

**ASCENSION OF WOMEN TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT POSITIONS: A CASE OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION, GAUTENG PROVINCE**

by

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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ABSTRACT

Inherited colonial and patriarchal laws have created barriers for women to gain entry to employment opportunities and hierarchically advance to senior management positions (SMS). Although government is making strides in promoting women representation and gender equality in the public sector, women remain underrepresented at SMS. The aim of the study was to investigate if women at the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) advance hierarchically at the same pace as their male counterparts to SMS. The study applied a qualitative research approach to address the research objectives. Data was collected through desktop research by reviewing secondary data sources available in the public domain.

The study found that women at DWS are underrepresented at SMS positions as males predominantly occupy these positions. This further widens the inequality gap, which shows that men continue to enjoy the benefits of patriarchal norms over women. Moreover, the majority of national government departments including DWS have not achieved the set employment equity target of 50% for women at SMS, and the 2% target for persons with disabilities (PWDs). The study revealed that it is a challenge to determine the level of compliance for women with disabilities at SMS as the composition of the gender and racial demographics for the 2% is not clearly defined by government. The study also found that barriers exist within the public sector which hinder the advancement of women, such as glass ceiling, glass cliff, patriarchal practices, gender stereotypes, gender bias and discrimination, exclusion of women in strategic decision-making structures, unequal salaries, harassment, bullying and intimidation, and unaccommodated disability needs, amongst others. The lack of support programmes and empowerment interventions for women to strive and self-actualise their potential to assume leadership positions has also been found to be amongst the barriers.

The study recommends that for gender equality to be achieved, DWS should provide support programmes and empower women through skills development, nurturing talent, mentorship, coaching, gender mainstreaming, and provision of a gender-focused budget. Other recommendations brought forward are the inclusion of men in gender forums to drive transformation, development of gender-neutral policies, supervisor-subordinate support, and flexible policies to enable women to achieve a work-life balance.

Keywords: gender equality, empowerment, advancement, inclusion

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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The racial and gender biased colonial government of the Republic of South Africa promoted patriarchal and sexist policies which not only discriminated against women, but also did not afford them an opportunity to progressively advance to higher hierarchical structures in the public service domain as opposed to their male counterparts. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (hereafter referred to as Constitution) was promulgated to redress the injustice of the apartheid laws; and enshrine values as well as human rights that promote a democratic system for the South African society (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The Department of Water and Sanitation (2015:2, 16), as articulated in its embedded service delivery values prides itself in the provision of “career development practices to maximize human potential...” and “employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation...” in the fulfilment of its constitutional mandate. This study seeks to explore whether the Department of Water and Sanitation (hereafter referred to as DWS) has mechanisms in place to redress gender equality through empowering women, particularly deputy directors, to advance to senior management positions.

This chapter outlines the background and motivation for the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, clarification of key terms, preliminary literature review, research design and methodology, demarcation of the study, ethical clearance, and layout of the research chapters.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Patriarchal corporate culture, gender bias in recruitment processes, and stereotyping have been found to be some of the historical hindrances of women’s career growth (Rao, 2015:8); and have predominantly contributed to the confinement of women to low level positions (Sebola, 2015:72). The Bill of Rights promulgated in the Constitution seeks to correct the injustice of the past by ensuring that everyone is afforded fair and equal opportunities, and not unfairly discriminated against (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Section 195 of the Constitution states that Public Administration must be governed by values and principles such as, but not limited to, “development-oriented, good human-resource management and career-development practices to maximize human potential, and broadly representative of the South African people” (Republic of South Africa, 1996:111). The Promotion of Equality and

Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2002 (Republic of South Africa, 2002) prohibits all forms of unfair discrimination and harassment generated by “historical colonialism, apartheid and patriarchy” and promotes equality in all social and government structures.

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997 (Republic of South Africa, 1997:10-11) directs national and provincial departments to develop service delivery strategies that identify “the development, particularly through training, of a culture of customer care and of approaches to service delivery that are sensitive to issues of race, gender and disability” and thus, “redress the imbalances of the past”. Thus, the Women’s National Coalition (1994) saw it fit to establish a women’s charter on effective equality to claim their rights in society by addressing matters of “patriarchy, colonialism, racism and apartheid which had subordinated and oppressed women within political, economic and social life”.

Research conducted by Sebola (2015:74-75) regarding gender equity and women empowerment at universities, asserts that the apartheid system created racial and gender-based discriminatory policies that made it difficult for women to occupy higher positions. The author suggests that the system failed to provide support and invest in empowering women; and was too quick to elevate men to senior management positions (SMS) than women. In a similar study conducted at the Mpumalanga Office of the Premier, Hlebela and Mphehle (2020:1584-1585) agree with Sebola that even though there is a high number of employed women than men in the department, there is still a lesser number of women ascending to SMS than men. Subsequently, these authors agree that there is a need for the workplace to implement equity strategies aimed at promoting women-specific development programmes and curb underrepresentation of women in executive structures.

According to Rao (2015:8) the underrepresentation of women in senior positions emanates from barriers such as, but not limited to, “cultural and religious stereotypes” against women, patriarchal corporate culture, discriminatory laws, and inherent gender bias in the recruitment and promotion of women. Vokić, Obadić and Ćorić (2019:93) claim that women need to self-promote and take up space particularly in male-dominated workplaces. The authors suggest that women should be more self-confident and insistent when promoting themselves in order to be considered for “employment, training and education, salary increase or faster promotion”. Antoniou and Aggelou (2019:200) augment that institutions need to curb gender discrimination by establishing policies that promote equal representation and the inclusion of women in senior positions.

In an endeavour to bridge the gender equality gap and ensure equity for women, this study seeks to investigate the extent to which the DWS has achieved government’s imperatives of gender equality. The DWS through its strategic plan commits itself in

enforcing the values and principles enshrined in the Bill of Rights, by capacitating and empowering women through creation of women targeted projects, inclusive job creation, targeted procurement, and skills development programme (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2015:3-4, 30). The department has further committed to improve female representation at senior management level by March 2021 after having reported a decline in female representation to 41% as at 31 March 2020 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2021:102).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although the DWS attempts to achieve government's imperatives by appointing more women in various senior positions, the advancement of women to SMS remains a concern. This disparity suggests that the department has not met the minimum employment equity threshold of 50% women representation at SMS. Seemingly, men are mostly employed in leadership positions than women, despite opportunities provided to women to act on these strategic positions. Ultimately, men would be preferred to permanently fill these positions while women predominantly occupy the majority of subordinate positions. Furthermore, women who get to occupy the senior positions are often not provided with the necessary support structure to effectively lead and retain those positions. This can lead to resignations and in turn, men get appointed for those positions, and women would be painted as failed leaders. This practice has therefore become a norm in the public sector, which negatively impacts on the ascension of women. The DWS's initiative to afford women equal opportunities to progress at the same pace to higher hierarchical levels as their male counterparts is hereby scrutinised to analyse whether women are subjected to prejudice and unfair discrimination.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore the question: Do women advance hierarchically at the same pace as their male counterparts to SMS?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In pursuit of the problem statement above, the main research objective is to investigate whether women advance hierarchically at the same pace as their male counterparts to SMS.

The secondary research objectives are as follows:

- To examine whether gender equality enhances women's advancement to SMS.
- To investigate whether women are empowered to assume leadership positions at DWS.
- To explore prohibitions for women's advancement to SMS.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question is: Do women advance hierarchically at the same pace as their male counterparts to SMS?

- Does gender equality enhance women's advancement to SMS?
- Does DWS empower women to assume leadership positions?
- What prohibits women from advancing to SMS?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The observed unequal representation of women and men in leadership structures in the public sector depicts the challenge that the sector faces in the implementation of the affirmative action measures set by the Employment Equity Act (Republic of South Africa, 1998:18). Such measures as stipulated in section 15 of the Act compel employers "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" (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

Research conducted by Lasseko-Phooko (2019:12, 81) on the challenges to gender equality in the legal profession in South Africa, analysed the role of patriarchy and gender stereotypes in attaining gender equality and achieving transformation in the legal profession. The study found that gender stereotypes have attributed to the underrepresentation of women in key decision-making structures of the legal profession; and that the patriarchal nature of the legal profession has hindered the professional growth of female legal practitioners. Another research by Tisaker (2022:xi, 10) investigated barriers to career advancement of women in the South African Tourism sector. The study focused on assessing the effects that these barriers have on the leadership, motivation and empowerment of women. The study found that the barriers to women's progression can significantly impact on women's leadership, motivation and empowerment. Research by Zikode (2020:ix, 4-5) explored the experiences of female managers in the information, communication and technology (ICT) sector on career advancement. The study focused on obtaining views on the attraction and retention of female managers in the ICT sector, and assessed the extent to which career advancement affects the loyalty of these women towards the organisation. The study revealed that women who are unable to gain access to advancement opportunities expressed lack of motivation to perform their duties or commit to the organisation (Zikode, 2020:116).

This study differs from the above-mentioned studies in that it endeavours to investigate the extent to which the DWS has achieved government's imperatives of gender equality. It seeks to explore

whether women at the DWS are empowered to advance at the same pace as their male counterparts. This study focuses on whether women at the DWS enjoy equal promotion opportunities as their male counterparts. Not only does the study enlighten the DWS on the disparities that prohibit women from ascending to SMS positions, but it also provides recommendations that would promote the implementation of its gender equality and foster transformation.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF KEY TERMS

Definitions relating to the subject being explored are discussed below:

- **Equity:** When applied in relation to gender, the concept implies “just distribution of all means of opportunities and resources between women and men” (Department of Women, n.d:xviii) and fairness towards women and men which must be ensured through “compensation for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men” from being equal (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2006:28). These include fair distribution of salaries to men and women (Balgobind, 2021:36) and fair gender participation (Isaacs, Strydom & Mbukanma, 2022:58).
- **Equality:** It refers to “full and equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms” (Republic of South Africa, 2002:4). In the South African women’s coalition charter, 1994, the concept of equality is regarded as the fundamental principle that should be achieved through taking cognisance of the challenges that women face in the economic, political, legal, education, development, social, cultural, health, and media fraternities amongst others, thus affirmative action must be implemented to address the challenges (Republic of South Africa, 1994:2). It is proposed in the charter that government must take lead in developing legislation and establishing institutions that protect the rights of women and promote equality in the different spheres of government (Republic of South Africa, 1994:2). In the context of gender equality, Balgobind (2021:37) describes equality as a state of men and women being equal to one another regardless of the gender status they categorise themselves; and getting access to equal opportunities regardless of socio-economic status. This study adopts the equality definition by Lasseko-Phooko and Mahomed (2021:508) as a state of being the same, which aims to redress the past and present imbalance thereby curbing women inferiority to men.
- **Harassment:** It is referred to as “unwanted conduct which is persistent or serious and demeans, humiliates or creates a hostile or intimidating work environment” (Republic of South Africa, 2002:4), and includes “violence, physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, gender based, and racial abuse. It also includes the use of physical force or

power, whether threatened or actual, against another person or against a group or community, ...which either results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in social injustice, economic harm, injury, death, physical and psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation” (Republic of South Africa, 2022:4, 9). According to Lutchman and Lesufi (2020:5), harassment of women is common in male dominated workplaces like the engineering industry, leaving women vulnerable and feeling intimidated to pursue a career in male-dominated environments. It is therefore essential that institutions develop policies that prevent and condemn all forms of harassment in the workplace to curb “abuse of power” to vulnerable persons (Republic of South Africa, 2022:5).

1.8 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is based on a review of secondary data in order to address the research questions. The secondary data consists of government publications and internal documents, legislation, peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, books including e-books, media articles, internet articles, and other sources related to the subject matter. The referencing method used is the Harvard referencing method.

1.8.1 Conceptual Framework

This study is underpinned by a deductive approach through identifying concepts from literature review to answer the research questions (Podmetina, Soderquist, Petraite & Teplov, 2017:1306). The key concepts that guide the study are:

- **Empowerment:** It is a process that resourcefully enables persons to be autonomous decision makers in the broader sphere of their lives (Otero-Neria, Varela-Neira & Bande, 2016:864); as Nyanjom (2018:24) attests that empowerment is centered around self-development by “achieving competencies and experiences necessary to progress successfully”. Chammas and Hernandez (2019:145) suggest that transformational leadership often fosters empowerment, which enables persons to be involved and to cooperate in decision-making processes. Similarly, Vokić, Obadić and Ćorić (2019:87) emphasise that empowerment includes identification of women eligible for promotion, mentorship, coaching, sponsorship; establishing women forums; providing opportunities that are experience-based; creating opportunities and programmes that are women targeted; and provision of top management support particularly to balance home and work life.

- **Gender equality:** It is a condition whereby women and men are afforded equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities (Vokić, Obadić & Ćorić, 2019:2). Thereby the opposite of this narrative thus depicts gender inequality.
- **Patriarchy:** It encourages a system of male command, and masculinity over feminism, whereby women are deemed inferior to men (Adisa, Abdulraheem & Isiaka, 2018:22; Bertolt, 2018:11).
- **Stereotyping:** It refers to the grouping of individuals into certain categories and behaviour associating feminism with women and masculinity with male figures (Bertolt, 2018:11).

1.8.2 Prohibitions for Women's Career Advancement

Women are compelled to constantly prove that they are just as competent and capable of occupying senior positions as men (Rao, 2015:8-9). Globally, it has been found that multiple disparities prohibit women from progressively advancing to SMS. Such disparities include, but are not limited to, discrimination, gender bias, exclusion, cultural and religious clashes, communication barriers (Singh, Singh & Singh, 2018:102-104); gender inequality (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017:1018), patriarchy (Rao, 2015:8; Adisa, Abdulraheem & Isiaka, 2018:22), gender stereotypes (Bertolt, 2018:8), unequal incentives (Hlebela & Mpehle, 2020:1578), bullying, intimidation, sexual harassment, and prejudice (Burke, 2019:21). Hence, these disparities lead to underrepresentation of women in senior positions, whilst in some cases prevent them from pursuing such positions (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017:1018).

According to Vokić, Obadić and Ćorić (2019:66), Antoniou and Aggelou (2019:200), and Burke (2019:24), hierarchical promotion of women is hindered by barriers such as:

- Glass ceiling, which restricts women from climbing the corporate ladder to senior position.
- Sticky floor, which confines women within low positions thus preventing career development.
- Bottleneck, which decreases the rate of women climbing the corporate ladder.
- Glass wall, which promotes role segregation.
- Leaky pipeline, which is “when women drop out of their career paths”.
- Glass cliff, which presents an increased rate of women leadership failure.
- Glass escalator, which advances men “in female dominated occupations” into senior positions.
- Concrete wall, which promotes gender bias policies and discriminatory laws pertaining

to “education and job opportunities”.

1.8.3 Gender Equality

Section 181 of the Constitution articulates that public institutions such as, but not limited to, the South African Human Rights Commission; the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities; and the Commission for Gender Equality, have been established to oversee gender equality matters and ensure that the rights of citizens are not in any way infringed (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

In examining whether gender equality enhances women’s advancement to senior management positions, it is suggested that workplaces must advocate for gender equality and transformation policies (Bilimoria & Singer, 2019:366); promote diversity and broader inclusion (Singh, Singh & Singh, 2018:102); respect individual differences and opinions (Rao, 2015:5); and afford marginalised groups an opportunity to engage in various matters (Hughes, 2015:39). Furthermore, Turner and Baker (2018:474) are of the view that women must be authentic; introspect on their leadership capabilities; be adaptive (Otero-Neria, Varela-Neira & Bande, 2016:872); realise their self-worth; and be confident to pursue higher positions.

1.8.4 Women Empowerment

Hlebela and Mpehle (2020:1580) are of the view that empowering women means providing them with opportunities and skills that foster independence to make decisions over matters that directly affect them. Not only do their abilities to make informed decisions prosper their families, they also yield positive results in the workplace and society in general (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017:1020). Nyanjom (2018:38) corroborates that empowering women with education and broader opportunities provides them with increased job opportunities, career advancement, and financial independence; they also become an inspiration and role models for other women to want to follow in their steps.

Bilimoria and Singer (2019:367) put forward that empowering women begins with making significant changes to a patriarchal culture; to develop policies that prohibit gender bias and other discriminatory disparities; and to advocate for women inclusion and representation in all areas of leadership. Leadership is not merely in political and traditional spheres but it also exists in an institutional domain. The terms ‘leadership’ and ‘management’ are interchangeably used in the public sector, and it has been observed that members of SMS serve as both line managers and institutional leaders.

Adisa, Abdulraheem and Isiaka (2018:20) argue that women leaders *unlike men* are faced with the predicament of mostly having to balance their home and work life, as they are family

caregivers by nature. Hence, they propose that institutions need to take cognisance of this trajectory when developing their employee support policies and support women by including policies such as flexible hours.

In an endeavour to progress to higher hierarchical levels, Turner and Baker (2018:474) propose that women need to be authentic, reflect on their leadership capabilities, be adaptive (Otero-Neria, Varela-Neira & Bande, 2016:872), realise their self-worth, and be confident to deal with organisational pressures. Fritz and van Knippenberg (2017:1027) attest that women need to have self-actualisation of their personal and professional identities that define their character, leadership traits, and leadership aspiration.

According to Chammas and Hernandez (2019:148), when an institution invests in transformation processes and empowering the women workforce there is an improved organisational performance, ethical standards, and financial and collaborative performance (Hattke & Hattke, 2019:227). It can be argued that the improvement is a result of women in leadership being able to take financially viable and “less risky” decisions (Burke, 2019:20). Hence, it is essential that institutions provide mechanisms and an enabling environment for women to progressively advance to leadership positions, particularly to SMS, not only for their own benefit but for the greater benefit of the institution as well.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology involves the systematic procedures by which the researcher starts from the initial identification of the problem to collection of data, until final conclusion and data presentation (Wotela, 2017:226). This includes the methods (Madondo, 2021:38) and procedures used to conduct the study. A discussion of how these tools were employed is detailed in Chapter 3.

1.10 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

This is desktop research which used secondary research to present a qualitative approach to gender equality. It used scholarly sources, books and e-books, peer-reviewed journals, departmental reports, and media articles to highlight the state of gender equality in the DWS. There were no human participants as it was a non-empirical study.

1.11 ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Scientific research conducted under the social sciences setup warrants ethical consideration. Furthermore, Brynard and Hanekom (2014:28) point out some key requirements for researchers

pertaining to the consideration of ethics, *inter alia* confidentiality and honesty. In upholding ethical values and standards for this research, an ethical clearance application was submitted to the College of Economic Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of South Africa and there were no ethical concerns found (see Annexure 1). Brynard and Hanekom (2014:97), contend that research ethics committees protect the rights of research participants, society, and researchers. Moreover, “in order to comply with sound research practices, it is integral that approval from an institutional ethics review board is acquired” (Navalta, Stone & Lyons, 2019:03). However, it is worth noting that, the research underway is a conceptual study, and therefore, the researcher is also bound to adhere to and scientific research ethical considerations.

1.12 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: General Introduction: This chapter discusses the background and motivation for the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, clarification of key terms, preliminary literature review, research design and methodology, ethical clearance, demarcation of the study, and the layout of chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature review: This chapter addresses the research questions through a review of secondary sources of data relating to gender equality. It also provides an overview of the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

Chapter 3: Research methodology: This chapter outlines the research activities for a qualitative research approach, research design, data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4: Analysis and interpretation of results: The process of analysing collected data, and its interpretation is presented.

Chapter 5: Findings, recommendations and conclusion: A summary of the key aspects discussed throughout the study is outlined in this chapter. The recommendations are made based on the findings as well as for any future research that may be considered. The limitations encountered during the research are also explained, and conclusions presented.

1.13 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the background and motivation for the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, clarification of key terms, preliminary literature review, research design and methodology, demarcation of the study, ethical clearance, and layout of the research chapters. The next chapter explores gender equality and provides an overview of the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

CHAPTER 2: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the background and motivation for the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, clarification of key terms, preliminary literature review, research design and methodology, ethical clearance, demarcation of the study, and the layout of the research chapters. This chapter conceptualises gender equality as a concept that the democratic government seeks to promote as it advocates for equal rights and opportunities to men and women regardless of their economic status. It also provides an overview of the barriers that hinder the advancement of women to SMS at the same pace as men, which forms the basis of this study. This chapter further outlines legislative framework underpinning the study, as well as attempts to address the research questions through a review of secondary sources.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF GENDER EQUALITY

The Republic of South Africa is regarded as one of the most unequal countries in the world. This is substantiated by Lutchman and Lesufi (2020:4) who base this narrative on a “GINI index” which quantified inequality to be three times higher when compared with the index of other countries worldwide. Bertolt (2018:11) suggests that colonial and discriminatory laws led to inequality of men and women due to being patriarchal in nature, while Lasseko-Phooko and Mahomed (2021:498) claim that the African National Congress (ANC) as the political ruling party recognised inequality to be a result of racial discrimination rather than the patriarchal system. Similarly, Sonntag (2019:21) concurs with Bertolt alluding that patriarchy is the hindrance of equality amongst men and women in any sphere of life as it attributed to male dominion over women. This is depicted by the country’s historical events whereby women had no voice and have had to endure marginalisation, oppression and exclusion in political decisions (Bertolt, 2018:5; Toni & Moodley, 2019:186). Not only were women as the marginalised group compelled to be financially dependent on their partners due to being deprived of fair recruitment and selection opportunities (Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020:2), but the privileged ones were also not afforded the same advancement opportunities as men in the corporate sector seeing that they were confined to non-authoritative positions as a result of a patriarchal system and racially discriminatory laws imposed (Sebola, 2015:72-75).

As much as the patriarchal system favoured men in general than women, black women were however the most affected (Meyer, 2014:1046) as they faced a double trajectory of racial and gender exclusion (Toni & Moodly, 2019:187). The term “black” is mainly used when making a

collective racial reference to Africans, Coloureds and Indians (Republic of South Africa, 1998a:6). These women were not afforded an opportunity to play an active part in the labour market nor of having any entitlement to own businesses (Department of women, 2015:10). They were confined to domesticated less-earning jobs and predominantly being servants in white households (Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disability, 2019:17). Eventually, their cry for political participation was heard, and this was largely demonstrated in various marches, which they held between 1913-1956 to lodge their grievances over the laws imposed on the marginalised group by the ruling government. This shaped the country's Constitution and transformation policies (Lasseko-Phooko & Mahomed, 2021:507).

The South African report tabled at the United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reveals that the public service sector has made strides in promoting women representation at SMS, as they account for 40.6% as at June 2015, which increased from 34.8% in 2009. It acknowledges that although progress has been made in maintaining 2% representation of persons with disability, there is still work to be done in increasing women representation as they accounted for 41.1% in comparison to 58.9% of men as of 2012/2013 financial year (CEDAW, 2014:21). In order to determine compliance in meeting the target for persons with disability and alleviate their exclusion as well as discrimination thereof in policy decision-making processes, the Department of Public Service and Administration (2006:22) encourages institutions to collect disaggregated data in terms of sex, race, disability, and gender sensitive indicators. Hardacre and Subasic (2018:6) are also of the view that gender racial ratios must be implemented in institutions as they seek to ensure that previously marginalised groups, inclusive of women with disabilities, are employed based on racial and gender preference so as to bridge the inequality gap and ensure broad representation.

The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation affirms that there has been significant progress made by the democratic government in empowering women and promoting gender equality between 1994 and 2014 as asserted by Maluka, Diale and Moeti (2014:1032). Such progress includes amongst others, a steady increase in women representation at Parliament from less than 2% representation prior to 1994 (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, n.d:4) to 46.1% women representation in Parliament post the 2019 elections and ultimately to 50% women Ministers in Cabinet by June 2019 (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disability, 2019:10). This milestone eventually paved the way for all spheres of government and the private sector to take cognisance of women inclusion in leadership structures and invest in advancing women hierarchically. The gradual increase in women representation in the public sector from 17% in 1999 to 34,39% in 2009 is acknowledged, however institutions have not been able to reach their gender equality goals despite the legislative efforts made by government to advance women. This trajectory was found to be attributed by various factors ranging from

individual, institutional, social, and inherited political barriers that are disadvantaging women from being employed or occupying SMS; and therefore gender racial ratios must be implemented to ensure that not only are women employed based on merits but are also selected to address underrepresentation of this group in the public sector (Hardacre & Subasic, 2018:6).

According to the Department of Public Service and Administration (2021:72, 75), it was found that in the public service sector there were 4,050 women representation at SMS level as of 30 September 2021, and 56 of them were women with disabilities. The department further depicts that although there were significantly 82 women represented at SMS level in an institutional level (mainly at national DWS), there is a need for improvement in the representation of women with disabilities as it is alluded that there are none represented in this regard. Men, however, still account for a higher representation rate in both the public sector in general and at an institutional level. The African National Congress in its Gender Paper, 2012 applauds the increase in women representation in Parliament and the public sector at large citing that legislation, statutory bodies, women's ministry and the women's league played a major role in bringing about change in gender parities and advocating for gender equality. The ruling party however, also acknowledges the need for improvement as it identifies "setbacks in and gender practices within the ANC" as one of the challenges that hinder women's advancement, thus preventing them from occupying key leadership positions within the organisation (Republic of South Africa, 2012:3).

Nonetheless, the results of the 2022 election for the top seven (7) leadership positions in the ruling party has turned out to be a stepping stone towards a recognition of the capabilities of women in the new democracy. On 19 December 2022, the country witnessed three (3) women being voted into the party's leadership positions amongst four (4) other men, thereby increasing the percentage of women representation compared to previous years, and one of those women made history by becoming the first woman Treasurer General of the party (*Eyewitness news*, 2022).

From the discussion above, it is clear that although government is making strides in promoting and ensuring that gender equity targets are met, it is however notable that there is still room for improvement in the public sector in general as the percentage of men in SMS level are still higher than women. Therefore, it is fundamental that this disparity be addressed through the development or review of transformation policies to strategically include gender mainstreaming programmes, address inherited social patriarchal norms, and employment equity plans; and that performance agreements of the heads of departments also include transformation commitments on advancing gender equality. Moreover, women must be continuously trained, mentored and capacitated, particularly women with disabilities, and those previously disadvantaged due to their racial status. Prioritisation of the needs of women with disabilities who possess similar

competencies with women without disabilities must be taken into consideration when providing employment and economic opportunities to women in general. Special gender focal budget and resources must be allocated for the promotion of gender mainstreaming at institutions. Gender units as well as gender forums must be created, and must also regularly raise awareness to SMS on gender issues. Furthermore, affirmative action policies must be able to redress unfair labour practices; promote the implementation of Batho Pele principles; enhance the skills of the previously disadvantaged groups; and create an enabling environment for men and women to sustainably attain equal economic gain. It is worth noting that although history has proven that women were barred from accessing opportunities that provide financial freedom and independence for them to be entrepreneurs in their own right as well as be successfully competitive in the labour market. Current democratic policies nonetheless have made provision for women inclusion in the economy, although the challenge of accessing economic opportunities still remains much more of a barrier for women than men, and even more difficult for black women to be in same league with white men or possess the same gender power in a male-dominated industry. Ultimately, society groups and institutions need to identify and address gender-based barriers that are making it difficult for women to attain the same equal societal status or access the same advancement opportunities as their male counterparts as literature suggests that women are still underemployed in managerial positions.

2.3 GENDER EQUALITY

Kahn and Motsoeneng (2014:1061) suggest that the public service sector needs to effect the mandate of the Constitution by prioritising gender equality through ensuring that women and men are afforded equal opportunities to reach their full potential. Literature affirms that gender inequality has been found to exist amongst patriarchal societal structures whereby women are regarded as inferior to men: the education system where the majority of education institutions are led by men than women (Toni & Moody, 2019:179), households whereby women are expected to perform domestic chores than men (Sebola, 2015:71), wages whereby men earn more than women for performing the same job (Hlebela & Mpehle, 2020:1578), recruitment and selection processes whereby women are subjected to unfair employment practices on the basis of gender (Rao, 2015:8).

The Department of Public Service and Administration (2006:14) articulates that human resource management must adopt policies that reflect on gender mainstreaming and transformation issues, particularly when the policies are biased towards women regardless of being meritocratic (Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020:7). During the period 1994 to 2009, the public sector had not achieved the set gender equity targets (Kahn & Motsoeneng, 2014:1068) despite government's plight to develop policies and programmes aimed at correcting gender imbalances,

promoting gender mainstreaming (Nhlapo & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2021:190), empowering women with education and skills to be financially independent, as well as advocating for the increase of women representation in senior management positions (Department of Women, 2015:21).

2.3.1 Bridging the Inequality Gap

In bridging the inequality gap, the South African Magistrate and High Courts have been assigned as equality courts to provide a platform for citizens to report complaints regarding harassment, hate speech, unfair discrimination and other related matters deemed relevant for the equality court (CEDAW, 2019:6-7). According to Bilimoria and Singer (2019:366), the inequality gap is worsened by the slow transformation progress of correcting past racial injustices making it even more difficult for the marginalised groups to secure senior positions, get equal salaries, and gain career development opportunities. Burke (2019:26, 417) underscores this, and is supported by Nyiransabimana (2018:9) who alluded that various strategies can be implemented by public institutions to ensure equality such as but not limited to:

- Affirmative action to redress gender injustice,
- Capacity building,
- Initiatives that encourage the advancement of women leadership skills in all levels,
- Training and talent development,
- Mentoring and coaching,
- Top management support,
- Transformation policies,
- Encouraging women participation and inclusion,
- Boosting morale and confidence,
- For men to refuse participation in “single-gendered panels” and be actively involved in gender forums,
- Promoting accountability as well as a culture of reporting any form of harassment and intimidation, and
- Ensuring gender quota in the boardroom.

Lindquist and Marcy (2016:176) assert the need for good corporate governance, as well as gender equity and diversity portfolios to promote women inclusion at SMS; whilst affording women flexi hours to balance their home and work responsibilities (Adisa, Abdulraheem & Isiaka,

2018:20). Other strategies include the establishment of gender employment margins and non-discriminatory policies. The Department of Public Service and Administration (2006:20) has established a Strategic Framework for Gender Equality, which mandates public institutions to meet the minimum target for designated groups in the workplace set at 50% for women in senior management, and 2% for people with disabilities. All public institutions are thus expected to adhere to these guidelines and implement structures that will oversee compliance with these guidelines. Nel and Joel (2019:5-6) suggest that women representation in leadership structures can be achieved through the implementation of gender equality quotas as a means to drive gender mainstreaming processes and good governance.

2.3.2 Transformation

Transformation is regarded as an active process aimed at reforming the public sector by reshaping discriminatory policies to address the needs of South African citizens in the new democracy (Republic of South Africa, 1995:1.2). Maluka, Diale and Moeti (2014:1020) concur as they describe transformation as a process which is concerned with restructuring the public sector to bring about social and economic equality for all South Africans. This study therefore identifies with the definition of the former author in that transformation is a process that seeks to improve the inequality gap that was inherited from the colonial government, advocating for democratic policies and promoting inclusivity of the historically disadvantaged, particularly women.

In addressing the racial and gender exclusion created by the apartheid government, the ANC administration advocated for transformation policies to advance the constitutional mandate of ensuring that all South African citizens enjoy equal rights and opportunities, and that they are not unfairly discriminated against based on racial grounds, gender and disability (Meyer, 2014: 1047). South Africa forms part of the States' parties, which have pledged their commitment to participate on the United Nation's CEDAW aimed at protecting women's rights, and promoting gender transformation policies (Meyer, 2014:1049). These States parties are expected to submit a report on measures taken to effect the provisions of the Convention and progress thereof to the Convention's Committee on the Status of Women (Commission on the Status of Women, 2021:23). Through a public participation process with civil society organisations, private sector, commissions for gender equality, government departments, and other interested parties, South Africa submitted its 5th report on the implementation of the Convention for the period 2009 to 2014 (CEDAW, 2019:4). The report suggests, "the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Women and Select Committee on Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs has since 2014 exercised its oversight function by requesting government departments to account on measures undertaken to empower women. This includes obtaining a report from government departments on the implementation of legislation; conducting monitoring visits at local level on government

programmes for empowerment; holding public hearings on issues concerning women such as the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998, Maintenance Act 99 of 1998, and the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Amendment Act 32 of 2007". It is further suggested, "Parliament and provincial legislatures hold annual Women's Parliament sessions during the National Women's Month in August, host debates on the 16 days Campaign of 'No Violence Against Women and Children', as well as annual sessions of Taking Parliament to the People" (CEDAW, 2019:5).

Transformation policies should not only focus on prohibiting all forms of discrimination towards women in the workplace but must also be action-orientated to achieve representation targets. The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service of 1995 outlines the targets that government must strive to achieve in promoting gender equality which are set at 50% of blacks represented at managerial level by 1999, 30% of new women recruited to middle and senior management level by 1999 (Republic of South Africa, 1995:10.6). In March 2009 the Cabinet identified a need to revise the initially set target for women representation at SMS level to 50% across all sectors (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2006:3). Chapter 13 of the White Paper articulates measures that the public service must take into account in its endeavour of promoting transformation in the workplace. Such measures include 1) human resource development and capacity building, which puts emphasis on the development of career paths for all categories of public servants, improvement of employment conditions, and basing promotion and career advancement on staff performance rather than on seniority or qualifications; 2) providing training and education to all public servants by focusing on developing as well as enhancing skills and competencies to allow individuals to access new career opportunities and management positions, and be eligible for promotion and progression; 3) implement targeted training and development by capacitating junior staff, middle and senior managers on various skills such as conflict management, project management, and leadership, and provide training focused on raising awareness on gender and racial dynamics as well as focused on capacitating the previously marginalised groups. Chapter 14 of the White Paper further details the need for transforming the public sector by improving employment conditions through bridging the wage gap between men and women as well as whites and blacks, outlining that black women are the most affected as they rank within the lowest paid group. Kahn and Motsoeneng (2014:1061) share the same view, stating that women are not getting the same access to education and promotion opportunities as their male counterparts and thereby earn lower than men. Hence, the public sector needs to invest in developing its workforce, and promoting inclusivity and equal representation of genders in all aspects.

2.3.3 Gender Mainstreaming

According to Nel and Joel (2019:5) gender mainstreaming promotes the inclusion of both males

and females in policy development processes whereas Nyiransabimana (2018:8) associates this concept with the promotion of socio-economic and political development to achieve gender equality and good governance. This study, therefore, identifies with the definition of the former authors in that gender mainstreaming is a process that seeks to eradicate discrimination against gender through the promotion of equality and inclusion of women in strategic decision-making processes. In order to prohibit gender discrimination, promote democracy, and create equal access to opportunities amongst men and women, various organs of state have been established. These include, but are not limited to the National School of Government (NSG) which provides training to public servants; South African Judicial Education Institution which mainly trains judicial members; Justice College and Police Academy (CEDAW, 2019:8); The Public Protector; South African Human Rights Commission; Commission for Gender Equality; Auditor-General (Republic of South Africa, 1996:181); and the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disability.

The NSG plays a fundamental role in developing the skill of public servants in all levels including middle and senior management. It prides itself in being driven by democratic values enshrined in the Constitution in its determination to capacitate entry-level employees, offer leadership development training and advocate for gender mainstreaming (<https://www.thensg.gov.za>). In contrast, the Department of Public Service and Administration identified a need to ensure that government departments promote women empowerment and gender equality not only through skills development but also through the introduction of an eight (8) principle plan of action which must be reported upon and signed off by the heads of departments prior to its submission. The plan encourages departments to promote the rights of women including women with disabilities by promoting transformation for non-sexism; to establish a policy environment by implementing sector-specific guidelines that promote women's empowerment and gender equality; to meet equity targets by ensuring 50% women representation at SMS level; to create an enabling environment by establishing gender-focused systems and structures; to incorporate gender aspects in departmental systems through gender mainstreaming; to empower and capacitate women to advance hierarchically; to provide adequate resources for advancing gender equality; as well as to ensure accountability, monitoring and evaluation for advancing gender equality in the public sector (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2010:2). On the one hand, Ramparsad (2019:123-124) suggests that the 8-point principle action plan and continuous skills development are fundamental in bridging the gender inequality gap and address barriers for hierarchical ascension. On the other hand, Nyanjom (2018:39) claims, that role modelling, coaching and self-development are essential in promoting professional development to advance women.

The above discussion provided a narrative of government's ambition to bridge the inequality gap in the public service as its commitment is mirrored through the signing of a declaration with the

international community to promote gender equality, and to advance transformation and non-discriminatory policies. Initiatives for promoting women empowerment are explored in the section that follows.

2.4 WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is concerned with sufficiently capacitating an individual to be independent (Isaacs, Strydom & Mbukanma, 2022:56), so as to be autonomous in decision-making processes (Otero-Neria, Varela-Neira & Bande, 2016:864). This study therefore identifies with the definition of the former authors in that empowerment seeks to enable an individual to be predominantly self-independent and identify their leadership capabilities. The role of women has been perceived by society to be associated with subordination whilst that of men is associated with a leadership role. As such, women empowerment begins with making significant changes to the patriarchal culture of an institution, developing policies that prohibit gender bias amongst other leadership barriers, and advocating for women inclusion and representation in all areas of leadership (Bilimoria & Singer, 2019:367). Kahn and Motsoeneng (2014:105) share the same view with Nyiransabimana (2018:12) that the workplace needs to invest on programmes that raise awareness on gender sensitivity issues, cater for both men and women, and bring about organisational change (Department of Public and Administration, 2006:21).

A study conducted by Isaacs, Strydom and Mbukanma (2022:71) suggest that the approach to women empowerment should be centred around 5 (five) key focal areas. These include availing information and communications resources throughout all levels and departmental structures; recognising performance excellence by providing rewards and incentives; providing women with opportunities to work autonomously and be capacitated through delegation, coaching and mentorship (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2006:21); fostering confidence through developing skills and imparting knowledge; and building up self-esteem through constant appreciation, establishing programme specific awards, and creating an environment for women to self-actualise their potential (Isaacs, Strydom & Mbukanma, 2022:71-73; Turner & Baker, 2018:474). Seo et al. (2016:9) cited by Nyanjom (2018:27) proposes that women need to self-develop by doing self-introspection and identifying their limitations, believe in themselves, project a possible attitude, take advantage of opportunities, be role models, and build a supportive network at home and work (Nyiransabimana, 2018:17).

In a media statement (South African Government, 2019) by the DWS spokesperson, Mr Sputnik Ratau, it was alluded that the department is striving towards addressing the gender imbalances in the department and meeting the 50% women representation at SMS. It is suggested that the department is progressing in providing an enabling environment for women empowerment and

gender equality through various programmes and workshops. Mr Ratau indicated that such programmes include the “accelerated development programme for middle managers” aimed at empowering and developing women to occupy senior management positions that could emerge in the future. The programme specifically targeted women, and 25 of the participating women were not only awarded certificates from academic institutions but were also appointed as senior managers in various sectors within the department. Another programme includes providing awards to women in the water sector. Recipients of the awards encouraged more women to play an active part in male-dominated programmes within the water sector (South African Government, 2019:www.gov.za/media-statements).

In his nation’s address on the eve of Women’s day 2022, President Cyril Ramaphosa recognised the achievement of South African women despite the numerous obstacles they faced under the colonial government. He praised iconic women such as Rahima Moosa, Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and Sophia Williams de Bruyn and others who paved the way for the recognition of South African women’s rights regardless of their race as they protested against the apartheid laws in 1956. The President continued to state that these women fought against the restrictions that were imposed upon them, which ultimately hindered them from getting decent occupations or studies. He urged South Africans to recognise the broad achievement of women as they continue to enjoy the freedom of choice brought about by the democratic non-discriminatory laws and policies. Reference was made to laws that encourage gender equality; guards against victimisation and any form of harassment against women; and promotes the advancement of women’s representation in senior positions (South African Government, 2022:www.gov.za/blog/deskpresident-124).

The increase of women’s advancement in higher positions since democracy has been applauded by the president, alluding that in Parliament women representation in the National Assembly is 46%, whilst in the entire public service sector, it is 62% with 44% being women at senior management. The president continued to praise the current administration for advancing women by appointing South Africa’s first women as head of the National Prosecuting Authority, Directors-General in the State Security Agency and Presidency, Deputy National Commissioner of the South African Police Service, and Deputy Chief Justice (South African Government, 2022:www.gov.za/blog/deskpresident-124). During the Women’s day 2022 commemoration, the appointment of the first woman Premier of KZN and the great achievement of the national women’s soccer team was also applauded by the president (South African Government, 2022:www.gov.za/speeches).

2.4.1 Benefits of empowering women

Literature suggests that when an institution invests in empowering the women workforce, there is an improved organisational reputation, ethical standards, financial and collaborative performance. Burke (2019:20) attests to this by claiming that the improvement results are from women leadership being able to take financially viable and “less risky” decisions. Vokić, Obadić and Ćorić (2019:vi) assert that when women are empowered and included in leadership positions, they promote continuous institutional development and harmony in strategic decision-making processes. Nyanjom (2018:38) agrees, stating that empowering women with education and broader inclusive opportunities provides them with increased job opportunities, career advancement, and financial independence. Women also become an inspiration and role models for other women to follow suit.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the colonial, apartheid and patriarchal systems made it difficult for women to access the same level of opportunities as their male counterparts, thus making it difficult for women to advance at a same pace with their male counterparts. Despite this trajectory however, the democratic government continues to make strides in empowering women, promoting equal rights and opportunities as well as advancing women to SMS.

2.5 WOMEN’S ADVANCEMENT

Underrepresentation of women in senior positions has been identified as a major disparity, which has been associated with multiple barriers either preventing women from occupying leadership positions or effectively leading in such positions (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017:1018). Such barriers include, but are not limited to, gender bias which tends to favour patriarchy despite better leadership capabilities demonstrated by women when compared to their male counterparts (Rao, 2015:8-9). Gender stereotyping has also been identified as a hindrance of effective leadership as it associates assertiveness and authority with men and submissiveness with women (Bertolt, 2018:8), hence when women become authoritative they are faced with negative attitudes projected by stereotypes.

Hlebela and Mpehle (2020:1578) augment that other barriers include having low-morale and low performance drive due to unequal incentives and opportunities with their male counterparts, such as earning a lesser salary than males while occupying the same position; or insufficient bursary and leadership development opportunities provided. Institutions can also be a barrier when they do not accommodate the needs of women to balance home and work life (Adisa, Abdulraheem & Isiaka, 2018:20; Nyiransabimana, 2018:15). Prejudice, gender discrimination, unequal salaries, sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation, and unaccommodated disability needs, are

amongst the barriers that women encounter in the workplace (Burke, 2019:21).

2.5.1 Factors Contributing to Women's Career Advancement

It is essential that employers establish women empowerment initiatives in the workplace for the upliftment of women through promotion of female leadership, diversity programmes, provision of equal pay between all genders, inclusive culture, policies against sexual harassment and discrimination, as well as recognising talent (Balgobind, 2021:37). Lutchman and Lesufi (2020:5) augment that there needs to be recognition and nurturing of talent by academia specifically in the essential fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. These authors base this view on a study conducted by the Engineering Council of South Africa in the engineering sector which revealed that out of the total number of all registered engineers in 2018/2019 only 6.75% were women, whilst 24.1% were women candidates and 74% of the registered were white. One aspect that these authors agree with is that there needs to be women targeted programmes which recognise talent, promote women inclusivity and empower the advancement of women. Nyiransabimana (2018:15-16) suggest that women can ascend to leadership positions if they are effectively capacitated, undergo training and mentorship programmes, get subjected to fair employment practices, and are provided with the necessary support particularly by their male counterparts.

2.5.2 Factors Prohibiting Women's Career Advancement

According to Toni and Moody (2019:177), there is a higher rate of female enrolment in higher educational institutions than their male counterparts. The success rate is also regarded as higher, although only up to the level of Master's degree, as there tends to be a decline in their enrolment and success rate from a doctoral level compared to their male counterparts. Black women in particular have been found to be underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and commerce as well as postgraduate studies which are mainly dominated by white men (CEDAW, 2014:24; Lutchman & Lesufi, 2020:5). Sebola (2015:74) claims that registered females do not finish PHD programmes due to being overwhelmed with work-family life and educational responsibilities more than their male counterparts, and find it difficult to have balance. As such, these factors could impede their career advancements later on in life, as they may not be eligible for employment in senior positions due to not meeting the outlined qualification criteria. Rao (2015:8) is of the view that other factors such as, but not limited to, a patriarchal corporate culture, gender bias in recruitment processes, and stereotyping have been found to be some of the historical hindrances of women's career advancement.

2.5.2.1 Patriarchy

A hierarchical ascension becomes a mammoth task in a patriarchal system whereby men predominantly have power over women, and often women are placed in subordinate positions (Adisa, Abdulraheem & Isiaka, 2018:22). Bertolt (2018:11) suggests that the ideology of colonialism, which he defines as a system that not only oppressed the marginalised but also subdued women under the male command, is the basis of patriarchy. The author views this trajectory as being exacerbated by the “biblical discourse” that normalises masculinity whereby men are regarded as family heads and females are expected to be submissive supporters. Sonntag (2019:21) supports this view reiterating that a patriarchal system does not only disregard the valuable contributions and opinions of women, but it also hampers the equality of women and men in any platform as it primarily affords men authority over women.

According to the Women’s National Coalition Charter (1994), a patriarchal system prevents women from fully executing their respective responsibilities as it does not provide them with the necessary “authority to make decisions in the home and in society”; and further limits their decision-making power “in all spheres of their lives, including the law, economy, education, development and infrastructure, political and civic life, family life and partnerships, custom, culture and religion, health and the media”. When questions such as: “Is the judiciary system ready for a female Chief Justice?” or “Is South Africa ready for a female President?” are still echoed by society, it is evident that a patriarchal culture exists in South Africa which harnesses the mindset of gender stereotypes and promotes gender disparities within the employment sector.

Patriarchal norms also play a role in the oppression of and prejudice against women. In a Nigerian study that investigated the impact of patriarchy on women’s work-life balance, Adisa, Abdulraheem and Isiaka (2018:19) argued that patriarchal norms exerted upon women make it a challenge for them to successfully achieve work-life balance. The finding depicts that this disparity is a result of male supremacy projected over women, which predominantly exists within the Nigerian society. Hence Vokić, Obadić and Ćorić (2019:62) allude that when an organisational system embodies patriarchy and does not create an enabling environment for women to be flexible and achieve a balance in work productivity and family life as attested by Nyiransabimana (2018:17), such a system becomes an obstacle in the advancement of women to leadership roles. Patriarchy often demeans women’s leadership capabilities, it is perpetuated by a backward society which believes in traditional ‘norms’ that a woman cannot and should not lead men but must rather serve them.

2.5.2.2 Gender segregation and stereotyping

The segregation of genders into different roles has been common amongst different cultures, perceiving females as domesticated and fit for subordinate positions whilst males are perceived as leaders (Sebola, 2015:71). The same sentiment is shared by Fritz and van Knippenberg (2017:1020-1021), that society perceives women as nurturers, feminine, and inferior to men due to their nature of easily displaying gentle emotions in contrast to men who are commonly perceived as competitive, authoritative, aggressive, assertive, and power driven. Thus, gender stereotypes tend to limit young women from pursuing careers that are typically associated with men, such as in mining, construction, political heads, and others. The president of Croatia and Chair of Council of Women World Leaders, Ms Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, in her keynote address to an Inter-Parliamentary Committee meeting in 2019, cited by Vokić, Obadić and Ćorić (2019:vii), shared a strong view that segregation and stereotyping of boys and girls must be prohibited and suggested that it is incumbent of society to stop gender stereotyping.

The concept of stereotyping refers to the grouping of individuals into certain categories and behaviour (Urlick, 2017:53); whereby feminism is associated with women and masculinity with male figures (Bertolt, 2018:11). It restricts equal access of opportunities by both men and women (Nyiransabimana, 2018:5). Gender stereotyping is defined by Abdulraheem and Isiaka (2018:22) as having bias mentality; and it tends to limit young women from pursuing careers that are typically associated with men, such as in mining, construction, political heads, and in other male-dominated sectors. President Grabar-Kitarović dejected customary norms that prejudices against women and are used to oppress their rights, thus she urges society to take a stand against stereotype mindsets by promoting equality and inclusion of women. She suggests that media should take a lead in promoting equal gender representation and not play a role in depicting male-superiority over women (Vokić, Obadić & Ćorić, 2019:vii).

According to Rao (2015:8), cultural and religious stereotypes contribute to the underrepresentation of women in senior positions, as attested by Hlebela and Mphehle (2020:1577) that cultural prejudice is one of the barriers impeding the success of women regardless of the women's interest to ascend hierarchically. South African traditional leadership positions such as Kingship, Chieftainship and Headmanship have over the years been observed to be occupied by male incumbents who have ruled in numbers over females.

2.5.2.3 Institutional barriers

Institutional barriers contribute to the slow progress and development of women in the workplace. Women may not be aware of leadership advancement and skills development programmes within their institutions apart from those self-identified through personal development plans, and in some

instances, there is lack of such extended institutional programmes altogether (Toni & Moodly, 2019:185). As women are naturally regarded as emotional beings than men, they get discouraged to pursue management positions due to emotional scars exerted by sexist remarks made towards them, and also being degraded by their male counterparts (Hlebelá & Mpehle, 2020:1584). Therefore, they often feel scared, inferior, or intimidated to engage in strategic decisions (Nel & Joel, 2019:2) or in male-dominated industries because their views are often not respected as much as those of their male counterparts (Lutchman & Lesufi, 2020:5-6). Women are undermined by gender stereotypes and do not get the same supreme reception as opposed to men (Toni & Moodly, 2019:186) even though they may possess valid credentials for the job or prove to be more competent than their male counterparts. According to Lutchman and Lesufi (2020:5), men often use their masculinity for sexual advances towards women, abuse their power, and also intimidate women against speaking out about ill treatment or being harassed.

It is also evident that systemic gender discrimination exists within the employment sector as the capabilities of women to occupy higher positions are continuously questioned and women constantly have to prove their leadership merit (Rao, 2015:8). This is projected at an interview held for the South African Chief Justice in February 2022, whereby the Supreme Court of Appeal Judge President Mandisa Maya, despite her prestigious track record, was asked by the panel as to whether or not the country is ready for a female Head of Judiciary whilst her male judge counterparts were not subjected to a similar line of questioning (YouTube, 2022: www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbOM2BCFnWY). Evidently, her capability to occupy such a senior position was questioned mainly based on gender bias rather than merit to occupy such a position (Rao, 2015:9), which is what some employers particularly tend to project during the selection process rather than investing in promoting inclusivity and gender equality (Lutchman & Lesufi, 2020:5).

Unfair and bias recruitment practices negatively impact on women's progression. Cadre deployments to key strategic positions contribute to advancing men than women due to the notion that women were more confined to domestic roles than men in the apartheid era, thus men were in the forefront during the fight for freedom hence their contribution and political affiliation is easily recognised and rewarded with leadership positions (Hlebelá & Mpehle, 2020: 1584). Positions associated with supportive roles such as a personal assistant, for instance, are still relatively aligned with a woman incumbent whilst that of the head of department or manager is associated with men (Nyiransabimana, 2018:14), making it a challenge for women to compete for or pursue such a high position. Generally, the majority of government departments are predominantly led by men, whilst women occupy supportive administrative roles. A study conducted by Hlebelá and Mpehle (2020:1585) in the Mpumalanga office of the Premier revealed that in 2020 women were underrepresented in senior management positions as they made up 33% despite the office

having appointed 58% of women. This trajectory emanates from women not being provided with the necessary support structure to hold leadership positions either by men or fellow women (Nyiransabimana, 2018:14), hence some women get discouraged to pursue available leadership positions in fear of failing (Toni & Moodly, 2019:189). Unlike men who are seemingly afforded an opportunity to take up an acting role for a vacant leadership position, and in the process get groomed to be a better candidate for a future permanent position and ultimately get appointed in that position (Ramparsad, 2019:129).

Other barriers that lead to the slow progress of women include: glass ceiling, which restricts women from climbing the corporate ladder beyond a particular level such as deputy director level; sticky ceiling, which confines women within low-level positions; bottleneck which, declines the rate of women climbing the corporate ladder; glass wall, which promotes role segregation; leaky pipeline, which is when women drop out of their career paths; glass cliff, which is based on an increased rate of leadership failure; glass escalator, which advances men to leadership positions; and concrete wall, which promotes gender bias policies and discriminatory laws (Vokić, Obadić & Ćorić, 2019:66; Antoniou & Aggelou, 2019:200; Burke, 2019:24). Whilst Hlebela and Mpehle (2020:1579) share the same view with these authors that glass ceiling and glass walls hinder the progression of women's careers; Toni and Moodly (2019:185-186) on the other hand contend that glass ceiling is no longer considered a barrier in the current era as it has relatively transcended into exclusion whereby women's views are not considered in key decision-making processes.

2.5.3 Initiatives for Women's Career Advancement

Affirmative action plays a fundamental role in promoting women inclusivity and representation in the workplace (Meyer, 2014:1048). As part of the affirmative action, women should be given first priority for career development initiatives to redress gender inequality. Mentoring of women who have progressed to SMS level is essential to capacitate and assist them in effectively carrying out their assigned responsibilities (Nhlapo & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2021:200). Fair recruitment and selection practices must be adopted based on meritocracy, which Haugen and Westin (2019:270) associates with talent, skill, intelligence, and ability. Gore (2018:166) similarly associates meritocracy with talent, education, and competency.

Training programmes must be designed specifically to suit the needs of women and making a change in patriarchal norms is essential. It is also fundamental that legislative framework aimed at advancing and empowering women be enforced by the public institutions. To ensure the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the public sector, Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020:7) are of the view that recruitment and selection processes must

be fair, promote gender equality and capacitate women to occupy better positions. Institutions need to create sexual harassment policies and an enabling environment for survivors of sexual harassment or assault, particularly women, to report perpetrators freely without fear of intimidation or victimisation by superiors or other men. Such perpetrators need to be removed from the workplace in an effort to protect and support the survivors. Men need to be agents of change that bring about gender equality in the workplace (Kahn & Motsoeneng, 2014:1077), by developing a culture of calling each other out and forming part of gender forums (Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020:7).

It is evident from the above literature that patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes attribute extensively in the slow progression of women. It is therefore essential that institutional policies take into cognisance the needs of women by promoting an organisational culture, which creates a conducive working environment that enables women to have a work-life balance and thereby strive in their capabilities. It is clear that the traditional societal grooming of men to project authority over women has contributed to a patriarchal culture. Therefore, change must begin with changing the mindset of gender stereotypes, particularly that of men who believe that women must be followers rather than being in the forefront, and also by creating gender inclusive policies and establishing developmental programmes that are non-bias or non-discriminatory against women. These programmes should place emphasis on women mentorship in order to boost their morale and gain confidence in their own capabilities to compete with men, particularly in male-dominated positions.

2.6 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The legislative framework that promotes gender equality and underpins this study is discussed below.

2.6.1 The Constitution

Various historical events gave rise to shaping the Constitution to correct the injustice of the past by ensuring that everyone is afforded fair, equal opportunities and not unfairly discriminated against as promulgated in the Bill of Rights. Section 9 of the Bill of Rights alludes the aim of the Constitution as to afford all persons equal rights before the law, protect and advance persons as well as promote equality in terms of “race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth” (Republic of South Africa, 1996:7). To strengthen the dawn of democracy in South Africa, six (6) Chapter 9 institutions were thus established (Republic of South Africa, 1996:103) and amongst them being the Commission for Gender Equality, which is mandated to “promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality

...and monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby, advise and report on issues concerning gender equality” (Republic of South Africa, 1996:106). Section 195 further mandates organs of state to uphold democratic values and principles, which include being development-oriented, applying good human-resource management and career-development practices to maximise human potential, and to be broadly representative of the South African people by applying fair meritocratic employment practices and redress the past injustice to the marginalised, particularly women (Republic of South Africa, 1996:111).

The democratic government developed several pieces of legislation to address inequalities that were inherited from the colonial government, which include but are not limited to the legislation discussed below.

2.6.2 The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill

The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill, 2013, is one of government’s initiatives which aims to ensure that section 9 of the Constitution is enforced, to promote women empowerment and gender equality; to streamline legislation pertaining to women advancement and representation thereof in senior management positions; and to caution organisations against all types of discrimination and abuse towards women (Republic of South Africa, 2013:2). The Bill further seeks to direct both the public and private sectors to reach the target of 50% women representation at SMS; to encourage organisations to take cognisance of women’s capabilities; and for society to treat women equally to men (Republic of South Africa, 2013:6). The Bill was passed by the National Assembly in 2014, soon after it had to be referred to Parliament for further consultation following submitted comments from human rights organisations (Lasseko-Phooko & Mahomed, 2021:512) as well as opposing political parties.

One of the submissions made to the Portfolio Committee for Women, Children and People with Disabilities opposing the passing of the Bill into legislation was submitted by the Community Law Service within the University of the Western Cape, which represented 27 various organisations sharing the same sentiment. These organisations were in support of women empowerment initiatives and acknowledged some of the provisions of the Bill, but were concerned that the Bill duplicates current legislative framework and that it does not address how the provisions of the Bill would be implemented (Community Law Centre, 2019:15). They further had reservations about the Bill having any greater impact on the improvement of circumstances for women empowerment and gender equality than any of the laws, policies and programmes currently in place to achieve a number of the same changes that this Bill seeks to make. They argued that “entrenched value systems of male entitlement and superiority that underpin women’s experiences of discrimination, exclusion and disempowerment, and that pervade all aspects of

society remain unchallenged by this or other legislation, policy or programmes. A stronger process of consultation with departments, civil society and most importantly, with women around the country is essential to establish what other measures, besides or in addition to the promulgation of legislation can affect real changes in all aspects of women's lives" (Community Law Centre, 2014:18). Thus, the organisations believe that "without political will and resourcing, no law, policy or programming will be implemented" (Community Law Centre, 2014:18).

In a National Assembly debate (2014), various political parties asserted that they support the notion of women empowerment in general and applauded the government's initiative to develop a Bill aimed at empowering women and promoting gender equality, which they constantly referred to by its acronym as a 'WEGE' Bill; however, they shared different views on the passing of such a Bill in its current form based on various concerns which were deemed pertinent to be addressed before it could be passed into law. For instance, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) represented by Ms LL Van der Merwe argued,

the primary obstacle to women's empowerment and gender equity is therefore not the absence of legislation, but rather the poor implementation of our legislation. In particular, we must ask the question: Why have existing legislation and existing bodies such as the Commission for Gender Equality not been successful in their aims and objectives?" She pointed out "currently, despite making up 43% of the economically active population, women are still chronically underrepresented in senior positions in the private and public sectors. According to the South African Women in Leadership Census 2012, women in South Africa constitute only 17% of all directors and a mere 3,6% of chief executive officers... despite research by Forbes indicating that companies that have women well represented at senior levels perform better than those who do not.

The party believes that the Bill, once passed into legislation,

will do very well in empowering those lucky few who are already in public and private institutions" but will not "address the root causes of why women are not climbing the career pipeline nor the poor quality of our education system for example, which does not empower our young women.

Also,

the WEGE Bill does not make provision for the sheer logistics and the added capacity which would be required to implement this law.

It is for this reason that the IFP does not support the current Bill (People's Assembly, 2019:

<https://www.pa.org.za/hansard/2014/march/04>).

Another party which was against the Bill is the Democratic Alliance (DA) represented by Mrs H Lamoela who argued on the “constitutionality and feasibility” of the Bill, contending that the Bill

overrides the mandate of the Commission for Gender Equality... and also duplicates some provisions in a host of other Acts, including the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, Act 4 of 2000, the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Act 75 of 1997, the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act, Act 53 of 2003 and the Human Rights Commission Act, Act 54 of 1999”.

Ms E More in support continued to argue that,

the Bill is another sad story of more talk and promises, and less action by the government as it does very little for rural women; women with disabilities; women who earn money through informal trading; women exposed to violence; women who are failed by the justice system; sex workers; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.

The party contends,

True empowerment is through the provision of quality education to the girl child... supporting women by monitoring service delivery and ensuring that women have access to basic services, government resources and safety mechanisms.

As such, the party does not support the Bill as it believes that

empowering a woman starts at community level, not in the boardroom” stating that “it all starts with education; not a piece of legislation for electioneering for the ANC that is not going to be implemented.

Hence the DA does not support the passing of the Bill (People’s Assembly, 2019: <https://www.pa.org.za/hansard/2014/march/04>).

The Deputy Speaker at the time, Ms Nomaindiya Cathleen Mfeketo, announced that 189 members of the house voted in favour of the Bill, while 210 members did not participate in the voting process mainly due to some of the members having to leave the house earlier on. As a result, the decision on the Bill had to be postponed as a majority of 201 members was needed in the National Assembly for a vote to be taken on a Bill, as required by Rule 25(2)(a). Currently, the Bill is still not passed as decision makers have not reached consensus (People’s Assembly,

2019: <https://www.pa.org.za/hansard/2014/march/04>).

From the discussion above, it is clear that although the different political parties support the notion behind the Bill, it is evident that there are pressing issues of concern that the Bill fails to address, particularly as other parties deem the Bill to be vague on how it intends to ensure that government and other societal structures will implement it once passed, so as to yield the outcome it seeks to achieve. The above arguments suggest that the Bill further lacks a clear mandate on consequence management upon organisations that fail to uphold the principles in which it aims to promote. Furthermore, the unprecedented delay in promulgating the WEGE Bill has evidently proven that the ruling party has failed to prioritise the need to urgently address the outcry of women in South Africa to acquire the same opportunities and benefits as men, and is therefore failing to address the patriarchal norms in which it inherited from the colonial government in order to create gender balance in societies at large. Despite literature suggesting that South Africa ranges within the most unequal societies thus far, women are still not enjoying equal pay with men for doing the same job, the gap is even bigger between women in general and white men. The delay in passing the Bill has ultimately created a setback in the plight for women in ensuring that they are recognised as equals to men despite valuable contributions made by human rights organisations and activists in their fight for women's rights.

Evidently, it would be beneficial for women if the Bill was passed. It will not only supplement the existing similar legislation intended to deter the sense of entitlement projected by men towards women but also discourage various forms of harassment towards women. Perhaps then, it would be more bearing if government does not only place emphasis on women empowerment programmes mainly during the last week of August being the Public Service Women Management week or in August as the women's month but rather strengthen these programmes through the development of a comprehensive plan of action cascaded down to institutional structures; and establish women-focused forums as well as portfolio committees that will mainly be responsible for an oversight role into these action plans. It is noted that the ruling party has a women's league in place, however their mandate in this democracy is questionable as they seem to be having a more reactive role to issues that affect women rather than applying a holistic proactive approach.

2.6.3 Employment Equity Act

The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 aims to redress apartheid discriminatory laws by promoting equality, fair employment practices, ensures diversity, and prohibits any form of discrimination. The Act further requires organs of state to put in place employment equity plans and implement affirmative action measures, ensure that meritocratic persons who were

previously marginalised are afforded “equal employment opportunity” and that all persons are “equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels”. Such measures include the elimination of employment barriers, promotion of diversity, ensuring reasonable accommodation, employment of a meritocratic workforce from the designated group, developing skills and providing training opportunities to women as the designated group (Republic of South Africa, 1998a:2).

The Act also prohibits employee harassment, which it describes under section 6 as a form of “unfair discrimination” that should be prevented and prohibited in the workplace in the process of promoting equity and equality (Republic of South Africa, 1998a:14). Harassment perpetrated against women in the workplace can create a barrier for them to actively participate in workplace programmes and eventually advance hierarchically. Such harassment may include sexual harassment; gender-based violence; bullying; and racial, ethnic, or social origin harassment, amongst others (Republic of South Africa, 2022:4). In this regard, the Minister of Department of Employment and Labour, Mr Thembelani Nxesi has in March 2022 repealed the Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual Harassment Cases in the Workplace, 2005 and replaced it with the Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment in the Workplace, 2022. The new code of practice thus sets out guidelines aimed at sensitising employers, trade unions and employees in general on the prevention, elimination and management of all forms of harassment and discrimination in the workplace (Republic of South Africa, 2022:6).

2.6.4 Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 prohibits all forms of unfair discrimination on grounds of race, gender and disability. It also prohibits hate speech and harassment instituted by “historical colonialism, apartheid and patriarchy” and promotes equality in all social and government structures. It places a responsibility on all public servants to promote equality through adoption and enforcement of equality plans and reporting on those plans to the relevant authorities. It encourages implementation of fair labour and employment practices including development, promotion and retention practices amongst others (Republic of South Africa, 2002:6-10).

Although it is noted that government is making strides in advancing gender equality policies, it is evident however that the implementation of such policies is moving at a slow pace and the mandate of this Act is not equally enforced in societies and organisations as it should be. It is observed that society remains compounded by patriarchal norms inherited from historical colonisation as the different racial groups are still not enjoying the equal rights and opportunities

that this Act intends to promote; nor are organisations proactive in ensuring that gender and disability forums exist to advocate for the rights of persons with disability and empowering women to duly advance at a similar pace as their male counterparts. It is therefore fundamental that government partners with organised labour to advance and advocate for fair labour practices that promote inclusion and reasonable accommodation of previously disadvantaged groups.

2.6.5 White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997 also referred to as a "*Batho Pele*" paper meaning "*People First*" is a policy framework and implementation strategy for transforming the public sector in order to improve service delivery. It directs organs of state to redress the past injustice and improve the lives of the previously disadvantaged people particularly persons living with disability and black women. The framework not only encourages public servants to put the needs of the public first but for managers to empower subordinates, particularly women, through mentorship and delegation of managerial responsibilities (Republic of South Africa, 1997:11).

The Department of Public Service and Administration (2006:18) articulates that the implementation of the Batho Pele principles will holistically strengthen service delivery standards and ascertain that the public sector achieves its constitutional mandate of improving the lives of women. However, one may question whether or not the ruling party can live up the philosophy of putting people first. In a study conducted by the Public Service Commission (PSC) during its mid-term review in 2008, it was found that departments have failed to effectively implement Batho Pele principles particularly the principle of redress when citizens make service delivery complaints, citing that departments have admitted to not having redress mechanisms in place and that "only 5% of national and 2% of provincial departments rated themselves as excellent in the implementation of redress mechanisms". The PSC affirms that this is despite efforts made by government to establish '*izimbizo*' and appoint community service workers to create platforms for better engagement and partnership between government departments and communities in order to establish and prioritise service delivery needs. The Commission also found that as much as these platforms are meant to benefit the communities and improve service delivery, the setback was that departments often fail to provide the necessary feedback to the communities following the consultative processes and that there is no mechanism in place for communities to make follow-up on the progress of their complaints (Public Service Commission, 2008:4, 6). Redress therefore is essential in addressing the needs of communities and ensuring that the government puts people first. On the other hand, Mabasa (2020:654) proposes that government must institute a training programme on Batho Pele principles for its employees as the author believes that much as employees are aware of the principles, they "lack determination to implement them" and the

'ubuntu' philosophy must also be integrated into the Batho Pele principles to enhance service delivery. The term 'ubuntu' refers to humanness (Asamoah & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2019:308), compassion *and* caring for one another (Broodryk, 2006 cited by Mabasa, 2020:654).

According to Cele (2009:5) cited in Van der Westhuizen (2021:443), the failure by government to put people first is attributed by the remodeling of traditional governance systems by colonisation in order to continue benefitting former colonisers. Thus, Kahn (2021) cited in Van der Westhuizen (2021:250-253) proposes that human resource management practices need to be decolonised to eliminate any form of bias, that people must portray the spirit of 'ubuntu', and for institutions to ultimately implement 'Afrikology' which is an African philosophy of similarly putting people first by taking into account integrated humanitarian ideologies of African and western cultures, as a strategy to improve service delivery for all citizens. Asamoah and Yeboah-Assiamah (2019:308, 317) suggest that African societies may understand the notion of 'ubuntu' differently, but African leaders and public servants have an obligation to promote the welfare of society and being trustworthy when managing state resources for the benefit of all people. As such, corruption, unethical practices for personal gain, and bad leadership are factors that are contrary to the philosophy of 'ubuntu' and must be alleviated as they are detrimental to provision and fair distribution of resources.

From the discussion above, it is clear that the philosophy of Batho Pele principle does not merely imply 'putting people first' but also encourages the spirit of caring for one another and being selfless for the greater benefit of society to which the government must demonstrate to improve service delivery.

2.6.6 Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service

The Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service (2006-2015) takes cognisance of the gender disparities that exist within the public sector, which impede women from advancing hierarchically to senior management services (SMS). It therefore provides an equity target adopted by Cabinet for public service which was set at 50% representation of women at all levels of SMS by 31 March 2009, as an endeavour to address the disparities and promote transformation. It further sets out the challenges faced by South African women in the country's plight of addressing issues of women empowerment and gender equality (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2006:2-3). Such challenges, include "gender relations, poverty, HIV/AIDS, violence against women, access to basic needs, access to employment and economic empowerment, access to science and technology, implementation of laws, women's access to political power and decision-making, and women's mobility in the workplace (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2006:4-7).

The National Office on the Status of Women within The Presidency plays a fundamental role in advocating for and developing the strategic framework to promote women empowerment and gender equality. It suggests that the empowerment of women is essential in the transformation process as it addresses the dynamics of “subordination and discrimination”. It further argues that government needs to address the challenges faced by South African women in a holistic manner and avoid a fragmented approach (Department of Women, n.d:v, xvii).

2.6.7 DWS Policy Framework

The DWS, in its strategic plan for 2015/2016 to 2019/2020, has committed itself in bridging the inequality gap by promoting “employment and personnel management practices that are based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation” (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2015:16). It has further committed itself in introducing programmes aimed at developing skills and job opportunities for women, adopting a river project which promotes women recruitment, regularly engaging and holding joint planning sessions with women, and through encouraging women targeted procurement (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2015:4, 31).

Although literature suggests that legislation makes provision for the empowerment of women to advance to SMS level through mandating organs of state to reach a set 50% target for women representation in SMS (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2006:3), it is however evident from annual reports presented by DWS that the department has not yet been able to achieve this target, and in contrast has been having a steady decline of women representation. According to the 2018/2019 DWS annual report, women representation at SMS level was at 43% as at 31 March 2019 and was reported to have decreased from 46.33% as at 31 March 2018 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020:118). The Department anticipated that the projection would improve by March 2020, however the 2019/2020 annual report depicted that the percentage yet again decreased to 41% as at 31 March 2020 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2021:102).

In view of the above, it is clear that DWS has not been able to live up to its commitment of ensuring 50% women representation at SMS level, and has instead regressed between the period of 2018 to 2020 despite establishing women targeted empowerment programmes. It seems therefore that the monitoring and evaluation process for these empowerment programmes needs to be strengthened, and the effectiveness thereof be reviewed. It is also essential that the barriers that hinder these programmes from producing the desired results be scrutinised to effect necessary improvement plans.

2.7 SUMMARY

This chapter conceptualised gender equality as a concept that the democratic government seeks to promote as it advocates for equal rights and opportunities to men and women regardless of their economic status; and provided an overview of the barriers that hinder the advancement of women to senior management positions at the same pace as men. This chapter further outlined legislative framework that promotes women's advancement, gender equality and women empowerment. The next chapter presents the research methodology.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter conceptualised gender equality that government seeks to achieve, the key concepts of the study were defined, an overview of the legislative framework that underpins the study was outlined, and the barriers that hinder the advancement of women to SMS were discussed. This chapter outlines the research methodology inclusive of the entire research activities for a qualitative research approach, research design, research method, sampling method, data collection method, recording method for the collected data, data analysis method, ensuring quality of the data collected, and ethical considerations.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Research methodology involves the systematic procedures by which the researcher starts from the initial identification of the problem, to collection of data, until final conclusion and data presentation (Wotela, 2017:226); this includes the methods (Madondo, 2021:38) and procedures used to conduct the study. Research design defines the phenomenon of study and how it will be studied, as well as how the data will be collected, analysed and reported (Eller, Gerber & Robinson, 2017:92).

This section focuses on the research approach, research design, research method, sampling method, data collection method, recording method for the collected data, data analysis, ensuring data quality and ethical considerations. These are detailed as follow:

3.2.1 Research Approach

Research approach can either be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method. A qualitative approach is used to explore and understand a social problem or evaluate a policy (McNabb, 2017:267). It can also be used to conduct desktop research through a review of existing literature on a phenomenon (Sibinga, 2018:65) or gain insight on people's perceptions and experiences about a phenomenon (Mohajan, 2018:23). This approach generally focuses on addressing research questions and generating a theory (Wotela, 2017:228), unlike testing a hypothesis as in the case of a quantitative approach (Eller, Gerber & Robinson, 2017:60; Mackey & Gass, 2016:3) or integrating the two approaches as in the case of a mixed method (Sibinga, 2018:61).

A feminist theoretical framework underpins this study as Small (1995:5) cited by McNabb (2017:355) explains that it examines bias and discrimination; challenges male dominance; and advocates social, political, and economic equality of men and women as similarly attested by

Rennie (1995) cited by Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow and Ponterotto (2017:13).

3.2.2 Research Design

Research design defines the phenomenon of study and how it will be studied, as well as how the data will be collected, analysed and reported (Eller, Gerber & Robinson, 2017:92). This view is attested by Wotela (2017:228) who asserts that based on the chosen research approach, a suitable research design can be selected; such as experimental design, a cross-sectional or survey design, a longitudinal design, a case study design or a comparative design. A qualitative secondary research study was used to explore and understand the research topic and not necessarily to build new theory (McNabb, 2017:283) or generalise findings (Mackey & Gass, 2016:4), pertaining to the pace at which women advance from middle management to SMS.

3.2.3 Research Method

In order to better understand the disparities surrounding women's hierarchical advancement to SMS, the research method mainly focused on reviewing existing literature rather than applying other qualitative methods such as interviews, observations or focus groups as there were no human participants involved in the research (Mackey & Gass, 2016:219). Not only does Bhattacharya (2017:36) reiterate that a qualitative research method aims to create better understanding of the phenomenon, but the author suggests that this method also analyses multiple written sources in order to gain deeper contextual insight and make meaning of the collected data whilst remaining objective as supported by McNabb (2017:267). Sibinga (2018:68) however cautions that whilst being objective, one needs to guard against being biased and making selective deductions that suit one's interpretation of the findings rather than applying fair judgement.

3.3 SAMPLING

According to Eller, Gerber and Robinson (2017:140), population refers to the entire mass of observation, while sample is a "subset" of the population of interest. Thus, sampling is the process of selecting a sample from the population, and sampling can either be qualitative non-probability or quantitative probability sampling.

Blandford, Furniss and Makri (2016:25) suggest that non-probability sampling is whereby the sample is selected based on pre-defined characteristics, as attested by Madondo (2021:126) who shares the same sentiment that with non-probability sampling the sample is selected deliberately by the researcher. Levitt et al. (2017:11) on the other hand points out that qualitative sampling methods are generally applied when the sample size is unknown or small. However, probability sampling is applied when one needs to "draw inferences about the population", unlike in the case

of non-probability sampling whereby it does not present a holistic “representation” of the population (Eller, Gerber & Robinson, 2017:143-144).

This study focused mainly on literature review and did not involve any human participants. The literature was sampled based on relevance of the secondary data in relation to the research topic focusing on women’s career advancement, gender equality and women empowerment in the workplace.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Qualitative data can be collected by means of an observation process whereby people’s behaviour or a particular set up can be observed (Sibinga, 2018:64). It can also be collected through interviews, audiovisuals, images, and literature reviews (Flick, 2018:231). In this study, the data was collected through desktop research by reviewing secondary sources of data available in the public domain and relevant to address the research questions. The researcher was the main data collection instrument (Mohajan, 2018:37-40), and there was no direct interaction with human participants. The secondary sources used were mainly published books and e-books, peer-reviewed journals, departmental reports, legislation, and media articles.

3.5 RECORDING OF DATA

A folder was created electronically for storing the data collected. A back-up folder was created to secure the collected data (Madondo, 2021:110), particularly in the ‘cloud’ storage to avoid data loss (Wotela, 2017: 235), and to minimise the cost and environmental impact of printing hard copies. A copy of the final report was submitted to UNISA for archiving as per their records policy.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The data, after collection, has to be processed and analysed. Data was analysed through an inductive process by identifying themes within the data (Young & Casey, 2019:54), and presenting the findings in words (Eller, Gerber & Robinson, 2017:60; Sibinga, 2018:62) rather than numerics (Mackey & Gass, 2016:3). The rich data collected was analysed to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. This process was done through content analysis by reading through the data to establish themes and patterns (Wotela, 2017:236), coding meaningful data in descriptive words, and identifying key concepts that provide a deeper understanding and interpretation of the raw data (Mohajan, 2018:28; McNabb, 2017:442).

The researcher was involved in the data analysis process by constantly re-reading the raw data; using a coloured pen to highlight and organise data; referring back and forth to the data to verify

findings; generating themes and patterns, and finally breaking down the data into three meaningful themes that answer the research questions (McNabb, 2017:288, 291). This process was applied until no further themes could be generated and data saturation was reached (Young & Casey, 2019:53).

3.7 ENSURING DATA QUALITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Literature suggests that it is essential to evaluate the quality of qualitative research findings to determine its credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness. With credibility, researchers evaluate whether the findings are a true reflection of the participants' data when collected during interviews (Madondo, 2021:121), or that identified themes are able to produce the intended outcome and answers to the research questions (Wotela, 2017:237-238). "Dependability is related to reliability" and evaluates the quality of the integration of data collection, data analysis, and formulation of a conclusion or theory (Madondo, 2021:122). Corti (2018:175) is of the view that publishing research data presents a platform for its interrogation thereby ensuring transparency, accountability, and integrity, and guards against plagiarism, and falsification of findings by other researchers. Whilst on one hand, Wotela (2017:237) articulates that a study is deemed reliable when it produces a similar conclusion after being replicated using the same research method, Corti (2018:175) on the other hand, argues that replicating findings can be challenging for qualitative researchers due to the voluminous amount of data collected particularly in longitudinal studies. Qualitative research method was applied to determine the reliability and credibility of the data collected by comparing multiple sources and obtaining perspectives of different authors to answer the research questions.

3.8 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the qualitative research methodology, inclusive of the research approach, research design, research method applied, sampling method, data collection method, recording method for the collected data, analysis of the data collected, and method of ensuring the quality of the data collected and ethical considerations. The next chapter presents the data analysis and interpretation of results.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the research methodology, which highlighted a qualitative research approach, research design, sampling method and data collection. This chapter outlines the data analysis and search engines used to collect data. Moreover, this chapter presents the data analysis and interpretation of results.

4.2 DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected through a review of existing literature, as there were no human participants involved in this research (Mackey & Gass, 2016:219). The data collection method was through desktop research by reviewing secondary sources of data available in the public domain and relevant to address the research questions. The researcher was the main data collection instrument (Mohajan, 2018:37-40). The secondary sources used were mainly published books, e-books, peer reviewed journals, departmental reports, legislation, and media articles. To obtain data relevant to answer the research questions, the researcher utilised keywords such as women empowerment, women advancement, gender equality, employment equity, patriarchy, stereotyping, leadership, transformation, gender mainstreaming and workplace barriers. The majority of data was obtained through electronic sources from Unisa's electronic library database and Google scholar. The research engines are detailed in Table 4.1 below.

4.2.1 Search Engines

The engines used to obtain the collected data have been detailed as follows:

Table 4.1: Search engines

No.	Database type		Search words	Sources obtained
1.	Electronic engines (journals and e-books)	Ebscohost	Research design	Eller, Gerber & Robinson (2017)
			Decolonisation	Van der Westhuizen (2021)
		Oasis	Stereotyping	Antoniou & Aggelou (2019); Urick (2017)
			Workplace barriers	Burke (2019)

No.	Database type		Search words	Sources obtained
		Unisa's online library	Leadership	Nyanjom (2018); Singh, Singh & Singh (2018)
			Gender equality	Vokić, Obadić & Ćorić (2019); Lasseko-Phooko (2019)
			Retention	Cleveland, Menendez & Wallace (2017); Johnson, Widnall & Benya (2018)
			Ethics	Brynard, Hanekom & Brynard (2014)
			Advancement	Zikode (2020); Tisaker (2022)
2.	Journals (Google Scholar and Sabinet)	Gender Management: An International Journal	Patriarchy	Adisa, Abdulraheem & Isiaka (2019)
	African Sociological Review / Revue Africaine de Sociologie	Bertolt (2018)		
	Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought	Sonntag (2019)		
	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Gender equality	Bilimoria & Singer (2019)	
	Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review		Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020)	
	HR Future		Balgobind (2021)	
	Journal of Public Administration		Kahn & Motsoeneng (2014)	
	South African Institute of Civil Engineering		Lutchman & Lesufi (2020)	

No.	Database type		Search words	Sources obtained
		<p>African Human Rights Law Journal</p> <p>African Journal of Gender, Society and Development</p> <p>African Journal of Public Affairs</p> <p>A Journal of the Academy of Business and Retail Management</p> <p>Frontiers in Psychology</p>		<p>Lasseko-Phooko & Mahomed (2021)</p> <p>Nhlapo & Vyas-Doorgapersad (2021); Nzewi & Sikhosana (2020)</p> <p>Nyiransabimana (2018)</p> <p>Sebola (2015)</p> <p>Hardacre & Subasic (2018)</p>
		<p>Administratio Publica</p> <p>SA Journal of Human Resource Management</p> <p>South African Journal of Human Rights</p>	Equality for PWD	<p>Kahn (2017)</p> <p>Potgieter, Coetzee & Ximba (2017)</p> <p>Nxumalo (2019)</p>
		<p>Journal of Public Administration</p> <p>Journal of Contemporary Management</p>	Transformation	<p>Maluka, Diale & Moeti (2014)</p> <p>Nel & Joel (2019)</p>
		<p>Innovation and Management Review</p> <p>Leadership & Organization Development Journal</p>	Leadership	<p>Chammas & Hernandez (2019)</p> <p>Fritz & van Knippenberg (2017)</p>

No.	Database type		Search words	Sources obtained
		International Journal of Public Leadership		Hattke & Hattke (2019); Otero-Neira, Varela-Neira & Bande (2016)
		The Journal of Values Based Leadership		Rao (2015)
		European Journal of Training and Development		Turner & Baker (2018)
		Journal of Global Responsibility		Asamoah & Yeboah Assiamah (2019)
		Polity	Meritocracy	Gore (2018)
		Fennia		Haugen & Wisten (2019)
		Management Division		Podmetina et al. (2017)
		Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People	Qualitative research	Mohajan (2018)
		AJPSDG	Gender mainstreaming	Ramparsad (2019)
		Academy of Social Science Journals	Women empowerment	Hlebela & Mpehle (2020)
		African Journal of Gender, Society and Development	Women advancement	Isaacs, Strydom & Mbukanma (2022)
		Journal of Public Administration		Meyer (2014)
		South African Journal of Higher Education		Toni & Moodly (2019)

No.	Database type		Search words	Sources obtained
		Journal of Contemporary Management		Dibobo, Ngonyama-Ndou & Mncwabe (2022)
		Journal of Contemporary Management	Stress, burnout	Meintjies (2019)
		Educor Multidisciplinary Journal		Ojo (2020)
		International Journal of Exercise Science	Ethics	Navalta, Stone & Lyons (2019)
3.	Government publications	Reports	Batho Pele	Public Service Commission (2008)
			Skills development	Public Service Commission (2021)
		Legislation	Gender equality	People's Assembly (2019); Women's National Coalition (1994); Republic of South Africa (1996, 2002); African National Congress (2012)
			Transformation	Republic of South Africa (1995, 1997)
			Employment equity	Republic of South Africa (1998a)
			Gender mainstreaming	Public Service Commission (2006)
			Women empowerment	Republic of South Africa (2013); The Presidency

No.	Database type		Search words	Sources obtained
				(2015)
			Harassment	Department of Employment and Labour (2022)
			Skills development	Republic of South Africa (1998a); Republic of South Africa (1998c)
4.	Media Articles	Institutional articles	Women empowerment	Community Law Centre, University of the Western Cape (2014); Commission on the Status of Women (2021)
			Batho Pele	Mabasa (2020)
		Media, news and speeches	Women advancement	South African Government (2019, 2022); YouTube (2022); Eyewitness News (2022)

Source: Compiled by researcher

4.3 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

This section discusses the themes and sub-themes that are derived from the data analysis. The first theme is gender equality, which mainly focuses on women equality and women representation. The second theme is women empowerment, which explores women equality and women support programmes. The third theme is women advancement, which details the retention of women, development of women, and hierarchical advancement.

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment equity • Women representation
Theme 2: Women empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women equality • Women support programmes
Theme 3: Women advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of women • Development of women • Hierarchical advancement

4.3.1 Theme 1: Gender Equality

This section explores whether women enjoy the same privileges as their male counterparts by focusing on employment equity and women representation.

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Employment equity

Through public policies, the government emphasises the need for public institutions to promote employment equity and enable gender equality in the workplace. Employment equity propels gender equality through implementation of affirmative action measures (Lasseko-Phooko & Mahomed, 2021:512) aimed at economically uplifting previously disadvantaged groups, particularly Blacks, women and PWDs (Kahn, 2017:74). It is also concerned with ensuring gender equality by encouraging fairness in recruitment processes and prohibiting gender and racial discriminatory practices inherited from colonial laws (Bertolt, 2018:11; Lasseko-Phooko & Mahomed, 2021:498). It further ensures that the previously disadvantaged groups have equal access to the same employment, development and promotion opportunities afforded to men and persons without disabilities (Hlebela & Mpehle, 2020:1579), and selection processes are conducted fairly for women to gain entry into higher positions (Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020:8).

Table 4.3 below illustrates employment active population (EAP) per ratio at top management in terms of race, gender and disability at national level in the public sector from 2018 to 2020. The table depicts that the national EAP over the stated period for males is 55.4% comprising of 43.7% Africans, 4.8% Coloureds, 1.8% Indians and 5.1% Whites; whilst the EAP for females is 44.6% comprising of 35.6% Africans, 4.1% Coloureds, 1.0% Indians and 3.9% Whites. The table shows that in 2018 there were 76.5% males, which comprise of 10.0% Africans, 3.4% Coloureds, 6.9% Indians and 53.3% Whites; while 23.5% females consist of 5.1% Africans, 2.0% Coloureds, 2.9% Indians and 13.1% Whites. In 2019 there were 75.6% males, which comprise of 9.9% Africans,

3.4% Coloureds, 7.1% Indians and 52.4% Whites; while 24.4% females consist of 5.4% Africans, 2.1% Coloureds, 3.2% Indians and 13.2% Whites. In 2020, there were 75.1% males, which comprise of 10.1% Africans, 3.5% Coloureds, 7.3% Indians and 51.6% Whites; while 24.9% females consist of 5.7% Africans, 2.2% Coloureds, 3.4% Indians and 13.1% Whites. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) were 1.3% in 2018, 1.5% in 2019 and 1.6% in 2020 (Department of Labour, 2021:26-27).

Table 4.3: Employment equity at top management

Gender	Males				Females				Persons with disabilities (PWDs)	Total representation	
	Race and disability	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian			
Representation in percentage (%) per year										M	F
EAP	43.7%	4.8%	1.8%	5.1%	35.6%	4.1%	1.0%	3.9%		55.4%	44.6%
2018	10.0%	3.4%	6.9%	53.3%	5.1%	2.0%	2.9%	13.1%	1.3%	76.5%	23.5%
2019	9.9%	3.4%	7.1%	52.4%	5.4%	2.1%	3.2%	13.2%	1.5%	75.6%	24.4%
2020	10.1%	3.5%	7.3%	51.6%	5.7%	2.2%	3.4%	13.1%	1.6%	75.1%	24.9%

Source: Department of Labour (2021:26-27)

From the above table 4.3, it is clear that males are predominantly the majority in all race and gender groups. It shows that White males are by far the majority, which means that it will take years before the difference between them, and other race groups are reduced. In 2018 to 2020 Indian and White males and their respective female counterparts at top management are overrepresented when compared to their EAP, whilst the African and Coloured males and their counterparts are underrepresented. There is a steady increase of African females from 2018 to 2020, which shows an average increase of 0.3% year on year. Coloureds for the same period reveal an average increase of 0.1%, Indians for the same period shows an average increase of 0.4%, and Whites for the same period portrays an average increase of 0.1% of women at SMS (Department of Labour, 2021:26). Table 4.3 reveals that although the female representation at

top management positions gradually increased, they remain underrepresented in the public service when compared to their EAP of 44.6%, whilst males are overrepresented when compared to their EAP of 55.4%. Females are less than the required 50% of women at SMS than their male counterparts over the stated period. Clearly men are the most preferred for top management positions than women. In relation to the employment of PWDs, the public sector has not been able to reach its 2% target from 2018 to 2020, and the government has not defined their EAP (Department of Labour, 2021:25, 27). This creates ambiguity in determining the level of representation for PWDs in the public sector and further creates a window for marginalisation as the composition of the 2% target is not clearly defined in terms of management levels by government. The underrepresentation of women in governance structures is asserted by Nel and Joel (2019:14), who claim that the gender inequality results in a male dominant cohort being the one making decisions for the organisation. Rao (2015:8) underscored this by suggesting that the inequality is due to gender-biased mentalities and discriminatory policies, which impede the ascension of women. Furthermore, Dibobo, Ngonyama-Ndou and Mncwabe (2022:6) claim that the majority of white males in top management and SMS is as a result of inherited apartheid norms, which favoured them over other races.

Table 4.4 below illustrates employment active population (EAP) per ratio at SMS level in the public sector from 2018 to 2020. The table shows that the national EAP over the stated period for 55.4% males and 44.6% female demographics remains the same as that of top management over the stated period. For SMS however, the table depicts that in 2018 there were 65.5% males, which comprise of 14.5% Africans, 4.7% Coloureds, 7.2% Indians and 36.6% Whites; while 34.5% females consist of 8.6% Africans, 3.2% Coloureds, 3.9% Indians and 17.9% Whites. In 2019 there were 64.7% males, which comprise of 14.5% Africans, 4.7% Coloureds, 7.3% Indians and 35.7% Whites; while 35.3% females consist of 9.0% Africans, 3.3% Coloureds, 4.1% Indians and 18.1% Whites. In 2020 there were 64.3% males, which comprise of 15.1% Africans, 4.7% Coloureds, 7.4% Indians and 34.7% Whites; while 35.7% females consist of 9.5% Africans, 3.3% Coloureds, 4.3% Indians and 17.8% Whites. PWDs were 1.2% in 2018, 1.3% in 2019, and 1.3% in 2020 respectively (Department of Labour, 2021:28-30).

Table 4.4: Employment equity at SMS

Gender	Males				Females				Total persons with disabilities (PWDs)	Total representation	
	Race and disability	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian			
Representation in percentage (%) per year										M	F
EAP	43.7%	4.8%	1.8%	5.1%	35.6%	4.1%	1.0%	3.9%		55.4%	44.6%
2018	14.5%	4.7%	7.2%	36.6%	8.6%	3.2%	3.9%	17.9%	1.2%	65.5%	34.5%
2019	14.5%	4.7%	7.3%	35.7%	9.0%	3.3%	4.1%	18.1%	1.3%	64.7%	35.3%
2020	15.1%	4.7%	7.4%	34.7%	9.5%	3.3%	4.3%	17.8%	1.3%	64.3%	35.7%

Source: Department of Labour (2021: 28-30)

Table 4.4 reveals that males are still predominant at SMS level in the public sector, which seems to favour patriarchy despite better leadership capabilities demonstrated by women when compared to their male counterparts (Rao, 2015:8-9). Although women representation has steadily increased from 2018-2020, which seem to suggest that more women are promoted to SMS positions in each year, the number of women who are promoted or recruited to these positions are still far less than their male counterparts. Indian and White females are overrepresented when compared to their EAP. The table shows an average increase of 0.4% for Indian females from 2018 to 2020, and an average increase of 0.2% for White females from 2018 to 2019 thereafter an average decrease to 0.3% from 2019 to 2020. African and Coloured females remain underrepresented when compared to their EAP despite their increase in each year (Department of Labour, 2021:30). Majority of the positions are occupied by men who exceed their EAP of 55.4% than women who are below their EAP of 44.6% in the public sector, which suggests that men are more likely to be appointed or promoted to SMS positions than their female counterparts. The racial groups which occupied the majority of the SMS positions from 2018-2020 are White males and their female counterparts, followed by African males and their female counterparts whose representation has significantly increased over the same period. The

representation of Indian males and their female counterparts has also been steadily increasing over the same period. Coloured males and females are the least represented group and there have not been any significant change in their level of representation. Despite Coloured females having an EAP level of 4.1% which exceeds that of their Indian and White counterparts, their representation remains below these groups, which suggests that attention needs to be given to address the barriers that attribute to some level of discrimination of this group in the current dispensation. In terms of the employment of PWDs, it seems that not much has been done to change their plight in the public sector because the 2% target has not been reached since 2018 to 2020 (Department of Labour, 2021:28-30).

Section 9 of the Constitution endeavours to address the injustice of the past by ensuring that everyone is afforded fair, equal opportunities and not unfairly discriminated against on the basis of race, gender and disability (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Section 195 further mandates organs of state to be broadly representative of the South African people by applying fair meritocratic employment practices and redress the past injustice to the marginalised, particularly women (Republic of South Africa, 1996). It seems that the public sector has after all these decades not achieved the national minimum targets of 2% PWDs as prescribed by the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995 (Republic of South Africa, 1995:10.6). It clearly shows that government is not committed to adhere to its own regulations. Kahn (2017:86) claims that the 2% target is not scientific and that government needs to interrogate this matter, as this is not a true reflection of the demographics for PWDs in South Africa. This could suggest that these vulnerable groups are in turn being unfairly treated by the very same government system, which endeavours to provide them with employment opportunities. This is supported by Potgieter, Coetzee and Ximba (2017:2) who suggest that the regulations in place to drive transformation and broad representation of all demographics including PWDs seem to have not achieved its intended purpose. Kahn (2017:86) asserts that government has not clearly detailed the composition of this 2% target in relation to gender and racial aspects that these targets must comprise of; and if these targets also include representivity at SMS level as well. Nxumalo (2019:369) agrees, claiming that the South African Human Rights Commission is concerned about the 2% target not being a realistic measure for PWDs in addressing their underrepresentation in the workplace, and is thus lobbying for the increase of the target. The author further points out that the underrepresentation of women with disabilities generally is alarming (Nxumalo, 2019:358). During the 2015 performance review, it was found that the public sector failed to meet the 2% target as it only managed to achieve 0.66% (RSA, 2015b:14) cited by Kahn (2017:86) and “only 10 (22.22%) of the 45 national departments had achieved the 2% target”. The DPSA did not set an example for other departments as it achieved 1.39% representation of PWDs and 41.1% of women at SMS level, whilst men predominantly occupied

senior positions at 58.9%. The department cited that PWDs were neither promoted to higher positions nor were they included in training development interventions which in turn disadvantaged them to advance hierarchically (RSA, 2015a:110, 121, 131) cited by Kahn (2017:86). Potgieter, Coetzee and Ximba (2017:2) claim that the underrepresentation of PWDs likely results in their non-promotion as they get to compete with a large pool of persons without disabilities who are possibly more competent and better performers in that particular occupational field.

From the above discussion, it is evident that females in all the racial groups remain underrepresented than their male counterparts. It clearly shows that White males and females occupied the majority of top and SMS positions from 2018 to 2020 in comparison to Blacks, and continued to enjoy the benefits of the colonial system, which was systemically structured to benefit Whites over Blacks. The results reveal that the public sector has not been able to meet its 50% target for women representation at SMS level from 2018 to 2020 nor the 2% target for PWDs. This suggests that decision-making processes are facilitated by male-dominated structures that may tend to make decisions that are not gender neutral or cater for the needs of PWDs. However, there has been a steady increase in female representation despite potential workplace barriers faced by women such as gender-discriminatory policies, training interventions not relevant for career growth, and job descriptions which undermine women's talent (Nel & Joel, 2019:15). As there are no outlined demographics for PWDs by government, it can be assumed that systematic discrimination of this group, especially women with disabilities, is prevalent seeing that there is no EAP measure of compliance for this group in terms of race and gender.

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Women representation

Women were deprived of economic emancipation and faced employment barriers, which made them less likely to be employed than men. Only a few managed to break through the barriers to reach leadership positions, even more so for PWDs to get employed (Kahn, 2017:82). Toni and Moodly (2019:186) assert that women were previously subjected to marginalisation and exclusion; hence this has led to their underrepresentation in organisational structures. This is supported by Ramparsad (2019:122) who claims that it is difficult to achieve gender equality for as long as a patriarchal system exists. Sonntag (2019:21) agrees stating that inequality is perpetuated by male dominion and masculine practices which tends to be a barrier for women inclusion and representation. According to Nel and Joel (2019:4), institutions must promote gender mainstreaming to ensure women participation and representation in strategic structures. Thus, Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020:8, 20) suggest that recruitment and selection processes are the cornerstone for the promotion of women inclusion and ultimately gender equality. These authors iterate that for gender equality to prevail there must be gender

mainstreaming processes and men need to get involved in driving change and transformation in public institutions through gender forums. Moreover, Nel and Joel (2019:5) propose that gender equality quotas are fundamental measures to ensure gender equality and gender mainstreaming so as to curb the underrepresentation of women in leadership structures.

Table 4.5 below illustrates only the departments which have achieved both the targets of 50% women at SMS and 2% PWDs nationally and provincially. A snapshot of the targets not met by other national departments is depicted in table 4.6. Table 4.5 shows that in 2019 women representation at the Gauteng Department of Social Development was at 60.53% and 3.46% PWDs; followed by National departments, namely the Department of Women currently referred to as *the* Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities at 58.06% and 4% for PWDs; The Presidency at 55.17% and 3.42 PWDs; the Department of Arts and Culture at 54.35% and 2.63% PWDs; the National School of Government at 53.49% and 2.16% PWDs; the North West Department of Tourism at 53.33% and 2.56% PWDs; the Department of Trade and Industry at 52.81% and 3.81% PWDs; the Department of Small Business Development at 52.63% and 3.08% PWDs; the Department of Tourism at 51.52% and 4.51% PWDs; the Government Communications and Information System at 51.06% and 2.86% PWDs (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2019:42).

Table 4.5: Women at SMS and PWDs

National / Provincial Department		% Women in SMS	% Persons with disabilities
Gauteng	Social Development	60.53	3.46
National	Arts and Culture	54.35	2.63
	Government Communication and Information System	51.06	2.86
	National School of Government	53.49	2.16
	Small Business Development	52.63	3.08
	The Presidency	55.17	3.42
	Tourism	51.52	4.51
	Trade and Industry	52.81	3.81

	Women	58.06	4.00
North West	Tourism	53.33	2.56

Source: Department of Public Service and Administration (2019:42)

Table 4.5 reveals that the mentioned public institutions are the only ones that have achieved both 50% women at SMS and 2% PWDs at national and provincial level by March 2019. The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities seems to be leading the achievement of 50% at SMS; and second with PWDs. It is important that the Department of Tourism is taking the lead when it comes to PWDs, since it is continuously interacting with local and international audiences, it needs all people of society especially PWDs. Chapter 3 of the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997, recognised apartheid laws as being discriminatory towards Blacks, women, and PWDs, and attributed to the lack of broad representation in the public sector in terms of race, gender and PWDs resulting in SMS positions being predominantly occupied by white males (Republic of South Africa, 1997:Chapter 3). Tables 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 illustrate that transformation in the public sector has taken place, but not to the extent that was envisaged by the transformation agenda of government. These tables reveal the latter 1) women are still being marginalised and worst off than their male counterparts, 2) African, Coloured and Indian men are enjoying the fruit of transformation at the expense of their women counterparts, 3) executive and SMS positions are predominantly filled by white males, and 4) the patriarchy system is still alive in the South African public service. On one hand, Nzewi and Sikhosana (2020:7,10) argue that patriarchy hinders women participation and involvement in strategic decision-making structures and processes such as budget planning. As such, institutions tend not to prioritise gender sensitive issues or budget for programmes that cater for the needs of women. On the other hand, Lutchman and Lesufi (2020:6) assert the need for institutions to review their policies to enable the inclusion of women and transformation thereof. One aspect that these authors agree on however is that it is important for institutions to bridge the inequality gap through women participatory programmes and processes.

Table 4.6 below illustrates the snapshot of the national departments which have neither achieved the target of 50% women at SMS nor 2% PWDs by March 2019. Due to the number of government departments at national and provincial level, a selection of national departments is listed below. Areas highlighted in green depict the targets that have been met or exceeded by the respective departments. The table shows that 36 (81.82%) of national departments have either achieved or exceeded either one of the set targets of 50% women at SMS and 2% PWDs, but none have achieved both. The Military veterans achieved 52.00% women representation and 0.44% for PWDs, while the Department of Health achieved 50.41% women representation and 0.43%

PWDs. In terms of women representation, the departments which achieved between 40-49% are Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries at 43.86%, Civilian Secretariat for the Public Service at 41.94%, Communications at 46.15%, Cooperative Governance at 43.57%, Correctional Services at 43.17%, Economic Development at 48.57%, Environmental Affairs at 42.37%, Home Affairs at 46.98%, Independent Police Investigative Directorate at 48.39%, International Relations and Cooperation at 46.24%, Justice and Constitutional Development at 44.44%, Labour (currently known as Employment and Labour) at 44.93%, National Treasury at 47.55%, Office of the Public Service Commission at 45.45%, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation at 47.78%, Public Enterprises at 41.18%, Public Service and Administration at 41.05%, Science and Technology (currently known as Science and Innovation) at 48.00%, Social Development at 48.48%, Statistics South Africa at 41.46%, Traditional Affairs at 40.74%, and Water and Sanitation at 43.24%. While departments which achieved between 30-39% are Basic Education at 36.84%, Energy at 39.08%, Higher Education and Training at 38.73%, Human Settlements at 39.47%, Mineral Resources at 38.24%, Office of the Chief Justice at 37.84%, Police at 36.95%, Public Works at 37.36%, Rural Development and Land Reform at 37.31%, Sport and Recreation South Africa at 33.33%, Telecommunications and Postal Services at 38.75%, and Transport at 39.81%, with the exception of Health at 50.41%, and Military Veterans at 52%. In terms of PWDs, the departments which achieved below 1% PWDs are Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries at 0.89%, Civilian Secretariat for the Public Service and Communications at 0.00% respectively, Cooperative governance at 0.62%, Correctional Services at 0.76%, Health at 0.43%, Higher Education and Training at 0.20%, Mineral Resources at 0.69%, and National Treasury at 0.52%. While departments which achieved between 1-1.9% PWDs are Basic Education at 1.17%, Energy at 1.60%, Home Affairs at 1.64%, Human Settlements at 1.50%, International; Relations and Cooperation at 1.21%, Justice and Constitutional Development at 1.80%, Office of the Chief Justice at 1.07%, Office of the Public Service Commission at 1.87%, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation at 1.87%, Police at 1.53%, Public Enterprises at 1.74%, Public Works at 1.27%, Rural Development and Land Reform at 1.96%, Social Development at 1.72%, Sport and Recreation South Africa at 1.34%, Statistics South Africa at 1.26%, Telecommunications and Postal Services at 1.92%, Transport at 1.06%, Water and Sanitation at 1.25%. Lastly, departments which met the 2% PWDs are Economic Development at 2.68%, Environmental Affairs at 2.30%, at Independent Police Investigative Directorate 2.22%, Labour at 2.67%, Public Service and Administration at 3.10%, Science and Technology at 3.47%, and Traditional Affairs at 2.17% (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2019:47-48).

Table 4.6: Women at SMS and PWDs at national departments

No.	National Department	% Women in SMS	% Persons with disability
1.	Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	43.86%	0.89%
2.	Basic Education	36.84%	1.17%
3.	Civilian Secretariat for the Public Service	41.94%	0.00
4.	Communications	46.15%	0.00
5.	Cooperative Governance	43.57%	0.62%
6.	Correctional Services	43.17%	0.76%
7.	Economic Development	48.57%	2.68%
8.	Energy	39.08%	1.60%
9.	Environmental Affairs	42.37%	2.30%
10.	Health	50.41%	0.43%
11.	Higher Education and Training	38.73%	0.20%
12.	Home Affairs	46.98%	1.64%
13.	Human Settlements	39.47%	1.50%
14.	Independent Police Investigative Directorate	48.39%	2.22%
15.	International Relations and Cooperation	46.24%	1.21%
16.	Justice and Constitutional Development	44.44%	1.80%
17.	Labour (currently known as Employment and Labour)	44.93%	2.67%
18.	Military Veterans	52.00%	0.44%
19.	Mineral Resources	38.24%	0.69%

No.	National Department	% Women in SMS	% Persons with disability
20.	National Treasury	47.55%	0.52%
21.	Office of the Chief Justice	37.84%	1.07%
22.	Office of the Public Service Commission	45.45%	1.87%
23.	Performance Monitoring and Evaluation	47.78%	1.87%
24.	Police	36.95%	1.53%
25.	Public Enterprises	41.18%	1.74%
26.	Public Service and Administration	41.05%	3.10%
27.	Public Works	37.36%	1.27%
28.	Rural Development and Land Reform	37.31%	1.96%
29.	Science and Technology (currently known as Science and Innovation)	48.00%	3.47%
30.	Social Development	48.48%	1.72%
31.	Sport and Recreation South Africa	33.33%	1.34%
32.	Statistics South Africa	41.46%	1.26%
33.	Telecommunications and Postal Services	38.75%	1.92%
34.	Traditional Affairs	40.74%	2.17%
35.	Transport	39.81%	1.06%
36.	Water and Sanitation	43.24%	1.25%

Source: Department of Public Service and Administration (2019:47-48)

Table 4.6 reveals that only two (5.55%) national departments i.e. Department of Health and Military Veterans have achieved and exceeded the 50% target for women at SMS, but were below the target of 2% for PWDs. Whilst seven (19.44%) national departments i.e. Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs, Independent Police Investigative Directorate,

Labour (currently known as Employment and Labour), Public Service and Administration, Science and Technology (currently known as Science and Innovation), and Traditional Affairs achieved the 2% target, but did not meet the 50% target. There are 34 (94.4%) national departments, which have not achieved the 50% target for women at SMS, while 29 (80.56%) have not achieved the 2% target for PWDs, and 27 (75%) have transgressed in meeting both the employment targets. A total of 22 (61.11%) national departments achieved between 40-49% women representation and 12 (33.33%) achieved between 30-39%, while a total of 8 (22.22%) achieved below 1% PWDs, and 19 (52.78%) achieved between 1-1.9%. The DPSA suggests that holistically the public sector remains below 50% women representation at SMS, although there has been a gradual increase noted with 0.9% increase from 2018 to 2019, while PWDs increased from 0.98% to 0.99% during the same period they also remain below the 2% target (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2019:42). This is alarming as it shows that the public sector has not complied with its own imperatives, and that not only does patriarchy exist in the public sector (Bertolt, 2018:11), but that the inequality gap remains broadened (Sonntag, 2019:21) despite being in a democratic dispensation. This results in women and PWDs being continuously disadvantaged, and more women concentrated in low-level positions. Ramparsad (2019:129-130) argues that when more men are employed at SMS than women transformation gets delayed, and therefore political heads need to play an active role in addressing male supremacy and review public policies to create more employment opportunities for women. This is underscored by Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020:9) who ascertains that gender equality can be achieved through political and institutional executive management partnership, as agreed by Balgobend (2021:36) adding that public-private partnership is also crucial in realising gender equality.

The DWS did not achieve the 50% women at SMS by March 2020 to bridge the inequality gap and improve the employment rate for female representation. This is because there was a decline in female representation at SMS from 46.33% as at 31 March 2018 to 43% as at 31 March 2019 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020:118); and a further decline to 41% as at 31 March 2020 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2021:102). However, by March 2021 there was only a slight increase of 1%, which brought the total female representation to 42%, which improved to 44% as at 31 March 2022. In terms of ensuring recognition and inclusion of the historically disadvantaged groups, mainly PWDs, the DWS did not meet the 2% set target, but nevertheless managed to gradually improve from 1.03% as at March 2019 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020:118) to 1.48% as at March 2022 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022b:114). Government is making strides in promoting and ensuring that gender equity targets at SMS and PWDs are achieved, however this is happening at an undesirable pace. For decades, government has not been able to meet the set targets for women at SMS and for PWDs despite

legislative framework, which advocates for women inclusion, promotion, and advancement. This is supported by Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020:5) who claim that it might take up to the year 2025 before the 50% target is achieved based on DPSA's review in 2017, which shows a decrease in the number of departments that had progressed in this regard. Kahn (2017:93) concurs, stating that similarly government had not achieved the 2% target for PWDs either within the same period as it had only achieved 0.66% since the inception of the targets. The above data also shows that majority of the government departments have not achieved both targets as of 2019. As such, these authors agree that it can take several years before women representation is equal to men and PWDs access the same employment opportunities as persons without disabilities.

From the discussion above, it is obvious that the public sector is taking government's imperatives serious, and taking decisive steps in meeting the quotas for women representation and PWDs. It is therefore concerning that despite notable strides made by government in meeting the gender quotas and ensuring women representation at SMS level men are still predominantly occupying the majority of the leadership positions than women. It is also puzzling that majority of the national departments have not achieved the set imperative of government. There seems to be an imbalance in achieving both set targets simultaneously within the same timeframe, as majority of the departments seem to focus more on women representation at SMS than with PWDs.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Women Empowerment

This section discusses support programmes that may enhance women's equality in the public service.

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Women equality

Women need to be empowered so that they ascend the corporate ladder as equally as men. Political influence and nepotism in recruitment and selection processes are some of the contributory factors to gender inequality at SMS. Lindquist and Marcy (2016:177) shared this notion by asserting that Heads of State, for instance not only can appoint Ministers but can also appoint Heads of institutions. Often, the public and interested parties can question the appointment as to whether it is based on political affiliation, gender dynamics or purely on merit (Rao, 2015:9). As men are often the ones who gain favour in political deployments, women are left to compete for the attainment of supportive roles (Nyiransabimana, 2018:14). Moreover, new executive appointments mean new changes to institutional policies (Lindquist & Marcy, 2016:179), of which such changes could alienate women inclusion further. Hlebela and Mphehle (2020:1584) supports this by claiming that 69% of their research participants agreed that cadre deployment has been an impediment to the advancement of women to SMS due to preferential

appointment of men than women. These authors claim that the process of cadre appointments is more concerned with appointing persons that are politically affiliated or 'known' and involved in the political realm with disregard for merits in terms of qualification and experience in that particular position, this is even worse for the appointment of women candidates when weighed with a male candidate (Hlebelá & Mpehle, 2020:1584).

Section 19 of the Employment Equity Act of 1998 mandates public institutions to analyse their own policies, procedures and the working environment to determine potential employment barriers negatively impacting on or unfairly discriminating against historically disadvantaged groups, particularly women (Republic of South Africa, 1998a:21-22). The DPSA suggests that 48% of public institutions have asserted that they have established a Senior Women Manager's fora to enable reasonable accommodation of women, and are making strides in breaking workplace barriers to access participation in the workplace. The DPSA report of 2021 cited that KZN Department of Public Works has conducted training sessions in 2021 on breaking barriers to entry into the public service, which targeted unemployed youth graduates. Whilst the KZN Department of Finance conducted combined gender workshops prior the Public Service Women Management Week (PSWMW) in 2021 to address social ills, relationship and health issues so as to sensitise both genders on gender-specific challenges. The Department of Transport developed a discussion paper on gender equality following an internal survey conducted on gender mainstreaming (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2021:23-24).

The Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the public service promulgated in 2006 aims to promote the rights of women in the workplace including those with disability. The DPSA is mandated to monitor the implementation of this framework by government departments, whereby departments are expected to observe the PSWMW, which takes place from 23-31 August annually and report on the key eight (8) principle plan of action for promoting women empowerment and gender equality in the workplace. Departments are thus obliged to hold dialogues on the implementation of the plan and submit progress reports in this regard. The dialogues are meant to establish women focused programmes to promote gender equality, inclusion, women advancement, and redress past injustices towards women (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2021:9). These principles seek to promote the rights of women including women with disabilities in directing departments to: 1) promote transformation for non-sexism; 2) establish a policy environment by implementing sector-specific guidelines that promote women's empowerment and gender equality; 3) meet equity targets by ensuring 50% women representation at SMS level; 4) create an enabling environment by establishing gender-focused systems and structures; 5) incorporate gender aspects in departmental systems through gender mainstreaming; 6) empower and capacitate women to advance hierarchically; 7) provide adequate resources for advancing gender equality; and 8) ensure accountability, monitoring and

evaluation for advancing gender equality in the public sector (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2010:2). Ramparsad (2019:120) suggests that for the eight (8) principles plan to be effectively implemented in the public sector, a collaborative approach by political leaders, the Ministry of DPSA, institutional executives and public servants is required to drive gender-related interventions in the public sector. The author however points out that the views of the DPSA's respondents from her study claim that the DPSA predominantly focuses on monitoring departments if they comply with the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality in terms of providing reports and not necessarily if they comply with the provisions of the plan (Ramparsad, 2019:124). Lasseko-Phooko and Mahomed (2021:515) claim that the framework ensures that gender equality is achieved through the elimination of discriminatory practices, which hinder women from equally accessing the same opportunities as men that institutions must strive to implement.

According to the DPSA (2021:17) all national and provincial departments are expected to submit an annual report in relation to the implementation of the above-mentioned eight (8) principles. Thus, the DPSA has monitored the submission of the reports for 13 years beginning from 2009 to 2021, hence a record of 13 reports were expected from each department by 2021. There are only three public institutions that have consistently complied in submitting all 13 (100%) reports during the stated period, namely the DPSA at national level while in the province it was the Western Cape Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs, and the Northern Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport. The national departments that submitted 11 (84%) reports since 2009 were Environmental Affairs, Public Service Commission, Presidency, Tourism, and Trade, Industry and Competition; provincial departments include a) the Western Cape Department of Local Government which submitted 8 (61%) reports, b) the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development submitted 12 (92%) reports, while 11 (84%) reports were received from c) the Free State Economic Development Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, and the Provincial Treasury, d) in Gauteng only Department of Education, e) in KZN only the Department of Human Settlements, f) in Limpopo only the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, g) the Northern Cape Provincial Treasury, h) and three (3) in the Western Cape, namely the Department of Community Safety, Provincial Treasury and Department of Transport and Public Works; and all departments in the Free State Province have maintained a 100% consistent submission rate since 2015 to 2021 with seven (53%) reports received from each department (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2021:17-18).

Table 4.7 below shows the analysis of the eight (8) standard compliance criteria for 2021 PSWMW by some of the national departments. Due to the large number of public institutions nationally and provincially, a selective number of departments are mentioned to provide a

snapshot of the status of compliance with the PSWMW criteria. These criteria include whether or not a department hosted a meeting, if the meeting was hosted during the PSWMW, if the meeting was chaired by the Head of Department (HOD), if only female SMS members attended the meeting, if the agenda was focused on the principle plan of action, if the stipulated template was utilised for the reporting purpose, if the report was submitted before the deadline, and if the report was signed by the Head of Department (Department of Public Service and Administration: 2021:47).

Table 4.7: 8 Compliance Criteria with PSWMW

Department	Hosted meeting	Week 23-31 August	HOD Chaired	Only female SMS attended	Agenda focus	Stipulated template	Date Submitted	Signed by HOD
Department of Trade and Industry	Yes	No (22/09/2021)	Yes	No (23 and 6 lower levels)	Yes	Yes	28/10/2021	Yes
Department of Traditional Affairs	Yes	Yes (31/08/2021)	Yes	Yes (92% SMS attended)	Yes	Yes	06/10/2021	Yes
Department of Transport								
The Presidency	Yes	Yes (27/08/2021)	Yes	17	Yes	No	29/10/2021	Yes
Department of Water and Sanitation								
Department of Women								

Source: Department of Public Service and Administration (2021:47)

Table 4.7 indicates that the Department of Transport, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) and Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities did not comply with the annual PSWMW programme criteria. The Department of Traditional Affairs managed to fulfil all the requirements with 92% women at SMS level attending the women's meeting; the Department of Trade and Industry did not comply in holding meetings within the prescribed period as determined by the PSWMW. However, 23 female SMS and 6 other females from lower levels attended the meeting. The Presidency complied with all requirements with the exception of utilising the stipulated template for reporting on the PSWMW. It is unclear whether the 17 females that attended the meeting at Presidency were members of SMS. In terms of hosting a meeting during the PSWMW the Department of Trade and Industry did not comply while the Department of Traditional Affairs and the Presidency complied. The reports submitted by these three (3) departments to the DPSA were signed by the HOD. According to the DPSA (2021:47), all national departments in general have struggled to meet 100% compliance for all the criteria, in 2017 100% compliance was only achieved for hosting meetings, utilising the correct reporting template and reports being signed by the HOD. Whilst in 2018 100% compliance was noted for utilising a focused agenda and report being signed by the HOD. None of the national departments achieved a 100% compliance from 2019 to 2021. The DPSA further noted that national departments have not been hosting meetings during the PSWMW and there has been a gradual decline in complying with this criteria, in 2015 compliance was at 73%, in 2016 at 71%, in 2017 at 53%, in 2018 there was a slight improvement to 65%, then a decline in 2019 to 46%, in 2020 a further decline to 38%, and a significant improvement was noted in 2020 at 76%. It is only in 2018 that there was 100% compliance by all the national departments in utilising an agenda that focused on the 8 principles plan of action, there was a decline to 54% in 2019, a slight increase to 60% in 2020, and a further increase to 69% in 2021. The correct reporting template was submitted by all national departments in 2017, 2018 and 2020, while 100% compliance of these reports being signed by the HOD was only in 2017 (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2021:47-48). The lack of national departments in complying with all the set criteria particularly that of the report being signed by the HOD shows that senior management is not at the forefront and decision-making on achieving the women empowerment objectives are left with lower-level staff. This suggests that SMS is either not aware of the prevalent workplace barriers discussed in the set meetings or they are shying away from taking responsibility in redressing the challenges faced by women in the workplace, and decisions to achieving gender equality and women empowerment are delayed due to an extended management consultative process. Rao (2015:8) claims that government's equality imperatives are well documented but poorly practiced. The author asserts that the commemoration of women's day or month for that matter serves no purpose if women continue to be marginalised and not afforded the same employment or advancement opportunities as men.

From the above discussion, it is clear that there is more focus and advocacy on women issues merely during the women's month in August. This suggests that women empowerment and gender equality seem to be more of a 'tick the box' procedural exercise by public institutions rather than fulfilling the legislative mandate of redressing the injustice towards the marginalised groups. Table 4.7 reveals that there is lack of holding non-complying departments accountable for not achieving government's imperatives.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Women support programmes

When employees are provided with support, they feel valued and would have some sense of loyalty towards their organisation (Otero-Neira, Varela-Neira & Bande, 2016:866). Hlebela and Mpehle (2020:1584) are of the view that an institution can provide women support interventions such as a Women's Conference, PSWMW and an SMS Women Summit which can be held annually, thus women must fully participate in them. Other support programmes include the establishment of mentoring and coaching programmes specifically targeting women. Approximately 48% of public institutions cited that they have mentoring and coaching support programmes, however 28% do not have initiatives to ensure that women are direct beneficiaries of economic development (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2021:24-25).

The DWS in its strategic plan for 2015/2016 to 2019/2020, has committed itself in bridging the inequality gap by promoting "employment and personnel management practices that are based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation" (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2015:16). It has further committed itself in introducing programmes aimed at developing skills and job opportunities for women; to establish an Adopt-a-River project; to regularly engage and hold joint planning sessions with women; and to encourage women targeted procurement (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2015:4, 31). The Adopt-a-River programme was established as a volunteerism initiative for community participation aimed at: 1) raising awareness about water resources and the need for citizens to participate in the management of these resources, 2) imparting knowledge and skills to the volunteers on quality and quantity of the water resources inclusive of surface and ground water, and 3) training and empowerment of role players involved in the programme. At the beginning of the programme, ten (10) rivers were selected as part of the pilot implementation, namely "Vaal River, Pongola River, Mokolo River, Olifants River, Klip River and Wonderfonteinspruit, Modder and Riet Rivers, Mtata and Buffalo Rivers, Olifants/Doring River, Hartz River, Crocodile River" (Department of Water Affairs, 2009:1-2). The Water Research Commission (2016:1) suggests that the target group for the programme was later changed from holistic community groups to unemployed women, youth and persons with disability as the programme was geared towards achieving the newly set objective of placing emphasis on job

creation opportunities and not merely volunteerism. From a training and development perspective the Energy Water Sector Education and Training Authority sponsored the Adopt-a-River training programme with R588 000 in 2015/2016 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2016:3295) and R800 000 in 2016/2017 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2017:286). In partnership with civil society and businesses, the DWS initiated a “clear rivers campaign” in 2016 in an effort to educate the community and raise awareness on the protection of water resources. The campaign encourages all persons to dedicate 67 minutes during the Mandela month to clean up rivers and other water sources (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2017:12). Nzewi and Sikhosana (2020:10) suggest that a partnership approach is key particularly between government and communities as a whole, everyone must get involved in empowering women to be financially independent. As such, women’s participation in local government processes is crucial in influencing municipal budgetary decisions to cater for their needs and ultimately contribute to the economy. Volunteerism is one aspect that becomes a stepping-stone for women to participate in government initiatives and acquire the necessary skills that will later on assist them to attain jobs and gain financial freedom.

During the DWS’s 2018/2019 performance review, the department had found that in relation to contributing to socio-economic development and transformation through the support of black entrepreneurs with targeted procurement of 50% per annum and creating job opportunities for the historically disadvantaged groups, being women, particularly black women and PWDs. The DWS achieved 76% of the targeted procurement and created 907 jobs during the period under review (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020:35). The DWS had substantiated the targeted procurement approach over qualifying entrepreneurs by citing that it had applied the Preferential Procurement Regulation 2017, which in turn contributed to its achievement (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020:37). The Preferential Procurement Regulations of 2022 under the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act 5 of 2000 repealed the 2017 Regulations with effect from 16 January 2023. These Regulations mandate public institutions to state the applicable 80/20 or 90/10 preference point system as envisaged in the regulations when advertising tenders as well as state the applicable specific goals for which the preference point system may be applied. The specific goals, which must be taken into account, include contracting with persons, or categories of persons, historically disadvantaged by unfair discrimination on the basis of race, gender and disability (Republic of South Africa, 2022:4). Balgobend (2021:37) claims that women must be sufficiently empowered to be financially independent, their skills natured, and must earn a salary that is equal to that of their male counterparts for the same type of jobs performed. This is supported by Dibobo, Ngonyama-Ndou and Mncwabe (2022:6) who suggest that preferential treatment of one race or gender over another is mainly an affirmative action as an attempt to redress the past injustice towards the disadvantaged groups, particularly

Blacks, women and PWDs to bring about equality and curb socio-economic inequalities.

The DWS created 1604 jobs during the 2017/2018 financial year for historically disadvantaged groups. However, during the 2018/2019 financial year it only created 907 job opportunities (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020:35, 62). During the 2021/2022 reporting period, the Deputy Minister for DWS, expressed her dissatisfaction at the department's overall underachievement of 14% for preferred procurement, which is below the set, targeted 15%. Despite the underachievement outcome however, the Minister acknowledged the department's milestone of women's participation in the preferred procurement related projects to be at 66% over the set target of 40% (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022b:10).

Women participation is fundamental in influencing decision-making processes and shaping public policies geared towards promoting gender equality socially and in all spheres of government. This is underscored by Isaacs, Strydom and Mbukanma (2022:58, 60), who claim that women support must begin with empowering them and bridging the inequality gap. To achieve this, it is essential that institutions ensure women inclusion and representation of their interests in various structures to promote improved productivity at an individual and organisational level. Adisa, Abdulraheem and Isiaka (2018:19-20) and Nyiransabimana (2018:15) agree, stating that women's needs must be taken into account, and patriarchal policies that hinder their achievement of home and work-life balance must be discouraged. This is underscored by Hence Vokić, Obadić and Ćorić (2019:62), who claim that an organisational system must debunk patriarchy and must create an environment that promotes flexibility for women to achieve a balance in work productivity and family life.

Cleveland, Menendez and Wallace (2017:389-390) concur that organisational programmes must be designed to offer the needed support to women to enable them to perform optimally as their male counterparts whilst balancing their social and work responsibilities. These programmes must endeavour to promote organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and lessen emotional burden related to work-life conflict experienced by women, must include amongst others provision of flexible work schedule and policies, breaking gender stereotype mentality, promoting gender neutral policies, enhancing supervisor-subordinate support, providing promotion opportunities to women, rewarding excellence, and diversifying top management. Isaacs, Strydom and Mbukanma (2022:72) state that coaching and mentoring programme is another initiative that enables women to attain skills, advances their knowledge, cultivates confidence, and promotes career advancement opportunities. In its endeavour to bridge the skills shortage gap in the water sector, the DWS centralised its training programmes on Administration, Water Resource Management and Water Services Management to online platforms due to the 2021/2022 Covid-19 restrictions (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022b:48, 115). Due to the trauma and

emotional distress that came with the Covid-19 pandemic, the DWS enhanced its employee health and wellness programme through stakeholder partnership to provide employees with psycho-social support services to cope with mental health issues and enable optimal occupational functioning (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022b:100).

From the above discussion, it is clear that women empowerment involves the provision of support programmes geared towards achieving broad representation and accommodating the needs of women. Such programmes include, but are not limited to, coaching and mentorship, targeted procurement focusing on supporting black entrepreneurs particularly women, creation of jobs with women being first preference, and provision of an enabling environment for flexi policies to accommodate women. Such flexi policies can include, but are not limited to, provision of “on-site crèche for nursing mothers and extended maternity leave” (Adisa, Abdulraheem & Isiaka, 2019:29), flexible work-time for women, alignment of policies to create equal opportunities for women (Vokić, Obadić & Ćorić, 2019:69, 77), employee wellness policies that promote psychological well-being, aid in improving work performance and offer counselling to manage work pressures and stress (Badul & Subban, 2022:126), a non-punitive working from home policy for women who need to tend to their motherly duties and development of human resource policies that take cognisance of diversity aspects (Dibobo, Ngonyama-Ndou & Mncwabe, 2022:14).

4.3.3 Theme 3: Women Advancement

This section discusses the programmes and measures that institutions should institute to retain women. The continuous development of women will empower them with competencies and capabilities that will prepare them for the next level of hierarchical advancement.

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Retention of women

Various reasons can contribute to women deciding to leave their jobs or institutions. These include work-related stressors such as workplace conflict, toxic working environment, job dissatisfaction, unhealthy supervisor-subordinate relations, and sexual harassment (Johnson, Widnall & Benya, 2018:172-173) or personal reasons such as caring for an ill family member, health condition, childbirth and lifestyle changes (Grotto, Hyland, Caputo & Semedo, 2017:449). Hence, employers need to implement strategies to retain and prevent women from leaving their jobs (Grotto et al., 2017:449). These strategies include but are not limited to programmes designed to enable women support and accommodate their needs to achieve a work-life balance (Cleveland, Menendez & Wallace, 2017:389), creation of a working environment that does not tolerate any form of abuse or harassment against women (Balgobend, 2021:37), and that which strives to develop the skills of women to enable them to work independently, and have career progression (Grotto et al., 2017:450; Isaacs, Strydom & Mbukanma, 2022:72). The resignation of

women attributes to their underrepresentation in the workplace and a potential increase in the vacancy rate.

Table 4.8 illustrates the total number of funded SMS posts in comparison with those filled and vacant. The data suggests that in 2018, there were 243 funded SMS posts of which 74.90% were filled by 155 (65.13%) males: 94 (60.64%) Africans, 5 (3.22%) Coloureds, 10 (6.45%) Indians and 46 (29.68%) Whites; while 83 (34.87%) females comprise 64 (77.10%) Africans, 4 (4.82%) Coloureds, 4 (4.82%) Indians and 11 (13.25%) Whites. 25.10% of the posts remain vacant. In 2019, there were 248 funded SMS posts of which 71.37% were filled by 96 (56.80%) males, comprising 77 (80.21%) Africans, 4 (4.17%) Coloureds, 8 (8.33%) Indians and 7 (7.29%) Whites; and 73 (43.19%) females constituting 58 (79.45%) Africans, 2 (2.18%) Coloureds, 4 (5.48%) Indians and 9 (12.33%) Whites, while 28.62% posts remained vacant. In 2020, there were 254 funded SMS posts of which 70.9% were filled by 101 (58.38%) males, which comprise of 79 (45.66%) Africans, 3 (1.73%) Coloureds, 10 (5.78%) Indians and 9 (7.29%) Whites; while 72 (41.62%) females consist of 57 (79.17%) Africans, 2 (2.78%) Coloureds, 3 (4.17%) Indians and 10 (13.89%) Whites, while 29.1% posts remain vacant. In 2021, there were 258 funded SMS posts of which 69.38% were filled by 98 (57.31%) males, which consist of 78 (79.59%) Africans, 3 (3.06%) Coloureds, 9 (9.18%) Indians and 8 (8.16%) Whites; while 73 (42.69%) females consist of 58 (79.45%) Africans, 2 (2.74%) Coloureds, 3 (4.10%) Indians and 10 (13.70%) Whites, while 30.62% posts remain vacant. In 2022, there were 251 funded SMS posts of which 74.9% were filled by 103 (57.87%) males, which consist of 83 (80.58%) Africans, 4 (3.88%) Coloureds, 8 (7.77%) Indians and 8 (7.77%) Whites; while 75 (42.13%) females consist of 62 (82.67%) Africans, 1 (1.33%) Coloured, 3 (4%) Indians and 9 (12%) Whites, while 25.1% posts remain vacant.

Table 4.8: Funded, Filled and Vacant Posts at SMS

SMS level	Total number of funded SMS posts					Filled SMS posts (%)					Vacant SMS posts (%)				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Director - General	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	100	100	100	100	100	0
Salary level 16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salary level 15	13	12	13	14	13	69.23	58.53	61.5	64.29	61.54	30.77	41.67	38.5	35.71	38.46
Salary level 14	52	52	55	55	51	65.38	61.54	63.6	58.18	68.63	34.62	38.46	36.4	41.82	31.37
Salary level 13	177	183	185	188	186	78.53	75.41	74.1	73.4	77.42	21.47	24.59	25.9	26.6	22.58
Total	243	248	254	258	251	74.90 %	71.37 %	70.9%	69.38 %	74.9%	25.10 %	28.63 %	29.1 %	30.62 %	25.1%
Total number of employees at SMS level (levels 13-16) for 2018-2022 in terms of gender and race															Departmental overall vacancy rate
Year	Male					Females									

	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Total representation	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Total representation		
2018	94	5	10	46	155	64	4	4	11	83	2018	13.0%
2019	77	4	8	7	96	58	2	4	9	73	2019	13.7%
2020	79	3	10	9	101	57	2	3	10	72	2020	18.4%
2021	78	3	9	8	98	58	2	3	10	73	2021	18.9%
2022	83	4	8	8	103	62	1	3	9	75	2022	19.6%

Source: Department of Water and Sanitation (2018–2022)

Table 4.8 reveals that males predominately occupied most of the SMS positions from 2018 to 2022 with the exception of 2020 whereby priority on appointments was afforded to females as the posts were filled by African and White females. Although African females were mostly appointed over the other female racial groups during the five (5) year period, African males still occupied a majority of the posts than all the genders and racial groups. It appears that more White females were appointed above their male counterparts for four (4) consecutive years from 2019 to 2022 respectively. However, African, Coloured and Indian females were the least appointed above their male counterparts in all the five years. Nevertheless, African females met the 50% employment equity target despite their male counterparts being appointed in most of the SMS positions during the five-year period, which was not the case for the other female racial groups. Ms Deborah Mochothli replaced the male acting Director-General in 2018 (<https://outa.co.za/blog/newsroom-1/post/water-department-drops-stained-top-official-228>). In 2022 the Director-General's position was filled with a white male candidate (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022b:115). The data seems to suggest predominance of males in leadership positions.

Bias selection and appointment practices have been found to be negatively impacting on women's progression. Positions associated with supportive roles such as a personal assistant, for instance, are relatively aligned with a woman incumbent whilst that of a manager is associated with men (Nyiransabimana, 2018:14). Such gender biasness and patriarchal norms tend to make it a challenge for women to compete for or pursue managerial positions (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017:1018; Rao, 2015:8-9). Women were not only bound by past discriminatory laws to be financially dependent on their partners by being deprived of fair recruitment and selection opportunities, but were also not afforded corporate advancement opportunities as their male counterparts (Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020:2). These practices have been addressed by Chapter 1, Part VII.A of the Public Service Regulations 2001, which requires public institutions to institute fair employment practices that ensure employment equity, fairness, efficiency and broad representation particularly of historically disadvantaged groups which were unfairly discriminated against (Republic of South Africa, 2001:26). Broad representation must not only take cognisance of race, gender, and PWDs (Republic of South Africa, 1994: Chapter IV.9), but also of employment equity targets at SMS (Republic of South Africa, 2001:51). The selection must be based on meritocratic criteria which ensures that the appropriately qualified and competent candidates are appointed (Republic of South Africa, 1998a:22).

In terms of the vacancy rate at the DWS, Table 4.7 depicts that from 2018 to 2022 there was an overall vacancy rate of 13.0% as at March 2018 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2018:122), 13.7% as at March 2019 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020:33), 18.4% as at March

2020 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2021:31), 18.9% as at March 2021 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022a:48), and 19.6% as at March 2022 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022b:114). The increased vacancy rate reflects that the DWS exceed the vacancy rate of 10% of funded posts (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2015:1), and did not adhere to the provisions of section 65 of the Public Service Regulations, 2016, which require public institutions to fill vacant positions within 12 months of being vacated (Republic of South Africa, 2016:69). The high vacancy rate at SMS level means that the duties of the vacant post must be assigned to an acting official as an extra workload. According to Ojo (2020:177) and Meintjies (2019:9), extra workload may increase level of work-related stress as the acting officials would want to prove their capability to act on the newly assigned position; physical and emotional exhaustion (burnout), ill-health, and an inability to maintain a work-life balance may all impact on a person's ability to optimally function.

From the above discussion, the number of funded SMS posts at the DWS seem to increase annually, which suggests that the DWS is not only striving to achieve 50% women at SMS, but also to improve service delivery. In all the racial categories, African males and females are the majority, with Coloureds being the minority at SMS level. The statistics show that the Director-General's position has always been occupied by a male, which suggest that females are less likely to be appointed. This depicts that a gender-centred approach is applied for fitting a person to the job during selection processes over and above prioritisation of qualifications and capabilities or suitability of the job candidate (Cleveland, Menendez & Wallace, 2017:382). As such, women continue to be exposed to gender discriminatory practices applied by gender stereotypes who give first preference for leadership positions to men than women (Lasseko-Phooko & Mahomed, 2021:520).

4.3.3.2 Sub-Theme 2: Women development

Gender segregation by society has mainly led to the association of domesticated and nurturing roles with girls while those of being 'head of the house' get associated with boys. As young girls are traditionally groomed to be caregivers, they tend to have little or no interest in pursuing career fields associated with males such as in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Vokić, Obadić & Ćorić, 2019:44). This is asserted by Bilimoria and Singer (2019:363) who suggest that despite an increased level of women's enrolment at tertiary institutions, their participation in these academic fields is however a cause for concern, hence this results in gender equity at a professional level. According to Nyanjom (2018:40), professional advancement begins with self-development, which can be attained through role modelling, while Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020:8) propose capacity building through bursaries and learnerships. A mentorship programme can also be implemented whereby female senior managers can enhance

the skills of those in lower levels. These authors suggest that institutions must provide a training budget for gender-specific training interventions.

The DWS partners with international academic communities such as Japan, China, Cuba, Denmark and Netherlands as well as Higher Education Institutions (HEI). The learning academy of DWS also has partners with training institutions in the following provinces: “six (6) in Gauteng, four (4) in Western Cape, four (4) in Eastern Cape, three (3) in KwaZulu-Natal, two (2) in Free State, two (2) in Limpopo, one (1) in Mpumalanga and one (1) in the North West” (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022b:11), and these institutions have been able to produce new graduates who have professionally registered with the Engineering Council of South Africa, the South African Council for Natural Science Profession and the Geomatics Council for Surveyors. For instance, Japan’s collaboration mainly focused on the provision of training on non-revenue water and water reduction through the Japan International Cooperation Agency, whilst one with the Dutch learning community resulted in the provision of scholarships on water management programmes through the Dutch government’s Orange Knowledge Programme (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022b:11). Bilimoria and Singer (2019:380) are of the view that a collaborative approach with learning institutions is beneficial in strengthening the workforce and advancing gender equality, diversity and women inclusion in the field of science, technical, engineering and mathematics. This is underscored by Nyanjom (2018:38) who claims that educating women promotes broader inclusion, and benefits them with increased job and career advancement opportunities as well as financial independence.

The Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999 mandates that employers contribute 1% of each employee’s monthly salary to the Sector Education and Training Authority for the development of its employees (Republic of South Africa, 1999:6). The DWS complies with the Act by making a regular contribution towards the skills levy for the development of its employees which amounted to R2 986 000 in 2019/2020 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2021:75), R3 086 000 in 2020/2021 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022a:116), and R3 190 000 in 2021/2022 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022b:87).

Table 4.9 below depicts that certain public institutions have internal capacity to train and develop their employees. These institutions are Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development; Environmental, Forestry and Fisheries; Government Communication and Information System; Home Affairs; National School of Government; South African Revenue Services; Social Development; South African Police Services; and Water and Sanitation. The departments that are excluded from the table do not have internal capacity for training their employees. These institutions outsource their training and development to external service providers, such as higher institutions of learning and the National School of Government (Public

Service Commission, 2021:32).

Table 4.9: Institutions with internal training capacity

NAME OF DEPARTMENT	INTERNAL CAPACITY
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveying Units • Agricultural Colleges and Institutions
Environmental, Forestry and Fisheries	Training unit
Government Communication and Information System	Training unit to train national communicators
Home Affairs	Learning Academy
National School of Government	National School of Government
SARS	SARS Institute of Learning
Social Development	Internal capacity within the line function
South African Police Services	SAPS Academy
Water and Sanitation	The Learning Academy

Source: Public Service Commission (2021:32)

The DWS has established the Learning Academy in 2007 with an intention to close the skills gap mainly focusing on the development of new graduate recruits and ultimately absorbing them into permanent positions, particularly in the field of science and engineering. The Learning Academy further seeks to broadly develop new recruits academically and professionally in the field of water-related science, engineering, and technical disciplines. It seeks to provide employees with opportunities to grow their career, attain first-hand work experience, and enhance their development by registering with the relevant professional bodies as well as Higher Educational Institutions (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020:9). In 2015/2016, the skills development programme focused on infrastructure rehabilitation and development of maintenance plans. An achievement was noted in the area of bulk water and wastewater infrastructure development, augmentation of domestic and industrial water supply, upgrading of boreholes, construction of bulk scheme, dam safety rehabilitation and raising of dam walls (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2016:14). In 2015/2016 the Academy placed 74 candidate male and female engineers and scientists into permanent positions (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2016:134), 181 in 2016/2017 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2017:35), 51 in 2017/2018 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2018:122), 549 in 2018/2019 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2016:118), and 35 in 2019/2020 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020a:12). A total of 24 Scholarships had also been awarded to both male and female middle and senior management during 2019 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020:9). However, the DWS has not provided disaggregated data to determine the percentage of women provided with scholarship and placed into permanent positions.

The DWS also partners with the National School of Government (NSG) to train its officials in line with its workplace skills plan. This partnership has also benefited senior and middle management

members by implementing the management targeted training intervention termed Khaedu project, which aims to empower managers with managerial skills and competencies to effectively lead in the workplace. Since March 2017, the DWS has assessed 51% of male and female SMS members on generic core management competencies in order to identify the skills gap, which informs improvement plans in the subsequent financial year (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2017:47, 120-121). However, the DWS has not provided disaggregated data to determine the percentage of women assessed at SMS. Nevertheless, various training development interventions were implemented for employees and SMS particularly through the NSG. Such interventions include the foundation management development programme, emerging management development, advanced management development, and executive management development (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2016:134). Other training courses attended by SMS are management courses, finance, employee relations, leadership (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2018:15); and relate to environmental management (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022b:39).

In 2015/2016, 4131 (55.88%) employees in general were trained consisting of 1863 (25.20%) females and 2268 (30.68%) males, of which 502 (12.15%) SMS comprise of 256 (51%) female and 246 (49%) males (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2021:179), by the end of the reporting period a grand total of 5746 (77.72%) employees in general were trained with an expenditure of R17 031 000 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2016:134, 273), however data relating to gender for this grand total is not outlined. In 2016/2017, 3271 (54.30%) were trained consisting of 1435 (43.87%) females and 1836 (56.13%) males, of which 399 (12.19%) SMS comprise of 205 (51.38%) females and 194 (48.62%) males, with an expenditure of R14 212 000 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2017:121, 169, 262). In 2017/2018, 2353 (34.05%) were trained consisting of 1029 (43.73%) females and 1324 (56.27%) males, of which 309 (13.98%) SMS comprised of 177 (57.28%) females and 132 (42.72%) males, with an expenditure of R581 117 000 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2018:122, 171, 265). In 2018/2019, 2823 (41.60%) were trained consisting of 1192 (42.22%) females and 1631 (57.78%) males, of which 120 (4.25%) SMS comprise of 54 (45%) females and 66 (55%) males, with an expenditure of R826 904 000 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020:118, 159, 267). In 2019/2020, 1624 (24.32%) were trained through the learning academy with an expenditure of R313 820 000 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2021:102, 226), however data relating to gender is not outlined. During this period, a grand total of 3423 (51.25%) employees were identified for training consisting of 1401 (40.92%) females and 1504 (43.94%) males, of which 7 (0.20%) SMS comprise of 1 (14.28%) female and 6 (85.71%) males, however it is not clear whether the training interventions identified were implemented (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2021:142). In 2020/2021, 420 (1.58%) were trained consisting of 128 (30.48%) females and 298 (70.95%) males, of which 10

(2.38%) SMS comprise of 4 females (40%) and 6 (60%) males, with an expenditure of R173 510 000 (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022a:142, 185, 267).

According to Lutchman and Lesufi (2020:5), it is essential for academia to recognise and nurture talent specifically in the essential fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Black women in particular have been found to be underrepresented in these fields as well as in postgraduate studies which are mainly dominated by white men (CEDAW, 2014:24; Lutchman & Lesufi, 2020:5; Kahn & Motsoeneng, 2014:1068). Women may not be aware of leadership advancement and skills development programmes within their institution more than those self-identified through personal development plans, and in some instances, there is lack of such extended institutional programmes altogether (Toni & Moody, 2019:185).

Table 4.10 below depicts skills development of genders trained at the DWS per occupational category, namely legislators, senior officials and managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals, clerks, service and sales workers, skilled agriculture and fishery workers, craft and related trade workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers, as well as elementary occupations. The table shows that in 2021/2022 a total of 2303 (35.48%) employees were trained consisting of 798 (34.70%) females and 1504 (65.30%) males in the different occupational categories. In terms of legislators, senior officials, and managers 59 (2.56%) trained comprising of 23 (38.98%) females and 36 (61.02%) males. In terms of professionals 268 (11.64%) trained comprising of 114 (42.54%) females and 154 (57.46%) males. In terms of technicians and associate professionals 257 (11.16%) trained comprising of 101 (39.30%) females and 156 (60.70%) males. In terms of clerks 398 (17.28%) trained comprising of 221 (55.53%) females and 177 (44.47%) males. In terms of service and sales workers only males were trained at 2 (0.087%). In terms of craft and related trade workers 581 (25.23%) trained comprising of 156 (26.85%) females and 425 (73.15%) males. In terms of plant and machine operators and assemblers 117 (5.08%) trained comprising of 4 (3.42%) females and 113 (96.58%) males. In terms of elementary occupations 620 (26.92%) trained comprising of 179 (28.87%) females and 441 (71.13%) males (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022b:154).

Table 4.10: Skills development per gender

Occupational category	Gender	Number of employees as of 1 April 2021	Training provided within the reporting period			
			Learnerships	Skills programmes & other short courses	Other forms of training	Total
Legislators, senior officials, and managers	Female	67	0.00	23	0.00	23
	Male	95	0.00	36	0.00	36
Professionals	Female	572	0.00	114	0.00	114
	Male	689	0.00	154	0.00	154
Technicians and associate professionals	Female	752	0.00	101	0.00	101
	Male	764	0.00	156	0.00	156
Clerks	Female	816	0.00	221	0.00	221
	Male	362	0.00	177	0.00	177
Service and sales workers	Female	67	0.00	0	0.00	0
	Male	150	0.00	2	0.00	2
Skilled agriculture and fishery workers	Female	0	0.00	0	0.00	0
	Male	0	0.00	0	0.00	0
Craft and related trades workers	Female	15	0.00	156	0.00	156
	Male	125	0.00	425	0.00	425
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	Female	214	0.00	4	0.00	4
	Male	830	0.00	113	0.00	113
Elementary occupations	Female	291	0.00	179	0.00	179
	Male	682	0.00	441	0.00	441
Gender sub-totals	Female	2794	0.00	798	0.00	798
	Male	3697	0.00	1504	0.00	1504
Total		6491	0.00	2303	0.00	2303

Source: Department of Water and Sanitation (2022b:154)

Table 4.10 depicts that the DWS trained more females in soft skills, while men are trained in physical and technical skilled jobs. The rate at which females were trained in all occupational categories is generally less than their male counterparts with the exception of female clerks, suggesting that males are developed at a much higher rate than females in the physically demanding, operators and authoritative positions. Evidently the gender parity in these occupational categories will remain a concern as males continue to be more skilled in these fields while females continue to be more skilled in non-authoritative positions.

The White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, 1997, promotes career development and advancement opportunities for women (Republic of South Africa, 1997:15). This will reduce the stereotype mentality being one of the workplace barriers (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017:1018) that aligns women with a certain category of jobs, mainly subordinate or supportive positions (Urlick, 2017:53; Nyiransabimana, 2018:14; Adisa, Abdulraheem & Isiaka, 2018:22). Hence it would possibly limit women advancement in authoritative positions (Hlebela

& Mphehle, 2020:1577) as their training interventions would similarly be aligned with such positions and should thus be discouraged through workplace policies. Ramparsad (2019:123-124) claims that continuous skills development is crucial in addressing barriers for hierarchical ascension. As supported by Nyiransabimana (2018:15-16) who suggests that career development programmes should promote women advancement, while Sonntag (2019:21) ascertains that patriarchal norms prevent equality amongst men and women and must be discouraged. However, gender disparity in training and development result in disparity in salary. These authors stress that women should be permitted to explore higher and more challenging jobs (talent management interventions) so that they may advance corporately (Dibobo, Ngonyama-Ndou & Mncwabe, 2022:10). The DPSA suggests that 75% of the public institutions have human resource development strategies in place and that 84% of the institutions have formal capacity building measures to capacitate women, young girls and PWDs (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2021:24).

From the discussion above, the DWS has endeavoured to comply with both the regulation and the provision of the Public Service Act in terms of filling funded vacant posts. Although the department filled most of the vacant funded posts at SMS from 2018 to 2022, it appears that males rather than females filled the majority of these posts. Despite the international partnerships, which allow DWS to capacitate its officials and ensure that, they are well qualified for current and future positions. It is therefore important that attention be given to the development and advancement opportunities of females to ensure that they are as equally developed and advanced as their male counterparts.

4.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Hierarchical advancement

This section focuses on management's commitment on the advancement of women to SMS. Various literature suggests that a majority of women find it difficult to advance hierarchically, and therefore get concentrated in lower and middle management positions more than men. It is apparent from the data presented in this study that women at middle management are not progressing to senior management at a similar pace as their male counterparts. Toni and Moodly (2019:179) attribute this phenomenon to institutional barriers suggesting that an institutional culture can subsequently prohibit one's advancement. Nel and Joel (2019:5) underscore this by claiming that a patriarchal system mainly hinders women's career progression. Sonntag (2019:21) concurs, reiterating that patriarchy exacerbates the gender equality gap as it promotes masculinity and subordination of women. Hlebela and Mpehle (2020:1578-1584) support this notion, as on one hand they claim that public institutions and society are patriarchal due to the inherited colonial norms, which in turn impede the progression of women to leadership positions, while on the other hand they attribute the non-progression to reaching a glass ceiling. Burke

(2019:24) suggests that the glass ceiling is one of the contributing factors to the impediment of women's advancement to management positions.

The table 4.11 depicts the level of promotion for both males and females in terms of the occupational bands, however in relation to the scope of this study, the focus will only be on the first two occupational bands. The table shows that in 2021 a total of 4 (0.4%) employees, which consist of 1 (0.2%) African male and 3 (0.8%) African females were promoted from professionally qualified and experienced specialists and mid-management to SMS. Promotion to the professionally qualified and experienced specialists and middle management occupational band consist of 519 (54%) males which comprise of 406 (78.22%) Africans, 15 (2.89%) Coloureds, 19 (3.66%) Indians and 79 (15.22%) Whites; while 440 (46%) females consist of 380 (86.36%) Africans, 15 (3.40%) Coloureds, 15 (3.40%) Indians and 30 (6.82%) Whites (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2022a:167).

As illustrated in table 4.8 that in 2021 there were 69.38% SMS posts filled by 98 (57.31%) males and 73 (42.69%) females, which suggests that government's imperative of 50% has not been met by the DWS, table 4.11 reveals that this gap between men and women is being bridged however, at a slow pace. The first two occupational bands of table 4.11 portray that only African males and females were promoted from professionally qualified, experienced specialists and middle management to SMS. As much as more females were promoted than males, their promotion rate slightly contributed to the 42.69% women representation by merely an increase of three (4.10%).

Table 4.11: Promotion per occupational band

Occupational band	Male				Female				Total
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	
Senior management	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	4
Professionally qualified and experienced specialists and mid-management	406	15	19	79	380	15	15	30	959
Skilled technical and academically qualified workers, junior management, supervisors, foreman and superintendents	417	19	6	27	628	46	16	77	1236
Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making	493	38	2	9	271	9	3	4	829
Unskilled and defined decision making	173	7	0	0	62	4	0	0	246
Contract (professionally qualified)	4	0	1	7	4	0	1	1	18
Contract (skilled technical)	5	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	9
Total	1499	79	28	123	1351	74	35	112	3301

Source: Department of Water and Sanitation (2022a:167)

This means that more still needs to be done to enable women in the professionally qualified, experienced specialists and middle management occupational category to be capacitated for promotion to SMS. There also seems to be a need for Coloured, Indian and White women to be empowered in this category as their representation is much lower than African women. According to Nyiransabimana (2018:15-16), hierarchical advancement is possible with an effective capacitation, training, and mentorship programme. However, Dibobo, Ngonyama-Ndou and Mncwabe (2022:8) state that men are most preferred for employment opportunities than women despite women's organisational commitment and proven capabilities to optimally perform. Therefore, Vokić, Obadić and Ćoric (2019:81) suggest that women need to make themselves noticeable, through self-promotion so as to be recognised for employment and hierarchical progression to leadership positions. This is affirmed by Turner and Baker (2018:474), who state that leaders must be self-aware of their competencies. Hence leaders, including women, must make means to regularly engage with women at entry level and middle management with the aim of transferring their skills and developing them for promotion opportunities (Lindquist & Marcy, 2016:181).

From the discussion, Coloured, Indian and White women were not promoted to SMS at the same frequency as African women. This implies that the former racial groups would not only experience underrepresentation, but also not achieve 50% representation at SMS. Societal expectation and gender stereotypes have placed men on pedestals to be leaders and women to perform domesticated roles. This has been a setback for young females to pursue career paths that are associated with male figures. Literature suggests that women need to overcome patriarchal norms and gender stereotype practices through self-reflection and self-actualisation of their own capabilities as well as taking advantage of capacity building opportunities to enable them to hierarchically progress.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter analysed the data collected, search engines used to collect data and the prevalent themes identified. The first theme exposed the challenges that women encounter in striving to achieve equality with their male counterparts. The second theme highlighted programmes that women can use to unleash their full potential to empower themselves. The third theme revealed ways in which women can advance and achieve self-actualisation. The next chapter outlines the summary of the key findings, recommendations and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter analysed the data collected and presented the interpretation of the results. It highlighted three themes such as gender equality, women empowerment, and women advancement. This chapter concludes the study and presents the key findings, recommendations, and conclusions of the study. The limitations and areas for further research are also discussed.

5.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to explore whether women advance hierarchically at the same pace as their male counterparts to senior management positions. In addressing the research problem, the following objectives were formulated:

The main research objective is to investigate whether women advance hierarchically at the same pace as their male counterparts to SMS.

The secondary research objectives are as follow:

- To examine whether gender equality enhances women's advancement to SMS.
- To investigate whether women are empowered to assume leadership positions at DWS.
- To explore prohibitions for women's advancement to SMS.

5.3 SYNTHESIS OF CHAPTERS

Various literature was consulted to examine the equality of women with their male counterparts, while investigating women empowerment and exploring the advancement of women to senior management positions. In addressing the research objectives, this study was outlined as follows:

5.3.1 Chapter One

This chapter introduced the topic of this study. It made reference to the nature of the racial and patriarchal colonial government being contributory factors to gender inequality and discrimination against women. It further outlined the barriers for women's progression to senior management positions. Moreover, it discussed the background and motivation for the study, significance of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, preliminary literature review, research design and methodology, ethical clearance, demarcation of the study, as well as the layout of the research chapters.

5.3.2 Chapter Two

This chapter endeavored to answer the research questions through a review of secondary sources of data in relation to gender equality, women empowerment and women advancement. It conceptualised gender equality as a concept that the democratic government seeks to promote as it advocates for equal rights and opportunities to men and women regardless of their economic status; and provided an overview of the barriers that hinder the advancement of women to senior management positions at the same pace as men. This chapter further provided definitions of key concepts and outlined legislative framework that promotes women's advancement, gender equality, and women empowerment.

5.3.3 Chapter Three

This chapter presented the qualitative research methodology. It further detailed the qualitative research approach to address the research questions. A reflection on past academic data, allowed the researcher to gain insight and knowledge of the phenomenon research subject. Literature review was chosen as the research method. The selection behind specific literature was outlined as well as the data collection and analysis process. Data quality and ethical considerations were also detailed.

5.3.4 Chapter Four

This chapter laid out the process of analysing the collected data and interpreted the findings through an objective approach. The search engines used to collect data were detailed and themes were identified to address the study objectives. The first theme focused on the equality of women in relation to their male counterparts. The second theme highlighted programmes that women can use to unleash their full potential to empower themselves. The third theme explored ways in which women can advance and achieve self-actualisation.

5.3.5 Chapter Five

This final chapter outlined a summary of the key findings of the study. The recommendations on the findings, conclusions, limitations of the study and further research were presented.

5.4 FINDINGS

This section presents the main findings in relation to the research objectives presented in section 1.4 of this study.

5.4.1 Objective 1: To examine whether Gender Equality Enhances Women's Advancement to Senior Management Positions

In line with the first research objective of this study, the literature in chapter two reveals that government is making strides in bridging the inequality gap, however at a slow pace. Colonial racial segregation has not only led to gender inequality whereby men predominantly occupy SMS positions than women, but has also led to the slow advancement of women to these positions. It seems that white men in particular continue to enjoy the privileges of an apartheid regime that favoured white supremacy and patriarchy despite being in a democratic era (Dibobo, Ngonyama-Ndou & Mncwabe, 2022:6; Rao, 2015:8). Women are still predominately occupying administrative and supportive roles than men (Urlick, 2017:53; Nyiransabimana, 2018:14), moreover they are subjected to lesser pay than men whereas they would be performing the same job (Bilimoria & Singer, 2019:366).

The literature suggests that a patriarchal system still exists in the public sector, and, women still do not enjoy the same privileges as men regardless of the existing democratic legislative framework that advocates for women inclusion and broad representation. This is mainly attributed to the fact that some of the public institutions have not been able to achieve the employment equity target of 50% women representation at SMS. Furthermore, some of these institutions have also not been able to achieve the target of 2% representation for PWDs, which is another disparity that contributes to the employment equity gap. It is a challenge to determine the composition of women within the 2% target, as government does not clearly define the demographics within this target (Kahn, 2017:86; Nxumalo, 2019:369).

The literature also revealed other factors that attribute to gender inequality and the slow progression of women in the public service which include: 1) the lack of urgency in implementing transformation policies (Bilimoria & Singer, 2019:366), which seek to eliminate discrimination against women including those with disabilities (Meyer, 2014: 1047), and to bring about social and economic equality amongst all genders (Maluka, Diale & Moeti, 2014:1020); 2) lack of gender mainstreaming which seeks to ensure that women are included in policy development processes (Nel & Joel, 2019:5; Ramparsard, 2019:132) and gender mainstreaming not being prioritised in executive structures (Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020:9); 3) non-allocation of budget specifically aimed at addressing the needs of women (Nzewi & Sikhosana, 2020:7,10). As a result, women remain underrepresented in key strategic structures; this leaves decision-making processes with men who may not necessarily develop policies that accommodate the needs of women.

5.4.2 Objective 2: To Investigate whether Women are Empowered to assume Leadership Positions at the DWS

The literature revealed that colonial and patriarchal systems created a barrier for women to access the same opportunities as their male counterparts, thus making it difficult for women to assume leadership positions, particularly SMS, at the same pace as their male counterparts. The literature suggests that women equality at leadership positions can be achieved through women empowerment. Empowerment enables women to work independently and capacitates them to overcome leadership barriers (Isaacs, Strydom & Mbukanma, 2022:56). It promotes women inclusion and equality in leadership (Bilimoria & Singer, 2019:367). It was found that institutions need to establish women support programmes and interventions that address gender sensitive issues and promote organisational change to bring about equality in senior positions (Cleveland, Menendez & Wallace, 2017:389-390; Kahn & Motsoeneng, 2014:105; Nyiransabimana, 2018:12). These support programmes include recognising talent, rewarding excellent performance, delegation of responsibilities to women as a means of capacitating them, creating promoting opportunities for women; coaching and mentorship, supervisor-subordinate support (Isaacs, Strydom & Mbukanma, 2022:71-73; Turner & Baker, 2018:47). The literature endorses paying equal salaries to men and women for performing the same job (Balgobend, 2021:37). There is a need for flexible policies that enables women to achieve a work-life balance; which will empower them to compete with their male counterparts for senior leadership positions. The study also revealed government needs to collaborate with communities to foster financial independence for women and encourage volunteerism for one to gain the necessary skills to acquire jobs and uplift their socio-economic status (Nzewi & Sikhosana, 2020:10).

The study revealed that the DWS applies affirmative action to promote socio-economic development and transformation through preferential treatment for women. This is done through the provision of support for black entrepreneurs, rewarding excellence to women in the water sector, partnering with NSG and higher institutions of learning for capacity building, and provision of a training budget for personal development (Dibobo, Ngonyama-Ndou & Mncwabe, 2022:6). The DWS has also extended the support to women through the provision of psycho-social support to enable them to cope with their home and work-related pressures. The study also revealed that the participation of women in strategic structures is key in promoting equality as it paves a way for women to contribute to policy-making decisions, therefore empowerment must focus on the inclusion of women (Isaacs, Strydom & Mbukanma, 2022:58, 60; Adisa, Abdulraheem & Isiaka, 2018:19-20; Nyiransabimana, 2018:15).

5.4.3 Objective 3: To Explore Prohibitions for Women's Advancement to Senior Management Positions

The literature revealed that a high vacancy rate at SMS level attributes to officials incurring extra workload, which negatively impacts their health, psychological well-being, and work performance due to the increased level of work pressure (Ojo, 2020:177 & Meintjies, 2019:9). Various reasons attribute to women deciding to leave their jobs, such as but not limited to personal reasons related to family responsibilities or personal stressors (Grotto et al., 2017:44), as well as work-related reasons such as work-conflict, toxic relations or sexual harassment amongst others (Johnson, Widnall & Benya, 2018: 172-173).

Lack of retention strategies and interventions to support women have also been found to be barriers to women's advancement. The literature suggests that prejudice, gender discrimination, unequal salaries, sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation, and unaccommodated disability needs, are some of the barriers that women encounter in the workplace (Burke, 2019:21). Moreover, some of the public institutions were found not to have support structures for women to self-develop, be mentored, and essentially be capacitated to self-actualise their potential and capabilities to occupy senior positions. As such they get discouraged to pursue leadership positions in fear of failure (Toni & Moodly, 2019:189).

Women who eventually progress tend to also reach a glass ceiling, which hinders further hierarchical advancement (Burke, 2019:24; Hlebela & Mpehle, 2020:1578-1584). Gender stereotypes tend to discourage females from pursuing leadership positions (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017:1018) in male-dominated careers such as in the field of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, mainly because they associate such careers with males (Vokić, Obadić & Ćorić, 2019:44). The literature suggests that women are underrepresented in these fields, and such fields are dominated by white men (CEDAW, 2014:24; Lutchman & Lesufi, 2020:5; Kahn & Motsoeneng, 2014:1068). This tends to limit women's hierarchical advancement opportunities as they get to compete with multitudes of a cohort of men who outnumber them and may be more skilled. It is for these reasons that government encouraged public institutions to implement affirmative action measures to capacitate previously disadvantaged groups, particularly women, Blacks and PWDs, in an endeavour to redress past injustices and curb further discriminatory practices towards them.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In respect of the above-mentioned findings the following recommendations are suggested:

5.5.1 Objective 1: To examine whether Gender Equality Enhances Women's Advancement to Senior Management Positions

To ensure that gender equality and women representation is achieved in the public sector, it is suggested that government should clearly define the demographics for the employment equity of 2% for PWD so as to determine the composition of women within this 2% target. For example, 0.5% should be earmarked for PWDs at SMS.

To ensure that transformation is promoted in the DWS, it is suggested that the DWS should strengthen compliance with legislative requirements, and that the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming is reflected as priority areas in the department's strategic plan. It is also suggested that a budget be set aside for a training programme on diversity and gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, it is suggested that the DWS should consider establishing an Employment Equity Committee that drives the gender equality agenda of the department. The Committee should be broadly representative of race, gender, PWDs, management representatives, and organised labour representatives. Moreover, the most senior person in human resource management should chair the Committee.

5.5.2 Objective 2: To investigate whether Women are Empowered to Assume Leadership Positions at the DWS

To ensure that women are empowered to assume leadership positions, it is suggested that the DWS should, through the training and development unit, encourage women at middle management to attend capacity building and skills development programmes offered by NSG. It is also suggested that the 'Nyukela' training programme, which affords managers an opportunity to acquire leadership skills be a prerequisite for senior management development programme. It is further suggested that the Project Khaedu' training programme also offered by NSG, which enhances the skills of managers to address service delivery challenges be another prerequisite for SMS.

To ensure that women who assume senior positions are capacitated to retain their position and not be set up for failure, it is suggested that the DWS should, establish an SMS induction tool in line with Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of the DPSA's SMS Handbook; with the aim of capacitating new incumbents of the post on what is expected of SMS, good governance measures and operational challenges. Based on a negative outcome of the quarterly performance assessment, the new incumbent should be able to self-identify their limitations in terms of competency, and attend training interventions required to enable performance improvement. It is also suggested that a mentorship programme focusing on female managers should begin from Assistant Director level to capacitate and prepare these managers for SMS. These candidates should be included

in strategic meetings not only as observers, but also as participants.

An annual programme should be considered whereby all female staff are invited to identify a female role-model amongst SMS to whom she can be paired with for shadowing and capacity building. Women who assume leadership positions should be allowed to perform their duties without any exertion of unwarranted pressure upon them to deliver on their mandate. This requires flexible policy provisions without any punitive actions imposed against them or being judged, victimised and/or harassed by their male counterparts.

5.5.3 Objective 3: To Explore Prohibitions for Women's Advancement to Senior Management Positions

To enable women to advance hierarchically to the next higher position, it is suggested that the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disability in conjunction with South African Human Rights Commission, the Commission for Gender Equality and the DWS should form a partnership, and direct resources to the empowerment of women at community level. These entities should hold an 'Izimbizo' (dialogues) in communities to solicit public participation, and afford women an opportunity to voice out their frustrations and raise challenges they face in breaking through the employment and gender equality barriers. This would allow these entities to have a better picture of the struggles of women and better allocate budget to address the needs of women.

It is suggested that the DWS should ensure that all stakeholders are involved, the school community encompassing of higher learning institutions, to select a cohort of girls who can undergo a grooming process by shadowing women at the DWS who are already at SMS level, which can be arranged during school holidays. Moreover, the public participation process should create a safe space for women to actively make a contribution without any fear of being intimidated or ridiculed by men or patriarchal community leaders. The DWS should ultimately use this process as a platform for women to actively contribute to legislative changes on issues that affect women.

To curb underrepresentation of women in male-dominated academic and professional fields such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics it is suggested that the DWS should, through their Learning Academy, create awareness to learners in Grade 10 regarding the types of careers that are available in the water sector, particularly those aligned with the above-mentioned fields that girls can enroll for later on at a higher learning institution. Providing the awareness early would assist the girls in making the right subject selection choice at a school level, which would aid in their career-paths later on. It is also suggested that through partnership with Department of Basic Education as well as Higher Education, the DWS should set up an

educational programme to sensitise young girls and boys about the importance of diminishing a stereotype mentality and gender segregation, as well as to offer career guidance on career paths for science related professions in the water sector.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Women empowerment is at the top of the government's agenda to afford women the same opportunities to hierarchically advance at the same pace as men, and thereby achieve gender equality at SMS level. However, it has been found that not all public institutions have achieved the government imperatives of 50% women representation at SMS, as women at SMS are still underrepresented than males. Moreover, white males predominantly occupy SMS positions and continue to enjoy the privileges of pre-democratic patriarchal laws. When a senior post becomes vacant at the DWS, women are selected to act on that position however a man would still be appointed to permanently fill the position such as in the case of a Director-General position. The gender equality gap further becomes widened. Resources need to be earmarked for the empowerment of women and review their recruitment and selection policies to promote preferential appointment of the previously disadvantaged group as part of the affirmative action measure. Additionally, the lack of demographic composition of the 2% representation for PWDs makes it a challenge to establish the level of compliance for the representation of women with disabilities at SMS. To address gender and racial bias, patriarchal norms, bias and unfair recruitment processes, glass ceiling, lack of gender mainstreaming, as well as gender stereotypes, the DPSA should encourage government departments to review their policies to embrace transformation and promote gender mainstreaming.

Gender-neutral policies should form the foundation of policy framework because they guard against any forms of discrimination against women and ensure that women, including those with disabilities, are represented in key strategic structures. An enabling environment needs to be created to foster intolerance of any form of abuse or harassment against women, and invest in talent management to enable career progression of women to SMS.

5.7 LIMITATIONS

The study mainly relied on literature as there was no human participation due to the nature of the study being non-empirical.

5.8 FURTHER RESEARCH

While this study mainly focused on investigating the hierarchical advancement of women at the same pace as their male counterparts to SMS at the DWS, through a non-empirical research,

future researchers may analyse the barriers that hinder the public sector in achieving the government's imperative of 50% employment equity for women at SMS. Further research may also analyse the 2% employment equity target against the EAP for PWDs, if it contributes to the ascension of a reasonable amount of women with disabilities to SMS.

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Dear Prof Kahn,

I have received the signed letter.

Please note that the committee has reviewed the completed dissertation, and did not find any ethical concerns. There are suggestions made but not of an ethical nature, therefore I do not think they would be implementable at this stage of the study.

You may send us the certificates of the training once completed. The student may continue to finalise their research.

Kind Regards



Reclaiming Africa's Intellectual Futures

Dr Vaola Sambo (MPhil, DLitt et Phil)


College Research Ethics and Integrity Advisor (Acting)


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