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with the provisional title:

**Women Participation in Leadership Positions in Mtubatuba Local Municipality**

**Faculty of Commerce, Administration, and Law**

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Date of submission: October 2021

**DECLARATION**

I declare that this project, titled “

Women Participation in Leadership Positions in Mtubatuba Local **Municipality**”, is hereby submitted to the University of Zululand in the fulfilment of the requirements for the master’s degree in Public Administration. This work has not been previously submitted for a degree at this institution or any other university. I also declare that this is my own work and that all information involved herein was thus recognised.

.....

.....

Nokuthula Ntuli

Date

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to all my family members, especially my mom.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I hereby extend my most profound gratitude and appreciation to the following people for their invaluable motivation, support and assistance during this study:

- My supervisor, Dr Jili, for her continued academic leadership and mentorship.
- Dr SR Ntuli, my brother and mentor;
- My mother and siblings for their support;
- My editor, Ms Elizabeth Marx, representing Academic and Professional Editing Services (APES), for editing and formatting my report;

I sincerely thank the women in political and administrative leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality for agreeing to participate in this study and immensely contributing information that helped me to reach this study's objectives. I am also very grateful to the MLM for allowing me to conduct this study and further permitting me to publish the results from it. This is a very noble act that highlights the Municipality's concern for gender equality in its political and administrative domains.

## **ABSTRACT**

The study aimed to explore the nature, level and extent of women's participation in administrative and political leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality. It adopted the socialist feminism theory as its framework. The study used qualitative research methods in which data were collected using semi-structured interviews from eight women working in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality's political and administrative structures selected using purposive sampling methods. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse data received from participants. The study found that women's leadership in both the administrative and political realms of the MLM was a struggle that demanded endurance against various harsh forces mainly stemming from culture and patriarchy. The study concluded that the excessive prevalence of gender inequality and male dominance in leadership was worsened by the fact that the few women in management and leadership were not seriously considered in decision-making. This was regardless of the existence of many national and local level policies and strategies aimed at elevating women into leadership with the agenda of attaining gender equality. Political organisations in the Municipality failed to mobilise support for the policies that promote advancement of women. The study recommended strategies to eradicate violence against women in politics and political violence in general, fighting patriarchy and addressing cultural rigidities holding women leaders down and gender equality policy monitoring and evaluation as a way of resolving the identified challenges.

**Keywords:** Gender equality, political leadership, administrative leadership, Mtubatuba Local Municipality

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
APES	Academic and Professional Editing Services
CHH	Child-headed households
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
EE	Employment Equity
HOD	Head of Department
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IGR	Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act
KPA	Key performance areas
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
MLM	Mtubatuba Local Municipality
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
OVC	Orphans and vulnerable children
PGDS	Provincial Growth and Development Plan
PSC	Public Service Commission
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SALS	South African Legislative Sector
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency

UN	United Nations
VAWP	Violence against women in politics
WPLG	White Paper on Local Government

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **BACKGROUND AND STUDY ORIENTATION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The fall of apartheid and the rise of constitutional democracy in South Africa brought with hopes that elements of inequality, including race, ethnicity, social class and gender would fall resulting in the creation of a country that respected equality among its citizens (Thobejane, 2015). Almost 30 years after this fall, some elements of inequality still linger in South African society, among these gender inequalities. While various policies and laws have been implemented to meet the Bill of Rights demands for equality by gender, disturbing realities in which women are still subservient to men and have very restricted access to leadership opportunities still exist. This study explored women managers' participation in the political and administrative realms of the Mtubatuba Local Municipality (MLM), a predominantly rural local government located in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province. The study's focus areas were the levels and nature of women's inclusion in politics and governance, the power dynamics affecting women's leadership and the broad challenges women encounter in securing senior positions within the Mtubatuba Local Municipality (MLM). The study takes women's and women as synonymous terms understanding that the former refers to one's biological sex and the latter to gender.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND**

The section discusses women's leadership trends and statistics in South Africa as a background to the study. It also presents the social and political background of MLM.

#### **1.2.1 Women leadership in politics and public service: South Africa**

In South Africa, women make up 50.74% of the total population (World Bank, 2020). However, this representation of women in the general population does not translate to their proportionate representation in politics or senior positions in local government. Mokoena (2018) provides an overview of the representation of women in the public service in South Africa. The author reveals that in senior positions in the public service, the province where the highest number of women representations in Gauteng where 43.7% of all the senior managers in public service are women. The province with the least women representation of senior-level managers in the public service is the Free

State where only 31.1% of the senior managers are women. At the national level, Mokoena (2018) notes that women senior managers constitute 40.9% of all public sector senior managers. Notably, in KwaZulu-Natal (which ranks third for women representation nationally) at least 40.4% of all senior managers in the public service are women (Mokena 2018).

With regards to women in political leadership roles, Vetten (2016) states that before the arrival of democracy in the Republic of South Africa in the year 1994, only 2.8 % of women were in Parliament. The first democratic elections in South Africa saw this percentage growing to 27.7% (Vetten, 2016). By the year 2016, there were 41% women in the cabinet while women deputy ministers made up 47% of all deputy ministers (South African Government, 2016). Also, there were 41% women in the National Assembly (South Africa Brand, 2016). South Africa now ranks 10<sup>th</sup> globally in terms of women's representation in politics (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019). It ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in 2014 and 7<sup>th</sup> in 2011 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019). The country's ranking has therefore deteriorated over the years. The Inter-parliamentary Union (2019) notes that from the 2014 elections in South Africa, women constituted 42.7% of all parliamentarians in the House of Assembly and 35.2% of all senators in the Senate. The Commission for Gender Equality (2020) also adds that from the 2021 elections, 45% of all representatives in the House of Assembly were women.

It can be said that women's participation in politics experienced a significant boost immediately after the end of apartheid through policy changes and the desire for inclusivity - including gender inclusivity. Notably, changes within regulations in political parties have significantly improved the representation of women in political leadership positions albeit there is evidence of a slow pace of change. The Commission for Gender Equality (2019) reveals that only two political parties in South Africa have gender mainstreaming policies -the African National Congress (ANC) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). The ANC, which is the main political party in South Africa, allocated a 30% quota for women on the party lists, for them to take part in political activities in the country (Gouws, 2008). The Commission of Gender equality (2019) notes that the ANC continues to achieve equal gender representation in politics. The Commission of Gender Equality (2019) specifies the number of women candidates fielded by the ANC in the 2019 national and provincial government elections which reflected gender equality.

In Africa, 22% of cabinet members and 24% of parliamentarians are women (ILO, 2015). As posited by Impakter (2020), the universal gender bias against women's leadership, rooted in socio-cultural and religious values, persists in Africa. The study notes that while Rwanda has the highest number of women parliamentary representatives (61.3%) and South Africa has the largest number of women ministers (44.7%), this does not necessarily imply that they are given the chance to influence decision-making processes. In other words, women are excluded from affecting the real sense of policy content and direction. The Impakter (2020) report also shows that when the number of women's cabinet appointments is compared to the percentage of budget they manage, the appointed women into cabinet positions "manage a relatively low proportion (18.9%) of budgets". It was concluded that even while there appears to be an increase in the number of women in African politics, it is merely "symbolic and at worst, redundant".

### **1.2.2 The socio-political contextual background: MLM**

MLM is a category B local municipality that falls under the Umkhanyakude District Municipality (Mtubatuba Local Municipality 2021). The Municipality makes up 29% of the Umkhanyakude District Municipality and 25 of the total population in KwaZulu-Natal (MLM, 2021). MLM is regarded as the most rural municipality of Kwa-Zulu-Natal (Ezeuduyi & Dlomo 2020). Ezeuduyi & Dlomo (2020) also note that the main town in the Municipality is St Lucia which serves as the service centre for the surrounding rural areas. The authors also reveal that the Municipality has two main tourist attractions the iSimangaliso Wetland Park and the Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park. Ezeuduyi & Dlomo (2020) also highlight that the iSimangaliso Wetland Park is a world heritage site that spans 200km across the whole coastline. The Municipality is in the northeastern part of KwaZulu-Natal. On its southern end is the Mfolozi River and in the north, it borders the Big Five False Bay Municipality. It borders the Indian Ocean on its eastern side (MLM, 2021).

The Municipality has a population of 202 176 (Mtubatuba local Municipality, 2021). The Mtubatuba Municipality (2021) further reveals that 98% of the population its population are Black Africans. The dominant language spoken in MLM is IsiZulu, which is spoken by 92% of the population (MLM, 2021). Most of the population are women who make up 54% of the population whilst at the national level, 50.7% of the population

are women. The Mtubatuba Local Municipality (2021) also reveals that the majority (70%) of its people are in formal employment whilst 30% are informally employed.

The Municipality is divided into twenty-three wards (Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2021). In the 2021 local government elections, MLM was declared a hung municipality with a collation having to be reached (Municipalities of South Africa, 2021). The MLM has been associated with various periods of political violence mostly in response to the failure of coalition parties to reach common resolutions on spending and appointments among other things (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2015). Like the 2016 local government elections, the 2021 elections also resulted in a hung council governed through coalitions (Municipalities of South Africa, 2021: Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2021).

The Inkatha Freedom Party, (IFP) won 9 of the council seats, the African National Congress (ANC) 6, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) 4, the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), the African Independent Congress (AIC) 1, the Democratic Alliance (DA) the National Forum Party (NFP), United Democratic Movement (UDM) and an independent winning a set each (Municipalities of South Africa, 2021). Of the 23 ward councillors, 86.96% were male and the remaining 13.04% were women (Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2021). Sadly, this low representation of women at the ward level is a trend in the KwaZulu-Natal Province with the Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma Municipality, named after a woman political icon having no single woman as award councillor (Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2021). This low representation occurs in a background where political parties that contested the 2021 local government elections spoke or presented manifestos that mentioned gender equality as part of their agenda. The City of Johannesburg, as the largest municipality in the country, had 65.93% male ward councillors and 34.07% women ward councillors whilst eThekweni had 79.28% male and 20.72% women ward councillors (Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2021). Thus, the Mtubatuba Municipality had a very low representation of women's ward councillors (MLM, 2021) compared to more urban and larger municipalities. At the same time, the largest municipalities in South Africa and the KwaZulu-Natal Province respectively also did not exhibit a 50:50 distribution of ward councillors by gender (Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2021).

At the launch of its local government manifesto, the IFP, which holds most council seats in MLM reiterated that the “party that stands up for women” further stating that “In fact, the majority of IFP members are women, because the IFP provides a genuine platform for empowerment” (IFP 2021:1). The ANC manifesto stated: “We must do more to achieve parity in gender representation, and appreciation of the role women play in society and communities” (ANC, 2021:26) while the EFF stated that “The EFF municipalities will strive to realise...real women empowerment in society, within the family and at the workplace” (EFF, 2021:44-45).

The above-highlighted gender inequalities replicate themselves in the Municipality’s executive administrative structures. The MLM’s deputy mayor, speaker are the highest profiled women in its political-administrative structures (MLM, 2021). One woman also holds a general manager position, albeit in an acting capacity being the highest-ranking women administrator (Municipalities of South Africa, 2021). Considering the prevalence of cadre deployment in South Africa, this is not surprising as male-dominated political structures have a major say on who leads local government administrations (Chamisa & Shava, 2018). Thus, the irony of the above inequalities in political leadership is occurring in an environment where the main political parties in MLM have committed to the importance of gender equality in political representation and other spheres of life.

### **1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW**

A literature review is an academic exercise aimed towards synthesising what other scholars established on a related topic (Creswell, 2018). It seeks to establish convergences and divergences in views and findings relating to the common phenomenon (De Vos et al., 2011). This preliminary literature review starts with defining the study’s key concepts and terms.

#### **1.3.1 The concept of leadership**

Leadership is the process of exerting influence and attaining control over an individual or group (Howard & Ulferts, 2017). It relates to one’s ability to direct the actions of others towards the attainment of specified goals (Shilangu, 2019). In politics, leadership had varying meanings that at the worst include exerting influence over followers regardless of their will. In the administrative and management disciplines, leadership definitions however focus more on goal-achievement through the

participation of followers (Akanji, et al., 2020). Aykut, Apinya, Billy, Crystal, Gilbert, and Ritina (2008) describe leadership as a system where an individual guides a group of people to function effectively towards achieving a common goal in a provided condition.

Leadership can be classified by domain into administrative and political leadership. Administrative leadership relates to exerting control and influence over public sector operations focusing on how the tactical operations of government are run (Gumede, 2015). They are viewed as bureaucrats focusing on transforming government policies into actions (Yyas-Doorgapersad, 2011). In government, administrative leaders are generally employed in positions albeit appointments are not uncommon (Chamisa & Shava, 2018). In South Africa, cadre deployment is a term that is associated with how the political leadership system appoints its loyal into administrative leadership. It blurs the distinction between political and administrative leaders as administrators eventually become associated with political parties (Chamisa & Shava, 2018). Political leaders on the other hand are not considered government employees. They influence the development of laws and policies upon which governments work (Chamisa & Shava, 2018). In modern public administration paradigms, there is an emphasis on maintaining a clear separation between administrative and political leadership within jurisdictions, including in local government (Yyas-Doorgapersad, 2011; Basheka, 2019). In a local government setting like the MLM, the most influential political leaders would be the mayors and ward councillors who are elected to office. Key administrative leaders would include the municipal manager and their team of tactical and executive managers in human resources, finance, information and communication technology units, among others (Vilakazi & Adetiba, 2020). Both administrative and political leaders strongly determine how a government works with the conflict between them being described as a common characteristic (Vilakazi & Adetiba, 2020).

Women's leadership participation in the public realm refers to the extent to which they exert influence over how government actions affect the citizenry. Thus, women's leadership participation outside the private sector is also looked at from administrative versus political leadership engagement. Women can lead in both the administrative and political spheres of the public sector. It is the reality of this participation that is a major issue of contention in modern-day politics.

### **1.3.2 Women's political leadership at the local government level**

Although women constitute about half of the world population, the women gender is still underrepresented in global political leadership positions. According to Atchison and Ian (2016), the 2015 World Economic Forum's international (gender divergence) index reveals a gender inequity in well-being and academic achievements of males and women; only 21% of the divergence in political leadership was bridged. This submission buttresses the reality that the male gender dominates the political arena globally. According to Kellogg et al. (2017); Swam and Liew (2017), nations usually ensure that not over 50% of women are represented in their national congresses. Political parties disregard or discard gender equality in strategic leadership positions. Democracy through political party systems enables women to stand for their communities (Akiv & Bon-Homy, 2017). However, it is observed that, mostly, political positions and leadership roles globally are dominated by the male gender, excluding women from such political leadership roles, particularly at the grassroots level (Holma, 2017).

### **1.3.3 Women administrative leadership at the local government level**

Globally, leadership at the local government public administration level is also described as gender skewed with males holding most of the senior leadership positions. This reality is observable in South Africa, Africa and most parts of the world. According to Sheet-Cushman (2017), in some governmental organisations, women's recruitment has increased but mostly in low-level positions. The number of women in senior management positions is low as most women are more inclined towards administration in organisations (Bowles and McGinn, 2005; Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani, 1995). Most establishments related to production, construction, and monetary administrations are male-dominated (Oakley, 2000). Even when women are given management positions, they are usually with less responsibility or in not too substantive positions (Bowles and McGinn, 2005).

Ryan *et al* (2011) discussed the male stereotype, while Maseko's (2013) study established that women are considered for senior leadership jobs with associated conditions. Ryan and Haslam (2005) established that women are usually made to lead in falling flat agencies, while men are chosen as board members of succeeding agencies. Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, and Bongiorno (2011); Ryan, Haslam, and Kulich (2010) revealed that when businesses do well, the tendency is to have a think-pioneer

think-male predisposition while failing enterprises attract an assume-emergency suppose-women leadership. In support of this submission, Bruckmüller and Branscombe (2010) opined that women are willing to attain leadership only when there is an emergency.

While feminism and general global concerns for equality have exerted notable influence in increasing women leadership in politics, public administration and the private sector, gender power dynamics at play continue to disempower and look down upon some women leaders. There are views that women leaders' power and authority is undermined by patriarchy and tokenism. According to Matoane (2015:110), male-dominated supremacy in strategic positions is present when women are presented with top posts in municipalities; they may not have the required authority to exercise complete control. This has created an additional concern in the emerging gender, power and authority relationships in political systems, public and private entities. Some scholars have itemised such concerns as gendered power dynamics (Guo, 2014).

#### **1.3.4 The role of patriarchy in gendered power dynamics**

Patriarchy, as a function of cultural practice that views women as inferior to men, is viewed as the most dominant factor in suppressed women's leadership in both politics and administration. (Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb, 2013). Patriarchy has affected women's historical development resulting in more women being underqualified for current leadership positions than men. While trends have shown significant increases in the proportions of educated women, gender stereotypes, again associated with patriarchal thinking still pervade societies to the disadvantage of women (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). Gipson et al. (2017) identified dominant factors against women's inclusion as leaders in government establishments. These elements include discrimination, gender biases, and stereotyping. In South Africa, the male-superior paradigm is apparent, attributable to various philosophies associated with the masculine stereotype. Women are appointed as senior officers with the primary motive of failing and showing themselves to be incompetent, compared to the male gender. Patriarchy has also created negative belief systems among women themselves. Centuries of oppression have cowed women from taking leadership positions believing that they would not make good leaders. All these factors have interacted to create an environment where women's

leadership is a questioned phenomenon and where male leadership is viewed as an unquestioned norm.

#### **1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The research problem is the need for new understandings on the perpetuation of gender inequality as a problem in the MLM, 26 years post-apartheid. Although women's participation in leadership in South African municipalities is improving but still not bridging the gender divergence. In MLM, 54% of the population is women and there are also more women voters than males (Municipalities South Africa, 2021). The problem at hand is the need to understand how only 13.04% (Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2021) are women and how less than 30% of administrative leaders in the council are women. Such a problem is a severe threat to social justice and a violation of women's rights. A research gap exists on the community-level dynamics that have created such an unbalanced status quo in MLM while other local municipalities, especially urban ones have larger women representations. The literature gap is further broadened by the fact that such inequalities occur in the presence of a myriad of policies that have already accepted that patriarchy is among the core causes of women's underrepresentation in government and politics. At the same time, political parties have committed to gender equality as a priority albeit this does not reflect in local government. There is a profound divergence that has not been covered coherently in this phenomenon.

#### **1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The study's primary aim was to understand the quality and levels of women's participation in leadership positions in Mtubatuba Local Municipality and the complexities and dynamics affecting this.

##### **1.5.1 Study objectives**

The study's objectives were as follows:

- i. To explore the levels and nature of women inclusion in political and governance leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality
- ii. To explore the power dynamics affecting gender equality in leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality

- iii. To explore challenges women, encounter in securing senior positions within the Mtubatuba Local Municipality

### **1.5.2 Research questions**

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- i. What is the level and nature of women's inclusion in political and governance leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality?
- ii. What are the power dynamics affecting gender equality in leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality?
- iii. What are the challenges that women encounter in securing senior positions within the Mtubatuba Local Municipality?

## **1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

This study used the feminism theory to conceptualise the principles of advocacy for women's rights and representation. The feminist theory justifies and supports the fundamental standard of women's conduct and portrays every gender as having to be effectual, significant, and unique (Armstrong, 2020). The social feminist theory or social feminism is rooted in the Marxist thought that gender inequality and other forms of inequalities are part of a network linked to oppressive capitalist paradigms (Napikoski, 2021). The theory acknowledges the failures of liberal feminist theories to resolve the deeply entrenched challenges of patriarchy arguing that this was because feminists were attempting to dismantle gender inequality while ignoring systems that perpetuated it. Socialist feminism was considered appropriate for this study because of its focus on capitalist, cultural, political and economic systems' role in gender inequality. This study, focusing on a rural Municipality, was inspired by the urban-rural divide aspect of gender inequality also discussed under the theory.

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study contributes to the literature on women's leadership trends in local government by synthesising relevant literature. It intended to emphasise the challenges women encounter when attempting to secure and occupy political and administrative leadership positions in the Municipality. The research aimed to immensely contribute towards the debate for establishing additional policies through challenging local governments' adherence to existing gender equality policies. These

policies will strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of women empowerment processes and gender equity policies in the local government fraternity.

The study offers recommendations to the political parties on the importance of women representatives in senior political positions in the Municipality councils. Challenges were formulated for further investigation. Further studies should explore factors that perpetuate the problem of inadequate women representatives in local government participation and functions. This research also provides SALGA (South African Local Government Association) with women's participation in local government leadership positions. The study assists municipalities in establishing a baseline for future interventions and monitoring.

The research will be published online through the University of Zululand repository. A hard copy of the dissertation will be available in the University Library collection. A series of journal articles from the study to be published in collaboration with other researchers in public administration will also follow. This will ensure that the study's findings make an impact in policies, decisions, strategies and programmes relating to women's participation in political and administrative leadership in municipalities.

## **1.8 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY**

The motivation for this study came from the researcher's current exposure to gender dynamics in public administration. The interest in women's participation in local leadership development and local government has also motivated the researcher to explore this phenomenon. Now in 2022 after 28 years of democracy, it is vital to obtain the perceptions of women in local government leadership positions, to contribute towards policy development and improvement of current gender diversity management policies in the local government fraternity.

## **1.9 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

This study contributed to the existing literature on women's leadership role trends in local government through a synthesis of relevant literature. Secondly, it highlighted the current challenges women face when attempting to secure and occupy political and administrative leadership roles in the Municipality. The research aimed to immensely contribute towards the establishment of further policies that will strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of women empowerment processes and gender equity

policies in the local government fraternity. Its exploration of gender and leadership also provided rich insights that highlight the unique dynamics that women leaders in rural set-ups face. The study also offered practical recommendations to the political parties on the importance of women representatives in senior political positions in the Municipality councils. Its major contribution to the body knowledge is mostly on gendered power dynamics within rural politico-administrative systems particularly the views that even when women are included in leadership positions, gender-power struggles affect how they lead. Thus, it unveiled two struggles, the first being getting into leadership and the second being how to lead in a gendered rural local government setting ruled by culture and patriarchy.

### **1.10 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

In research, delimitation refers to setting the conceptual and geographical boundaries of the study area (Gray, 2014). This study applied a spatial delimitation choice. This study was solely on the Mtubatuba Local Municipality albeit it highlighted the problem of interest from perspectives beyond the MLM using an array of literature sources.

### **1.11 STUDY STRUCTURE**

The report produced for this study comprises the following five chapters:

#### **Chapter 1: Background and Study Orientation**

This chapter provides the introductory part of the study, presenting the research background, study motivation and study's significance. It also discusses the research problem, research objectives and research questions and summarily presents a preliminary literature review.

#### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The second chapter discusses the other scholars' findings on similar subjects and the divergences and convergences in these findings. This chapter also presents the study's theoretical framework.

#### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

Chapter 3 presents the study methodology. The research design is described, remarking the research paradigm that the study intended to adopt, the research

approach, target population, sample design, instrument of data collection, and data analysis to be implemented in the study.

#### **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results**

Chapter 4 focuses on the data presentation, interpretation of results, and data analysis. This process concerns converting raw data into meaningful findings, articulating the fundamentals of the study.

#### **Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion and Recommendations**

Chapter 5 discusses the research findings, conclusion, and study recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reviews the literature on women's leadership and participation in government and politics. It also presents the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. Ridely (2012) describes literature review as a process in which researchers select relevant documents from both published and unpublished sources that contain relevant information about the subject under investigation. A literature review is an academic exercise that aims to synthesise what other scholars have written on a related topic (Creswell, 2018); to determine the gaps to be filled by further studies (de Vos et al., 2011). Polit and Beck (2008) argue that a literature review is a salient summary of the existing body of knowledge that is related to a topic under investigation, which allows for the proper placement of research objectives and a statement of the problem in academic research. It can be said that a literature review is a comprehensive review of previous works to provide relevant and accurate information that will motivate the researcher to focus on research problems based on the relevant information obtained from the various reviewed sources. Brink, Walt, and Rensburg (2013) identify various purposes of literature in academic research as:

- It allows the researcher to conduct critical evaluation and appraisal of research works on the subject matter under investigation.
- It provides the opportunity to better understand the research problem and research questions.
- It provides clues on how to write the research methodology and instruments.

The chapter starts by defining leadership as a concept before moving on to the power dynamics affecting women's participation in leadership.

#### **2.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

This section presents definitions of the study's most important terms and concepts. These include leadership, gender equality and power dynamics. It also highlights general factors associated with women's leadership as a concept.

### **2.2.1 Definition of leadership**

Aykut, Apinya, Billy, Crystal, Gilbert, and Ritina (2008) describe leadership as a system in which a group of people are guided by an individual for the achievement of a common goal. Maxwell (2011) defines a leader as a person that influences and encourages a group of people to work to realise set goals. In other words, a leader can achieve and realise a defined vision. Karki and Gurung (2012) add that a successful leader is a person that can motivate and enlist others to achieve their goals. Hence, the hallmark of leadership is to have the necessary capacity to influence others towards accomplishing goals. Bhasin (2011) argues that leadership is the ability of a superior to influence the behaviour of subordinates or groups and to persuade them to follow a course of action. The submission of Aykut et al. (2008) implies that leadership involves motivating and mobilizing people and resources to achieve targeted goals and objectives. Leadership requires a set of skills that can be learned and nurtured (Bhasin, 2011).

### **2.2.2 The concepts of gender inequality and equality**

South Africa as a rainbow nation or multicultural and diverse country has been through tremendous changes in attempts to ensure gender equality. Subsequently, for women in leadership positions at the local government level, gender inequality in leadership remains a major challenge (Kahn & Lauw, 2014).

Fennell and Arnot (2011) assert that gender equality is a “state of affirming women differences from men and with an emphasis in differences from men and with an emphasis on the significance of recognizing the distinct approaches or nature in talking, conceptualizing and interacting social constructs. These scholars propound the view that gender equality is rooted in the basis that women and men are unique but their recognition of being separate should be equally considered. Thus, gender equality means equal, fair and just treatment between women and men in the workplace (Kuhn & Lauw, 2014). The fundamental attribute for gender equality in the public sector is seen through affording women similar opportunities as men in leadership, without any form of gender stereotyping or discrimination (UNEGE, 2007). Gender equality is seen by different scholars as a point of departure for ensuring that there is redress and empowerment for women.

Research conducted by Haatja, Leinoner and Mustakallio (2011) established that “gender equality means equal obligations, rights and possibilities for men and women in leadership positions. There has been a consensus in the literature that gender equality is removing the restrictions and different concepts that encourages gender stereotyping, which restrict women in terms of participating in strategic positions. This implies that women must be given equal opportunities and resources. However, Kuhn and Lauw (2014:101) acknowledge that gender equality does not mean women and men are biologically the same but the need to ensure that there is no discrimination against women based on their gender. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) states that gender equality is the ability to access rights fully, without prejudice based on sexual orientation that women and men have equal freedom and privilege based on the constitutional rights (Republic of South Africa, 2013).

Public administration legislation and literature concurs that gender equality in the public sector is concerned with ensuring respect, dignity and equal access to the development opportunities by both women and men allowing them chances to reach their full potential (Kahn & Lauw, 2014). For instance, Section 107 and 111 of the Constitution of Republic South Africa (1996) states that good human resources and equal development opportunities of human potential should take place in a transformed human resource culture reflecting affirmative action principles (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

### **2.2.3 Gender equality and transformation**

The aspect of gender equality in leadership is of interest to Chapter 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). Section 9 (3) prohibits indirect and direct unfair discrimination based on colour, race, language, religion and gender. This implies that in the Republic of South Africa no institution or individual can prohibit women from occupying leadership, senior or management positions in the public sector (Kuhn & Lauw, 2011).

Women’s equal rights to access leadership positions in the public sector are also supposed to be championed by the Public Service Commission (PSC) as a social and state in which women have full access without exclusion nor discrimination on basis of their gender (Republic of South Africa, 1996). According to Kuhn and Naidoo (2011) for institutional transformation to take place, gender discrimination and stereotyping

should be discouraged through the monitoring and evaluation of policies that ensure gender equality in the public sector institutions. This challenges the change in the philosophy, values and culture of every institution, with a common understanding of employees for the policies and measures on how to ensure that transformation takes place. Women and men must be treated equally at the workplace, not adhering to the socio-economic values, the predominant stats that women must be submissive to men (Kahn & Lauw, 2014).

In the context of the study, the municipalities must ensure that gender equality policies are implemented to remove cultural dysfunctionality which has negative efforts on the transformation of the institutions. It is therefore through transformation-focused leadership that municipalities can successfully implement gender-inclusive practices to ensure that women have access to leadership positions. The institutional culture of the municipalities should be enabled to allow employees to portray a positive vision for the future.

Research conducted by Kahn and Lauw (2014) established that in the South African public sector more must be done to promote gender equality. However, the goal of ensuring that there is at least a 50/50 representation of women and men in leadership roles has not been achieved. The process of transformation has been slower than anticipated (Kuhn & Lauw, 2014). A study conducted by Dlanjwa (2018) found that even though municipalities adopt gender equality strategies, the challenge is the measures for collaboration and coordination in the promotion of gender equality across political and administrative structures. Gender equality monitoring and evaluation challenges are also commonplace at various government levels (Opstrips & Villdelse, 2015) including the local government level. Dlanjwa (2018) conclude that South African municipalities practice an organizational culture that limits efforts of gender equality with a low level of lobbying for the implementation of senior management opportunities for women. These new findings concur with Kuhn and Lauw's (2014) arguments that gender equality in local municipalities has been successfully implemented at the operational and technical levels while a gap exists in leadership positions for women both in political and administrative realms. At the same time, the Commission for Gender Equality. 2020 argues that gender inequality in South Africa was not only a leadership level problem but a challenge affecting all seniority levels

including the lowest levels. Thus, there are also debates relating to whether gender inequality is more prevalent at higher or lower organisational structure levels.

#### **2.2.4 Power dynamics and gender as a concept**

Power dynamics refers to the relationships and interactions between two or more entities concerning the determination of getting things done (Bates, Parker & Ogden, 2018). It relates to the exercise of influence and control over entities (Guo, 2014). These entities could be people, resources, organisations, jurisdiction and so on. Power dynamics also relates to the types and forms of power in a setting including formal and informal power (Bates, Parker & Ogden, 2018). While formal power is that which one earns by virtue of holding an entitling role or position, informal power is acquired via elements like “unearned privilege, or because they have strong relationships with decision-makers and peers” (Bates, Parker & Ogden, 2018:1). According to Guo (2014), the concept of power dynamics comes with another concept of power distance. This relates to the degree that parties wielding the least powers accept that power is distributed (Guo, 2014). Thus, if the least powerful groups in power relations believe that there is too much an unfair concentration of power in some classes, a large power distance is hinted at. Such power distances can hinder the participation of low-powered groups in development as a result, among other things, resentment of unfair power balances (Guo, 2014). As Guo states, in high power distance societies, people focus on the importance of power and social structure in comparison to low power distance societies where social cohesion is more important than social strata (Guo, 2014).

The above conceptualisations of power dynamics challenge interest in understanding the nature of gendered power dynamics – including their formality or informality and the power distances involved. Gendered power dynamics relate to the power-related interactions between persons and or groups of different genders (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). Gender power dynamics also relate to whether one or more of the genders would consider giving or relinquishing some power to another (United Nations, 2018). The UN (2018:1) opines that in current gendered power dynamics, “Power is normally never given, power normally needs to be taken”. This view is followed by comments that all concerned stakeholders need to work towards the transfer of power from male-dominated echelons to underpowered women.

### **2.2.5 Factors affecting women participation in leadership**

Various factors affect women's participation in leadership. For instance, Nidiffer, (2010) argues that gender bias which is deeply embedded in African cultures, economics, political and social institutions are reasons why many countries in Africa have low women representation in governance. This implies many African societies and organisations need to address these causes of imbalance ( International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance , 2021). Nidiffer (2010) further identifies the gender stereotypes, inadequate childcare, inflexible working hours, hierarchical structures, and lack of appropriate training and mentoring, and notes that the cultural beliefs of many African countries prevent women from being placed on the same leadership level with men (Nidiffer, 2010). That is, many societies in Africa believe that women should be secondary to men in every facet of life.

Yip, Turnor, Black, Soto Torres and Reichard (2020) also reveal that women taking up leadership positions also face the challenge of anxiety of facing a new identity as a leader. The authors describe the associated transitional separation that is related to new leadership roles. In addition, Yip et al., (2020) further note that coaching of new women leaders should take cognisance of this challenge to ensure women adapt to leadership positions. Smith, Watkins, Ladge and Carlton (2019) also reiterate the issue of alienation with associated leadership positions. Smith et al., (2019) reveal that black women in leadership positions are often overlooked and or disregarded because they do not conform to the stereotypical identity of a leader. The authors describe this challenge as that of an "*outsider within*". Smith et al., (2019) in their study on black women in executive positions note that this overlooking of black women in leadership positions results in fellow employees in the organisations adopting two attitudes towards women leaders: either a hostile attitude or undue passiveness towards the new leader. The authors also reveal that as a result, women in such leadership positions adopt several coping strategies in an attempt to ensure their visibility among colleagues.

Kabir (2020) also explains the challenges that women go through even after attaining leadership positions in government. The author notes that women who attain leadership positions face challenges of less support from subordinates, are more critically evaluated than male counterparts and are excluded from important networks. The author asserts that as a result, they exert less authority in their positions. Hockett

(2021) concurs with Kabir (2020) and notes that women leaders in Kenya despite them being viewed as successful by their counterparts face a myriad of challenges in asserting their leadership roles mainly due to stereotypes and because of male dominance. In addition, Hockett (2021) notes that women in leadership positions fail to exert their authority because of long-standing cultural role expectations.

The issue of women in leadership positions facing stereotypes is further reiterated by Ali and Rasheed (2021). The authors highlight that women in leadership positions face a myriad of problems, especially stereotyping. In addition, Ali and Rasheed (2021) reveal that women in leadership positions have an additional challenge of balancing familial roles with their leadership roles. Ali and Rasheed (2021) also reveal that women in leadership roles also have a challenge that most networks in leadership positions are male-dominated which results in them not having support to perform their functions. Hussein and Hussein (2021) justify Ali and Rasheed (2021) by also explaining that women in leadership positions lack political support. Hussein and Hussein (2021) note that the lack of political support illustrates a lack of social support for women leaders. The above findings reiterate the challenges faced by women who would have already attained leadership status. The next section further assesses the power dynamics in male-women leadership from a global and regional perspective.

### **2.3 GLOBAL LEVEL PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING GENDERED POWER DYNAMICS**

As gender inequality is seen as a global challenge, it has attracted global research and scholarship with various scholars and institutions presenting trends and effects of skewed gendered power dynamics. Among them, Radu, Deaconu and Frăsineanu (2017) note that organisations, societies and institutions in this 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot function effectively without equal participation in leadership activities. This implies the need for balanced gender dynamics. In the present era, countries that practice inclusive leadership in which everybody is involved in effective decision-making achieve better results (Radu, Deaconu & Frăsineanu, 2017). Stable political systems can be built when there is inclusive participation that will bring about collaborations, connections, and effective communication (UN Women, 2018).

From a global perspective, the National Democratic Institute report (2018), notes there that there has been an increase in the number of women in leadership positions in

developed countries, but many countries of the world have not fully tapped women's leadership skills. There has been an increase in the rate of women representation in national parliaments globally from 11.8% in 1998 to 17.8% in the year 2008, and then to 23.5% in the year 2018 (National Democratic Institute, 2018). In the United States of America (USA), women consist of 6.2% of the congress and 19.4% of parliamentarians, 12% of governors and 17% of the mayors are women in the United States (National Democratic Institute, 2018). In the United Kingdom (UK) 30.8% of local councillors are women (The White House Project, 2017). The above figures also indicate a rise in women's participation in developed countries. It is noteworthy that the report revealed that in sub-Saharan Africa, women's involvement in parliaments rose from 11 to 23.6% in the year 2018, while in the Arab State region, it increased from 3.1% to 17.5% during the same period (National Democratic Institute, 2018). Nonetheless, the developments made in increasing women's representation in politics and senior positions in government can be attributed to global declarations and initiatives on women empowerment.

Picking the USA as an example of a country with advanced gender equality in leadership and opportunities, research indicates that many organisations that are led by women are doing well. In the USA, women make up about 50.8% of the total population (The White House Project Report, 2017). They make an estimated 60% of university undergraduates, and 60% of master's degree holders (The White House Project Report, 2017). In the fields of law, medical practices and management, women are doing well compared to men (Morley, 2018). The White House Project Report (2017) reveals that women account for 47% of the United States (US) labour force and 49% of that country's college-educated workforce. In addition, women in the US account for 52% of professional and middle- management levels employees. Thus, in that country, there is an increasing general sense of gender equality (The White House Project Report, 2017).

At the same time, some reports present the global gender equality in leadership situations as highly depressed. Despite the commitments of many countries to promote gender-based equality, particularly in a leadership position and in formal structures of representation and decision-making, women continue to be relegated and under-represented in various leadership positions (United Nations Women, 2018). Although women constitute almost half of the world population, the women gender is

inadequately represented in global political leadership positions. According to Atchison and Ian (2016), it was publicised that there is a gender inequity in the well-being and academic achievements of men and women, with only 21 per cent of the gap in political leadership bridged. Bauer, Gretchen, and Manon (2017) submit that in 1955, only 3 per cent of the global parliament population were women and that by 1995, the figure had only increased to 11.6 per cent and later to 21.8 per cent in 2016. This highlights a significantly slower rate of transformation towards gender equality in leadership. Such inequalities continue to motivate global, continental and regional efforts and attempts to ensure a gender-equal universe.

### **2.3.1 Women, power and leadership dynamics in Africa**

Women in leadership positions have been a major issue in various corporate management, particularly in developing countries (Ahmed and Uddin, 2016). Extant literature indicates that in many developing countries, there is still a wide gap between gender inequalities regarding senior management and executive positions. In this case, women remain a minority in such positions as executive officers, chief financial officers, chief operations officers, directors, and chief executive directors (Sandberg, 2013). Poltera (2019) submits that the need to reposition women in leadership positions, particularly in African contexts has led to the introduction of various initiatives by the United Nations (UN), which include the establishment of the United Nations (UN) African Women Leaders Network, African Women in Science and Engineering, Leading Women of Africa, 2019 Forbes Women Africa Leading Women Summit, the African and European Union's recent "Women in Power" event (2018), the associated Declaration and Africa's Agenda 2063, the African Union's Women's Decade, Women and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the UN's Commission on the Status of Women. The essence of all these initiatives is to recognise the need to redress the issues of discrimination and gender inequity and oppression of women also, as power imbalances among women in African countries.

ILO (2015) gave the picture of women in leadership positions in some selected countries as 13.3% in Norway, 11.1% in Turkey, 59.3% in Jamaica, 42.7% in the USA, and 34.2% in the UK (ILO,2015). However, the situation is not similar in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Only 5% of women in Nigeria were reported to be in leadership followed by 4% in Ghana, and 3% in Sudan. In addition, McKinsey Women Matter (2016) reports that Africa as of 2016, only had 5% of women as chief executive

officers (CEOs) in major companies. This implies that even though African women are integral to the growth and development of the continent, they do not get the necessary position or credit they deserve for their contribution to the social and economic development of the continent.

An ILO (2020) report indicates that women influence over 80% of global consumption of goods and services and that having more women in leadership positions in Africa will promote effective decision-making and the financial status of organisations. Extant literature indicates that the involvement of women in politics in Africa will improve the political process in the continent. ILO (2020) maintains that the involvement of women in politics in Africa will encourage women in Africa to work across party lines to promote the issues of gender equality and reduce or eliminate gender-based violence, which is associated with the political environment in Africa. Andaleeb and Wolford (2004) note that women in the political arena in Africa impact their communities in different ways, such as making the school and workplace more compatible for girls and women. In addition, women in leadership positions in Africa serve as mentors and role models for young women who want to build their careers in the various professions they engage in (ILO, 2020).

ILO (2015) argues that women's participation in the labour force and economic growth are positively related to the career progress of women in managerial positions in various establishments in Africa. According to an enterprise survey in Bangladesh, which is a developing country in South Asia, it was revealed that out of 1442 firms in the country, only 4.8% of total firms have a women top manager and 1.7% of women are the owner of companies (The World Bank, 2013). This implies that the country has lower standards as related to the women in the managerial or leadership positions in various organisations in the country.

In Nigeria, women constitute about 50% of the Nigerian population, but it is argued they are not inadequately represented in the leadership positions in the country (Fapounda, 2014). In Nigeria, there is gross inequality between males and women, especially in both political representation and economic managerial positions in the country (Fapounda, 2014). She goes further to say that in Nigeria, the male gender dominates the political, government and economic spheres, where they have sole authority over resources, despite the fact the women in the country constitute almost

half of the population (Fapounda, 2014). This implies that Nigeria has not yet aligned with the United Nation's target of 30% women representation in power allocation. The failure of women to be well represented in leadership positions in Africa can be attributed to the high level of poverty among women in the country (Fapounda, 2014).

The ILO (2020) report further indicates that the total global representation of women is below the 30% benchmark that is often identified as the necessary yardstick to measure the level of involvement of women in political leadership portfolios. Airini et al. (2011) indicate that when women are involved in political and social-economic issues in society, their statuses improve, particularly when they are involved in decision-making processes at all levels of governance.

Some reports highlight improvement on some gender-equality indicators. According to the Global Gender Gap Report (2020), 153 countries were sampled to investigate gender gap prospects in the professions of the future, and it was revealed that the pursuit of gender parity has improved due to more political representation of women. However, it was reported that in the area of politics, there is a higher disparity in gender representation which favours men more than women. The report notes that women's participation "in the political arena remains the worst-performing dimension" (Global Gender Gap Report, 2020). This implies that there is a need for leaders in governments in every country to investigate the systemic causes of gender inequality and take necessary steps to empower women to hold leadership positions not only in government establishments but also in private enterprises.

According to Nkomo and Ngambi (2009), empirical studies on leadership and management in Africa are scarce, but literature on African women in leadership are sparser. The authors conclude that there is a critical need for more research on the status, possibilities, and experiences of African women in management and leadership positions. Premised on the submissions above, the current study deems it important to contribute to the existing literature on women's leadership. The above failures and achievements have been made on the back of various global, regional and local gender equality promotion initiatives. These are discussed below.

### **2.3.2 Global and regional conventions on gender equality in politics**

This section discusses policies, protocols and conventions that have been designed with the agenda of enhancing women's participation in politics and leadership. It starts with a discussion of global conventions before moving to the African continent and southern Africa.

On a global level, the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action provided an aggregate of many instruments on gender-based discrimination. The 1995 Beijing Platform of Action identified twelve main key points of action (UN Women, 2021). These included women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision making, institutional mechanisms, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment and the girl child (UN Women 2021). Of note is the action plan on women in power and decision making which advocates for the increase in the number of women in political leadership positions UN Women, 2021). Despite the bold and milestone declaration of the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action, Amin, Remme, Allotey and Askew (2021) reveal that 25 years later in 2021 not any of the 181 countries that were signatory to this Platform of Action has claimed to have achieved gender equality.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, (SDGs) goal 5 also aims to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. In achieving goal five, one of the key targets is to increase women's representation in political leadership. Article 7 of the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) also calls upon the governments to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women those results in them being unable to participate in elections or have representation in governance. Schopp-Schilling (2004) in the *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* report (2004) notes that the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is the most important human rights treaty made for women. The convention was formulated in 1979 and has been implemented and monitored since 1982 with 180 member states ascribing to it.

In Africa, Article 2 of the African Charter on Human and People rights call for the prohibition of all forms of discrimination against women to ensure equality with men.

Article 2 of the African Charter on Human rights notes that member states of the African Union should ensure equality of women through the suitable, legislature, policy and institutional frameworks (Commission for Gender Equality 2020). In addition, the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance Article 3 (6) calls for the facilitation of gender equality in both the private and the public institutions (African Union 2018). The African Union also adapted The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa popularly known as The Maputo Protocol in 2003 and effected in 2005. The Maputo Protocol is an instrument that ensures African women have the right to participate in the elections process and have equality with men among other rights such as autonomy in health and the ending of women genital mutilation.

In the SADC region, the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development advocates for an equal (50/50) representation of women and men in leadership roles (Commission on Gender Equality, 2020). Manalula (2011) argues that the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development took too long to be ratified. The author notes that the document was ratified after two years. Manalula (2011) further states that even after ratification, the domineering influence of patriarchal society has made it difficult to implement declarations on gender equality.

### **2.3.3 Women's participation in administration in local governments**

Despite the protocols and conventions that have been regionally and globally ratified, women's participation in local government administrative leadership is considered dire. Studies have attributed the inadequate appointment of women as leaders in municipalities to several factors with the dominant of these being discrimination, gender biases and stereotyping (Gipson et al., 2017; Ruzunduge, Zhou, and Shingirayayi, 2020). Alkadry and Tower (2014) report that women are side-lined from getting management roles right from recruitment to selection in the administrative processes of an organisation, such that most do not get employed to start with. Supporting this claim, Sheet-Cushman (2017) observe that in some government organisations, women only get such positions as network worker, secretary, clerical officer, and front desk officers and not managerial positions.

In South Africa, the male-superior paradigm is apparent, due to various philosophies that are associated with the masculine stereotype (Gipson et al., 2017). Ryan et al.

(2011) opine that women are used as mercenaries to attract people to invest in some organisations. Gipson et al. (2017) add that when women get employed in senior positions, it is more with the expectation that they will display their incompetence, and in the process fail. It can, thus, be deduced that women are not given priority when it comes to leadership positions but are used as back-ups to support the capabilities of their male colleagues.

There is a need to promote effective participation of women in governance, particularly in this era in which women are being relegated to second class citizenship, such that they struggle to obtain political, social and economic powers (Kantor, 2008). The United Nations has organised various national and international conferences, workshops and seminars to create more awareness on the need for women to participate in governance (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2012). In 1979, the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was held in Mexico. The convention highlighted the need for the development of necessary policies and legal frameworks that will prevent and abolish all forms of discrimination against women on issues pertaining to governance (United Nations Human Rights, 2017).

Wallace (2015) notes that women's representation in leadership positions is very important in various ways, which include the need for social justice, promotion of equality, equity and parity, and enhancing the quality of governance. Madsen, Longman and Daniel (2012) note that, for more women to be involved in various leadership opportunities, there is a need for them to develop relevant skills and competencies, mentoring opportunities, and the need for effective coaching that are related to leadership and governance. The presence of women in leadership positions will contribute to positive unique experiences where women can mentor younger girls and women as role models for improved governance (Nidiffer, 2010). Morely (2014) argues that women in leadership positions within the administration and governance domains of the public services sector are instruments for economic growth and sustainable development.

#### **2.3.4 Women's leadership participation in rural communities**

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance's (IIDEA) 2021" Women's Political Participation ~ Africa Barometer 2021" highlighted several key

challenges that either impeded or complicated rural women's participation in political leadership. These were strong patriarchal and traditional structures that did not support women's ascension, illiteracy and low educational levels, lack of political information, lack of political support, challenges in accessing political centres and funding constraints (IIDEA, 2021). While some urban women were also affected by similar challenges, the extent and intensity of challenges faced by rural women required enhanced government and multi-stakeholder involvement. The Women's Charter for Accelerated Development recognises some of these challenges and acknowledges rural women in general as a vulnerable group (Parliament of South Africa, 2021). The charter, to reverse male dominance and women underrepresentation in rural community affairs, proposes that "Rural women shall be part of decision-making structures in traditional communities." (Parliament of South Africa, 2021:44). In addition to training and education, the inclusion of women in traditional structures could help to gradually dismantle rigid cultural practices that venerate men while disregarding women.

When women are involved in political parties, they can speak for fellow women in their communities (Akiw and Bon-Homy, 2017). The concern, however, is that most of the time, political positions and leadership posts are controlled by the male counterpart, particularly at the grassroots level. Matoane (2015:110) points out that male-dominated sovereignty in strategic positions suppresses women. The author also notes that when women are by chance given top positions at the grassroots level, they are not given the authority to take full charge. Scholars (Kellogg et al. 2017; Swam and Liew 2017) suggest that there should be national policies that will ensure 50% of women representatives in national congresses.

Rural women are very important agents of development through the roles they play as catalysts for community economic, environmental and social transformations for sustainable development (Doss,2010). This indicates the need for empowering women for their well-being, their family members, and the rural communities at large. Rural women significantly support their households and communities, particularly in food and nutrition security and income generation to improve rural livelihood (Doss, 2010.)

Fontana (2015) points out the need to enhance rural women's leadership quality through meaningful participation in all forms of decision-making processes in their communities. They go further to say that for the effective realisation of sustainable development goals (SDG), there should be equal participation of rural women in decision-making. Thus, rural women should be part of decision-making from parliament to local government levels. Fontana maintains that governments at all levels should establish necessary institutional frameworks that will accommodate the poor and women in decision-making in their communities. He goes further to say that their governments at all levels should help to reform their electoral system to accommodate more women, particularly those in the rural areas

To encourage more women in the leadership activities in the rural areas, the UNEPA (2018) maintains that the government at the local level should employ participatory approaches to eliminate socio-cultural constraints that may affect women's participation in decision-making. Haggblade, Hazell and Reardon (2018) assert that there is a need for capacity building and the use of quota systems that will strengthen rural women's leadership skills for effective participation in governance.

### **2.3.5 Trends of Women leadership in the private sector**

This section briefly looks at women's leadership trends in the private sector with a view of relating this with women leaders in the public sector. A World Bank report by Mukhtarova, Baig and Hasnain (2021) found that as a country's income increased, its percentage of women working in the private sector increased when compared to the percentage of women working in the public sector. The public sector is therefore considered a major formal employer of women in many countries. Nonetheless, in the private sector, gender inequality in leadership is also a common problem. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) report (2020), gender diversity promotes better business outcomes and makes it very easier for a business organisation to attract talents.

The report goes further to say that businesses that accommodate women in senior-level positions perform better as shown by increases in their profit margin. To buttress this, research was conducted by Women in Business and Management in the year 2019. The study surveyed 13,000 enterprises in almost 70 countries. The finding revealed that 57% of the respondents admitted that gender diversity initiatives that

accommodate women improved business outcomes. In addition, almost three-quarters of the companies that tracked gender diversity in their various management, report increases in their marginal profit from 5% to 20%. Their research concludes that including women in managerial positions bring about better efficiency in organisational activities (ILO, 2019).

Sandberg (2013) conducted a study that examined over 60 US companies in the year 2012. The findings revealed that women are still underrepresented at senior levels in most of the companies in the United States. Hryniewicz and Vianna (2018), in similar research in Brazil, discovered that only a few women in the country occupy the enviable position of chief executive officers (CEOs), senior executive officers and executive officers. The findings also revealed that only 4.5% of the board directors in the Brazilian companies are women and that the country ranked 85<sup>th</sup> in the gender inequality index country (World Bank Report, 2019).

In addition, in the year 2019, there was an increase in the number of women in senior management positions all over the world as the number rose to 29% and the percentage remains till the year 2020 (Thornton, 2020). Thornton (2020) reports that 87% of blue chip companies in developed countries have at least a woman in a senior management position. The implication of this is that developed countries have room for gender equity, which allows women to be in leadership positions, to contribute their quota to both economic and human developments in their respective countries. Catalyst (2020) argues that despite a very high record of women CEOs (500) in America in the year 2020, there is still a need for higher recognition of women. It was noted that there are still nearly 13 companies being run by a man for every company run by a woman.

A study by Maseko (2013) highlights that women were considered for senior leadership jobs with associated conditions. According to Ryan and Haslam (2005), women are generally made to lead in falling flat agencies, while men are selected to be board members of successful businesses. All these further emphasise the bias against women in leadership. Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, and Bongiorno (2011), Ryan, Haslam, and Kulich (2010) further report that when businesses succeed, there is the likelihood of associating such success with men. Conversely, the authors revealed that when businesses fail, there is the predisposition that such enterprises are led by

women. In addition, Bruckmüller and Branscombe (2010) support the above claim by asserting that women only get to leadership positions when emergencies arise, and vacant positions need to be filled up.

#### **2.4 WOMEN AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA**

In the African context, it is noted that women in political leadership in developing countries, such as South Africa, can promote the social well-being of women and girls, which will impact society at large. Women in political leadership can promote economic growth and development in terms of healthcare delivery, educational development and availability of necessary infrastructure (Airini et al., 2011). The United Nations (2010) maintains that for effective democracy development in developing countries, there is a need for women to be engaged equally in decision-making. To identify the reason why South African women are not properly placed in leadership positions, a survey was conducted in the year 2007 by the South African Commission on Gender Equality. The finding revealed that 30% of the women in South Africa are too emotional to handle high-level leadership positions (Gouws, 2008). The present study sought to understand the veracity of this assertion.

In South Africa, in the year 1994, during the transition from apartheid to democracy, the advent of democracy created a great political opportunity for South African women to frame certain political issues in gendered terms. Beckwith (2008) notes that the Women National Congress (NWC) advocates women to develop a women charter's that was handed to Parliament in 1994. The essence of this is to give opportunity for South African women to articulate their desires and needs through the creation of national gender machinery. Gouws (2008) argues that in the republic of South Africa, women cannot hold the position of leadership because they are very disadvantaged, poor and uneducated. The lack of a comprehensive social protection system for some South African women also makes life more difficult for poor South African women (Hills, 2020). The essence of this is to make women more relevant in political leadership in South Africa. Based on the foregoing, women in South Africa have important roles to play in politics that will be beneficial to all South African women (Commission of Gender Equality, 2020).

While South Africa's gender equality status is described as poor, some comparative assessments assert it was better-performing than African peers. The International

Republican Institute (IRI) (2016) surveyed African countries' women in leadership in Africa and used quantitative data that are related to women's role in leadership and government. Twenty-nine African countries were selected for the study, using various indicators, which include measuring the number of women in the national legislature and the number of committees chaired by women (IRI, 2016). However, the index indicated that South Africa leads other countries in the continent concerning women and leadership roles in Africa, closely followed by Rwanda, Cabo Verde, and Uganda. Sudan, DRC, Zambia, Malawi, and Sierra Leone received the lowest index scores, which indicates low leadership and influence of women.

South Africa is a party to the Africa Charter, which was ratified in the Maputo Protocol on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2004. It is in line with this, that the country made great strides in ensuring women's involvement in political and decision-making processes (Republic of South Africa, 2015). In addition, the South African Electoral Act 73 of (1998) states that every registered political party must respect the rights of women. The Act mandates every political party to ensure that women candidates can communicate with ease with parties and should be given equal opportunity as their male counterparts (Republic of South Africa, 2015). The electoral act also states that every political party in the country needs to encourage and ensure free access of women into all public meetings, marches, rallies and demonstrations (Republic of South Africa, 2015). This implies that there is an enabling framework that is in place, in principle, in South Africa. This study will find out what operates.

#### **2.4.1 Gender dynamics in the South African context**

Leadership is not limited to the male gender. Krinzman (2015) identifies the characteristics of women leaders as transformational, task-focused, collegial, collaborative, and self-branding. Elias (2018) concurs with Krinzman (2015) on the qualities in women that ensure their success in leadership positions. The author notes that women leaders have attributes such as empathy, the ability to build relationships that foster teamwork and can encourage team members to build on their potential.

In South Africa, Moody and Toni in Paoloni, Paoloni and Arduni (2019) present a different picture depicted by Elias (2018) and Krinzman (2015). Moody and Toni (2019) assert that leadership occurs in a cultural context that is predominantly patriarchal where male voices of influence tend to be louder. The authors further assert

that in South Africa, there are several policies and legislature that support the appointment of women in leadership positions however, women's interests in these leadership positions are determined by intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Moodly and Toni (2019) further describe these intrinsic motivators for women to take up leadership positions such as aspirations to be in leadership positions. The authors conclude by noting that though there are extrinsic motivators for women to take up leadership positions such as the legislature, intrinsic motivators play a greater role.

In South Africa, the assertions made by Moodly and Toni (2019) of women not fully taking up leadership positions in South Africa are challenged by Andi, Selva and Nielsen (2020), in a study on the number of women in leadership roles in the media industry. The authors reveal that in South Africa, at least 47% of all senior media editors are women in comparison to 41% in the United States of America. Awung and Dorasamy (2019) also agree with Moodly and Toni (2019) by noting that the advancement of women in leadership positions in South Africa is still strongly influenced by socio-cultural expectations. In addition, Awung and Dorasamy (2019) further highlight women's lack of uptake of leadership positions is also determined by poor work-life balance, unpredictable scheduling at work and stereotypes at the workplace. Awung and Dorasamy (2019) conclude that for women to take up leadership positions, support from within and outside the workplace is critical.

In a study on women leadership in local municipalities in South Africa, Ramosunya (2020) posited that women remained underrepresented in leadership positions. Ramosunya (2020) reveals that the low number of women in leadership in local municipalities in South Africa as a result of institutional gender dynamics, traditional stereotypes regarding the role of women in society, negative political influence at the municipal level and a lack of external support for women to take leadership roles. In a similar study in municipalities in Mpumalanga, Mokoena (2018) like Ramosunya (2020) noted that women remained underrepresented in leadership positions in all municipalities in Mpumalanga. Mokoena (2018) reveals that the reasons for women's under-representation were societal factors that do not promote the advancement of women, the lack of confidence in women themselves to take up leadership roles, inability to balance work and home life for women and a lack of political support for women.

#### **2.4.2 Laws on gender equality in South Africa**

Several scholars have such as Moodly and Toni (2019) indicate that there are laws in South Africa that have challenged women to take up leadership positions in local government. These laws cover a broad range of topics such as marriage, land, violence and equity in employment. Some specific laws directly promote the leadership of women or protect women from discrimination in the workplace. Such laws include the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and the Commission of Gender Equality Act 39 of 1996. Other laws such as the Domestic violence Act 116 of 1998, the Customary Marriage Act 120 of 1998 and the Maintenance Act 99 of 1998 indirectly ensure the empowerment of women albeit not in the workplace. Notably, all the laws published are enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa (1996) (Mkhize & Mgcotyelwa-Ntoni, 2019).

The Constitution of South Africa (1996) serving as the supreme law in the country asserts that one of the founding values of the Republic of South Africa is non-discrimination and non-sexism. In addition, one of the fundamental rights outlined in section 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) is the right to equality of all persons (RSA, 1996). The Constitution further acknowledges that the right to equality emanates from apartheid's historical background of discrimination based on one's gender, race, social origin, religion or language (RSA, 1996). Considering this Memela and Maharaj (2018) also note that the South African Constitution promotes gender equality through this promulgation of the Bill of Rights enshrined in the Constitution. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa's (1996) clear assertion on non-discrimination based on gender is further reiterated by Mkhize and Mgcotyelwa-Ntoni (2019) who note the sufficiency of the constitution in advancing the non-discrimination of women in South Africa.

Another law that is supported by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) that seeks to empower South African women is the Labour Relations Act of 1995 (Act 66 of 1995). The law outlines how to deal with laws that matters pertaining to sexual harassment in the workplace (Act 66 of 1995). Notably, one of the challenges that have been found to discourage the uptake of leadership roles by women is the issue of sexual harassment of women in the workplace (National Academies Press, 2018). The National Academies Press (2018) notes that women especially in medicine, engineering, military and academic sciences fail to take up leadership roles because

of the effects of overt and ambient sexual harassment they experience in the workplace. Consequentially, Act 66 of 1995 contains the Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual Harassment. The Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual Harassment clearly outlines that sexual harassment is an act of discrimination. In addition, The Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual Harassment also outlines the need for employers to have policies in place regarding sexual harassment (RSA, 1995). Despite all these measures in place to advance the leadership of women, through the minimising of sexual harassment, Calitz (2019) highlights a case in a local Municipality where a lack of education on the Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual Harassment ultimately led to the resignation of a women victim of sexual harassment, demonstrating the negative effects of sexual harassment on the participation of women in leadership.

Another important legislation relating to women and leadership is the Employment Equity Act (Act of 55 of 1998). Act 55 of 1998 has two purposes. The first is to ensure that there is an equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment in South Africa. The second purpose of Act 55 of 1998 is to ensure there is an implementation of affirmative action that redresses the disadvantages that groups were subjected to in all forms of employment and at all levels. Despite the publishing of Act 55 of 1998, Espi, Francis and Voladia (2019) in a study on the insights on gender equality in employment, conclude that there are still disparities in representation of women as well as in pay levels of women. Similarly, Van der Waldt, Fourie, Van Dijk, Chitiga-Mabugu and Johan (2019) also note that Act 55 of 1998 alone is not sufficient to redress the lack of equitable representation of women in local government. The authors note the need for a competency framework for women empowerment. On the contrary, Ntanjana, Maleka, Tshipala and du Plessis (2018) in a study in the tourism sector in Gauteng noted that there were no disparities in employment conditions based on gender differences in tourism.

The Commission of Gender Equality Act (Act 39 of 1999) was formulated in order to safeguard women's rights and promote gender equality. Act 39 of 1999 was later amended in 2013 to the Commission on Gender Equality Amendment Act (Act 17 of 2013). The promotion of gender equality as outlined in Act 39 of 1999 remains a challenge in some cases in South Africa. Akinola (2018) notes that despite the laws such as Act 39 of 1999 the economic emancipation of women in South Africa is not

achieved as cultural norms deny them the right to land ownership. Akinola (2018) further states that the right to land ownership by women especially in rural areas is exacerbated by the low number of women in leadership positions in local government who can advocate for women to own land.

Awung and Dorasamy (2019) note one of the reasons why women fail to take up leadership positions is the failure to balance work and life commitments. The authors describe the responsibility to provide care for children as part of the life commitments that prevent women to take up leadership roles. Akinola (2018) also concurs with Awung and Dorasamy (2019) and noted that the responsibility of childcare is culturally assigned to women. The Maintenance Act (Act 99 of 1998) enables women who are unable to pursue leadership positions to have the financial support to pay for care services for children so that they can overcome the challenges of work-life balance and pursue leadership opportunities. Act 99 of 1998 as outlined was formulated in order to deal especially with the challenges faced by women and to capacitate the state to pursue persons for failure to meet their maintenance obligations.

The Domestic Violence Act (Act 116 of 1998) was also formulated in South Africa in order to protect women and men from all forms of violence in the home environment. While this law protects persons of both genders, Furusa and Limberg (2015) believe that women as the prime victims of domestic violence the law is of major benefit to women. Act 116 of 1998 affirms that domestic violence is a major impediment to the attainment of gender equality. Waldman (2021) however notes that there are inconsistencies in the implementation of Act 116 of 1998 resulting in victims being left vulnerable to their abusers with regards to effecting protection orders. The author specifies that these implementation inconsistencies emanate from the police and the courts. Field, Onah, van Heyninigen and Honikman (2018) also note that South Africa has one of the highest domestic violence cases in the World. The authors profile women victims of domestic violence by describing them as food- insecure, unemployment and in stable unmarried relations. Notably, the findings by Field et al., (2018) could imply that emancipation of women through employment could curb incidences of domestic violence.

Other laws that have promoted the advancement of women in leadership in South Africa include the Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act (Act 92 of 1996). The act

promotes the reproductive rights of women by allowing them the choice to have a safe, legal and early termination of pregnancy. Act 92 of 1996 was also amended in 2004 and 2008 (RSA 2008). The Criminal Procedure Second Amendment Act (Act 85 of 1997) was put in place in order to ensure persons who commit serious crimes against women and children are not released. In addition, the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (Act 120 of 1998) is also a law drafted in order to empower South African women. The law ensures customary marriages have the same rights as civil marriages. This is particularly beneficial in empowering women to access land and inheritance.

### **2.4.3 Policies on women empowerment in South Africa**

The South African National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality (WEGE) formulated in 2000 and implemented in 2002 is one of the policies put in place to ensure women's empowerment. In addition, the National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment also seeks to ensure women have equal access to products and services with men. One of the challenges that the National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment seeks to address is the access of women to political power. The policy explains that since 1994, several laws have been put in place that ensures that women have access to political power. However, despite the women being well represented in politics they still lack the adequate political power to influence the decisions that improve their welfare. In support of the National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality, Mkhize Ngcotyilelwa-Ntoni (2019) also highlight that the social environment within the political arena makes it very difficult for women to effect change that empowers women. Hills (2020) also reveals that the National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality strives for a 50% representation of women in executive decision-making boards.

Another policy that seeks to empower women in public service is the Strategic Plan for the Department of Women 2015-2020. The Strategic Plan outlines three programme areas that seek to be addressed in order to ensure women's empowerment. The first is the provision of strategic leadership and management and administrative support services for women's socio-economic empowerment (Department of Women 2015). The second is to promote women's socio-economic empowerment and the third is to undertake policy research, knowledge management,

monitoring evaluation and coordination for women's socio-economic empowerment (Department of Women, 2015)

In addition, the Department of Women also published the Women's financial inclusion framework in 2019. The Women's Financial Inclusion Framework (2019) seeks to ensure that all women have access to financial resources in order to ensure their economic inclusion (Department of Women, 2019). In addition, to make provisions for financial resources, the Women's Financial Inclusion Framework also facilitates knowledge development among women (Department of Women, 2019). This inclusion of a skills and knowledge focus to allow women to compete economically as outlined by the Women's Financial Inclusion Act (2019) is particularly important as it helps to eliminate the lack of confidence that women have in taking up leadership positions as described by Mokoena (2018).

## **2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

Theoretical framework involves structuring a network of these theories that directly or indirectly have a bearing on the study (Kumar, 2018). A theoretical framework provides the avenue for research to have a framework that can be used in academic research to analyse, facilitate and better understand the subject under investigation (Saunders et al., 2018). Theory in academic research helps to solve real-world problems. A theoretical framework in academic research can be used to bridge the link between independent and dependent variables in scholarly research (Saunders et al., 2018). It is in line with these views that the current study will use a theoretical framework to guide its discussion.

There are various theories relevant to this research. These include motivational theories, feminist theory, post-modern and post-structural theory, standpoint theory, intersectionality, literary theory, queer theory, theories of the body and sexuality, postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis, law and bioethical theory, critical race theory, affect theory, feminist new materialism among others. However, the study employed the feminism theory.

Feminism theory (Gilligan 1997; Calàs and Smircich, 1996) focuses on analysing gender inequalities in human society. The theory explains the art of discrimination, objectification, oppression and patriarchal issues that women are facing in society. The history of feminism can be examined from three-point of view. The first point of

view or wave can be traced to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The second wave can be traced from the 1960s to the 1970s, and the last wave started from 1990 to the present date (Tong, 2001). Feminist theory emerged from feminist movements from these generations. It is manifest in a variety of disciplines such as feminist geography, feminist history, and feminist literary criticism, Feminist theory has been applied into various fields such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, economics, language, philosophy, religions, art history, and literacy criticism. Most of these knowledge areas or disciplines have employed the feminist theory to explain how the gender system work, as well as to examine normative and ethical issues, to assess how, and if societies are treating women in fair manners.

This researcher, as a woman in a public sector establishment, observes from experience that patriarchy impacts the workplace, and in turn, favours gender discrimination against women, particularly in the local government environment. Hence, for the purpose of this study, the feminist theory, which borders on equity of job allotment between men and women, whether in junior or management posts, will be applied. In addition, the study used a feminist lens because the study places gender as the main subject matter. Another justification for using social feminism theory is that it gives a loud voice to women and validates women's needs, desires, values, and experiences. The theory also explains the need to empower women for leadership positions and to be part of inclusive decision-making in society.

There are many variations of the feminist theory (Kark, 2014; Wallce, 2015). These include the liberal, radical and socialist theories of feminism (Napikoski, 2021). This study applied the socialist feminist theory whose origins is in the precepts of Marxist and socialist movements advocating for classless societies (Armstrong, 2020). The basic views of the socialist feminist theory are that:

- Women in lower social classes including those in rural settings face the most severe forms of oppression but are poorly represented by liberal feminism with its focus on working middle and upper-income women (Oakton, n.d; Napikoski, 2021).
- Women have provided unpaid labour for generations including serving in their households, childbearing, among others. Current capitalist societies lack an appreciation of this. Women's roles in society are not considered modes of

production despite their importance in building and sustaining both economies and societies (Armstrong, 2020).

- Gender inequality is one of the many forms of oppression suffocating women's progression. Class and racial divides (that also include the urban-rural divide) are also forms of oppression that must be concurrently addressed with gender inequality (Armstrong, 2020).
- Capitalist class structures are gendered and consider men as naturally superior leading to the broad exclusion of women's concerns and needs (Armstrong, 2021).
- The labour movements and other bodies advocating for women's rights have generally failed to address inequality within the workplace as a centre of the capitalist state (Thobejane, 2015; Armstrong, 2020; Napikoski, 2021).
- There has been a slow acknowledgement of women's social, cultural and economic significance in societies leading to women being viewed as second class groups (Oakton, n.d).

The social feminist theory borders on the social advancement of women; for instance, human rights, social justice, and adds to the critical awareness of individuals in social and political contexts (Oakton, n.d). Social feminism sees all social systems as being built on the oppression of women and calls for fundamental changes in all systems such as education, legal, and social welfare. Its view that gender oppression is part of a wider oppressive system that includes economic, cultural and political inequality is its point of departure from liberal and radical feminist approaches (Napikoski, 2021). According to Napikoski (2021:1), "The goal of socialist feminism is to work with men to achieve a level playing field for both genders". Thus, gender equality is its core interest. This resonated well with the study's interests in equal leadership representation by gender.

A major criticism levelled against socialist feminism is its assertions that ending racism would result in gender equality as the former was the broader context in which the latter occurred (Thobejane, 2015). This argument is based on South Africa's observations that even with the fall of apartheid, and to a large extent the dismantling of racial systems, gender inequality characterised by the underrepresentation of women in society, politics and economic persists (Thobejane, 2015).

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed literature on leadership, women's participation in political and administrative leadership and gender equality. The reviewed literature indicates that in many countries women have been relegated to the position of second-class citizens. It was also revealed that few women play significant roles in the political, economic, and social development of every society, but these few had proven to be capable leaders. The research was anchored on the theory of feminism, specifically the socialist feminist theory. The literature found that while there was a general convergence on the view that women were poorly represented in leadership, judging from international, regional and local statistics, there were divergences also. These divergencies were mostly on the degree or proportion of women underrepresentation in leadership as well as the most contributory factors. These divergences challenged a localised approach in understanding the women and leadership participation realities from an MLM perspective. The next chapter discusses methodologies that were applied in further querying this research.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Methodology is the study of methods applied in meeting specific objectives within a given discipline. Research methodology is therefore defined as a study of choices pertaining to methods for the creation of knowledge as acceptable among researchers (Bell, et al., 2018). It can also be looked at as “a science of studying how research is done scientifically” (Patel & Patel, 2021:48). This chapter outlines, discusses and motivates the research methodological choices that were applied in this study. The chapter starts by discussing the research philosophies, approaches and strategies that were applied in this study. Other sections covered in the chapter outline and discuss the population and sample design, the data collection tool and its administration, pilot study, trustworthiness, data analysis, and research quality issues. The last section of the chapter highlights the ethical considerations that guided the study.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

Research paradigm is defined as the collection of methods or rules where a particular piece of research is undertaken (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015:570). Guba and Lincoln (1994:107) observe a paradigm as a set of beliefs dealing with first principles. It presents a global observation that defines (for its holder), the nature of the world an individual’s place in it and the range of relationships to that and its part. A research paradigm has also been described as a set of guiding philosophical views that researchers have come to accept or at least consider (Zaidi & Larsen, 2018). Despite various definitions, there is a common belief or view that a research paradigm is the basic guiding framework upon which research methods, designs and strategies, among others are based (Kumar, 2018).

##### **3.2.1 Interpretivism as a research paradigm**

This study was guided by an interpretive paradigm, also referred to as interpretivism. Interpretivism is a research paradigm borne in the social science disciplines. The paradigm can be traced to the eighteenth-century works of German social theorists with the name of Immanuel Kant emerging as one of the earliest pioneers of interpretive thought. Interpretivism emerged as social researchers’ efforts to apply

natural science-based methodologies in studying human beings as social actors rather than as scientific elements met various challenges. The key challenge was the wider diversity of human beings when viewed as social actors. Social backgrounds, belief systems, personal and group experiences that fed into an individual's cognitive and affective systems required and challenged for subjectivity in studying social phenomena that affected people (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The then-dominant positivist views with their rigid emphasis on objectivity of measurement firstly lacked regard for the subjective component of persons as research subjects and secondly did not methodological support the same subjective component (Saunders, et al., 2018). Positivism was ingrained in a single-truth belief that research output produced a single, measurable reality. This view clashed with social researchers' beliefs that multiple realities can emerge from a single phenomenon based on who is looking at it as well as who is being studied. Advocates for the interpretive paradigm further contended that this pluralistic view was not static and could be created and recreated differently each time a social actor is engaged in a study. Such a view, which basically meant that reality is constructed was also referred to as constructivism by some scholars like Creswell and Creswell (2018) taking interpretivism and constructivism as a single paradigm.

A research paradigm consists of four elements. These are epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology (Saunders et al., 2019). Thus, there is an epistemology for positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, critical theory paradigms (Zaidi & Larsen, 2018). These are briefly discussed in this subsection.

#### ***a) The epistemology of interpretivism***

Epistemology is a philosophical branch focussing on understanding the nature of knowledge specifically what society considers to be knowledge, how and why (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In the interpretive-positivist paradigm debate epistemologists' arguments centre on whether knowledge is subjective or objective (Zaidi & Larsen, 2018). Interpretivists believe that subjective, constructive knowledge generated from social actors qualifies as a reliable source of knowledge that can inform society adding on to the existing body of knowledge (Saunders, et al., 2018). This study followed the epistemological view that subjective information constructed through the researcher's

engagement with research participants is adequate in meeting the study's research objectives and effectively informing society.

### ***b) The ontology and axiology of interpretivism***

While epistemology deals with knowledge, ontology focuses on reality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The ontology of interpretivism is therefore based on the question of whether a constructed, pluralistic reality is indeed a reality (Zaidi & Larsen, 2018). This is a confrontation with the positivist view that reality is singular rather than plural (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study also takes a view that the pluralistic realities of different participants is believable and can adequately inform gender-related leadership complexities and vicissitudes in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality. As is discussed later, the above epistemological and ontological views guided the use of phenomenology as a research design of choice.

The third element of a research paradigm is axiology. Axiology as a philosophical discipline focuses on values that human beings assert over themselves as they act (Saunders, et al., 2018). Axiology, therefore, guides the researcher's ethical perspectives in carrying out a study (Zaidi and Larsen 2018). These include the research choices and methods one selects in conducting an inquiry. This study was guided by commonly presented views that research is meaningful is conducted in an ethically and morally acceptable manner (Kumar, 2018). The study's ethical considerations are discussed in detail in a later section.

The fourth and commonest element of a research paradigm is methodology (Zaidi & Larsen, 2018). The methodology of interpretivism is qualitative in nature (Kumar, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This is discussed in the next section.

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY/ RESEARCH APPROACH**

The study adopted a qualitative methodology that centres on the collection, analysis and interpretation of non-numerical data (Jensen & Laurie, 2016). According to McRoy (1995), as cited in De Vos et al. (2011), the qualitative methodology stems from an anti-positivistic, interpretative approach. This study adopted an interpretive approach and therefore a qualitative methodology. The interpretative approach concerns understanding and describing the phenomenon instead of predicting or explaining human behaviour (Gray, 2014).

Qualitative research methods are defined as research methods that involve the collection, analysis and reporting of non-numerical data to answer given research questions. According to De Vos et al. (2011:65), “qualitative researchers collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or the problem”. They further allude that “qualitative research is a form of inquiry where researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand”. Its major strengths include the ability to process subjective data towards answering research questions as per the interpretive research paradigm needs. Qualitative research, also in line with interpretive epistemological and ontological views, supports the understanding of social actors whose knowledge and realities are a function of their personal and group experiences as influenced by their environment. Qualitative research methods appreciate the plural realities that may emerge from a given setting while valuing subjective knowledge associated with such realities.

Qualitative research methods were also applied to this study because of their strength in exploring new phenomena as well as an existing but poorly understood phenomenon (Babbie, 2016; Blaikie & Priest, 2017). The qualitative approach in this study, among other things aimed to establish an understanding of a previously under-researched topic through human interactions with the subject (Gray, 2014). Given the view that Women Participation in Leadership Positions in Mtubatuba Local Municipality as a phenomenon is not well studied a qualitative approach facilitated an inductive research process that aimed to identify new information that could help current or future theory-building. The quest to establish an inductive process of data collection motivated the choice behind qualitative research, followed by progress in creating theory (Cresswell, 2018). Qualitative methods were therefore critical for this study’s research questions which were centred on the need of understanding the realities of women's participation in leadership positions in Mtubatuba Local Municipality. The study’s need to capture the social actors’ experiences, perceptions and emotions on women's participation in the leadership of their community was greatly advanced by the subjectivity, naturalistic and pluralistic nature of qualitative research.

Despite the above strengths and appeals, qualitative research methods have weaknesses when compared to quantitative methods. Firstly, while their subjectivity and plural realities focus is considered a social research strength, it is also seen as weakening the methodology’s ability to produce reliable outcomes (Bell, et al., 2018).

Its other weakness stems from its use of small samples and non-systematic sampling techniques as well as highly flexible data collection techniques. Because of the above, its findings cannot be inferred or generalised to larger samples (Babbie, 2016; Blaikie & Priest, 2017). Despite the above weaknesses, the acceptability of qualitative research in public administration disciplines continues to grow hence its use in this study (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). Also, the researcher believes that the above weaknesses were outweighed by the in-depth and highly informative data that came out of the research processes.

### **3.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

A research strategy is the set of methods that a researcher uses in implementing a research design of choice (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There are various qualitative research designs including case studies, grounded theory and ethnography (Kumar, 2018). The study applied a phenomenological research strategy. Creswell and Creswell (2018) place phenomenology as a research design while Saunders et al. (2019) view it more as a philosophy. Both agree that its crux is in understanding the lived experiences of social actors pertinent to a given set of research objectives. Phenomenology is rooted in exploring how humans make sense of experiences and transform experiences into consciousness—Individually and as a shared meaning. A phenomenological perspective, therefore, attends to the perceptions and emotions of people associated with what they experience, not only to mere observations of the experience (Bosmans, Hardonk, De Cuyper, & Vanroelen, 2016). According to Powell, Gray, and Reese (2013:78), “Phenomenology is useful for learning about a phenomenon that has little research by exploring the experiences of people in their natural environment rather than confirming or denying a preconceived theory”. This study took women's participation in local government level politics as a phenomenon of interest. This phenomenon was accordingly studied from the experiences of those who live it as per the postulations of various scholars among them Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Saunders et al (2019).

### **3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design is defined as a blueprint or structure of methods, strategies and techniques selected by the investigator to collect diverse research aspects in a logical and systematic nature to achieve the goal of the research problem (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018). This framework enables the researcher to conduct the research questions and objectives efficiently and successfully (De Vos et al., 2011). The study adopted the exploratory research design.

Exploratory research is a social study aiming to explore a particular phenomenon to fundamentally formulate specific research questions to that phenomenon (Gray, 2014). Exploratory research is conducted radically to gain insight into a problem or situation in a community or an organisation (De Vos et al., 2011:95). Exploratory research design answers concepts such as “what?” to obtain the cause and effect of the natural occurrence or phenomenon. An exploratory research design is widely associated with qualitative research. Kumar (2019) asserts that exploratory research serves two critical purposes: the studying of new and emerging phenomena for which very little is known and the studying of a not-so-new phenomenon that despite several research attempts has many elements that are not well understood.

Exploratory research designs are also closely related to inductive research approaches (Bell, et al., 2018; Kumar, 2018). Inductive research attempts to build theories from research findings and therefore does not start with a pre-conceived theory as its research basis (Bell, et al., 2018; Kumar, 2018). Deductive research on the other hand starts with a defined theory or theoretical basis and attempts to test whether this theory can answer research questions (Babbie, 2016). This study attempted to get research findings that could add new information for theory-building.

Exploratory research designs are mostly cross-sectional in nature. Cross-sectional research involves the collection and analysis of data at a single point in time (Babbie, 2016; Bell, et al., 2018). It differs from longitudinal approaches that involve the collection of data over time to compare any time-related changes (Babbie, 2016).

### **3.6 TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The target population is the group of people, events, trends, or cases that a study focuses on (Jansen & Laurie, 2016). Selecting the appropriateness of the target population is motivated by the women's participation in politics and leadership positions in MLM wards. It is also described as a full set of all elements that are eligible to participate in a study (Babbie, 2016; Bell, et al., 2018).

This study's target population was women who worked within the political dimensions of the MLM. These women worked in any of the following roles:

- Women ward councillors
- Women administrative officers working for the Municipality
- Women political activists in respective political branches

The study's inclusion criteria were that one had to be currently working in the above categories and were willing to participate in the study. The phenomenological strategy guided the above selection criteria as only persons who lived and experienced the phenomenon of interest were considered (Valge, 2016).

### **3.6.1 Sampling design**

In research, a sample is a subset of the population that is selected to participate in a study (Okeke & van Wyk, 2015). A sampling strategy is a set of processes and procedures that guide the selection of a sample of interest (Kumar, 2014). Sampling designs also referred to as sampling techniques are classified into probability and non-probability sampling. This research employed non-probability sampling techniques.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), non-probability sampling is a sampling design where the probability of each included population subject or element is unidentified. Non-probability sampling design allows for researchers to select a sample based on perceived advantages rather than on probability (Bell, et al., 2018). Such advantages include accessibility, convenience, participant willingness and cost (Wood, 2016; Babbie, 2016). A non-probability sampling technique is also effective in cases where the researcher has sufficient knowledge of a topic to select a sample of experts (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, and Walker, 2019). Some participants in this study were considered experts in the political arena making non-random sampling conveniently applicable for the study.

The study used purposive sampling. This is a non-probability sampling method where the researcher applies their discretion to select subjects that are likely to advance the meeting of research objectives considering elements like cost, accessibility, convenience as well as the willingness and ability to partake in the study (Babbie, 2016; Gray, 2017). For this study, the researcher valued the research participant's interest, willingness and convenience to participate as key factors that determined

one's inclusion into the sample. This was on top of meeting the eligibility criteria that needed one to be working in a political or politico-administrative capacity within the bounds of the MLM.

Commonly discussed weaknesses of non-probability sampling are that it is more prone to selection biases when compared to probability sampling (Gray, 2014). The researcher minimised such biases by selecting participants from diverse political and administrative backgrounds as part of the sample.

The total sample size of the study was eight participants from a population of 30. One participant was purposefully selected from the political and administrative entities listed below:

**Table 3.1: Determining the sample size**

<b>Political party</b>	<b>Municipal department</b>
IFP	Planning Department
DA	Corporate Department
ANC	Community Services
NFP	Technical

Source: Researcher.

Using the above sample, the researcher was able to achieve a data saturation point on the sixth participant. After the sixth interviewed participant no new data emerged from the interviews.

### **3.7 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

An interview survey was employed to collect data from the respondents. Interviews create a conversation between two or more people the interviewer directs questions to elicit responses or perceptions from the interviewee (Okeke & van Wyk, 2015:243).

Common types of research interviews are structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Bell, et al., 2018). A structured interview involves standard questions that are administered to all interviewees usually using a rigidly formatted interview schedule. An unstructured interview lacks a set format, although the interviewer may have some critical questions formulated in advance (Gray, 2014:56). The rationale for unstructured interviews is to allow participants to respond flexibly

while being guided by the researcher's schedule. A semi-structured interview is a hybrid between a structured and an unstructured interview (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). It makes use of guiding questions that are presented to all interviewees and secondary questions that are flexible and dependent on how the interviewee answered the guiding question. Semi-structured interviews were used because they enabled the researcher to probe the participants' experiences and perceptions while ensuring that responses remained relevant for answering the study's research questions. They, therefore, promoted in-depth responses that are critical in advancing the study's exploratory interests.

The interview schedule was administered face-to-face hence the interviewee and the interviewee engaged each other either physically or via online means. The interview schedule consisted of two major sections the demographic data section and the general questions sections. The latter collected data that directly related to the study's research questions. For the detailed interview schedule, please see Appendix C.

### **3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Validity and reliability are important research quality indicators that can determine whether other stakeholders can rely on a study's output or not. Validity is the level and extent to which a given research tool assesses what it was designed to assess (Saunders et al., 2018). In qualitative research, validity and reliability are proxied by trustworthiness which encompasses transferability, credibility, confirmability and dependability (Forero et al., 2018). Trustworthiness simply refers to whether a study's findings can be trusted (Forero et al., 2018). Measures of quality control in research are concerned about trustworthiness. According to Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, and Walker (2019:556), trustworthiness is a broad term referring to the rigour of qualitative research. These data quality measures are discussed in this section.

#### **3.8.1 Credibility**

According to Ary et al. (2019), credibility in qualitative research is regarded as the truthfulness of the findings a similar concept to internal validity in quantitative research. Credibility can be achieved through the following measures:

- Prolonged engagement with participants
- Persistent observation in the field

- Peer debriefs or peers' researcher's negative case analysis
- Researcher reflexivity
- Participant checks
- Authentication

It is also improved by a thorough description of foundation data and a fit between the data and the emerging analysis (Ary et al.,2019). For this study, the researcher selected participants whose political engagements could be checked or confirmed (Forero, et al., 2018). Secondly, the researcher also exercised reflexivity ensuring that the views from the participants, rather than their views constitute the research findings. The above measures helped to maintain the study's credibility (Forero, et al., 2018).

### **3.8.2 Confirmability**

Confirmability is a qualitative data control measure that is considered an equivalent of validity in quantitative research, and which relates to the degree findings in a study that can be corroborated by similar studies (Forero, et al., 2018; Ary et al.,2019). It is founded on the perspective of the truthfulness of findings in the data. The researcher must draw the collected data, analytic processes, and findings to confirm the adequacy of the results. The study applied acceptable research methods guided by several research scholars. The research processes and procedures that were applied in reaching research conclusions were well-documented to facilitate any future confirmations.

### **3.8.3 Dependability**

Dependability in qualitative research is equivalent to reliability in quantitative research (Kumar, 2018; Ary et al.,2019). A study is deemed dependable if it can produce relatable outcomes if repeated in the same setting (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Kumar, 2018). According to Ary et al. (2019), dependability can be enhanced through properly documenting the research processes applied as well as the research contexts they were applied in. Audit trails that may be examined by peer researchers, a student adviser, or colleagues in the field may also be created to enhance dependability (Ary et al.,2019). This study relied on proper research process and context documentation as its main dependability enhancing tool.

### **3.8.4 Transferability**

Transferability is the degree that the study findings can be generalised to other contexts or groups in qualitative research (Babbie, 2016; Kumar, 2018; Ary et al., 2019). They confirm, “This is accomplished when the researcher offers satisfactory information about the self and the research context, procedures, partakers, and researcher–participant associations to empower the reader to decide how the findings may transfer”. The subjectivity and naturalistic nature of qualitative research make the transferability of research findings a major challenge (Forero et al., 2018). The study applied Forero et al’s view that data saturation can help to enhance transferability. The research made attempts towards data saturation by targeting at least 18 participants, with a preliminary view that this size could ensure data saturation.

## **3.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis is a process where data are organised to understand the target population’s patterns of behaviour (Noor, 2018). Data analysis is an umbrella term referring to diverse analysis forms, such as content analysis or thematic analysis (Wood, 2016). This study applied thematic analysis as its appropriate data analysis method using the Nvivo version 8 software by QSR International. Thematic analysis is centred around classifying masses of data into related themes through which data meaning can be attained (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Thematic analysis is considered a flexible method that is not attached to any qualitative research philosophy or strategy (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). It can therefore be effectively applied in exploratory, phenomenological studies and this partly motivated its use in this study. Its strengths are that it can group large volumes of data towards either a predetermined or undetermined theme. It also facilitates a better understanding of research participants as it constructs themes based on their views (Braun & Clarke, 2014).

Braun and Clarke (2014) identify the six stages or phases of thematic content analysis as:

- Familiarisation with the data;
- Identification and establishment of initial codes;
- Extracting themes from established codes;
- Reviewing and revising the codes and themes;
- Finalisation of the themes

- Report presentation

The above steps guided the use of thematic content analysis in this study.

There are various ways of coding (extracting meaning from data) that can be applied in qualitative research. Open coding is the process of deriving codes from data without any predetermined view (Carpendale et al. 2017). With open coding, codes and themes emerge as one goes through the data. Closed coding, on the other hand, relates to the extraction of predetermined codes for the development of themes (Carpendale et al 2017). This process is suitable for situations where a researcher knows the type of data they are looking for and are working with volumes of documents (Braun & Clarke, 2014). The researcher digs through the documents to extract information relevant to their research question needs. Thus, open coding was used and themes that were not previously determined emerged. For this study, the themes were formed under each research objective or research question. Each theme was further associated with participants. The study, therefore, applied an open coding technique to identify subthemes falling under each research objective.

### **3.10 PILOT STUDY**

A pilot study is a small mock study that is conducted before the main research to determine whether the methodology, sampling, instruments, and data analysis are apt and correctly implemented (Kumar, 2014; Babbie, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A pilot study was conducted in another Municipality on four interviewed participants with similar instruments. The pilot study's findings yielded those questions were longer to mitigate the researcher to rephrase these questions. Results indicated some questions needed probes and these were added. The pilot study also enhanced the study's data collection validity, therefore, improving data quality and enabling an effective answering of research objectives (Babbie, 2016).

### **3.11 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Study delimitation relates to establishing conceptual and geographical boundaries regarding the subject of the study area. This also involves clarifying the concepts commonly used in the study (Gray, 2014). This study focused on spatial delimitation. This study was solely delimited to MLM. All wards in MLM were eligible for inclusion

as long as participants were women ward councillors, party representatives' councillors, and Municipality officials from each department. The study's limitations were that as a qualitative study, its findings cannot be readily generalised to other municipalities.

### **3.12 RESEARCH ETHICS: PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations ensure that the research is conducted according to expected standards. The rights and professional codes of the study were not violated. De Vos et al. (2011:90) remarks that "researchers must protect the dignity and integrity of the participants". Ethical considerations ensure researchers protect the participants from all forms of harm, as observed in the following principles (Kumar, 2018):

- **Error! Reference source not found.**
- Ensuring confidentiality, anonymity
- **Error! Reference source not found.**
- Ensuring that participants are protected from harm

These considerations are discussed in relation to this study.

#### **3.12.1 Informed consent**

The right to informed consent demands that every participant who takes part in a study must do so with full knowledge of the nature of the study. This knowledge includes the researcher's name and the organisation they represent, the name of the study and its purposes as well as how their information will be used and protected (Saunders, et al., 2018; Kumar, 2018). Informed consent right also commands providing research participants information on their rights as well as actions expected of them (Saunders, et al., 2018). Any risks, adversities or harms that may befall a participant must also be explicitly communicated (Kumar, 2018). In this study, each participant signed an informed consent letter as a way of ensuring informed consent to participate in the study. Each form comprised the research aim, objectives, and a summary of the research background. Prospective participants endorsed the conditions, agreeing to participate in the study.

### **3.12.2 Voluntary participation**

Voluntary participation in the participants' involvement in a study out of genuine free will without being coerced, threatened or being promised any rewards emanating from their participation (Babbie, 2016; Bell, et al., 2018). Voluntary participation is only possible if participants are fully aware of the nature of the study, its risks and its benefits (Kumar, 2018). For the study, the right to voluntary participation was stressed in the consent letter that the participants signed. The letter informed the participants that they were not under any obligation to be part of the study and could withdraw from it at any time if they wished to.

### **3.12.3 Ensuring confidentiality, anonymity and privacy**

Confidentiality is of utmost importance during research. It must be ensured that the research process is confidential; names, addresses, and other research participants' personal information must not be traceable or disposed of to a third person (Babbie, 2016; Bell, et al., 2018). To ensure confidentiality, the research did not collect any names or other information that may quickly give away one's identity. Pseudonyms were used to hide the participants' identities (Babbie, 2016). Additionally, a commitment that collected raw data that could lead to participant identity would not be shared with any third parties. The collected data was also protected in password-locked computer devices. After use, all the data will be deleted from virtual sources and the hard copies will be shredded. Confidentiality is necessary to protect integrity and privacy (De Vos, 2011).

### **3.12.4 Protection from harm**

Protecting research participants from harm does not only focus on physical harm but legal issues that could result in participants being penalised for participating in studies (Kumar, 2018). Obtaining requisite permissions that allow participants to take part in a study is a critical step in protecting participants from harm (Kumar, 2018). The researcher requested permission to conduct the study. The Municipality issued a permission letter to approach the employees. The second phase of data collection was from political parties. Permission was provided by the political parties' authorities to interview women party activists (APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY). According to Gray (2014), only upon receiving approval, the researcher could approach participants to conduct the study.

### **3.13 SUMMARY**

This chapter outlined and discussed the philosophical, methodological and ethical choices that guided this study. It also motivated the research strategy, research methods, research designs, population and sampling choices as well as data analyses methods applied to answer the study's research questions. The overall research approach applied in the study can be summarised as an interpretive paradigm based qualitative research approach that applied an exploratory research design within a phenomenological research strategy. The research was driven by the need to answer research questions from the perspectives and experiences of social actors central to the phenomenon of interest, hence a phenomenology strategy. In terms of data analysis, thematic analysis was considered appropriate for bringing out the exploratory depths from the semi-structured interviews used for data collection. All the choices, methods and approaches applied in the study were duly guided by the views of renowned research scholars like Creswell and Creswell (2018) among others. The next chapter presents the study's data analysis results.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a discussion of data analysis and interpretation of the research results. The analysis covers demographic data interpretation as well. This is motivated by Nwachukwu (2014) who states that in qualitative research analysis, demographic data are essential for an in-depth understanding of the predicaments encountered by participants concerning the phenomenon under review. The chapter is furthered by the themes and sub-themes presented as part of the qualitative analysis aimed at answering the study's three research questions. Data collected from participant interviews were analysed using NVivo software. The data were classified according to themes emerging from the narrative discourse of the participants, guided by Suldana's (2013) qualitative analysis strategies. Literature synthesis was applied to further discuss the participants' perspectives.

#### **4.2 STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

The participants were selected from among women involved in political and politico-administrative functions in MLM. These included women employed in the MLM. The inclusion criterion involved women ward councillors, women political and administrative officers, and women political activists in respective political party branches. This study adopted a purposive sampling technique. Characteristics such as age, race, and educational qualifications, were not used in sample selection. However, Hill, Miller, Benson, and Handley (2016) present that ego, race, gender, ethnicity, and income influence women in accessing leadership positions. These demographics were therefore captured in the analysis below.

**Table 4.1: Selected study participants**

Participants	Study code	Number of participants	Percentage
PR Councillor	PRCA	2	25.0
	PRCB		
Line Manager	LMA	2	25.0
	LMB		
Ward Councillor	WCA	2	25.0
	WCB		
Admin. Officer	OA	2	25.0
	OB		
Total		8	100.0

Source: Author.

Unique codes or pseudonyms were developed and assigned to each participant in this study. Pseudonyms ensured the participants' confidentiality. The selected participants and their pseudonyms were as follows:

- Two PR Councillors: PRCA and PRCB
- Two Line Managers: LMA and LMB
- Two ward councillors: WCA and WCB
- Two officers: OA and OB

Each category of the selected senior workers contributed 25% to the total sample.

#### **4.2.1 Participants' age**

Table 4.2 below shows the eight participants' age characteristics.

**Table 4.2: Participants' age**

VARIABLE	SUB-VARIABLE	FREQ.	%
Age	21-34	2	25.0
	35 – 48	4	50.0
	49-64	1	12.5
	65+	1	12.5

	Total	8	100.0
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Source: Author.

The participants' ages were profiled and divided into four categories. Two women were aged between 21 to 34, four between 35 to 48, one between 49 to 64 and one above 65

#### 4.2.2 Participants' race

According to Manyando (2020), racial integration policies in local municipalities are not formulated or implemented correctly, as rural municipalities lack racial diversity. The study, therefore, captured race as a variable of interest. Table 4.3 below shows the MLM participants' racial dynamics.

**Table 4.3: Participants' race**

VARIABLE	SUB-VARIABLE	FREQ.	%
Race	Black	7	87.5
	Coloured	1	12.5
	Other	0	00.0
	Total	8	100.0

Source: Author's own creation

As shown in Table 4.3 above, almost all participants were black women and one was coloured. Other racial groups were not represented in the study. The reason for black women's dominance in the study is that the Municipality is in rural areas where most of the population are black isiZulu speaking women (MLM, 2020).

#### 4.2.3 Participants' marital status

The reason for establishing the study participants' marital status was to explore any possible relationships between marital status and political and governance leadership among participants.

**Table 4.4: Participants' marital status**

VARIABLE	SUB-VARIABLE	FREQ.	%
Marital Status	Single	4	50.5
	Divorced	1	12.5
	Widowed	1	12.5
	Married	2	25.0
	Total	8	100.0

Source: Author's own creation

As shown in Table 4.4 above, four of the participants at the time were single, while one was divorced, another one was widowed and two were married. The sample, therefore, included women from diverse marital status backgrounds.

#### **4.2.4 Participants' work experience**

Work experience is a crucial factor for the eligibility for promotion and leadership positions in organisations. It was therefore necessary to understand the relevant experience of each participant in the position they occupied.

**Table 4.5: Participants' working experience**

VARIABLE	SUB-VARIABLE	FREQ.	%
Work experience	0-3	1	12.5
	4-6	4	50.0
	7-9	2	25.0
	10+	1	12.5
	Total	8	100.0

Source: Author's own creation

Four participants had held leadership positions in the Municipality for four to six years while one had zero to three years' experience; two had seven to nine years' experience and one had over ten years of experience. All the interviewed participants, therefore, had at least one year of work experience with a sizeable number having between four to six years of work experience.

### 4.3 THEMES EMANATING FROM RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1

The study's first research objective was to *explore the levels and nature of women's inclusion in political and governance leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality*. Thematic analysis of data relating to Objective 1 yielded three subthemes. These are firstly summarised in Table 4.6 below before being further discussed.

**Table 4.6: Theme 1: The levels and nature of women inclusion in political and governance leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality**

Subthemes - Theme 1	Political domain contributors	Administrative domain contributors
1. Male dominance and low women engagement in municipal political and administrative structures	WCA	LMA, LMB, OA
2. The extent of leadership skills development in women over time	PRCA, PRCB	LMA, LMB
3. Patriarchal and male-dominated nature of political parties; the past versus the present	PRCB, WCB	OA

Source: Author.

#### 4.3.1 Male dominance and low women engagement in municipal political and administrative structures

Male dominance in municipal structures was a widely discussed concern with all research participants contributing various views towards this phenomenon. The Municipality management team comprises 15 members (MLM, 2021). There are only four women in the unit; this is not in line with government policies of gender equity. The gender ratio in the management team was 4:11, meaning only 27% of the senior management team were women. The participants' responses in **Error! Reference source not found.** indicate a lack of compliance with the 50:50 rule in the Municipality. LMA talked about how the 50:50 principles might not be implemented toward the equal inclusion of women in senior positions in the Municipality:

*“Even though they are trying for the 50:50 principle in senior positions, women are still not appointed in the top-level management and are less likely to be appointed”. [LMA]*

All participants expressed a strong sense of belief that local government, not only in MLM but in South Africa had remained patriarchal in nature despite expected changes towards gender inclusivity. Males set the pace and rules behind women's involvement. Patriarchy as a negative nature was strongly ingrained in political and administrative systems to an extent that taking a leadership position was a major challenge:

*“It becomes very challenging for women to be active in political life when the management structures are male-dominated [WCA]*

*“I think there was never an MLM mayor who is a woman because local government is dominated by males who over the years have been given more opportunities over women to participate in strategic positions”.*

*LMB*

Under such patriarchal structures, there is limited access to leadership and management for women. Participants in the study, among them WCA and OA highlighted that patriarchy-driven political and administrative structures did not respect women as leaders. This in addition to excluding them in power, discouraged them from actively participating in leadership:

*“The concept of women as leaders in the Black South African public sector has been viewed as a tertiary factor, male-dominated leadership positions in the government, OA*

As noted, employment into senior leadership was gendered and had still not moved away from past patriarchal natures. Eagly and Carli (2007) refer to a ‘glass ceiling’ metaphor that exists. This indicates several barriers that women encounter even before they deal with the glass ceiling. They contend that women and males do not have equal access to managerial and leadership positions. They confront various challenges in their journey to fill management positions. Many women had terrible experiences in contesting senior positions in local government. According to Ruzunduge, Zhou, and Chamisa (2020), women in South Africa encounter gender discrimination in organisations. This includes the metaphorical glass ceiling, gender bias, and stereotyping as factors in poor implementation of the Employment Equity Policy and corporate principles.

#### **4.3.2 The extent of leadership skills development in women over time**

While women South Africans faced more oppression including limited access to education and skills development than males in the past. This theme is built on attempts to find out if present-day MLM had over time acquired such leadership skills needed for their success in local government and politics. As noted by PRCB and PRCA, in MLM finding women with the right combination of skills, qualifications and education required for one to fully execute a given leadership role was difficult:

*“Finding women who fully meets the minimum requirements is very difficult, some do have relevant education but lack work experience and those who have worked many years are not furthering their studies”. PRCB*

PRCA further commented that skills shortages were related to the rural nature of MLM where most women were lowly-skilled. PRCA presented the Municipality as an entity that at times wanted to engage women leaders but was limited by their scarcity:

*“Municipalities have no vast choice for appointing women in their strategic positions, in the rural areas there is a shortage of women managers, such becomes a hindrance for women to participate in decision-making platforms”. PRCA*

The above view resonates with described skills and gender characteristics of MLM as discussed by researchers like Sibeko (2018). Unlike in urban areas, most women in rural areas are illiterate, resulting in poverty and teenage pregnancy, leading to school dropouts and orphanhood. According to Sibeko (2018), most girls in MLM got pregnant at age 14 to 17 and did not return to school because they are from child-headed households (CHH), or they are orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). Such social dynamics affecting rural women's education has also affected their progression into leadership over time. Thus, LMB sees educating women as a critical strategy for reversing the above-discussed negative trends:

*“Focusing on educating women up to post-graduate studies and scarce skills like accounting and engineering should be a priority for government development goals to create opportunities for women leadership in strategic governance”. LMB*

LMA recalls her experiences of being hired into leadership purely based on her education acumen. Such experiences reinforce the view that the role of education in politico-administrative leadership can never be underemphasised:

*“I applied as a line manager and my skills are rare and indeed the majority of candidates were male, but I was employed due to my experience and knowledge of the field of management, I was not employed because I am a young woman or because of my acumen”.*

LMA

According to Sibeko (2018) and Mokoena (2018), scarce skills in women are a nationwide concern. This phenomenon is worse in rural areas as women lack access to science and technology. Sibeko’s (2018) view strongly resonates with the study’s finding on the scarcity of leadership skills among rural women.

#### **4.3.3 Patriarchal and male-dominated nature of political parties; the past versus the present**

Historically, women occupied a considerable function in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Women’s participation as political leaders immensely contributed to the freedom and transformation of society. Participants indicated that the function of women in political leadership in the present-day MLM was neglected. Even when occupying leadership positions, women’s authority is undermined. Women’s political leadership in political parties that eventually contributed to municipal councils determined their chances of leading municipalities. Thus, as long as they did not have exposure to political leadership at the political party level, their chances of transforming into local government leadership were equally constrained. This was the case under the current political party structures as highlighted below:

*“I think political power is the control of the appointment of political leaders in the municipalities, women are poorly represented and have little say on such practices”.* PRCB

Such political limitations as WCB saw it, deny the MLM opportunities to get adequate service delivery. This stems from the participants’ belief that women leaders had more to offer in terms of service to communities:

*“Political Parties, structures do not believe in women leadership and women participation in a leadership position such as chairperson of portfolios, speaker or chief whips are male reserved positions, I believe this creates more limitation for women to have an impact on the service delivery system”. WCB*

The above view closely relates to an argument by Opstrips and Villdelse (2015) that the lack of gender diversity in political leadership and top management hinders effective productivity.

OA opined that the same political parties always talked about gender equality, but they were not serious enough to establish gender equality monitoring and evaluation processes in their parties:

*“Political parties do not have a strong policy implementation and evaluation to ensure that there is equal distribution of power and representativeness of women in political positions in the local government”. OA*

According to Carrol and Fox (2014) and Ramosunya (2020) women are restricted by male dominance in the public sector. The lack of political backup for women's election in leadership positions reduces their development, therefore, active participation. This view by Carrol and Fox (2014) is believed to be true by PRCB, OA and WCB. In MLM, as experienced by some participants, the extent of women's leadership engagement and development was generally very slow. Patriarchy in political and governance systems was noted as a force too strong and a force that was not easy to dismantle even with the passage of time.

#### **4.4 THEMES EMANATING FROM RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2**

The study's second research objective was *to explore the power dynamics affecting gender equality in leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality.*

Such power dynamics in local government are envisaged to affect and relate to both the political and administrative leadership spheres. For instance, cadre deployment is a policy the government implemented to ensure balance and a mandate in the public sector for the training and development of individuals in government positions (Chamisa & Shava, 2018). The aim was to ensure the supply of competent

administrative leaders from the political realm into governance and leadership structures (Chamisa & Shava, 2018). The study participants indicated that power dynamics adversely affect the employment and promotion of women into senior positions. Limited women's presentation was established in structures, such as ward committees and portfolio committees. This theme looked at power dynamics in political structures before looking at the same in the governance and administrative structures of the MLM.

**Table 4.7: Theme 2 - The power dynamics affecting gender-equality in leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality**

Subthemes - Theme 2	Political domain contributors	Administrative domain contributors
1. Power dynamics and women in ward and portfolio committees	PRCA, PRCB, WCAQ	OA, LMA
2. Power dynamics and women in administrative and management roles	PRCA, PRCB, WCAQ	LMA, LMB

Source: Author's own creation

#### **4.4.1 Power dynamics and women in ward and portfolio committees**

Several factors influence eligible women's representation in political leadership at the ward level as party leaders, PR councillors, and ward committees. Due to fewer women being elected to these committees, by default, it limits their strategic participation in decision-making processes at the ward level. Participants, however, indicated that women typically hold powerful positions, such as treasurer or chair of committees, as part of decision-making in the Municipality. The doubt is on the influence women have on decision-making. This is captured in PRCA's extract:

*"I was elected as an additional member to participate in the ward committees, and my role is not enough to influence the committee where it is the men who mostly take decisions". PRCA*

OB noted that unbalanced power dynamics resulted in males playing the role of nominating women into political and municipal committees. This even applied in posts that involved women's affairs:

*“I was elected as a party representative to ensure that I represent women issues on the council. The nomination is still being influenced by males as the political party structures”. [OB]*

Despite policies implemented for gender equality, women lack support in nominations for political leadership. Participants confirmed that women in political structures receive inadequate support in the structure. They lack support to ensure nomination and voting power to encourage women in political leadership.

*“Women lack support within political structures, they often do not stand a chance to survive competition with men in leadership positions”. WCA*

Thus, men used their numbers to nominate and appoint other men. With men being dominant in political structures, women found themselves at the mercy of men when it comes to being voted into committees.

At the grassroots levels, women are excluded from participating as chairpersons. Participants expressed that in public participation structures, such as ward committees and portfolio committees for decision-making, women still have a limited say on the matters of governance. As stated in LMA’s case below, administrative leadership jobs are determined by political entities like portfolio committees that do not gender-balanced and are dominated by men:

*“I applied to be a Line manager but the decision in portfolio committees is still favouring the male counterparts, women do not have influence in the committees as compared to men”. LMA*

In their experience, LMA, therefore, records having suffered employment prejudice as a woman because of gender and because of male dominance in committees. Matoane (2015) found relatable findings that women were poorly represented even at community-level politics. This tended to stifle their capacity to support other women.

While not all women in the MLM had experiences of being denied senior leadership positions in the Municipality as a result of their gender like LMA. According to the participants, some women occupy powerful positions through qualifications, but there is still a divergence concerning influence and decision-making in service delivery and IDP formulation. The study illustrates that women can hold an occupation, but they usually become victims of tokenism when it came to decision-making. A lack of faith

in women leadership was observed as a challenge towards implementing employment equity policies in the Municipality. In PRCB's words:

*"As a woman, no men will take your voice as from the political parties' men mainly take final decisions". PRCB*

LMA further commented that as a seemingly powerful woman leader she did not have the desired influence that is supposed to go along with that power as men undermine her contributions:

*"I am a deputy chair of a portfolio committee but men with other general members seem to have more voting power to influence the process of decision making, this has a sense of demoralising to women who have great opportunities to grow". LMA*

It emerged that women leaders are not provided adequate political backup or support to lead in the municipalities compared to males. This created a severe challenge concerning advocating for women empowerment policies in the council as a political structure of governance.

*"I have seen that at the branch level both women and men do not place so much confidence on women for issues of leadership and governance influence, but men are still viewed as "Obaba" (father figures) as the ones who can only make things happen and take a lead in strategic decisions". WCA*

Women's political, administrative and strategic contributions to the Municipality's affairs were also diminished through stereotyped gendered roles and responsibilities assignments. Women were often included in high-powered committees but were unfortunately given low-level roles with limited decision-making as noted by WCB:

*"Women in committees are additional members who play a role of operational matters, such as secretarial duties or organising events, their presence does not include decision making that drives service delivery at the local level". WCB*

Women are, therefore, inadequately presented in leadership positions at ward committees and portfolio committees as influential positions or crucial to decision-

making in IDP processes. lack of representation at local committees' networks restricts opportunities for influence on developmental processes. While the growing number of women in leadership in the MLM could have grown, the quality of such leadership has been hampered by the patriarchy-driven power dynamics.

Besides their low representation in political and administrative structures women also played very constricted roles in trade unions and political associations that were considered pillars of political strengths in municipalities. Women's potential ability to influence each other to rise into leadership and to influence males towards gender-equal structures is curtailed. This also means that there are fewer women in unions who can role model other women as union leaders:

*“Women are also not well represented in unions, both IMATU and SAMU are predominantly led by men, so women are still viewed as followers”.*

*PRCA*

Participants thus expressed that even justice is not conducted to ensure that women are stewards in unions in the Municipality.

The participants' views that even when women are nominated or elected to ward and portfolio committees they are still powerless to affect important decisions highlights the formal and informal types of power as discussed by Bates, Parker and Ogden (2018). as part of power dynamics in MLM. Women have formal power that is however undermined by male informal power. The view that informal power can be attributed to an “unearned privilege” or to “strong relationships with decision-makers and peers” (Bates, Parker & Ogden, 2018:1) is also highlighted as males felt seemed to believe that they were more privileged than women simply by gender.

From past studies, Van Zyl et al. (2015) state that the lack of feminist leadership in the community hinders women's empowerment, participation, and leadership in governance structures. Miller (2016) also established that women's leadership is critical for promoting feminist engagement within gender-oppressive systems. Miller (2016) articulates that placing women into social and political positions in community-based structures is critical not only for the women in leadership but for society. Such concerns are also raised by the participants who believe that women in political structures are an indispensable tool for dismantling patriarchy and gender exclusion. However, and unfortunately, women in MLM are not extensively empowered to be part

of community leadership structures that can help in extending the fight against gender inequality. The power dynamics in the Municipality, as highlighted are skewed towards males who also held significant informal power. They related to women politicians not as peers but as their superiors. Going by Guo's (2014) discussion on power distance, the MLM grassroots committees were characterised by high power distances with women being significantly less powerful and being unsatisfied with the power distribution status quo.

Eagly and Carli (2007) assert that women encounter vestiges of prejudice and resistance to women's leadership. Such resistance could be subtly exercised through undermining their contributions and openly through outright insubordination. The findings above, on the subtler form of resistance that include not taking their decisions seriously, therefore, resonate with Eagly and Carli's views. According to Van Zyl et al. (2015), feminist leadership must propound the qualitative inclusion of women in leadership positions previously reserved for men, within cultural, traditional, and religious spaces. This view is also shared by WCA which saw the father figure aspect of male leadership overriding the authority and power of women political and administrative leaders.

Literature on research in MLM (Manqele, 2018, Mthembu, 2019) identified male dominance in management structures such as the municipal council, the management committee, and the Municipality's executive committee. This exhibited inadequate gender equity participation in the holistic state of the Municipality management structure.

#### **4.4.2 Power dynamics and women in administrative and management roles**

While the previous subtheme focused on women's leadership from mostly a political power dynamics perspective, this theme looked at women in administrative leadership in the MLM taking cognisance of the thin separation between the two.

At local government, women's representation and participation in the Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC), EXCO and Local Labour Forums (LLF), for instance, are part of the District Municipality. The study indicated that even though women are appointed into some administrative leadership positions, their influence is limited in governance and representation. This trend is also reported within political

appointments in the Municipality as well. Women are just office barriers to abide by the department of labour or SALGA policies.

*“Lack of political will for women to be selected into governance structures is another factor that hinders women participation in the decision making in the Municipality. Women always deputise, you hardly see them appointed to be Mayors or Speakers, it is a general trend in all the rural municipalities.” LMA*

*“Women are not supported to be in leadership positions, especially to represent women in terms of employment equity in senior management positions”. LMB*

Women complain about the processes and adaption of policies from political parties to incorporate them into management structures in the Municipality. There is a lack of diversity in leadership; therefore, women are discouraged from applying for senior positions:

*“Women lack support to be trusted in managerial positions, I have been in a leadership position for years now but still feel the struggle of gender oppression although I have consistently produced satisfying results with the department”. LMA*

The supposedly responsible authorities including CoGTA, and SALGA were also blamed for not supporting women managerial and administrative leadership in municipalities:

*“I think there is not enough effort in practice to push for women leadership in the local government through Cogta and SALGA as to ensure that local government, women managers are encouraged and, in most instances, compelled to go for training and attend courses at academic institutions”. PRCA*

PRCB also pointed at the limited involvement of women organisations in activities that could support women's political and administrative leadership specifically the IDP development processes. Like with political leadership, this stifled women's chances of getting important experiential learning that could enhance their leadership capacities:

*“Availability of women to stand on the chairmanship positions is another problem, for instance, women organisations are not given a platform in the process of the IDP development, and such does not represent the needs of young girls and women”. PRCB*

According to the research conducted by AAWW (2021), despite gender discrimination, leadership is not inheritably masculine. Most leaders are males because of the platform society and different cultures provided them. The findings also highlight a strong existence of informal power in which males took authority over women while disregarding the latter's formal power (Bates, Parker & Ogden, 2018). According to Carrol and Fox (2014), women's governance positions imply that they have more say in the governmental structures. However, as noted in the above finding women leaders reported not being empowered by the governance positions bestowed upon them. Hyde (2014) discovered that essential ingredients of leadership have no relation to the leader's gender. The gender difference is brought about by the people's willingness to be led. Women adopt transformational leadership through which they motivate their followers and have charisma and intellectual stimulation. The study however presents a picture in which leadership was gendered and followers and peers alike tended not to respect women leaders. Women experienced limited participation in government structures in the MLM. A lack of effective integration of policies and implementation exists. Like with political leadership, women also faced administrative leadership challenges that included not being adequately and honestly empowered to lead and exercise their decision-making powers.

#### **4.5 THEMES EMANATING FROM RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3**

The study's third and last research objective was *to explore challenges women encounter in securing senior positions within the Mtubatuba Local Municipality*. As a theme, it could be expressed as Challenges women encounter in securing senior positions within the Mtubatuba Local Municipality.

The participants established that women experience diverse challenges in governance, especially in securing promotion into strategic leadership positions. Various challenges emerged during the interviews, and these were transformed into subthemes under the challenge's theme.

**Table 4.8: Theme 3: Challenges women encounter in securing senior positions within the Mtubatuba Local Municipality**

Subthemes - Theme 3	Political domain contributors	Administrative domain contributors
1. The divergence between policy availability and implementation	PRCA, WCA	LMA, LMB, OA
2. Cultural beliefs and the suppression of women leadership	PRCAA, PRCB, WCA, WCB	OA
3. Political instability, corruption and male domination	PRCA, WCA	LMB
4. Hostile working environments	PRCA	LMA, LMB
5. Negative self-judgements and inspirational challenges	WCA	OA, OB, LMB
6. Education and skills in political and governance leadership	PRCA	OA, LMA

Source: Author.

#### **4.5.1 The divergence between policy availability and implementation**

The purpose of the Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998, is to achieve equity in the workplace by promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment. This would eliminate unfair discrimination while implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups. The act is to ensure fair representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce. Another step in the advancement of women's empowerment and gender equity is that of the selection and enactment of significant arrangements and enactment. Among those are the National approach rules on women's empowerment and gender balance (2000), the Local Gender Policy Framework (2006), the Employment Equity Act (1996) with the affirmative activity strategy and, the Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (2011) still to be turned into law.

The participants generally agreed that at both the governmental level there were various instruments, including laws, policies and strategies that had been developed to facilitate the ascendancy of women into leadership positions. This was in accordance with the legislative requirements briefly highlighted above. The

Municipality also had policies aimed at promoting women's leadership in resonance with national policies. Whilst the policies existed, they were not widely promoted or implemented:

*“There is no promotion of policies and recruitment strategies that follow the 50:50 principles to ensure that there is gender balance among the two in terms of women empowerment”. [PRCA]*

WCA believed that in their content, the policies were adequate for supporting women's ascendancy into positions of power but were not being put into practice and LMA concurred with the view that the existing policies were not being put into practice describing this situation as a policy gap:

*“There are several policies that are designed to strengthen the presence of women and their ability to secure strategic positions in the Municipality”. WCA*

*“The government policies for gender equity are available but the problem is the gap between policy and implementation at the spheres”. LMA*

LMB presented a slightly different view that existing policies were being implemented. It was the quality of implementation that resulted in their failure. Thus, there were two views on policy implementation – non-implementation and failed or unsuccessful implementation. Both resulted in the maintenance of the male dominance in leadership as the Municipality's *status quo*.

*“There are policies, but the implementing is unprecedented as compared to the expected outcomes, there is failure to implement these policies, where it is characterised by absolute non-achievement”. LMB*

Political parties, as per the participants' experiences played a role in this poor policy implementation situation. Political parties in the Municipality failed to advance the policies for women empowerment as expected. This involves educating women on their rights and functions in ascending into leadership positions. This failure created limitations concerning leadership positions being attractive to women:

*“Political parties fail to advance for the successful implementation of gender equality in the Municipality, men are seen to be powerful leaders*

*as compared to women, there is a huge gap in the policy implementation system". OB*

This view was also shared by Amon (2017) who believed that policies in political parties still fail to bridge the existing divergences in political leadership positions.

*"There are women Line Managers that are recently employed in strategic positions, but there is still a gap in the implementation of gender equity policies at different structures, especially political portfolios women are less represented". WCA*

LMA believed that gender equality policies meant to enhance women's ascendancy into political and governance leadership were not subjected to monitoring and evaluation processes. This has adversely affected the success of policies and strategies designed to support and facilitate women leadership:

*"Issues of lack of monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation are a key challenge as to ensure that the Municipality successful implement the policies". LMA*

*"In the Municipality, there is awareness of the policies pertaining to the issues of gender balances and the redress, but the problem is that policies do not succeed or fail on their own merits because women are still afraid to ascend to top positions". PRCA*

The monitoring and evaluation challenge's view forwarded by LMA strongly agrees with Opstrips and Villdelse's (2015) argument that policies implemented in a jurisdiction may fail to bring about visible change quickly. The need to continuously review the progress and effectiveness of these policies cannot be over-emphasised as a means of ensuring they are effectively taking society towards desired targets (Opstrips & Villdelse, 2015). Dlanjwa (2018) also relates that local government level monitoring and evaluation on gender equality has been poor and ineffective.

As articulated in SALGA policy documents, municipalities need to adapt and operate according to Act 108 of 1996 and the *White Paper on local government Act 52 of 1997*, present and seemingly understood in the Municipality. This study has established that majority of these policies in MLM lack proper implementation. These policies do not

help to fill the existing divergence in the Municipality. This is captured in the extracts from PRCA and OB's interview schedules.

According to Matsiliza (2017), South African municipalities have been overwhelmed by service delivery challenges, poor planning and compliance with existing policies, and legislative framework relating to effective implementation of constitutional imperatives. This, in part, has affected their capacity to effectively implement anything. According to Carrol and Fox (2014), women held various political functions at a national level, but in local leadership positions, this was not the case suggesting poor gender equality policy implementation at the local government sphere. This poor local level gender equality policy implementation is evident in the MLM, judging from the participants' perceptions and experiences.

#### **4.5.2 Cultural beliefs and the suppression of women leadership**

The participants identified the powerful influence of culture and gender biases in critical support for women leaders in the workplace. This results in gender inequality in the political environment.

*“My senior male manager once said to me, this Municipality can never be led by women, our fore politicians will turn in their graves”. OA*

*“Ngeke siphathwe umfazi”*, translated (we cannot be led by a woman). This Zulu phrase presents an immense gender discrimination slogan against women in a typical patriarchal Zulu society, whether in a political or administrative atmosphere. Traditionally in the South African public sector, women are commonly leaders in health facilities, such as clinics and hospitals, attributable to the dominance of women healthcare workers. Unlike in other departments, such as municipalities, women lack leadership positions; patriarchal tendencies have been long discovered in literature as a critical barrier for black African women to lead. Such attitudes are among some experiences women in the study encountered:

*“Working with traditional men is a challenge because you have to think about their position in the society, more than political and administration officials”. PRCA*

Early research by Marsh et.al, 1961 and Miller 1952 found that women's participation in rural government positions was limited compared to males who have been widely

recognised as powerful leaders. The traditional protagonists define women as holders of caregiver positions and some are apathetic about their development. The study concurs with Marsh et al.'s (1961) findings.

*“Culturally and religiously women are still limited to supporting roles, they are expected to follow their husbands, or any other men assumed superior to them”. WCA*

Marsh et.al (1961) observes that wives of traditional leaders or elite women have always been reserved for leadership in rural communities. Culture observed women as incapable and second to males concerning leadership. This was supported by religious teachings, such as Islamic and Christianity, in the earliest years.

Despite changes in laws and general modernisation of society, rigid cultural precepts and tenets remained a strong force challenging women's effective participation in political and governance leadership in the MLM:

*“The problem is cultural factors that support the connotation that women are weaker, can only be housewives and that there cannot be representation of women in local political structures especially young woman”. WCB*

Despite gender equity policies and diversity management in the constitutional imperatives, most participants confirmed a lack of respect, traditionally for women to take influential positions, such as mayor and chairperson of critical portfolios. According to ILO (2020), women were limited to occupations as farmers, secretaries, wage earners because of gender inequalities in the public sector.

*“It is not an easy thing, women even if they are leaders, they are limited by the nature of being women, you have to submit to men”. WCB*

The predominant attitude of women with no final say on governance issues became a universal challenge in the Municipality sector. Participants confirmed no sense of position equality and *status quo* between women and males in the Municipality. The inclination perpetuates such traditional practices, placing women as inferior in a system designed to ensure women do not take decisions for themselves; and where males hold traditional tendencies that women need males to think and provide for them. According to ILO (2020), a similar issue is that women are primarily provided

second preference to occupy skills and hold critical positions in government, with fewer opportunities for education and training, which potentially limits them. Women are encountered with cultural family duties, pulling them down to go further beyond the glass ceiling.

*“Mtubatuba is a very traditional society women have never been trusted with strong positions to lead, such sociocultural barriers limit the development and growth of women leaders who can be entrusted for making a change in the Municipality”. PRCB*

Cultural tendencies, creating a metaphorical glass ceiling for women, are prevalent in the present study. Mittal, Sharma, and Srivastava (2015) also expressed disappointment in stereotyping among traditional barriers, affecting women at the workplace with the fallacy that they are less traditional barriers.

*“It is a challenge for women to occupy leadership and strategic positions because the Mtubatuba Municipality is a traditional community because men are seen as leaders and women as followers”. OA*

The traditional society still prefers males to lead regardless of how powerful or skilful women in the room are. Participants confirmed limited growth and space for women to develop themselves for managerial or strategic leadership positions in the Municipality. Like other cases in the literature, South African women are marginalised, or they encounter severe opposition when attempting to lead in positions where males are perceived as more eligible. According to Huang and Gamble (2015), this has cost women opportunities for promotion.

The participants were optimistic that women could lead, indicating more significant commitment towards their provided opportunities in the Municipality. It was also evident that women feel challenged to lead among men, but they seem to have a positive attitude and are self-motivated to advance their careers to greater heights:

*“From the olden days, women in Mtubatuba were perceived to be less educated as compared to men in the society, such has created a gap for women to be less represented in the managerial positions”. PRCA*

Preconditions set in socio-cultural values are perceived to put women in an inferior position in assuming leadership positions. Women are excluded from high-level

positions because they have not filled such positions before; they are, therefore, between the fear of the unknown and gender discrimination.

*Traditional attitudes that women must be cheerleaders, caregivers and secretariats in governance still exist in Mtubatuba Municipality. Women feel inferior due to their gender, as a result, they are not contesting any political or senior administrative positions in the Municipality". LMB*

*"The patriarchal beliefs that women cannot lead in the council or among men is still dominating in this Municipality, as result, they feel threatened to stand for nomination in the political positions". WCA*

The view that traditional barriers could exert a strong influence against women's participation in leadership is also shared by several other scholars among them Ruzungunde, Zhou and Chamisa (2020). The study participants strongly believe that patriarchal systems in the Municipality directly influence the appointment and promotion of women in strategic positions. Traditional cultural elements are also seen as too powerful to easily dismantle in rural communities like MLM.

#### **4.5.3 Political instability, corruption and male domination**

Gender power dynamics in the MLM are also discussed as a function of the general political instability that devils the Municipality. The consequential social and political disturbances of political infighting discourage women from taking leadership positions and roles when they emerge. This view is expressed by PRCA who stated that:

*"Mtubatuba Municipality has always been seen as a politically unstable environment, women leaders are distancing themselves from the political wars, hence men tend to be dominant in the council than women". [PRCA]*

WCA also concurred with the above view adding that men had created an environment marred with the uncertainty that made it difficult for women to take leadership in. Amid the political confusion and instabilities in the municipalities, women find themselves lost in the chaos. WCA also comments that women found it comparatively difficult to garner political support in vociferous, politically charged male-dominated councils and this, in turn, intimidated them:

*“Women are intimidated when they are striving to tackle political leadership positions, sometimes they face a strong opposition from male counterparts who have more political support”. WCA*

Another reason why women were being excluded from top politico-administrative roles was their generally less corrupt nature. As per WCB’s views, women were less inclined to partake in corrupt activities. This positive trait was used against them by male counterparts who preferred to elevate persons who could readily yield to existing corruption-driven inner circles.

*“Women are not easily convinced at work, and they are afraid to be part of the corrupt groups, so men are afraid of them to include them in their circles”. WCB*

Under the above circumstances, the challenge highlighted in the study is that to command respect, one had to be part of a cluster of corrupt individuals against one’s leadership perspectives and personal nature.

This is reiterated by PRCB who added that at the political level, the “just” nature of women is used against them by men:

*“Men look down on women, because we try to be just and we are powerless, they undermine women regardless of the party”. PRCB*

Krinzman’ (2015) and Elias’ (2018) view women as transformational leaders who were more likely to practice fairness and integrity than men. This transformational aspect is described as a positive leadership trait that can facilitate effective goal realisation. However, in contrast, in the findings above, women’s transformational leadership traits are being used against them in the corrupt and unstable nature of MLM. Various reports confirm the MLM as a centre of political instability. A report by the *NCOP Cooperative Governance & Traditional Affairs, Water and Sanitation and Human Settlements* highlight that in 2015, a decision to disband the Municipality as a result of severe and incessant political infighting had to be taken. The same report stressed that such instability had deteriorated into political violence in some of the Municipality’s communities (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2015). This confirms political violence intensity in MLM as discussed by PRCA and WCA. The same report also highlights the unprofessional nature of political rivalry in the MLM (Parliamentary Monitoring

Group, 2015), the same nature the participants highlight as against the general nature of most women leaders. A 2018 United Nations Women (UN Women) report titled “*Violence Against Women in Politics*” popularises the concept of violence against women in politics (VAWP) asserting that it tended to stifle women's participation in the political space (UN Women, 2018). The same report strongly related VAWP with the common challenge of gender-based violence (GBV). The UN Women’s assertion is evident in the participants’ views that women sometimes chose to back down in the light of political violence. With South Africa being listed as a society in which GBV occurs at alarmingly high frequencies, one can infer that women leaders’ decisions to back down from some political fights are in response to a manifestation of GBV within the political space as noted by UN Women.

#### **4.5.4 Hostile working environments**

Unbalanced gender-power dynamics, patriarchal attitudes and cultural factors contributed to the creation of a generally hostile political and administrative workspace for women leaders and women aspiring to lead.

*“Some Male employees exhibit negative attitude towards women participation, sometimes adoption of their ideas is difficult, and the implementation of the ideas is a problem. [PRCA]*

Thus, even as leaders, the adverse working environment which LMA takes to be a function of traditionalism leads to a negative and hurtful classification of women within both the administrative and political workspace. The use of hard descriptions such as “incompetent” and “weak” in reference to women emphasises the harshness of the environment they work in as leaders:

*“Traditionalism carries contradistinctive forces such as gender stereotyping, sexism tendencies that classify women as incompetent and emotionally weaker than men to lead in strategic positions”. LMA*

It is therefore not surprising that some women chose lower-level administrative occupations in the Municipality to circumvent the more adversarial high-level positions:

*“Women are more as interns and clerks because there is a scarcity of women who avail themselves for the senior positions”. LMB*

According to Logel et al. (2012), negative stereotypes harm individual performance. Fitzgoral (2017) and Jones (2017), believe that males feel intimidated when they are doing similar jobs or occupying the same positions as women, so they hinder women's growth. Such intimidation pushes them to act counterproductively against women leaders. In PRCB's experiences, such counterproductive tendencies included excessive scrutinisation of women's efforts with the intent to find fault in them: According to Buchanan et al. (2012), not only males who exhibit biases and discrimination against women leaders but women employees or followers have indicated discrimination against women leaders.

#### **4.5.5 Negative self-judgements and inspirational challenges**

Amongst the participants, there were some views that women sometimes let themselves down by displaying negative traits and characteristics that impede their respect as political and administrative leaders. One such view was that women firstly failed to believe in themselves as leaders and secondly failed to believe in the leadership of other women as well. LMB was among the participants who expressed this notion:

*“Women do not believe in other women's leadership; they still elect and support male counterparts in the process of governance and administrative structures. Those women who happen to be elected became alienated and hard to work with”. LMB*

As per LMB's experiences, this attitude and frame of mind negatively affected the few women who ascended into administrative and political leadership as they felt alienated and unsupported by fellow women. This attitude, therefore, relates to the poor women leaders' support themes unveiled in this analysis but this time the lack of support is not from political and governance systems but fellow women. The situation is further worsened by the view that some women supported the patriarchal dominance and the suppression of women leadership:

*“Pity some women still support the trend” [OA]*

Other negative characteristics highlighted in the analysis are that women leaders failed to garner confidence because they failed to appreciate the situation around them. The existing political uncertainty which is viewed as a norm is seen as confusing:

*“...women are terrified to take leadership roles because it is not clear to them what is wrong or right “. WCA*

Thus, women leaders are distrusted by other women in political structures while at the same time they felt undermined by male dominance. Such views however do not go uncontested as other participants see women as confident and capable leaders who had already proven their leadership superiority ages ago.

A lack of confidence exists in women leadership in MLM women are undermined leading to low confidence. In the absence of effective leadership mentorship, such negative views are bound to persist given the deep entrenchment of male domination in leadership in MLM:

*“Women in local government lack mentors and role models because the sector is predominantly a male dominant sector; such have become a challenge that hinders their professional development and growth. While a response from*

OB opines that in the private sector, there was greater availability of mentors who can inspire women to be confident of themselves and to aspire for greatness:

*“There is no adequate inspiration for women leaders; one has to do the work expected to do and meet the targets, unlike in private companies where you are allocated a mentor to inspire you”. OB*

OA however notes that women should also appreciate and allow themselves to be inspired by other women outside the political realm who have succeeded in challenging patriarchal environments:

*“The source of inspiration in the local government for women can be outside political parties, most inspiration comes from within or other women who have been into politics before”. OA*

Women leaders in MLM lack professional support primarily from their subordinates. This is observed in both male and women subordinates. Continuum in the political development for women to be included on hierarchy influences and authority are less communicated.

*“In the past women in Mtubatuba have successfully been in political positions but not as dominating like men so it is a problem for women to believe that it is possible to lead in such a situation”. WCA*

*“In my department, there are more males since it’s a council, most people elect males as political leaders because they believe men have more power than women [LMB].*

In the Municipality, women diminished the courage to apply or avail themselves of leadership positions. The view that personal confidence is a limiting factor in women's leadership is discussed by Mokoena (2018). Nidiffer, 2010 and Latu et al. (2019) alongside the ILO (2020) share similar sentiments on the importance of women's leadership role modelling. ILO (2020) notes that when women are elevated into power they become role models that can inspire girls and younger women to stride towards leadership and career success. With fewer women in leadership, such developmental opportunities are lost.

According to Fernandez (2017), negative self-assessments of women's skills and external biases appear in job choices. This may result from socialisation or cultural beliefs about gendered job functions. This tendency was more prevalent in the past and is still persistent in women in rural areas (Holman, 2017). This view that long years of being oppressed as a gender continue to affect leadership confidence in women is also seen as a reality by WCA, LMB and others. A study by Kadiresan and Jared (2015) discovered that one of the biggest obstacles that perpetuate male dominance in government leadership positions is the preventive expectations and biases coerced on women in rural communications. Such prejudices involve promoting a narrative that women were weak and non-courageous and could not therefore lead.

Van Zyl et al. (2015) also allude that women are few in leadership because of the widely perceived aspect of a lack of job promotions. Rosiner (1990) established that some women have internalised that they cannot be great leaders. A determinant for securing leadership positions or striving for promotion or advancement into senior positions or leadership positions in the public participation sector is beyond them. Van Zyl et al. (2015) find that another detrimental factor is that women, especially in rural areas, have low self-esteem attributable to sociocultural perceptions of women in rural communities. These factors also limit women's participation in leadership in ward

committees and portfolios. Going by the participants' experiences, this view seems true as some women still believed that leadership was a male domain and women were not capacitated for it.

#### **4.5.6 Education and skills in political and governance leadership**

Participants expressed the views that the lack of adequate qualifications, work experience and scarce skills was also a hindrance to women's leadership progression. Some participants however believed that political leadership skills did not necessarily require long academic histories but could be developed within the Municipality. OA opined that unfortunately, there was limited support for developing governance skills among the so-called "ordinary people". As furthered by OA, as most women did not participate in forums that could equip them, with the relevant leadership and governance skills, they lost this opportunity:

*"The majority of women do not have leadership roles in the Portfolio committees and Local labour Forums, remember these committees and forums are supposed to train even ordinary people on working within the government". OA*

LMA also blamed patriarchal systems for not creating adequate opportunities for women to get political education if they chose to:

*"Women are not having a place in the political leadership, political education of women itself is a skill that is lacking for creating opportunities for them to participate in decision-making". LMA*

Women are less recognised as heroes in the local government sphere compared to males. The challenge this created was twofold. Firstly, it denies up and coming women leaders the chance of being confidently mentored by other successful women leaders. Secondly, it adversely affected women's leadership confidence.

These challenges are highlighted by PRCA below who stated that:

*"There are few women who are mentored or role model by other women in senior management". PRCA*

Women continue to lack adequate skills and experience for senior or leadership positions. The above view also takes the discussion to the roles of patriarchy in

women's leadership. The patriarchal nature of local government discussed by among other participants LMA and WCA cyclically denied women skills resulting in them being denied leadership opportunities. This scenario resonates with Eagly and Carli's (2007) view of women's leadership being a labyrinth set up by male-dominated systems. This study concluded that limited education and training for women contribute to poor women representation and promotion in securing managerial and leadership positions in cadre deployment and administrative posts.

#### **4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter analysed the qualitative data that came from semi-structured interviews with eight women in leadership capacities with the MLM political and administrative realms. Three themes emerged. The themes and their subthemes present the Mtubatuba Local Municipality as a precinct characterised by severe gender inequalities in leadership at the political and administrative levels. The data showed unbalanced power dynamics in which males in leadership had more power than women in leadership. Also, the former exercised informal power that undermined the latter's authority and influence. The power dynamics discussed were also a function of fewer women being in local government and politics. As men tended to nominate and vote for other men in committees, women were severely disadvantaged by low numbers. The study also found the strong and pervading effect of patriarchy and traditional cultures in perpetuating inequalities in leadership representation. There were also subthemes that political instability, corruption and male domination, hostile working environments, negative self-judgements and inspirational challenges among women and education and skills in political and governance leadership also affected women leadership in the MLM. The Next chapter concludes the study, giving recommendations appropriate for addressing the above-outlined challenges.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Using thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews from eight women in political and administrative domains of the MLM, the previous chapter unearthed 11 subthemes under three main themes. This chapter concludes the study based on these findings. It provides recommendations on how the Municipality can improve women's representation in leadership and gives recommendations for future studies that can advance the knowledge base on gender, power, dynamics and leadership. The chapter starts with a recap of the study's objectives and discusses how these were met. It also highlights the study's limitations.

#### **5.2 AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The study aimed to understand and appreciate the factors and dynamics affecting women's participation in both political and administrative leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality. The study applied a phenomenological research strategy that looked at women's leadership as a phenomenon of interest from the experiences and perspectives of the social actors of interest. The phenomenological strategy enabled the researcher the query issues of interest from women political and administrative leaders.

##### **5.2.1 Research objectives**

To recap, the study had three research objectives directly emanating from the stud's main aim. These were:

1. To explore the levels and nature of women inclusion in political and governance leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality
2. To explore the power dynamics affecting gender equality in leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality
3. To explore challenges women, encounter in securing senior positions within the Mtubatuba Local Municipality

The findings to these objectives are discussed in the next section.

### **5.3 THE STUDY'S FINDINGS**

The study was able to meet the above research objectives. Using thematic analysis, 10 subthemes emerged under three themes in their totality providing answers to the study's research questions. Findings relating to each of the above objectives are discussed below.

#### **5.3.1 Research objective 1: To explore the levels and nature of women inclusion in political and governance leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality**

The study findings showed that gender inequality was a major challenge affecting women's ascendancy into leadership positions. The Municipality was found to be lacking in terms of supporting women leaders in both the political and administrative realms. These findings were made in three subthemes:

- Male dominance and low women engagement in municipal political and administrative structures.
- The extent of leadership skills development in women over time and
- Patriarchal and male-dominated nature of political parties; the past versus the present.

Under the first subtheme, it emerged that women's inclusion in leadership was very low. Municipality data further showed that there were only 27% women in leadership positions. This is far from achieving the 50/50 policy as prescribed by the department of labour. The study concurred with the literature that there is a dominance of males in senior positions in the Municipality. The second sub-theme highlighted a reality that not much has been done to effectively facilitate leadership skills development in women and there was a contested view that the Municipality often failed to find "qualified" women leaders as a result. The last subtheme highlighted that the nature and extent of patriarchal leadership had not moved much over the years and continue to overshadow women's leadership. The above findings agreed with views from the literature including perspectives by Eagly and Carli (2007), Carrol and Fox (2014), Sibeko (2018), relating to the male-dominated nature of leadership.

### **5.3.2 Research objective 2: To explore the power dynamics affecting gender equality in leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality**

The study met this objective through three subthemes related to this objective.

These were:

- Power dynamics and women in ward and portfolio committees
- Power dynamics and women in administrative and management roles

In the first subtheme above, it emerged that the power dynamics in ward and portfolio committees as major political committees was skewed towards the male gender. Women were not being nominated and elected to such committees as males chose to be led by other males. A few women who took part were nominated by males and had to drive the male agendas in these committees. The second subtheme dealt more with appointment and promotion into administrative leadership structures and positions. Such structures included the more administrative the Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC), municipal executive committee (EXCO). Thus, women were not only excluded from senior administrative and executive structures but also grassroots level political entities like ward committees. This highlighted the extent of their exclusion in leadership. In MLM, women in ward and portfolio committees do not hold any influence in decision-making. Even those who occupy the leadership positions often fall into the trap of tokenism. Women lack political support from both males and women within their political parties. This has had a demoralising effect on their will to participate, even on issues that concern their authority actively. Males lead the adaption of policies to promote women in the Municipality. This has resulted in the lack of diversity in leadership. Women also shun political systems marred by violence and corruption as is the MLM case. This, according to the findings has resulted in skewed gender-power dynamics in municipalities.

### **5.3.3 Research objective 3: To explore the challenges women encounter in securing senior positions in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality**

Six subthemes fell under this objective that focused on the challenges women encounter in securing senior positions in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality:

- The divergence between policy availability and implementation
- Cultural beliefs and the suppression of women leadership

- Political instability, corruption and male domination
- Hostile working environments
- Negative self-judgements and inspirational challenges
- Education and skills in political and governance leadership

As noted in the previous chapter, there is a divergence between policy formulation and policy implementation on gender equality and political and administrative leadership in MLM. Women lack internal support and political support even in the presence of policies that compel such support. The MLM is also characterised by traditional barriers, which put women as followers rather than leaders. While there is a view that there are many well-documented policies that demand gender equality in leadership in government and politics, these are poorly implemented and with little or no monitoring and evaluation of their progress. The availability of these policies has not lessened the imbalances established in managing the Municipality.

Attributable to cultural barriers, women lack the confidence to challenge senior positions and sometimes look down upon themselves. The lack of role models and mentors who can inspire women to take up leadership in both political and administration was also discussed as a challenge. This was exacerbated by the educational system dynamics where fewer women are educated for leadership. Low support for political leadership training has exacerbated women's slow ascension into leadership.

#### **5.3.4 The findings in relation to the theoretical framework**

In resonance with the arguments set by many socialist feminist theorists, the study's first theme highlights the gendered nature of capitalist political systems (Armstrong, 2020; Napikoski, 2021). In such systems, males are considered the dominant gender and women as a supporting gender with patriarchy being an acceptable system affecting women of all classes (Armstrong, 2020). The gender-power dynamics of a capitalist society give man the power to rule. Relating the second theme to the theoretical framework, there is also an agreement between the two that current systems have failed to eradicate gender inequality (Napikoski, 2021) and such systems include labour movements and governments. As highlighted by Oakton (n.d.) this perceived failure of liberalist systems to resolve gender equality was the main reason behind the emergence of socialist feminism as a different branch from liberal

feminism (Napikoski, 2021). Thobejane (2015) also asserts that there is evidence of failure in South Africa's feminist-driven struggles a view widely associated with the emergence of socialist feminism.

As per the social feminist view, gender inequality is structural. In the study, it is shown that gender inequality is associated with class, with rural women being less considered for leadership compared to urban peers. The role of education in the oppression of women is also highlighted. Under socialist feminism, social cultures, political systems, governance structures, institutions of education and leadership are part of a networked system fully designed for male dominance (Napikoski, 2021). This labyrinth is fully presented in the study. As shown in the findings, women were poorly educated because of patriarchy and in turn were politically and administratively disadvantaged. In this regard, the socialist feminist theory helps to explain the intricate status quo characterised by the low participation of women in leadership. At the same time, the arguments by Thobejane (2015) that the end of apartheid and state-sponsored racism has not resulted in gender equality as premised by social feminists also holds in the MLM. Despite the local Municipality being Black African dominated, gender inequality and discrimination were severely notable. This argument thus points out that while the socialist feminist theory's views are applicable to the MLM, some like the association between racism and gender inequality do not.

#### **5.4 STUDY LIMITATIONS**

The study was conducted as qualitative research confined to MLM. It made use of eight participants purposively selected for interviewing. Its limitations are that its findings cannot be limitlessly implied firstly to represent the views of all women leaders and aspiring leaders. Secondly, its findings cannot be limitlessly inferred from other municipalities. However, because most of its findings were corroborated by other studies, other researchers can cautiously rely on the study when discussing its findings relative to other settings.

#### **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Mtubatuba Local Municipality and other rural municipalities confirmed by additional studies are behind in actively employing gender equality policies for women to participate in leadership positions. Various factors contribute to these challenges,

stiffening policy implementation to improve the situation. This study reveals that women are willingly competing with their male counterparts. Women still encounter worse challenges compared to males. The recommendations aim to improve the practice of balancing the women to male ratio in leadership in MLM.

#### **5.5.1 Find strategies to eradicate violence against women in politics and political violence in general**

The study found that political violence was general against the nature of women who in turn chose to stay out of politics in response to political instability. The Municipality is recommended to seriously consider the role of political violence in constrained women leadership and implement strategies aimed at pacifying its communities while protecting women politicians. UN Women encourages increased political stakeholder engagements in dialogue and programmes aimed at pacifying communities and addressing the root causes of such violence (United Nations Women, 2018). Adequate educational and advocacy programmes should then be implemented based on the established roots behind political violence.

#### **5.5.2 Fighting patriarchy and cultural rigidities holding women leaders down**

Possibly the most difficult task for the Municipality is the need to fight patriarchy and male-dominated cultural traditionalism as phenomena that are deeply entrenched in the MLM community. Long-term and multistakeholder community education that involves traditional leaders as recipients is encouraged. Given that cultural tendencies are acquired from communities, targeting community systems including the local education systems could broaden awareness on women's rights including rights to equal treatment in leadership.

#### **5.5.3 Implementing gender equality policies**

The study results demonstrate that the Municipality has external policies on the promotion of women into leadership positions. In-house policies and strategies which will develop and monitor equality policy implementation are required. The policies should be informed by qualitative research-type strategies, promoting women's participation in grassroots political decision-making. Implementing gender-sensitive policies will develop women's leadership traits.

The study shows that developing and implementing such policies will be met with resistance from both males and women. The Municipality, therefore, needs to facilitate

semi-annual gender equality reports. The reports must focus on the progress and plans to fasten the equality policy.

#### **5.5.4 Gender equality policy monitoring and evaluation**

For policies already implemented, the Municipality needed to focus on monitoring and evaluation of policy achievement versus policy targets. Corrective actions should be implemented in all cases where leadership equality quotas are not met. Such corrective actions should include long-term approaches like women's leadership development programmes.

#### **5.5.5 Employee training and development**

The Municipality should re-focus its training on trans-formal programmes, which will promote gender tolerance. The training should aim to create gender awareness, discuss resistance to equality, and facilitate cultural changes in the Municipality. The changes in employee behaviour will ensure women are recognised and provided the power to participate in decision-making.

Training will help in creating a women-friendly working environment. The Municipality should collaborate with private institutions to facilitate excellent women-driven programmes. The programmes will create a competitive environment, promoting equality while prioritising women's leadership development. Additionally, the Municipality should promote the use of mentors and role models to inspire women into leadership and to develop leadership skills relevant to the contexts they may find themselves in.

#### **5.5.6 Community gender education and communications**

As highlighted in the study, women's leadership at the grassroots levels is also undermined by male domination. Education was proven to eradicate the worse ideological myths. The Municipality should intensify community education programmes, focusing on women's leadership. The education programmes should maintain that political advocacy and lobbying put women first on branch-level politics.

### **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES**

- This study further recommends other areas of research that will advance knowledge and practice development in women's political and administrative leadership in local governments. The first recommended study is on the

analysis of gender policy monitoring and evaluation systems within the MLM and other local governments. This recommendation stems from the view of some of the participants that this was a generally neglected area.

- The second recommended study is research that further investigates political violence against women within the local government sphere and how this has affected them as a gender. This study could also attempt to relate WAWP with GBV noting the high prevalence of the latter in South African communities. Such a study will expand on the VAWP perspectives highlighted in this research possibly empowering relevant authorities to better manage VAWP and GBV.
- A study to measure the impact of an increased number of women in leadership positions will immensely benefit the Municipality. Most studies focused on women occupying leadership positions, lacking any indication of how this affected a Municipality's overall performance. Finally, studies that assess, evaluate and investigate the quality and quantity of leadership development training required to effectively support women leadership in rural local government setups are recommended.

## **5.7 CONCLUSIONS**

The study found that women's leadership in both the administrative and political realms of the MLM was a struggle that demanded endurance against various harsh forces mainly stemming from culture and patriarchy. Regardless of the severity of the Municipality's women leadership landscape, some women were geared to persevere and succeed in it. The study concluded that the excessive prevalence of gender inequality and male dominance in leadership was worsened by the fact that the few women in management and leadership were not seriously considered in decision-making. This was regardless of the existence of many national and local level policies and strategies aimed at elevating women into leadership with the agenda of attaining gender equality.

Political organisations in municipalities failed to mobilise support for the women policies that promote of advancement of women. This included neglecting their roles of educating women on their rights and functions in ascending leadership positions. They were also blamed for side-lining women for nominations into leadership. Study findings indicate women are self-doubting and discouraged from competing for senior

positions because the Municipality does not focus on creating equal opportunities. Rigid and unflinching cultural practices, patriarchal dominance, political instability, poor access to education and leadership development opportunities, poor support from political parties and associates are significant challenges in the Municipality.

The study's major strengths were that it was able to mobilise women in political and administrative leadership as its participants. This enabled it to deeply understand leadership dynamics and challenges from the lived experiences of those directly affected by the phenomena. As a result, it gave recommendations that would practically support gender equality in leadership in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality. Additionally, it effectively queried laws and policies affecting gender equality in leadership representation from a South African perspective identifying monitoring and evaluation loopholes as well as the severity of patriarchy's ability to override gender regulation.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY

MTUBATUBA



UMASIPALA . MUNICIPALITY . MUNISIPALITEIT

52 Mtubatuba 3935

Tell (035) 550 0069

Fax (035) 5500060

Enquiries: Office of the Municipal Manager

28 February 2020

University of Zululand  
Miss N. Ntuli (200710549)

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH**

After considering your request to conduct a research in our institution, we are glad to offer an opportunity to conduct this research project referred to.

This letter serves as an authorization for Miss N. Ntuli, student number (200710549) to conduct a research for academic purposes with the following topic: **The role of Women in Leadership and their participation on Local Government: Case study of Mtubatuba Municipality.** The duration of the research project will be from 01 March 2020 to 16 December 2020.

If you have any queries or require additional information regarding this approval, kindly liaise with Mr S. G. Mthombeni on 035 550 0069 or email address: [hrm@mtubatuba.gov.za](mailto:hrm@mtubatuba.gov.za).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. R. Ntuli', written over a horizontal line.

Mr S. R. Ntuli  
MUNICIPAL MANAGER

## **APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT**

### **INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION**

Ntuli Nokuthula

(Participant)

Project Title: Women Participation in Leadership Positions in Mtubatuba Local Municipality

I Nokuthula Ntuli from the Department of Public Administration, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project. The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:


1. The purpose of the research project is to fulfil the requirements for Master in Public Administration
2. The University of Zululand has provided ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards understanding the function of community participation Ward Demarcation Process.
4. I will participate in the project by responding to research questions and assisting with relevant documents needed for the study
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so with no negative consequences.
6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
  - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: None
  - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: None
  - c. there is a 0% chance of the risk materialising
8. The researcher intends publishing the research cause the form of Masters Dissertation and Journal articles. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed

to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.

9. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Dr Nokukhanya N Jili (Supervisor) Tel: 035 902 6615 and Email: [JiliN@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:JiliN@unizulu.ac.za)
10. By signing this informed consent declaration I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
11. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Nokuthula Ntuli have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.



Participant's signature

16/ 06/ 2020

Date

**APPENDIX C: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

**RESEARCH TITLE: Women participation in leadership positions in Mtubatuba Local Municipality**

**SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

1. Please give an indication of your marital status?

Single		Married		Divorced		Remarried	
--------	--	---------	--	----------	--	-----------	--

2. Age

21-34		35-48		49-62		63+	
-------	--	-------	--	-------	--	-----	--

3. What is your race?

African		Coloured		Indian		White		Other	
---------	--	----------	--	--------	--	-------	--	-------	--

If other, specify.....

4. What is your home language?

isiZulu		siSwati		English		Sesotho		Other	
---------	--	---------	--	---------	--	---------	--	-------	--

If other, specify.....

5. What is your highest educational level?

Diploma		Degree		Postgraduate	
---------	--	--------	--	--------------	--

6. Are you physically disabled?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

7. For how long have you been employed in the department (in years)

1-3		4-6		7-9		10+	
-----	--	-----	--	-----	--	-----	--

8. What is your current position?

PR councillor		Manager		Ward councillor		Officer	
---------------	--	---------	--	-----------------	--	---------	--

**SECTION B: Participation in Leadership**

To conceptualise the power dynamics affecting (the employment/promotion of) women in senior positions in the MLM.

- How were you appointed on the current position?
- What is the most challenging thing about being a women leader?

Males believe women capable are not, besides because they are educated and they have skill and ability. Males are bossy

- Does your gender affect how your decision-making is taken if yes explain and if no explain how it doesn't?
- Explain the attitude of other male counterparts concerning leadership dynamics towards you?

To examine labour trends, and the demographic profile of senior staff in MLM

- What inspires women leaders in Mtubatuba Municipality?

“Caring for people and service delivery is what keeps us going, nurturing spirits”

- What is the historical experiences with women predecessors in the Municipality? Explain how their legacy has shaped the current women leadership trajectory.

- What gender is more representative in your department and what are factors that influence the current situation in your view?

- What is a hinderance for women to be powerful in their position in the Municipality?

To explore practical challenges encountered by women in securing senior positions within the Mtubatuba Local Municipality.

Junior managers positions are selected, but there is still latency towards.

- Do you feel motivated as a women leader? if yes what motivate you and if no what demotivates you?

- What are challenges you encounter with as a women leader in your position?

- What triggers those challenges?

- What are sources of those challenges?

- What can be done to mitigate to improve the conditions for women leadership practice in Mtubatuba Local Municipality?

## APPENDIX D: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

**UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND  
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**  
(Reg No: UZREC 171110-030)



### RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Website: <http://www.unizulu.ac.za>  
Private Bag X1001  
KwaDlangezwa 3886  
Tel: 035 902 6731  
Fax: 035 902 6222  
Email: LundallN@unizulu.ac.za

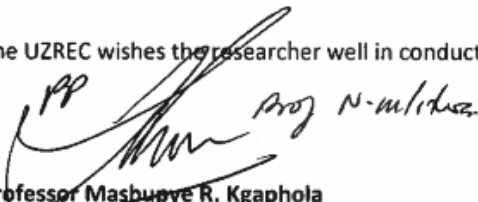
### ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Certificate Number	UZREC 171110-030 PGM 2020/90						
Project Title	Women's participation in leadership positions in Mtubatuba local municipality						
Principal Researcher/ Investigator	N Ntuli						
Supervisor and Co- supervisor	Dr N.N Jili						
Department	Public Administration						
Faculty	Commerce, Administration and Law						
Type of Risk	Medium Risk – Data collection from people						
Nature of Project	Honours/4 <sup>th</sup> Year	Master's	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Doctoral		Departmental	

The University of Zululand's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC) hereby gives ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project. The Researcher may therefore commence with data collection as from the date of this Certificate, using the certificate number indicated above.

- Special conditions:**
- (1) This certificate is valid for 1 year from the date of issue.
  - (2) Principal researcher must provide an annual report to the UZREC in the prescribed format [due date-10 December 2021]
  - (3) Principal researcher must submit a report at the end of project in respect of ethical compliance.
  - (4) The UZREC must be informed immediately of any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the documents that were presented to the meeting.

The UZREC wishes the researcher well in conducting research.

  
Professor Mashupye R. Kgaphola  
University Research Ethics Committee  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation

10 December 2020



## APPENDIX E: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR



Nr: 20161

### ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL EDITING SERVICES

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### LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

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**Research report title:** Female-participation in Leadership Positions in Mtubatuba Local Municipality

**Authors:** Nokuthula Ntuli

**Institution:** University of Zululand

**Date Issued:** 1 November 2021

This document certifies that the manuscript listed above was edited for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and overall style. Neither the research content nor the author's intentions were altered in any way during the editing process. Documents receiving this certification should be English ready for publication; however, the author has the ability and choice to accept or reject our suggestions and changes.

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Warm regards

*Elizabeth Marx*



Attended the EFA International Editors' Conference – Chicago: August 2019 <https://www.the-efa.org/efas-2019->



[conference-announcement/](#)