

Original article

Interventions to promote gender equality in the mining sector of South Africa

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Mining
Women
Gender equality
South Africa

ABSTRACT

This research study explored workplace challenges that women in the South African mining sector still face despite progressive gender sensitive regulations. The purpose of the research was to come up with evidence-based recommendations on how to promote sustainable gender equality in South Africa's mining sector. A survey approach was used for the research, with a total of 2 365 women working in the mining sector being interviewed. The main challenge faced by the women was lack of career progress followed by discrimination in decision making and in remuneration. Women attributed these challenges to their immediate supervisors and company policies. A key lesson from the research was that legislation can be a useful tool in mitigating workplace challenges for women and reducing gender inequality in the mining sector but it is not a sufficient intervention. The study recommends that deliberate steps should be taken to facilitate and impart skills to women that they need to progress up the employment level hierarchy. This should be done while at the same time opening up opportunities of higher responsibilities for women to hold.

1. Introduction

Increasing the number of women active in the formal economy of a country makes both economic and moral sense. Both men and women are economic assets to a country. Private companies can open up opportunities for increased profit, growth, and innovation by closing gender gaps (IFC, 2018). In addition, they also have the right like everybody else to gainfully engage in the economic activities of a country. With women in South Africa constituting more than 50% of the population (Stats, 2017) the country's vision of creating an all-inclusive developed society is not possible without the participation of women in the mainstream economic activities of the country.

There are cultural, social, economic, physiological, and sometimes psychological barriers to women's participation in the formal economy (Department of Arts and Culture SA, 1994). In some cultures, the main responsibility of a woman is still considered to be that of a nurturer and caretaker of a home (Lo, 2002). In some cases, women are socialized not to be aggressive in looking for jobs outside their areas of location, especially if they have family responsibilities (Lo, 2002). In other cases, the configuration of workplaces and the economy in general may not be pro-women workers.

Those tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that the number of women in the formal economy increases have to navigate through these rather complex and intertwined barriers in order to achieve this

objective. Focus on barriers, however, diverts attention from the challenges women face in workplace after entry, and how these workplace challenges in turn impact on the barriers to entry. Although some of the challenges that women face in the workplace - like sexual harassment and gender discrimination - have been documented, how these challenges link with the initial barriers to entry is a less explored area. Experiences of women in employment if shared, either directly or indirectly, can motivate or demotivate other women aspiring to join and work within particular sectors of the economy.

Specific to the mining sector in South Africa, some progress has been made in employing women in this previously male-dominated sector. This is attributable, in part, to progressive legislation on equity in workplaces, and to some extent, to the changing mind-set of mining companies on women workers. To maintain the momentum of women employment in the mining sector, it is critical to undertake periodical assessments of the challenges being faced by women who have succeeded to get employment. These assessments can be informative in terms of the effectiveness of interventions that government and other stakeholders put in place to encourage women employment in formal sectors of the economy. The assessment would further provide direction on how to proceed with or change legislation and other interventions to achieve the objective of accelerating socio-economic empowerment of women in South Africa in general.

Women participation in the mainstream economy of South Africa

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2019.03.015>

Received 31 October 2018; Received in revised form 18 February 2019; Accepted 25 March 2019

Available online 10 April 2019

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remains minimal yet they constitute more than 50% of the population (Kaggwa, 2017). It is prudent that mining creates and provides employment opportunities to women, since mining is one of the key sectors of the South African economy.

To encourage women employment and participation in the country's mining sector, the South African government took the legislative route. It introduced a Mining Charter that set up quotas for women employment and participation in mining. By 2016, evidence indicated that despite the legislative intervention, the number of women participating in the mining sector was not increasing. The 2004 Mining Charter had set a target of 10% for representation of women in sector. By the end of 2009, only 6.5% women representation had been achieved (Shabangu, 2011). With this recognition, the study set out to investigate the challenges being faced by women in the workplace in the mining sector, and the extent to which these prevail as a potential cause of stagnation of women's participation in the country's mining sector.

2. Literature

The issue of challenges facing women in the workplace has a long history. For many developing countries the challenges are rooted in the patriarchal nature of societies. In patriarchal societies, a variety of belief systems, cultural and religious practices excluded women from participating in the workplace (Hartmann, 2010).

Specific to mining, women working in the sector is not a new phenomenon. A number of authors allude to women participation in mining activities during pre-industrial times in America, Scotland and Sweden (Tallichet, 2006), (Boorman and Meyers, 2006); (Abrahamsson et al., 2014). Common to this pre-industrial women working in mines were the adverse conditions under which they worked.

The move to radically push for gender mainstreaming in the workplace gained momentum in the second half of the 21st Century. It was aided by international organizations such as the United Nations, and global feminist movements.

Global efforts to improve conditions of women working in the mining sector can be traced back to 1935 when the International Labour Organisation (ILO) forbade the employment of women in underground mining (International Labour Organisation, 1935). From then, there have been different interventions in different countries aimed at improvement conditions of women in the sector.

Unimproved working of women in the mining sector in South Africa is fairly recent. Prior to 1996, women were prohibited to work underground (Matshingane, 2017). The move to open formal employment for women across all sectors gained momentum after the 1994 democratic transition. The new democratic government introduced laws and legislations to open up and create employment for women in the formal sectors of the economy. Notable among these legislations was the Gender Policy Framework (GPF) of 1994 that was aimed at ensuring that women are integrated into the formal workplace and the political and cultural aspects of life. Then there was the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, which was aimed at promoting equality, curb discrimination and ensure fair treatment of all persons in the workplace including women (Department of Labour South Africa, 1998).

For the mining sector, a Mining Charter was put in place 2002. The key aim of the Charter was to transform the mining sector so that it would truly reflect the demographic profile of the country and to benefit all citizens without any discrimination. The Mining Charter set standards and terms for women's involvement in the mining sector. The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment of 2003 included provisions for women's active involvement in mainstream economic activities, and for women to gradually occupy key positions in all sectors (Department of Mineral Resources South Africa, 2017). The Mining Charter and the Mining and Petroleum Resources Development Act 28 of 2002 (DMR, 2002) introduced mandatory quotas for women participation in the mining sector.

Despite the global initiatives, government legislations, and the changing mind-set of mine companies on the potential of women as formal workers, a number of women-specific challenges still persist in the workplace. From global studies, women-specific challenges still experienced in the workplace include general discrimination, disempowering and down-grading (Feyerherm and Vick, 2005), and inflexible working practices (Worrall, 2012).

Previous studies conducted in South Africa have identified a few challenges facing women in the workplace that are not unique to the country though. The study 'Women in Mining in SA' (WIMSA, 2013) identified unequal treatment as a major challenge. The study applied a survey approach and it had 247 respondents. The focus of the study was, however, on professional women (89%) and women that held operational posts within mines (77%). The study concluded that although legislation forced the mining industry to employ women, it was important that women also took it as their responsibility to change mind-sets in this industry in addressing exclusion, unequal treatment and lack of support.

Another study by Botha and Cronje (2014) highlighted absence of mentors, unsupportive supervisors for women in the workplace, and misconceptions of women's ability to perform tasks as some of the challenges women faced in South Africa. The other challenges identified by Botha and Cronje (2015) were double-bind, sexual harassment, discrimination, isolation, male-dominated culture, as well as long hours of work. Their study was based on a survey with a sample of 156 respondents in platinum, phosphate and copper mines. The sample comprised of management, male and female employees working in key mining activities. The study recommended that specific attention should be given to career development and progression of women in key mining activities.

No primary research on challenges facing women in the mining sector of the South African economy that covered more than one province and had a sample size of more than 2000 women respondents has ever been carried out, at least to the knowledge of the author. The few studies that have been carried on women in South Africa's mining sector had samples of less than 500 respondents (Matshingane, 2017), were conducted within a single mining company (Khoza, 2015), or were based on secondary data.

A few studies in challenges facing women in the workplace in other sectors of the South African economy have been previous done. Among these studies is the study by Sangweni (2015) who reported that discrimination was still a challenge for women in the construction sector. Haupt and Madikizela (2009) study claimed that lack of sufficient knowledge of the industry, lack of successful women, limited career choices and harsh work environments were some of the challenges experienced by women in the workplace in the construction sector. They asserted that the nature of the construction industry posed a threat for women's career development. Their study, which used a survey approach, had a sample of 1 435 industry practitioners, 141 first and final year construction students, and 17 professional women from the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces.

A study by Moodley (2012) found that women still faced sexual harassment in South Africa's construction sector. The study was based on a survey and face-to-face interviews with a sample size of 100 respondents; 40% of the respondents were women contractors and 60% were female consultants in the industry. This was basically a small and none representative study.

Given the fact that women facing challenges in the workplace is still a common phenomenon, and given the fact that the South African government has been aggressively pushing for women employment in the formal sectors, it was prudent to undertake a more broad primary research to document challenges that still persist in South Africa's mining sector. It was envisaged that the findings from this research would be useful in guiding future interventions aimed at increasing the number of women in the workplace, and maintaining the momentum for women's participation in formal employment.

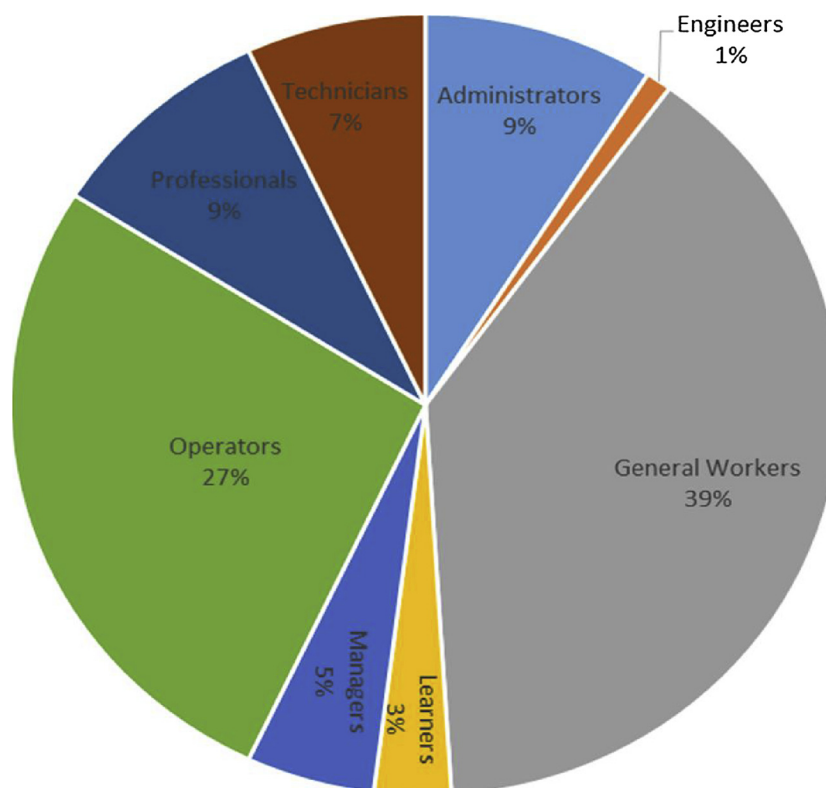


Fig. 1. Positions held by women in South Africa's mining sector.

3. Methodology

The research study used a survey approach and was conducted 2016 and 2017. Information was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire with both closed and open ended questionnaire. A purposeful stratified sampling technique was used in coming with the sample. The motivation for using the stratified sampling technique was to ensure that more women were interviewed per province. The technique did not however guarantee having a representative sample. The strata were provinces where mining activity was taking place. The provinces covered by the survey were: Highveld, Eastern Cape, North East, Gauteng, North West, Free State, Rustenburg, and Northern Cape. Within these provinces, a random sampling was used to administer the questionnaire to women working in different mines.

A questionnaire consisting of 36 questions, both closed and open ended questions, was used to collect relevant data. In total, 2 365 women working in the mining sector were interviewed. Quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaires was collated, coded and thematically analyzed using PASW (formerly SPSS) and ATLAS.ti Version 7.6. Based on the analysis, conclusions on challenges that still face women in South Africa's mining sector were identified. Drawing from the identified challenges, recommendations on how to promote gender equality in South Africa's mining sector were made.

Due attention was given to ensuring both face and content validity of the questionnaire. This was done by subjecting the questionnaire to external expert review to ascertain whether each question measured what it was intended to measure. After the external expert review, a pilot study was conducted to establish potential shortcomings of the questionnaire as an information collecting tool. The main field research commenced after pilot study had confirmed that responses got from respondent using the questionnaire were as intended.

4. Findings and discussions

4.1. Demographics of respondents

The majority of respondents, 96.7% (2287), were black. The number of coloured, Indian and white respondents was minimal. Race has always played a role in the socio-economic dynamics of South Africa; as such it was considered useful to document the race of respondents. Respondents' race category was self-identified.

With regards to the age, the majority of respondents, 47.1% (1 114), were in the 31–40 years age group; while the smallest group 0.1% (24) was under the age of 20 years. This finding can be interpreted to mean that responses given were dominated by young to middle-aged women.

Most women interviewed 55.9% (1 322) had worked in the mining industry for 5 years and above. Respondents that had worked in the sector between 2 to 5 years were 26.2% (620). One could therefore say that most of the women interviewed had ample working experience in the mining sector.

4.2. Position held by women in mining

To put into context the challenges that women face in mining and to come up with informed recommendations on interventions to promote gender equality in South Africa's mining sector, it was considered prudent to document positions held by women in the workplace. Information on the positions women hold in the mining workplace was juxtaposed with education and experience.

It was found that a majority of women in the country's mining sector worked as 'general workers', as opposed to managerial and/or professional positions. The general workers' category was broadly defined to include women whose work responsibilities were not core to the mining activity. These included assistant back washers, bagging attendants, belt cleaners, brick rappers, cashiers, car-washers, casual, change house attendants, and cleaners among others. Those classified as general workers constituted 39.3% (929) of the respondents, followed by

operators 27% (639) of the respondents (Fig. 1). Women working as professionals were just 9% (213) of the respondents. By virtue of women holding low jobs, one can deduce that these women are poorly paid. Study findings confirmed the global trend that women are over-represented in cleaning, secretarial and support positions as compared to managerial and professional positions in the mining sector.

Notwithstanding some advances, such as, increase in female employment in the formal sectors of the economy, women continue to face significant hurdles in entering the labour market and getting high ranking jobs. The low ranking jobs they get are a result of the unequal access to opportunities. This limits women's progress, constrains their social status, and ultimately restricts women's personal development.

Respondents further indicated that because the low ranking positions they held were not core to the mining activities, they were considered as unimportant and treated as such. Some women interviewed reported that men were being given higher ranking jobs, at the expense of women. Management tended to prefer men over women because of the latter's perceived physical strength and ability to work harder and longer. As a result, most men occupy positions such as operators which are core to the mining business. This pattern is common in situations where women move into male-dominated occupations; decisions around which type of jobs are best for women tend to be subjectively made. The subjectivity in job allocation emanates from gender stereotyping, and it continually acts as a barrier to women in the labour market.

The research also discovered that there was a substantial number of women 31.2% (738) whose job titles indicated that the position they held was critical to mining, such as operators. A scrutiny of the actual responsibilities that were attached to the jobs revealed that in some cases the job title and responsibilities did not tally. This was the case for 45% (332) of respondents whose job titles indicated that there were critical to mining activity. For instance, many women who gave their positions as crushers and winch or belt operators explained that when they are underground these positions simply do not apply. Once underground, they assume the role of assistant to male colleagues, who then do the work. Surprisingly, the women say their supervisors are aware of this.

The women reported that their biggest challenge in this regard was the heaviness and weight of machines and the mine equipment which makes it difficult for them to operate the equipment; but they also reported that men prefer to do the work so as to speed up the production process. And so positions were characterized 'feminine' and 'masculine' based on the skills that the jobs entailed, but also based on the working culture. Even in situations where gender equality was observed, it was evident that some companies still took a traditional view of division of roles based on gender, and preferred male employees in a number of areas.

4.3. Challenges facing women

According to this research, the five top challenges faced by women in the South African mining workplace are: lack of career advancement, discrimination in decision making, discrimination in remuneration, general abuse, and workload. Family issues, lack of male support, health cover, personal issues, and maternity benefits were also identified.

Lack of career advancement was identified by 64% (1 514) of the respondents, while discrimination in decision making and in remuneration were pointed out by 42% (993) and 38% (899) of respondents, respectively (Table 1).

The following section provides more details on the top main challenges identified by the women interviewed.

4.3.1. Career advancement within the workplace

Career advancement in the workplace was recognised as being pivotal in empowering women and in transforming post-apartheid

Table 1

Challenges facing women in the workplace in South Africa's mining industry.

Types of Challenges	Percentage of Respondents
Lack of career advancement	64%(1 514)
Discrimination: Decision making	42%(993)
Discrimination: Remuneration	38%(899)
Abuse	31%(733)
Workload	31%(733)
Family issues	27%(639)
Lack of support from male colleagues	27%(639)
Health cover	27%(639)
Personal issues	22%(520)
Maternity benefits	20%(473)
Other	10%(237)

workplaces in South Africa. As such, the government under the Mining Charter prescribed that companies should spend no less than 5% of their annual payroll on human resource development, focussing especially on previously disadvantaged South Africans including women. Such expenditure would ensure that women get training and relevant workplace experience that in turn would advance their careers.

The study found that most women employees were not being given opportunities to advance their careers in the workplace. The most common sentiment expressed regarding career advancement was stagnation in their work position, even for those few women who had a chance to go for some form of training. Some of the common statements women made in this regard included:

"I've been working in the same position for years without opportunities to grow."

"There is no training, development, and promotion in this place."

Another recurring aspect that the women, particularly black women, pointed out was that they were not given priority. Sometimes the women were completely ignored in favour of white employees when it came to promotions in the work place, irrespective of their abilities. One woman expressed this view:

"Opportunities aren't provided and, if available, are given to white, uneducated employees."

In addition, the study found elements of career gender discrimination in some of the companies. It was expressed that career development and training favoured men over women. Certain positions or appointments were not offered to women because of their gender. Some of statements women made in this regard included:

"Women are not being considered for certain positions."

"Majority of higher positions are given to males."

"Most development programmes are for men."

"Development and growth opportunities are only available to men."

"There is lack of confidence from the employer towards female employees."

"All team leaders are male. They must appoint women as team supervisors to give them confidence at their workplace."

Age discrimination was also identified as a career development barrier for those women who had worked for a long period of time for the companies. It was mentioned that career development opportunities were mostly for young women. The women indicated that:

"More opportunities are given to the younger generation."

"Old staffs aren't given opportunities to grow in their positions."

Some women pointed out that sometimes there was no correlation between positions held and qualification and career progress, which to some extent discouraged some of them from aggressively seeking training. Some of statements made in this regard included:

"Appointment isn't based on qualifications."

"Women get entry level positions even with qualifications."

"People with no qualifications are hired over people with qualifications."

In other instances, women found the processes of getting training very cumbersome and discretionary, which discouraged some of them from career development through training. One woman expressed this

view:

“There are too many processes to go through before attending a course, it depends on who you are.”

4.3.2. Discrimination in terms of decision making

Women employed in the mining sector are part of the companies' workforce. Ideally, they should have the same rights as their male colleagues in all respects. The women reported, though, that they felt undermined when it came to decision making. They were not given the opportunity to offer ideas, which lead to some of them losing interest. Confirming this discrimination, the women said:

“Men tend to ignore and reject suggestions from me.”

“Males don't respect females. They never take women's concerns even when there are problems.”

“Afraid to speak your views because of being undermined.”

4.3.3. Discrimination in remuneration

Discrimination in terms of remuneration was found to exist in the mining sector. There were cases of women employees being compensated differently to men despite being at the same level, and performing the same duties. One of the women expressed the view that:

“Working same jobs but different pay exists and experience is not considered (in determining remuneration).”

Another challenge relating to compensation was race. It was said that one race group, particularly whites, was favoured over the others. One respondent stated that:

“Racial differences in pay and favouritism exist in my workplace.”

Lack of compensation improvement over a long period of time was also identified. Some women felt that their wages and salaries had stagnated for a long period. Some of the statements made by women in this regard were:

“I have been earning the same salary without an increase. Being a single parent it's hard.”

“Been working for the planning office for the past 4 years and when I asked for a (pay) raise I'm declined.”

A few women indicated that overtime work was not being compensated. Moreover, the remuneration received by the women was too low, to the extent that many could not afford basic needs.

4.3.4. Abuse – verbal

Verbal abuse was yet another challenge that women reported. Apart from the emotional trauma it caused them, women said it also made them feel vulnerable. Some of the verbatim statements women made are:

“It's very challenging when you are being insulted by your colleagues for example, being called slut or bitch.”

“Verbal abuse makes you feel inferior as a woman.”

4.3.5. Workload and flexibility

It was found that there were inconsistencies in job allocation in the too. Some of the women felt that job descriptions and specifications were not clearly outlined. This led to unequal distribution of duties between workers. In this regard, some women said:

“Duties aren't clearly allocated or discussed, making one do more than they should.”

“Work is not equally shared even if people shared same positions.”

It also emerged that women employees had difficulties to access and utilise leave days. The verbatim statements by the women revealed a conflict between careers and domestic roles, where the career was deemed to be more important than domestic roles. Some of the statements made in this regard were:

“Leave is at times refused even when you're tired.”

“If supervisor doesn't get along with employees, he will refuse to sign family responsibility form even if she (employee) has days. (This) makes it difficult to take care of ill child.”

“Working shifts doesn't allow me to spend time with my child and care

for the elderly.”

It should be noted that the research did not distinguish whether the challenge of workload and work flexibility was exclusive to women.

4.3.6. Family issues

The family is a very important unit of society. As such, family issues will always find a way into the lives of all working people, especially women. Women have domestic roles and responsibilities, like raising children and caring for the other family members. Some 27% of the women stated that ‘family issues’ was part of challenges they faced in the workplace. The women expressed these views:

“Family is important, so whatever happens to it has an effect on how I do the job.”

“We live home at 5am and come back 4pm and we get no time with our family. This is affecting me at work.”

“We work long hours per day we don't get time to take care of our children.”

“I lack focus due to family and work demands.”

4.3.7. Lack of male support

Lack of support from male colleagues was another challenge that the women identified. Some of the common statements women made in this regard included:

“They don't assist in the field.”

“Feels like since you are a woman, men take you for granted, and they don't take you seriously, they don't support you.”

“Because every time you have to prove yourself that you can do the work.”

“We are discouraged by male colleagues.”

“Women are not yet welcomed by the male colleagues and management; they are stubborn to accept women in the industry.”

Women were not asked if they were receiving support from their fellow women. This is a question that need to be asked in future research.

4.3.8. Women occupational health and safety in the workplace

In explaining occupational health and safety as a persistent challenge in the workplace, women made the following comments:

“They don't provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).”

“We use dust mask for three days when it is supposed to be changed every day.”

“We don't have enough/ full PPE.”

“We use our hands without gloves, no shield glasses.”

“We don't have dust masks.”

“No PPE, you take 7 years without boots.”

4.4. Causes of challenges faced by women in mining

The study also wanted to find out what the women attributed the challenges that they faced. In this regard, management/supervisors followed by work demands were identified as the major causes of challenges that women faced in the workplace. The percentage of respondents that attributed the challenges they faced at work to management and work demands was 57% (1 348) and 21% (497) respectively (Table 2). Male colleagues, company policies, and personal family matters were also identified as causes of challenges that women faced, though to a lesser degree.

Some of the women who identified management as the cause of the challenges they faced felt that management behaviour had undertones of racial discrimination, nepotism, and patriarchal tendencies. Some of the common statements the women made in this regard included:

“Favouritism and patriarchy by management behaviour is a problem.”

“Black women have to explain themselves when they want personal development and applications are declined.”

“Nepotism and people with connections have better opportunities than others.”

Table 2
Causes of workplace challenges faced by women in mining.

Cause of Challenges	Percentage of respondents
Manager/Supervisor	57%(1 348)
Work demands	21%(497)
Male colleagues	21%(497)
Company policies	20%(473)
Family	10%(237)
Other	8%(189)
Spouse	4%(95)

Regarding male colleagues, women who identified this as a cause of challenges they faced in the workplace said that they did not receive moral support, but were rather discouraged by their male counterparts.

Women's domestic role of bearing and raising children also emerged as one of the causes of the challenges faced by women at the workplace. One woman expressed the view that:

"The company does not provide development opportunities for women because it thinks that we will be busy having to raise your children."

Further discussions with the respondents revealed other causes that had not been included in the questionnaire. These were: a) access to right information, b) general perception of women at the workplace, c) low self-esteem, and d) lack of right qualifications.

Women indicated that lack of information about available opportunities was hindering their career development. The perception that women are not efficient and reliable employees was further limiting their careers. In this regard, they mentioned that:

"There is an assumption that women's absenteeism is due to their high rate of pregnancy."

"They think that women got no powers to decide."

"Companies trying to keep women by not training, because they think if they do they will leave."

It also emerged that women's low self-esteem was a catalyst to women's lack of career development. Women reflecting on this aspect was said:

"Women aren't putting themselves out there."

"We lack of self-esteem and not taking hold of opportunities."

Regarding lack of qualifications, it was mentioned that:

"It was difficult for the company to develop women if they don't have a qualification."

"Women are afraid to take the lead over men."

5. Interventions to promote gender equality in the mining sector of South Africa

To promote sustainable gender equality in South Africa's mining sector, there should not be any discrimination between men and women in terms of workplace practices such as career advancement, remuneration, and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, women need to occupy positions that allow and enable them to be part of the decision making in the sector.

The study revealed that women in South Africa's mining sector still face a number of workplace challenges that act as stumbling blocks in achieving gender equity despite the country's progressive legislation. The main challenge faced by the women was lack of career advancement, followed by discrimination in decision making and in remuneration. Women attributed these challenges to their immediate supervisors and company policies. There was a high level of awareness of policies to empower and protect women in the workplace. However, the awareness had not translated into a reduction in the prevalence of challenges that women faced.

Most women in the sector occupied low level jobs. The majority of the women were 'general workers', as opposed to holding managerial and/or professional positions. In some cases, job titles given to women were exaggerated relative to the workplace responsibilities they had.

Very few women were in positions that influence decisions made in the workplace. Hence, their voices were largely muted in terms of influencing the strategic direction of the companies they worked for. This meant that even if gender equality was to be prioritized in the workplace, it had to be spear-headed by men rather than women - a very untenable situation.

A key lesson from the research study relevant to the objective of promoting gender equality in the mining sector, in general, was that legislation can be a useful tool in reducing gender inequality in the workplace. On its own, though, it is not a sufficient intervention. Mining companies can come up with creative ways to circumvent legislation if they are not convinced about the business case of gender equality. Nonetheless, by putting in place interventions that address women-specific challenges in the workplace, gender inequalities in the sector can be reduced. Such interventions should include elements that are specifically aimed at enabling the career advancement of women in the sector.

Based on the above realization, the study recommends that in order to promote gender equality in a sustainable way in South Africa's mining sector, deliberate steps should be taken to facilitate and impart skills to women needed for them to progress up the employment hierarchy. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) Toolkit on Actions and Strategies for Oil, Gas, and Mining Companies (IFC, 2018) can be a useful resource, with some modifications, in guiding on how the required skills can be imparted and monitored with time. This should be done while at the same time opening up opportunity for women to take up jobs with higher responsibilities. Second, forums at which women in the sector can freely share their experiences with other women within and outside their work environment should be created. This can act as a catalyst for more women to join the sector by demystifying some of the fears that society has about women working in a male-dominated work environment. Finally, assessment of progress made in integrating women in the mining sector should be done periodically to ensure that the advancement of women emancipation in the sector is always kept in the limelight. The assessment should be collaborative between mines management, government, and civil society.

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