively and efficiently to match their male counterparts. The qualifications the participants possess and the years they have been employed in the Office of the Premier are proof of their competencies.

Two out of nine participants mentioned that it is imperative to establish a designated directorate if employment equity policies are to be effectively applied in the appointment process of members of senior management in government departments like the Limpopo Office of the Premier as a case study in this investigation. These female have

served between 11 and 20 years but have remained in the same post levels for more than eight years. That is why they strongly feel that a devoted directorate should contribute to the improvement of the implementation of employment equity policies.

Stauffer (2018) contends that organs of state must implement legislative frameworks to alleviate gender discrimination at the workplace and in recruitment through the designation of responsibilities and succession planning. On the other hand, Dalton (2017) argues that despite the availability of gender inclusion policies in the world, there is evidence that there are huge gender mainstreaming implementation gaps in the appointment of senior management. This status reveals that there should be continuous monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of existing policies.

Given the above findings, it is critical for government departments such as the Office of the Premier, to put a variety of measures in place to improve the implementation of employment equity policies in the appointment of members of senior management service. Some of the measures that were proposed by the participants could improve gender mainstreaming in the appointment of senior managers in the Office of the Premier. Participants suggested that the implementation of consequence management, empowerment of middle management level officials, the establishment of a designated directorate and the monitoring of recruitment and selection processes could go a long way to improve issues of employment promotional equity. The current achievement in terms of the realization of the set targets viz, 49% for females and 51% for male senior management respectively, in the Office of the Premier, bears evidence to this and also necessitates the implementation of mitigating measures if adherence to employment equity policies is to be improved in government departments. Siukola and Huma (2017) argues that effective implementation of gender mainstreaming requires the fulfilment of certain measures or mitigating factors that government institutions should consider to ensure that there is political commitment, visible and measurable goals, and develop a plan for implementing gender mainstreaming in all policy areas.

These findings address the fourth research question which sought to understand what measures could be implemented to improve adherence to employment equity policies in the appointment of senior management as a case study. The findings also achieves the fourth study objective which sought to suggest and provide various measures that

could improve employment equity in terms of gender mainstreaming in the appointment of senior managers at the Office of the Premier in Limpopo Province.

5.7. General Findings of the Focus Group Interview

All the participants were asked the same four questions prepared for the study. They indicated major challenges faced and difficulties for the Office of the Premier in achieving gender transformation. Participants' responses are indicated below:

5.7.1. Ineffectiveness in the implementation of EE policies

The nine participants agree that the Office of the Premier has employment equity policies which were promulgated and recognise that there is a need for women's empowerment and participation in decision-making. Women are a historically disadvantaged group at the senior management level of different national and provincial departments. This is despite the existence of policies which for gender transformation in the public service meant to benefit both women and men as far as gender equality is concerned. One participant said: "There is a challenge in designing, implementing and evaluating programmes and projects of gender transformation".

The Department of Public Service Administration (2003) in South Africa inherited a public service which was strongly influenced by discriminatory employment policies and practices based on race, gender and disability. Hence, these groups are still poorly represented at decision-making levels and occupational classes. The study therefore evaluated progress made in terms of evaluating policies and programmes that have been based on the needs of men as the dominant group in society and in decision-making.

Notably, there was consensus among participants that Employment Equity policies in the Office of the Premier are not effectively applied or implemented. One participant said: "*The Office is not effective as gender mainstreaming gets spoken about when the Director General and the Premier appear at the Portfolio Committee on Quality of Life. Otherwise, it is considered as one of those operational activities that are not necessarily binding*". Hence, gender parity in the Office has in the past twenty years hovered between 30-39 percent EE target in terms of women representation at the SMS level and only increased to between 40-48 from 2022.

5.7.1.1 The Republic of South Africa Constitution Act, 1996

In South Africa, gender equality is a constitutional human right whereby women are afforded the same status as men. However, participants women do not enjoy full constitutional human rights. A participant said: *“Discrimination based on gender is one of the major obstacles for women to gain access to senior positions in the Office of the Premier”*. Other participants indicated that candidates are appointed based on where they come from (ethnicity), while others highlighted that people are appointed due to favouritism and preference. One participant stated: *“Appointments are based on whether they like you or not”*.

5.7.1.2 White Paper on Affirmative Action, 1994

Affirmative Action in South Africa is defined in the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 with measures designed to ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups have equal employment opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce of the designated employer. Despite these legislative measures, one participant said: *“Women members in Senior Management Service in the Office of the Premier are not allowed to claim their space at that level”*.

The responses provided by the participants on ineffective, partial, and inconsistent implementation of employment equity policies corroborate well with the Employment Equity Plan for the Office of the Premier developed for 2018-2023. Table 5.2 below shows categories, barriers and Affirmative Action Measures identified which contribute to the non-implementation of Employment Equity policies by the Office of the Premier. The plan indicates clearly that the barriers are not a result of policies gaps and procedures but occur during implementation stages.

Table 10: EE Plan for the Office of the Premier

CATEGORIES	POLICY	PROCEDURE	PRACTICE	BARRIERS	AFFIRMATIVE ACTION MEASURES
Recruitment	N/A	N/A	✓	Inconsistency of job requirements for the same posts	Develop consistent and uniform requirements for the same posts.

Advertising positions	N/A	N/A	✓	EE targets for each post advertised are not specified.	Posts advertised shall specify the EE targets required.
Selection criteria	N/A	N/A	✓	EE targets are not considered.	The memorandum for the appointment should be signed by the EE Manager to ensure that it complies with the EE targets.
Appointments	N/A	N/A	✓	Non-implementation of the EE targets	Appointments shall be done as per the EE targets.

Table 5.2: EE Plan for Office of the Premier 2018-2023

Gaile (2017) states that some of the benefits of Affirmative Action are to promote diversity, stop gender stereotypes, and break the glass ceiling in the workplace as far as gender mainstreaming is concerned

5.7.1.3. Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill, 2013

Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill calls for 50/50 representation and meaningful participation of women in decision-making structures. Section 9(1) of the Bill supporting section 8 above stipulates: "Despite any other law, targets for women in all laws and policies on empowerment shall be at least 50%". This complements the South African Cabinet Decision 85(A) of 2005 on Employment Equity targets to be implemented by all national and provincial government departments.

The Office of the Premier, as a coordinating and monitoring department, failed to adhere to this piece of legislative mandate for almost six years since the last Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). The Employment Equity Plan was approved and implemented as shown by the data below:

Occupational Levels	Male				Female				Foreign Nationals		Total
Top Management	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5

Senior Management	34	0	0	1	22	0	0	0	0	0	57
TOTAL	37	0	0	1	24	0	0	0	0	0	67

Table 5.3: 2018 Numerical Goals & Targets

Occupational Levels	Male				Female				Foreign Nationals		Total
Top Management	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
Senior Management	34	0	0	1	21	1	1	1	0	0	60
TOTAL	37	0	1	1	23	1	1	1	0	0	65

Table 5.4: 2019 Numerical Goals & Targets

Occupational Levels	Male				Female				Foreign Nationals		Total
Top Management	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
Senior Management	34	0	0	1	21	1	1	1	0	0	59
TOTAL	37	0	1	1	23	1	1	1	0	0	69

Table 5.5: 2020 Numerical Goals & Targets

Occupational Levels	Male				Female				Foreign Nationals		Total
Top Management	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
Senior Management	33	1	0	1	21	1	1	1	0	0	59
TOTAL	35	2	1	1	23	1	1	1	0	0	69

Table 5.6: 2021 Numerical Goals & Targets

Occupational Levels	Male				Female				Foreign Nationals		Total
Top Management	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
Senior Management	32	1	1	1	21	1	1	1	0	0	59
TOTAL	34	2	1	1	23	1	1	1	0	0	69

Table 5.7: 2022 Numerical Goals & Targets

Occupational Levels	Male				Female				Foreign Nationals		Total
Top Management	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
Senior Management	32	1	1	1	21	1	1	1	0	0	59
TOTAL	34	2	1	1	23	1	1	1	0	0	69

Table 5.8: 2023 Numerical Goals & Targets

The Bill provides enough and sufficient measures in the form of policies, plans, programmes and strategies on how to infuse these initiatives that aim to promote the rights and benefits of women and achieve the requisite conditions for women empowerment in the workplace. Therefore, there are no genuine reasons why the Office of the Premier and the whole Limpopo Administration fail to comply with these legislative provisions. This may suggest that there are indeed preferences, nepotism, and favouritism as suggested by one participant who said: *“The Premier and the Director General do not trust women in higher positions”*.

5.7.1.4. The Employment Equity Act, 1998

The purpose of this act is to strengthen the existing Affirmative Action Policy, and to promote equal opportunity by eliminating unfair discrimination amongst previously disadvantaged groups. The South African Employment Equity Act was enacted in 1998. The current study focused on the unfair discrimination of designated groups (women) although Affirmative Action does not stipulate the target like the Cabinet Decision of 2005 where the 50/50 percent Employment Equity target was decided.

The effective implementation of the Employment Equity policies by the Office of the Premier assists in addressing the under-representation of women at the Senior Management Service level. One participant said:

“The Office of the Premier does not seem committed to implementing the Employment Equity Policy as the 50/50 percent Employment Equity target remains a dream and stagnant. Accordingly, changes or improvements in gender representation

appear when advertising posts, target groups in particular women to apply and the Employment Equity status is presented to the Interview panel during the shortlisting”.

The Office of the Premier Employment Equity Plan did not outline or specify the required target as per the template designed by the Department of Employment and Labour.

5.7.2. Discrimination based on gender

The South African Human Rights Commission (2016) define discrimination as any act or omission including policy, law, rule, practice, condition or situation which directly or indirectly imposes burdens, obligations or disadvantages on; withholds benefits, opportunities or advantages from any person on one or more of the prohibited grounds. Discrimination can be about exclusion, reinforcing perceptions of inferiority or difference. One participant said:

“There are elements of discrimination in the appointment process of SMS members in the Office of the Premier as the participants indicated that although reports on Employment Equity status are presented to Top and Executive Management Meetings, the Office continues appointing males and prioritizes the appointment of external candidates while internal candidates are overlooked”.

This can result in low staff morale for employees with requisite skills and those who have been with the Office for many years without being appointed to senior management positions. Inconsistent application of the employment equity policies, favouritism, nepotism, as well as panel members deviating from the designated targeted groups compound the problem (Kanyane, 2014).

The perceptions that SMS members are politically connected, pre-planned, and that their appointment lacks transparency, are some of the accusations made against the Office of the Premier. For example, one participant said:

*“Political interference in the selection processes which leads to appointments being based on favouritism rather than qualifications or merit makes it very difficult to determine how candidates are selected over others who are most suitable”.*This

suggests that there is exclusion or discrimination of candidates who qualify, and have relevant experiences for the advertised posts. in the Office of the Premier

One participant had an opportunity to be part of the appointed selection and interview panel for a post-targeting designated group. Although the Office of the Premier was aware that the post targets a woman, the participant was surprised to see a male candidate shortlisted and finally appointed. This shows that there was already a preferred candidate before the selection interview panel could even do its job. Some participants stated that even though the EE status was presented to the shortlisting and Interview panel during the process, they did not see any changes or improvement in the practice. Often a tug-of-war ensued amongst panel members when a preferred candidate for the position was a woman who proved to be the best.

5.7.3. Unavailability of Gender Mainstreaming Policy or Strategy

Out of the nine participants interviewed, six indicated that there is no Gender Mainstreaming Policy or strategy in the Office of the Premier. This finding was validated by the members of the Employment Equity Consultative Forum. Some participants indicated that gender mainstreaming policies are effectively implemented. However, the researcher's observation was that these participants could not differentiate the existing employment equity policies due to lack of awareness campaigns and sessions relevant to gender equality issues. Gender mainstreaming is the intervention strategy aimed at ensuring that the concerns and \experiences of both men and women are identified in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of transformative policies and programmes in all spheres of life.

All participants responses show that there is general lack of enforcement of policy and non-compliance. For example, one participant said: "*The Department of Labour has never imposed any penalty on government departments*". Another participant indicated that it happens because the penalty will be from government to government.

5.7.4. Lack of Political Will

Lack of political will came out strongly from participants who felt that the Executive Authority (Premier) responsible for the appointment of senior management and the Director General whose advice played a role, are not doing enough to empower women.

The fact that gender mainstreaming was only spoken about when the director general and Premier appeared at the Portfolio Committee of Quality of Life during Women's Day or 16 Days of Activism leaves much to be desired. One participant expressed frustration, saying: *"The status quo on the low-gender representation at the SMS level will remain as long as the powers to appoint SMS members remain the responsibility of the Executive Authority"*. Furthermore, the Director General and the Executive Authority do not have confidence in women, or they are anti-transformation when it comes to women's empowerment. Hence, for decades the Office of the Premier has failed to meet the employment equity target.

5.7.5. Lack of Succession Planning

In responding to all four questions raised, the participants indicated that the unavailability of succession planning in the Office of the Premier is a challenge because women are victims of gender inequality and cannot contest whenever senior management positions become vacant. For example, one participant said: *"Lack of Succession Plan to fill critical and scarce skills by the Office to capacitate Middle Managers to gain experience, knowledge and skill remains a problem."* Another participant added: *"Lack of succession planning where the Office is not doing enough so that there is a pool to fill the vacant funded posts as and when they become available exacerbates the problem, and lack of mentoring, coaching and clear succession planning programmes to fine-tune Middle and senior managers is a clear dereliction of duty"*.

The researcher established that the Office has an approved plan of the Succession Plan Policy. However, implementation remains a problem because there are no activities regarding this policy that are taking place.

5.7.6. Recruitment and Selection Panel deviation from the EE policies

On this issue, participants were very vocal and sceptical indicating that the Selection and Interview Panel deviated from the existing approved policies and plans and no actions were taken for non-compliance. The Selection and Recruitment Committee failed the Office of the Premier to respond to the call for gender representation in the public service, and in particular, the SMS posts.

The selection and recruitment panel is designed to fulfil the directives of those in charge. Sometimes panel members are not well constituted as indicated by the appointment of people with no knowledge of posts. Participants said despite the panel being aware of the required target, it still recommend the opposite gender and there are no actions taken against non-compliance to policy. Regarding this matter, one participant said: *“The appointed panel according to me is just a requirement that stipulates that all posts should be advertised and interviewed and appointment made. The powers to appoint remains the responsibility of the Premier in this regard”*. Therefore, the Premier has the responsibility to lead by example.

5.7.7. Women's perception and attitudes

Recruitment and selection processes have changed and women should be prepared to respond to current times. One participant said, *“The Office is trying to enforce compliance to meet the equity status”*. However, the participant was sceptical as women themselves are inhibitors of other women when it comes to empowering and advancing them. Another participant said women should not wait for employment equity to work for them, but should work hard so that they match their male counterparts.

5.7.8. Lack of consequence management

One participant said, *“Institutions such as the Public Service Commission, Commission for Gender Equality and the Department of Employment and Labour are letting women down because they fail to do oversight role”*. Without these institutions being active and enforcing compliance, government departments such as the Office of the Premier will appoint candidates of their choice. This is against their approved Employment Equity Plans. Hence, meeting the target remains a challenge.

5.8. Summary

This chapter presented, analysed and interpreted the results of the study. The chapter also interpreted participants' oral transcripts in the light of the views of various scholars who have engaged with similar issues. The next chapter presents an overview of the study, a summary of the findings and make study recommendations.

CHAPTER 6: OVERVIEW, SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the study by providing an explicit articulation of participants' responses about all the objectives of the study. Henceforth, an account was given of how the problem was addressed, resulting in the recommendations of the study. A detailed discussion of how the research was explored is followed by a summary of the findings, the contribution as well as the limitations of the study. Recommendations are made based on the findings of the investigation to inform future research.

6.2 Overview of the study and summary of the findings

The study evaluate the extent of implementing employment equity (on gender transformation) in its design and enforcement in the appointment of senior management in the Office of the Premier.

The first objective sought to establish the extent of implementing employment equity policies (on gender transformation) in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier. Participants' inputs revealed that enforcement of employment equity policies is a problem because it is characterised by reluctance to implement the necessary prescript. The features of non-compliance are evident and attributed to the oversight bodies' roles. Oversight bodies such as the Branches: Institutional Development Support and Performance Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, Portfolio Committee of Public Administration, Standing Committee of Public Accounts, Audit Committee and Heads of Department Forum were missing in action. This could be attributed to a lack of consequence management and accountability and that political connectedness and nepotism are favoured in appointing senior management members. Similarly, Dalton (2017) argues that despite the availability of gender inclusion policies in the world, there is evidence that there are

huge gender mainstreaming implementation gaps in the appointment of senior management.

Objective 2, sought to understand how equity policies are implemented in South Africa. Once the National Parliament has passed a law or a policy has been published, it is up to the national and provincial ministries and departments to implement the law and/or policy. The oversight bodies continuously monitor adherence to policies and procedures. Oversight bodies consistently enforce the consequences of policy evaluations to demonstrate the seriousness of compliance.

Study findings revealed that despite the Office of the Premier being the custodian and overseer of monitoring in the province, there is no enforcement of rules and regulations. , When the Office of the Premier fails to comply, oversight bodies fail to invoke the penalty clause. Although advertised positions for SMS members always state that women and people with disabilities are recommended to apply, outcomes of such interviews favour men revealing that something is amiss in the process. Hence, female candidates are sidelined as men are appointed for senior management positions. Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) corroborate this finding when they argue that gender inequality persists in many organizations due to lack of proper implementation of existing policies.

Objective 3 sought to establish the nature of the problems encountered in transforming the appointment of senior management in the Office of the Premier. The findings revealed that the Executive Authority and the Director General do not have confidence in women. This is evident by lack of succession plans in the Office of the Premier to fill critical posts by designated groups. A lack of transparency on advertised posts requiring women and people with a disability creates perceptions that SMS members are appointed based on political connectedness, nepotism and tribalism. Prospective candidates appointed are often seconded without requisite skills. Some women's appointments are made to maintain the 50-50 equity status whilst in some instances external candidates are favoured at the expense of internal candidates. This finding concurs with Kanjere and Ngwakwe's (2017) argument that success in gender equality will be achieved if women can actively avail themselves for promotional posts and that internal candidates should be considered for appointment if they have applied.

Objective 4 sought to find measures that could be put in place to improve adherence to the employment equity plan on gender transformation. The findings reveal that men continue to be overrepresented at the SMS level suggesting the absence of measures to curtail the problem. There is a need for education on gender mainstreaming to political heads so that they provide budgets spearheading gender equality issues. Dedicated awareness sessions for employees and supervisors should be introduced in the Office of the Premier to share the benefits and objectives of the EE Plan on gender transformation. The SMS posts vacated by women should be recommended to be filled by women. There should be strict monitoring of the recruitment and selection process of prospective candidates. Furthermore, mechanisms to track women and women with disabilities to senior and top management should be considered to speed up gender transformation. Mentorship and capacity-building workshop programmes should be organised to alleviate gender transformation in the Office of the Premier. This is in line with Stauffer's (2018) contention that organs of state must implement legislative frameworks to deter gender discrimination at the workplace and in recruitment through the designation of responsibilities and succession planning.

6.3. Contribution of the study

A new synthesis of various aspects that are addressed by the study has led to contributions in the number of areas that are discussed below:

6.3.1. Theory building: Human Resource Management Practice

This study contributes to the building of Human Resource Management Practice and Transformation theories in certain areas where transformation concerning gender equality will be championed. For example, through the utilization of theory, the problems affecting the implementation of employment equity policies could be realized. South African recruitment and selection processes for the appointment of senior management should be reviewed by devolving powers for the appointment of senior management to Head of Department (Director General). Doing so would push the Director General to adhere to the employment policies as well as include the mitigating measures for the implementation of employment equity policies. The theory can be applied in local and international administrative contexts.

Although this study was limited to the Office of the Premier in Limpopo Province; it is hoped that it will stand as an example of how gender transformation could be undertaken in other contexts.

6.3.2. Contribution to the Human Resource Management Practice

The study adds insight into the implementation of employment equity (gender mainstreaming) policies in the appointment of senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo in the following ways:

- Advance theory on the extent to which employment equity (gender mainstreaming) policies are applied in the process of appointing senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo regarding gender mainstreaming in general;
- The implementation of the findings and recommendations will guide the process of gender mainstreaming in the whole South African Public Service;
- In turn, the findings and recommendations could be useful to policymakers, Heads of Department and Director-General, HR, Gender and Transformation Specialists and other relevant employees;
- The investigation has revealed that almost all senior management who participated in the study hold the minimum required qualifications;
- Finally, the investigation came up with new knowledge and insights and can guide different stakeholders both in the administrative context and the public sector as a whole.

6.3.3 Theory building: Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming (transformation) is a contested concept when put into practice. Therefore, it requires further and continuous research to add value for theory development and building. Participants' responses suggests that the implementation of employment equity policies is not effective. Therefore, it is necessary for government departments like the Office of the Premier to intensify and enforce the application of employment equity policies in the process of appointing senior management if the set gender equity targets are to be met.

Another contribution is that problems such as discrimination based on gender, appointment of external candidates, lack of succession planning, inconsistencies in the

application of employment equity policies and lack of political will encountered in the process of appointing senior management in the Office of the Premier could be minimized.

6.4. Limitations of the study

This study has the following limitations:

- 6.4.1. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to other contexts because it was based on a case study.
- 6.4.2. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa had a limiting effect in that fewer study activities were being undertaken during the two years of the pandemic.
- 6.4.3. This is a cross-sectional study undertaken on a particular department rather than the whole province.
- 6.4.4. Time constraints affected the researcher when Focus Group Interview participants constantly postponed the because of their work responsibilities. The situation was exacerbated by electricity outages which affected the availability of research participants, venues and recording appliances.
- 6.4.5. Lack of financial support from the university during the data collection process to fund the research assistants. In the end the researcher had to pay research assistants from her own funds.

6.5. Recommendations of the study

Before outlining the recommendations of the study, it is imperative to highlight the functions of the Office of the Premier in Limpopo as a case study to relate them to the findings. The Office of the Premier exists to support the premier to perform the following duties:

- Implement provincial legislation
- Implement mandated national legislation
- Develop and implement provincial policy
- Coordinate functions of Limpopo Provincial Administration and Departments and
- Prepare and initiate provincial legislation

The following recommendations based on the identified problems facing the Office of the Premier as far as the appointment of senior management is concerned:

6.5.1. Inconsistent application and implementation of the Employment Equity Policies

It is recommended that the Office of the Premier in Limpopo Province to

- consistently, comply, enforce, and intensify the implementation or application of employment equity policies in the process of appointing senior management;
- enforce and uniformly implement EE policies by all provincial departments to ensure that there is visible improvement in employment equity status.
- ensure that in their performance agreements, heads of departments include achievements on employment equity at this level on an annual basis.
- The Branch: Institutional Development Support should not only perform their functions for compliance purposes but for impact to make gender representation visible.

6.5.2. Discrimination based on gender

The Office of the Premier and the whole provincial government

- should avoid appointing candidates based on political connections. Advertisements (requirements) should be consistent and standardized instead of coining them to suit particular people.
- should be professional, set a good example, and ensure that there is no political interference.
- Posts that are vacated by females should be filled by females and not males so that there is no perception of favouritism, tribalism or nepotism. By so doing, problems such as discrimination based on gender, unreasonable appointment of external candidates, inconsistencies in the application/or implementation of employment equity policies as well as lack of political will be avoided.

6.5.3. Unavailability of Gender Mainstreaming Policy or Strategy

The Office of the Premier should

- develop and implement the Gender Mainstreaming Policy with clear employment equity targets to complement the existing policies.
- should implement its Employment Equity Plans objectively.

6.5.4 Lack of Political Will

- Political will is very critical in ensuring that employment equity policies are implemented.
- The Premier as the Executive Authority responsible for the appointment of members of the senior management:
 - ✓ should demonstrate the commitment and willingness to achieve visible set objectives of gender representation in the Office of the Premier and all other provincial departments.
 - ✓ should ensure that the performance agreement of the Director General as the Head of the Limpopo Provincial Administration has the key result area on the achievement of the EE target in displaying commitment to women empowerment and gender equality (representation) in his Office and the whole province.
- For the employment equity policies (Gender Mainstreaming) to be fully implemented, political commitment has to exist on the part of all provincial and national pieces of machinery to deal with policy failure.

6.5.5 Panel members deviating from the EE Plan

The Office should continuously train and brief all panel members on the importance of gender mainstreaming so that any deviation from the EE targets can be penalised

- Appointment of the panel members should be based on their experience with the work of the posts advertised for the members to perform their recruitment process effectively.

5.6.6. Lack of Succession Planning

- Succession planning as a process and strategy for replacement planning or passing on leadership roles, identifying and developing new, potential leaders into leadership roles and positions when they become vacant should be effectively implemented.
- Those responsible for human resources planning in the Office of the Premier must identify the skills, practices, and knowledge for those critical posts and prepare certain identified employees openly and fairly.

- The existing approved Succession Planning Policy should fast-track its implementation noting and considering that succession planning involves preparation rather than pre-selection.

6.7. Conclusion

The implementation of the Employment Equity Plan on gender transformation is complex and difficult. Gender inequality is an age-old phenomenon that dates back to the apartheid era in South Africa. The current South African government inherited a public service which was strongly influenced by discriminatory employment policies and practices based on race, and gender. For many decades, women have been grossly marginalized in organs of decision-making and other governance structures. There is a need for institutional structures to enhance the full participation of women in the employment sector.

South Africa has good and sufficient laws, policies, and structures to monitor the implementation and compliance of employment equity. Unfortunately, there no consequence management for those who deliberately fail to advance gender equality in the public sector. As a result, the country is not fully promoting equal employment opportunities and fair treatment of gender at the senior management level. The advancement of women into more senior positions in the public service of South Africa remains a challenge facing national, provincial departments and municipalities in South Africa.

The lack of monitoring and evaluation processes also perpetuates the ineffective implementation of gender mainstreaming. No major improvements can be made if monitoring and evaluation are neglected. The current study identified gaps for further research and recommends that more extensive research be carried out on the matter of gender employment equity.

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Appendix A: Editors letter

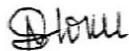
Editing and Proofreading Report

20 February 2024

This letter serves to confirm that I, Dr I. Ndlovu of the Department of English, University of Pretoria, have proofread and edited an MA dissertation titled: "Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming on the appointment process of senior management: A case study of the Office of the Premier in Limpopo Province, South Africa" by Ellah Nkhensani Ngobeni.

I carefully read through the document, focusing on proofreading and editorial issues. The recommended suggestions are clearly highlighted and can either be accepted or rejected using the Microsoft Track Changes Function.

Yours Sincerely



Isaac Ndlovu, PhD
Department of English,
University of Pretoria
South Africa
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E-mail: isaac.ndlovu@up.ac.za

Appendix B: Interview guide

Title: Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in the appointment of senior management: A case study of the Office of the Premier in Limpopo province, South Africa

Gender mainstreaming is defined as a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as those of men an integral part during the designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes of a particular institution. This includes both political, economic, and social sphere, in order for women and men to benefit equally. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to evaluate gender mainstreaming in the appointment of senior management at the Office of the Premier in Limpopo Province, South Africa. This will include the efforts put by institutions internationally, regionally and nationally on the improvement of gender representation in the public service.

The study also focuses on how different researchers and scholars view gender equality to women and development as well as women and gender agenda debate. The challenges, strategic approaches to the implementation of gender mainstreaming as this study is grounded on is a transformative worldview that may change the lives of the participants. The research ethics will also be taken into consideration which includes informed consent, voluntary participation, avoidance/minimizing the harm to participants, anonymity and confidentiality, and deception of subjects and/or respondents.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please tick in the appropriate box

1. Age

35-40		41-50		51-65	
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2. Gender

Female	
--------	--

Male	
------	--

3. Occupation

Deputy Director	
Director	
Chief Director	

4. Number of years in the same post level

--

5. Years in the employ of the Office of the Premier

5-10	
------	--

5. Level of qualification or education

Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Honours	Masters	Doctorate	Other (Specify) _____
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SECTION B: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

To what extent are employment equity policies (Gender Mainstreaming) applied in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo?

QUESTION 2

To what extent are employment equity policies enforced in the process of appointing senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo?

QUESTION 3

What is the nature of the problems encountered during the appointment of the senior

management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo?

QUESTION 4

What measures could be implemented to improve adherence to employment equity policies (requirements) in the appointment of senior management as a case study evaluation?

Appendix C: Ethical clearancerance certificate

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

**RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR**

**NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Ms EN Ngobeni**

**STUDENT NO:
19023426**

**PROJECT TITLE: Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in the
appointment of senior management: A case study of the Office
of the Premier in Limpopo Province, South Africa.**

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: FHSSE/22/GYS/03/0710

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Dr MH Mukwevho	UNIVEN, Youth and Gender Studies	Supervisor
Prof. TD Thobejane	UNIVEN, Youth and Gender Studies	Co - Supervisor
Ms EN Ngobeni	UNIVEN, Youth and Gender Studies	Investigator - Student

Type: Doctoral Research
Risk: Minimal risk to humans, animals, or environment (Category 2)
Approval Period: October 2022 – October 2025


The Research Ethics Social Sciences Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:


- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
 - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
 - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
- Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviation from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the final date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
 - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
 - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Requires further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process,
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
 - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
 - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
 - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions A. It necessary

**ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Date Considered: September 2022**

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee: Prof TS Mashau

Signature 

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
2022 -10- 07
Private Bag XS050
Thohoyanou 0950


UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
PRIVATE BAG XS050, THOHOYANOU, 0950, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA
TELEPHONE: 018 309 1000 FAX: 018 309 1001
"Equality driven, Respectfully sustainable, World-Ready Capable and Innovative University"

Appendix D: Permission to conduct Research

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

Ms EN NGOBENI

Title of the research: Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in the Appointment of Senior Management: A Case Study of the Office of the Premier in Limpopo Province, South Africa

From : **Ngobeni Ellah Nkhensani**

Contact details: 082 717 0185

To: The University of Venda

Email: ngobenik@premier.limpopo.gov.za

Dear Respondent,

This letter serves to request your permission for me, Ellah Nkhensani Ngobeni, from the Institute for Gender and Youth Studies at the University of Venda to conduct research whose purpose is to evaluate Gender Mainstreaming in the appointment of senior management in the Office of the Premier in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

The University's permission for this study to be conducted is vital since the findings of the study will help in determining how best the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy could be utilized in improving gender representation in the senior management bend (Level 13-16) in the province and the country as a whole. The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. A summary of the study findings will be provided to whom it may concern.

- In case there is something you do not understand in the process, you are free to contact my promoters, **Dr M.H. Mukwevho**, and **Prof T.D. Thobejane**.

Please note the following:

- This study is exploratory and it involves semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions on gender mainstreaming in the appointment of senior management in the Office of the Premier, Limpopo Province in South Africa. Names will not appear in the findings, and the responses and/or answers given will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the responses and/or answers you provide.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate as well as stop to participate at any time without any negative consequences.
- The interview and Focus Group Discussion should take 30 minutes and an hour at most. You are therefore requested to respond as honestly as possible. Please answer the questions as honestly as possible.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. After this process, you will be provided with a summary of the findings upon request.
- For any clarity and questions regarding the study, please contact my promoters, **Dr MH Mukwevho, Prof. and TD Thobejane.**

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study voluntarily.

RESPONDENT'S SIGNATURE

MAY 2022

Appendix D: Turnitin Report

