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So Close but yet So Far: South African Women's Challenges in a Post-Colonial Local Government

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Abstract

This study contributes to the current body of knowledge that suggests, there has been limited progress in decision-making between women and men, which hinders the use of women's skills, suggesting that very little has changed for women. There is an overwhelming amount of literature on gender and decision making, which has led to an increase in sufficient conceptual and theoretical frameworks. However, this study contributes to the rather limited literature on progress in women's decision-making in South Africa's local government. This qualitative study presents the context of women in leadership positions in local government. Secondly, the study presents the barriers faced by women in leadership positions. Finally, the study critically analyzes and concludes on the challenges that hinder the empowerment of women in leadership positions in South Africa at the grassroots level. The findings of the study suggest that women are lagging in decision-making due to organizational structures attributable to the presence of dominant behaviors in the workplace that can be linked to patriarchy and male dominance which exclude and marginalize women. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming policies are weakly implemented in South Africa's local government institutions.

Keywords: Gender Mainstreaming, Inclusive Leadership, Gender Equality, Local Government, South Africa

1. Introduction

The Government of National Unity (GNU) was established with the objective of giving women equal representation in politics and in decision-making in local government structures. This would allow them to improve public policy and administration. South Africa is a leader in gender equality, development, and women's empowerment in particular in the public sector. However, South Africa's leadership is still contentious because there has yet to be equal representation of women within decision-making processes. This impacts local government. This study addresses the central research question about the outcome of South African gender mainstreaming policies in South African local governments. It focuses on how this affects women's decision-making in local government.

Notably, South Africa is still facing many escalating security threats. The most serious of these is poor municipal service delivery due to weak municipal governance. Smith (1995) claims that gender equality is a prerequisite for good governance. This is because the state's efforts to improve governance and eliminate gender inequalities within the male-controlled municipal

governance structures are now more effective (Constantelos and Diven, 2015). Umukoro and Egbai (2016) also believe that gender mainstreaming can be a solution to improved services and better governance. Albertyn (1995) echoes the view that good governance requires women to be involved in decision-making at all levels. Women make up more than half the population and are most affected by poor service delivery. In fact, women in poor households are still denied access to basic services like water, sanitation, and refuse collection services (Statistics South Africa, 2015). This is because women often rely on public services to provide for their household's survival, but they also often have to take care of most household and domestic chores (Joshi, 2011; IPPR, 2020). Inadequate access to water, sanitation, and refuse are the main causes of protests against municipal service delivery in South Africa (Van Vuuren, 2013; Mamokhere, 2019; Netswera, 2014; Langa and Kiguwa, 2013). These service delivery problems adversely affect and disadvantage women (Carusa and Sommer, 2018; Kehler, 2001; Joshi *et al.* 2012); this can be attributed in part to women's underrepresentation at local political decision-making levels (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2014). Research has shown that women's participation in water management and decision-making is associated with better outcomes for women and their communities (Mommen *et al.* 2017). Equal leadership between men and women is associated with better water supply sustainability (Narayan Parker, 1995). Mohlakoan and Dugard (2009) suggest that household services such as water or sanitation are susceptible to gender-specific policy and legislative recommendations. This is because of the gender-specific division of labor in the household, where women manage water supplies for cooking and cleaning and face intersecting issues with accessing water and sanitation.

This study will focus on understanding the factors that have pushed local government to be an equitable actor for good governance and how it has performed in its municipal governance decision-making. This is the basis of this study. This study proposes a case study approach to examine the impact of gender mainstreaming on South African municipal decision-making. This study adds to the existing knowledge that shows that there has been little progress in decision-making between men and women, which hinders the use of women's skills and suggests that very little has changed for the women. There is a lot of literature about gender and decision-making. This has resulted in a rise in theoretical and conceptual frameworks. However, the literature on women's progress in South Africa's local governments is very limited. Hence, this study presents the situation of gender and explains the role of women in South Africa's municipal governance. The study then evaluates the participation of women in local elections to determine if gender mainstreaming policies are effective.

The government policy has made it clear that gender mainstreaming systems must be effectively institutionalized to meet women's needs and address the historical legacies that have hindered their progress (RDP, 1994). The Constitution of South Africa states that good governance must align with the mandate of the Commission on Gender Equality to promote gender equality and protect, develop, and achieve it (Manjoo, 2005).The Constitution states that municipalities should have diverse decision-making bodies and include gender equality. Hunt (2014) emphasized the importance of women representing themselves at the municipal level of government, as this is where the majority of service delivery issues that impact women are addressed. Decentralization and accountability at the local level are key opportunities to empower women and increase their participation in municipal governance. This will position them politically to make an impact on basic service delivery for women.

Landsberg (2012) identifies that operationalization and implementation of policy decisions are major challenges for institutions in the region. This can also be seen as a result of the need to gender mainstream in decision making on local issues in order to ensure effective service delivery (Doorgapersad 2016). As gender mainstreaming is about achieving gender equality (United Nations Women, 2016), this requires more women leaders to drive women's issues, and for good governance in local decision-making. The goal of gender equality at the South African municipal level has not been met. Data shows that 33 percent of South Africans are represented in both parliament and local government (Hicks *et al.* 2012). It is notable that the majority of political power in local government rests at the political party level. This means that 67.95% of ward councilor positions are held by men while their female counterparts make up 32.05 percent (IEC, 2016).

Hicks and Buccus (2012) argue that culture, patriarchy, and hegemony in male decision-making in local governments hinder women's participation and entry. Despite the 50 percent increase in women's quotas by political parties (Local Government Municipal Structures Act no. 117 of 1998), this does not guarantee women's place in decision-making (Geisler, 2001). The foundation of intersectional complexity, which is linked to culture, stereotypes and hierarchy, hegemony, patriarchy, and continues to hinder gender mainstreaming at local governance level, has a solid foundation. Geisler (2001) states that the complex intersectional oppressions, patriarchy's legacy and dominance, as well as the power inequalities between the poor and privileged classes that encourage advancement for men, make it difficult to promote gender mainstreaming. This highlights the gaps in local governance decision-making. This is the case for South African women leaders who are able to hold positions in decision-making structures that are predominantly male-dominated. Makhosi Khoza, a female politician, was removed from the chairperson position of Parliament's Public Service and Administration Portfolio Committee. She had cited driving issues and her party eventually disciplined her for her outspokenness. Insufficient evidence is available regarding women who are underrepresented in elected or nominated political positions and their influence on local government decision-making (Wright, 2020). However, the evidence is not sufficient to support gender mainstreaming of community decision-making. This study will examine the factors that have led local governments to be positioned as equal agents of good governance and how they are faring in local decision-making.

This study focuses on the potential for South Africa to change its municipal gender mainstreaming policy architecture. It does this by drawing lessons from the organizational structures based on dominant workplace behaviors, which can be linked with patriarchy or male dominance and exclude and marginalize females. The study focuses on the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies in municipal service institutions. This paper proposes a review and revision of the current gender mainstreaming policies to ensure greater political will and commitment by the local governments to implement and follow the gender mainstreaming policies.

2. Materials and methods

A qualitative research study was conducted. Although the notion of female leadership and decision-making has been heavily explored in the academic literature in the other two areas of government, national and provincial, there is little literature on this phenomenon in the context of local government. Moreover, there is relatively little evidence of women's involvement in local government in recent years. However, the contribution of this study is related to the limited knowledge not only on the status of women in policy- making in local government, but also on their status in political parties and in a post-liberation and democratic transition environment that requires more attention.

This study examined gender mainstreaming efforts undertaken by municipalities through an examination of national gender mainstreaming legislation and policies in South Africa, as well as gender mainstreaming policies and their outcomes in ensuring women's equal representation and participation in political decision-making. This study is a case study of South African local government structures.

The structure of the study consisted of data collection and documentation with the aim of answering the questions and hypothesis. Initially, a qualitative, exploratory literature review was conducted, examining definitions, theories, policies, viewpoints, principles, methods and other research findings, as well as data collection of statistics from the various institutions. The study focused on the politics of women in local government structures in South Africa, as the principles of good governance require that women are involved in decision-making at all levels of government, as women constitute more than half of the population and remain the most affected by poor service delivery. Moreover, local government is the structure of government that should be closest to the mass of the population to meet the immediate needs of the people.

Secondly, primary and secondary sources were used to conduct a secondary research. This was done using library sources, internet sources and documents, frameworks, contracts,

visions, missions, minutes, decisions, reports, websites, press releases, papers, strategies, national and regional frameworks and operational plans and documents related to gender mainstreaming, local government with reports such as gender mainstreaming reports, local government audit reports on local government audit reports. The institutional dynamics responsible for the challenges in implementing gender mainstreaming in municipalities was concluded.

This case study of this study on South African municipal structures that have adopted a gender mainstreaming approach notes that this needs to be explored and assessed to ensure that challenges are identified, and prescriptions proposed. A review of the current gender mainstreaming model is urgently needed to create an enabling environment for the increased inclusion of women in decisive decision making for good governance.

3. The status of women in local government in South Africa

In 2015, South Africa was ranked 10th in the top-ranking countries for single and lower houses of government 1995 vs. 2015 demonstrating that 41.5 % of women gained access to government (Union, 2020). Women face a host of difficulties in gaining access to government (Union, 2020). These challenges include cultural norms, gender roles, party practices, lack of financial support, and a traditionally masculine work environment – which together tend to favor and attract men and discriminate against and discourage the participation of women.

A growing number of global and regional declaration have highlighted the need for women's participation and the share of women in power and authority within state structures has become a key indicator of a state's progress toward gender equality. Regional trends highlight (Union, 2020) women's representation made substantial progress in the Sub-Saharan African countries, where their average share of leadership grew from 9.8 per cent in 1995 to 22.3 per cent in 2015 (+12.5 points). Notably it was in 1995, that no state in this region had elected more than 30 per cent women to their single or lower houses. For South Africa, this has changed on a positive note, since 1995, reaching above the 35% mark.

In expounding on the status of women in the politics of pluralist South Africa, local government has made great strides in advancing gender mainstreaming and safeguarding women's rights. On the 28 August 1994, Nelson Mandela became the first democratically elected President after almost a decade of white domination and rule by a minority led government. It was during this tenure, that the ANC -led government abolished the apartheid regime's policies that safeguarded continued inequalities and oppressions aligned to racial, classist and sexist advances. Historically, prior to 1994, in South Africa black people were not afforded their full political rights and civil liberties such as being allowed the right to vote or stand as members of parliament. For women, the status quo remained even after the GNU was instituted into office.

On 22 June 2005, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka was appointed the first female Deputy President of South Africa under the Mbeki Administration (Williams, 2013). South Africa has come very far in instilling gender equality, 61 years after 20,000 women marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August in 1956 in defiance to the then apartheid governments pass laws. In 1994, there was 2.7 percent female representation in parliament (Enaifoghe, 2019). Presently, the Ramaphosa Administration that took office with the 2018 Cabinet reshuffle did not attain the 50/50 percent gender equity targets that the ANCWL and other gender activists continue to eagerly anticipate. In 2018, this Ramaphosa Cabinet has often been referred to as a balancing act. As this administration transpired due to the forced resignation of the former President Jacob Zuma and was not a true reflection of the new President Ramaphosa's envisioned cabinet, this must be considered for the purpose of this study.

In the aftermath of the July 2021 social discontent, burning of trucks and factories, the looting of malls and the Phoenix Massacre a cabinet reshuffle occurred in August. The 2021 reshuffle demonstrated President Cyril Ramaphosa's gained advantage in selecting his own cabinet and placed women in key strategic portfolios in parliament such as Defence and Military, Public Services and Administration, Small Business Development, Tourism and Human Settlements. The gender parity balance suggests that the number of women have exceeded that

of their male counterparts as decisive decision takers at one of the highest decision making bodies of the state cabinet.

However, in 2021 prior to the 1 November 2021 municipal elections, under the Ramaphosa Administration, at the local government level male domination prevails, with only 1 women Executive Mayor at the municipal major metropolitan. After South Africa's municipal elections held on 1 November 2021, the region saw the emergence of three women taking office as Executive Mayors. Eugene Johnson was appointed as executive mayor by the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC) for the southern Nelson Mandela Bay municipality. Mpho Phalatse and Tania Campbell were appointed as executive mayors by the opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA). Mpho Phalatse was appointed as executive mayor for the City of Johannesburg, which is considered the economic hub of South Africa and Tania Campbell was appointed as the executive mayor for the industrial epic enter, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality.

This demonstrated limited progress, as moreover, as more men occupy the majority of mayoral positions, and hold relevant and strategic portfolios in the major metropolitan municipalities such as in The City of Tshwane and the City of Cape Town (Tandwa, 2020; Tembo, 2021).

According to the Commission for Gender Equality, the number of women candidates in local government elections has increased significantly since 1995 in all provinces except Gauteng. However, when it comes to elections in municipal government, there is still much room for improvement. Commendably, three provinces passed the 50 percent women representation mark in PR elections in 2016 (Eastern Cape, 53 percent; Limpopo, 53 percent; and Mpumalanga, 56 percent) compared to one province in 2011 (Mpumalanga, 50 percent). However, there is still a long way to go, as there is a clear indication that more men than women are elected to local government (and the numbers decrease at provincial and national levels), even though there are still more women that vote in the country.

Particularly, it was in 2016 when more women were elected into local government through the PR system. These numbers increased in all provinces by 5-10 percent, except in Gauteng. Furthermore, in 2016, under the PR system, in the provinces, it was in the Western Cape where women represented the least numbers and constituted of 34 percent in 2011 and 39 percent in 2016, in all other provinces women constituted at least 40 percent of candidates. At the ward elections level, women remain the least represented, with a decline in the last municipal election in 2016, where in seven provinces between the 2011 and 2016 elections, there were just three provinces that demonstrated a positive increase, however remaining below the 50 percent mark (KwaZulu-Natal from 17 percent in 2011 to 22 percent in 2016, Northern Cape from 36 percent to 40 percent and Western Cape from 33 percent to 39 percent) (Hicks *et al.* 2016).

In the 2016 local government election, the overall representation by women as leaders was at 41%, with women being represented in the wards at 33%. In the 2021 local government elections 63% of councilors who won seats were men, compared with 37% who were women (IEC, 2021). This means that women have exceeded the 30% mark attained at the first democratic election and are close to the 50% mark the ANCWL aims at securing (Williams, 2013). Suggesting, there are more women in local government today than there was in 1995. However, the above suggests that there are less women entering local government, than there are on the voter's roll. This suggests that there is a need for this constituency of women's needs and agenda to be driven at the municipal government level.

3.1. Barriers to women participation in political decision-making

According to RDP (1994), "only a quarter as many women as men have jobs in the formal sector". High unemployment, the migrant labor system and the difficulties of the informal sector have heavily impacted on women's employment opportunities. Within formal employment, women are discriminated against in many areas, such as wages, job security, special needs of female workers and employment opportunities. This is of great concern, especially for women of color who continue to be marginalized due to the prevailing patriarchal and historical legacy of the past. Britton and Fish (2008) point out that the post-apartheid state has fallen far short of the promises

of the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) in terms of land distribution, access to housing and a secure social safety net. This is partly due to the donor-driven shift to the market-oriented National Plan for Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), which has shifted much of the social welfare and development commitments to the private sphere of the household, of particular concern to women.

In retrospect, Abbas and Mama (2014) argue that the new ruling elite were the ones that entrenched patriarchal authority. This has led feminist movements to focus their attention and efforts on liberal norms, values and principles linked to pan-African ideals that are inclusive of all people on the continent. This can be linked to the first peace talks and negotiations in South Africa where no women were present or represented as the elite controlled the process and it focused on the political party, particularly the party ANC (Waylen, 2007). Furthermore, the negotiation process was regularly convened and negotiated by men, and it was linked to the party structure that allowed senior party members, who were still men, to lead the reconciliation talks (Hassim, 2006b, 2009).

Since independence, South Africa has been plagued by new threats to human security such as high unemployment, lack of access to education and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. This has resulted in some being privileged and others remaining disadvantaged. As a result, South Africa's human security remains at risk. Privilege and class discrimination are as old as humanity itself and will remain in the future. The main objective of the study confirms that the transitional processes, systems and legacies of the past associated with South Africa's apartheid regime continue to dominate the state in the areas of gender, class and race. Furthermore, privilege remains a security threat to the vast majority of the population due to the widening gap between rich and poor, which impacts on the livelihoods of the vast majority. The main research question of this study examines whether the Black African woman continues to be heavily stereotyped due to hegemony, hierarchy and representations in relation to class, gender and race in South African local government. It is important to remember that political, economic and social freedom is not synonymous with privilege for some and deprivation for others.

Statistics South Africa (2015) shows that in South Africa, the wealthy have become and remain wealthier, while the middle-income group is still struggling to make ends meet. The World Bank findings are consistent with the stark reality that the poor in Africa are getting poorer. This is because of inequalities in income, property and access and because the poor lack the capital to gain more resources. This directly affects people at the local level and highlights the importance of local government. Coincidentally, there is a direct correlation and varying degrees of inequality within the South African population. However, the lives of an emerging minority of black privileged people have changed for the better after apartheid.

However, the increasing human security challenges show that the policy has not been successful, with problems such as poor services, unemployment, gender inequality and the widening gap between rich and poor leading to social discontent and unhappiness in communities. This is mainly due to the problems of race, class and gender. The status quo remains as the real challenges of insecurity, gender inequality and privileged hegemonies are yet to be explored. The chosen research methodology of this study, the intersectional theory, aims to address social injustice based on privilege within class, race, gender and ethnicity. It requires a broader, in-depth analysis of racism that gives rise to inequalities such as class, gender, and ethnicity.

There is the need to review the process of racialization at all levels, including local government, to ensure that there is not a minority of winners and a majority of losers, where the minority of winners make decisions and set policy for the majority. In this case, the study suggests the notions of 'otherness' and the idea of privilege enabling divide and rule should be addressed. Recent research has shown that the emerging black middle class has grown but has remained tiny and timid, with blacks making up less than 15 percent of the economy (blacks make up 90 percent of the population and black Africans around 85 percent). Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) companies have a relatively substantial share of the size of their investments in the stock market. Iheduru (2004) and Bhora *et al.* (2017) note that these black elite groups owned more than 14 percent of the country's R90 billion oil industry and enjoyed 11

percent of the 3.3 billion operating profits. Despite this, women of color continue to lag as decision makers in local government.

Consequently, BBBBEE policies are meant to empowerment of all black people including women, workers, youth and people with disabilities and people living in rural areas. Huge inequalities continue to exist 27 years into democratic South Africa (Díaz Pabón *et al.* 2021). Even though much progress has been achieved, progressive change has however not materialized, as black African women continue to battle to find employment when they do they occupy low-income jobs and their male counterparts get paid more for doing the same job. Further to this, few women occupy decision making posts.

However, Patel and Graham (2012) note that in recent years, women have been the main beneficiaries of BBBEE through social development funds, although more studies are needed on the impact of BBBEE and how it has contributed to social development resulting from corporate compliance with the policy. However, BBBEE has not yet resolved the issue of fairness and equality for all citizens of the state, especially poor African women who are given full access to markets (Patel and Graham, 2012). These BBBEE initiatives have not created jobs for the majority, although inclusion programs have been introduced. BBBEE programs have therefore resulted in a representative of the black population gaining access to markets while capitalism has been restructured in favor of the majority.

This means that BBBEE policies have lived up to their strategy of creating a black capitalist class or economic elite that complements white capital in South Africa to ensure a consumption boom and economic development. Importantly, this type of equality remains flawed. It is based on the collective group of black privileged South Africans rather than individual identity and involves group embodiment. It has not benefited the majority of South Africans, nor has it reduced poverty for the majority of black people in the region. This is even more evident when one looks at women, who are still poorly represented at the state level, in local government and state institutions, which should be at the forefront of women's advancement.

Political inclusion should be understood and implemented not only in terms of quantity, but more importantly in terms of the quality of representation of interests by public officials. The black middle class has become a reality in South Africa, which promotes multiculturalism. This powerful groups can continue to contribute to multiculturalism and economic development that impact on social development as long as there is a clear separation between state and elite power. There is evidence that the end of apartheid in South Africa focused on the global economy rather than development issues, which affected the lives of people in the region. This is the reason for development-oriented local governance. In South Africa, when the ANC government came to power in 1994, capitalists withdrew from supporting the majority government, leading to a striking political and economic crisis. In addition, this secured minority profits and capitalist position, which ultimately increased concerns about the effectiveness of neoliberal programs.

This also led to capitalist domination over hegemony, which could not even control the ANC due to the pre-existing capitalist order (Bassett, 2008). Moreover, black subordination prevails in white dominated capitalism. The number and extent of women's involvement in leadership positions and as decision makers remains low, if not non-existent in some cases, in the case of local government, looking at the number of women mayors who have been represented in major metropolitan municipalities since 1994, which is one of the highest levels of leadership at the local government level.

Municipal governance must extend and transcend beyond race, class and gender divides in order to propel a political governance system that ensure concrete and progressive municipal administration and change for all in the state, especially citizens and previously marginalized groups such as women. It is worth noting that during South Africa's transition to a National Unity Transitional Government, gender activists advocated for socio-economic and reproductive rights to lay the groundwork for affirmative action through the Constitution to institutionalize social citizenship rights. The ANC mediated social justice during the transitional period and in the formation of a constitution (Hassim, 2006b).

The safety of the people and the creation of better living conditions, that is, the need for effective service delivery in municipalities, remains very important for the well-being of the people, equally important is increasing their share in the global economy and of even greater importance

for good governance. At present, BBBEE has not disenfranchised South Africa, but serves a small minority of people that includes white capitalists from home and abroad and an emerging middle-income black group. The economy is thus still dominated by a minority while the majority continues to be marginalized. Therefore, the links between social conditions and the cultural legacies of African elitism need to be exposed and there is a great need for intersectional reforms that include all citizens of the state. This also applies to local government structures.

Exclusionary policies, re-racialization and privileged capitalism, corruption and a lack of self-regulation have led to nepotism that reinforces accumulation and power. Subsequently, 90 percent of the population continues to be disadvantaged because minority privileges are contested and questionable. BBBEE favors the privileged over mass development and is based on a system of inclusion in resources, access and income. In light of the above arguments, it is important to remember that people have different perceptions of ideas and thus multiple realities exist (Stacey, 1988).

In conjunction with the intellectual and theoretical arguments, there are many practical and existing obstacles that cause women to be undervalued and underrepresented in political participation. Some of them are: fundamental inequality: women have constitutional rights but are not considered equal; political and economic instability: it affects the development of a political culture with democratic norms; discrimination: women are discriminated against when they run for office or are elected or appointed to local government; and the male-dominated environment of political institutions: There are few women in decision-making bodies, and the style and mode of operation are those acceptable to men (Eagly and Sczesny, 2009; Kasomo, 2012; Ilesanmi, 2018; Morgan Dadzie *et al.* 2021; Ilesanmi, 2021)

Other factors include: Security: women are exposed to risks to their physical and mental security through their participation in peace negotiations and political leadership positions; psychological factors: Women may lack self-confidence and choose not to engage; and overarching: gender equality and women's participation is generally neglected during the peace process (Narayan, 2005; Krook and True 2012; Aduda and Liesch, 2022). Deep-rooted causes include ideological factors: patriarchy as a system of male dominance shapes women's relationship to politics (Bari, 2005); contextual factors: these include the lack of effective monitoring mechanisms, the lack of resources, the need to promote women running for political office, the lack of female role models and the lack of solidarity among women (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2007).

Other barriers include lack of knowledge, understanding, and orientation about municipal governance and municipal laws; lack of knowledge about the strategic and technical aspects of municipal programs, public participation, and service delivery mechanisms; lack of support and cooperation from family, colleagues, municipal committees, and the political party; and lack of experience and training in communication, negotiation, and decision-making to deal with complex municipal issues. These factors may vary in other countries (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2014).

Both the Municipal Structures Act and the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill were enacted to give effect to the Constitution. The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill contains the key element that failure to comply with the Constitution justifies punitive action against the defaulting unit. This includes local councils and executive officers. Clause 11 requires 50 percent representation. However, following the 2011 local government elections, Limpopo had the highest proportion of women on executive councils (Morna and Mbadlanyana, 2011).

3.2. Gender equality in South African municipal governance

South Africa is known for being one of the most unequal nations in the world. Statistics South Africa (2020b) says that this is due to the Gini coefficient for per capita spending, which was 0.67 in 2006 but fell to 0.65 by 2015. This is according to the Statistics South Africa (2019). According to the Palma ratio in South Africa, the top 10% spent 8.6x more than the bottom 40% in 2006. The ratio decreased to 7.9 for 2015. These figures indicate that inequality at the national level has fallen between 2006-2015 (Statistics South Africa, 2020b). Average female workers earn

about 30% less than their male counterparts. The report found that men are more likely and more well-paid than women to be employed.

Additionally, South Africa's income distribution clearly shows the high level of racialized inequalities in the South African labor force. Black Africans are not only the least likely to find employment, but they also have the lowest wages. However, Whites are more successful than all other groups. Between 2011-2015, the average real monthly earnings of black Africans employed was R6 999 (real earnings). For Indians/Asians and coloreds, the respective figures are R9 3339 and R14 235. The monthly cost for whites was R246646, three times more than that of black Africans.

South African women face additional obstacles to gaining employment. They are still restricted from securing jobs in certain areas or having certain skills once they have been employed. South African women often find themselves marginalized in local politics and are excluded from decision-making processes. According to Statistics South Africa (2021), South Africa's labor market is more favorable for men than it is for women.

Table 1. The B-BBEE commission national status report

Occupational Level	Period	White	African	Colored	Indian	Male	Female
Top management	2001	87%	6%	3%	4%	87%	13%
	2019	65.6%	15.2%	5.6%	10.3%	75.6%	24.4%
Senior Management	2001	81%	9%	5%	5%	80%	20%
	2019	53.7%	23.5%	8%	11.4%	64.7%	35.3%
Professionally qualified	2001	56%	33%	6%	5%	62%	38%
	2019	34.7%	43.2%	10%	9.4%	53.1%	46.9%
Technical Skilled	2001	18%	61.07%	18%	6%	60%	40%
	2019	18.1%	63.2%	11.6%	5.4%	52.3%	47.7%

Source: B-BBEE Commission (2020)

Table 1 illustrates that the 2018 National Status Report on Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE Commission) shows that whites, foreign nationals, and black males accounted respectively for 62 percent and 16.76% (20%: 2017) of management control. These data are only applicable to the office of the director and not all levels in management control. However, it shows low levels at board level which, in turn, affects lower levels management because of the power and bargaining disparity between blacks, and non-blacks.

The post-1994 period saw the economic development strategy implemented by ANC favoring international and local capital. This also benefited other strata like the 'African petty bourgeoisie' and the working class. This was evident in policies changes and implementations like the Labor Relations Act, Employment Equity Act, and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act. It also reflected the affirmation of African nationalism ideology in the transformation of state (Butler, 2007).

Men are more likely, regardless of race, to be employed in paid work than women. Women are more likely, however, to engage unpaid work. The proportion of men in the labor force is higher than that of women. This is because the labor participation rate for men for the first time is higher than it is for women. In addition, the unemployment rate is lower for men than it is for women. According to the Statistics South Africa (2021), the unemployment rate for women was 36.8 % in Q2 2021. It was 32.4 percent for men. Black African women had a 41.0 percent unemployment rate during the same period as white women (8.2 percent), 22.4 percent with Indian/Asian women (22.4 percent) and 29.9 percent with women of color (29.9 percent).

The number of men who held leadership roles was 66.9%, while the 33.1 percent for women. In total, 30.1 percent of those who had a job in Q2-2021 were employed in primary and housekeeping jobs. Domestic, commercial, and technical occupations were dominated primarily by women. The remaining occupations were dominated largely by men. Only 5.5% of domestic worker jobs were held and 11.9% of skilled trades were held by women.

According to Statistics South Africa (2021), South African local governments are still racialized, and gendered. The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2020) has stated that there is still inequalities between men and women across the entire global labor market. This does

not necessarily mean that they will be better placed in the workplace, regardless of their educational attainment. This suggests that equality is not likely to be achieved soon as progress toward it remains slow. The main problem facing women in paid work is unequal treatment in the workplace. This is evident in South Africa's evolution of its local government structures. This is an example of equality in pay for work that has equal value. Despite performing the same work in local governments, women are still paid less than their male counterparts. This is a major obstacle to women's economic empowerment in the local government.

Table 2. Workforce profile at the top management level by business type, population group and gender

BUSINESS TYPE	Male				Female				Foreign National		TOTAL
	African	Colored	Indian	White	African	Colored	Indian	White	Male	Female	
National Government	50.6%	6.4%	4.3%	5.7%	26.1%	1.9%	1.8%	2.8%	0.2%	0.1%	100.0%
Provincial Government	51.8%	6.5%	2.0%	4.8%	26.9%	3.1%	1.4%	3.1%	0.0%	0.3%	100.0%
Local Government	52.5%	6.4%	4.7%	6.1%	24.9%	1.2%	1.4%	2.4%	0.4%	0.0%	100.0%
Private Sector	7.8%	3.3%	7.4%	55.4%	4.2%	2.1%	3.2%	13.2%	2.9%	0.5%	100.0%
Non-Profit Organizations	24.0%	4.0%	3.7%	24.9%	12.9%	3.3%	4.0%	17.9%	3.0%	2.2%	100.0%
State Owned Companies	35.8%	4.3%	5.0%	15.3%	23.9%	4.3%	3.1%	6.7%	1.4%	0.1%	100.0%
Educational Institutions	11.0%	3.5%	4.8%	33.3%	6.7%	2.9%	2.3%	31.7%	2.4%	1.3%	100.0%

Source: Department of Labour (2020)

Table 2 shows representation within the local government sector. Particularly in local governments, where men still dominate the top management positions and local government tends to favor men at this level.

In 2015, 277 of South Africa's 2782 municipalities had an Acting Mayor. Of these, 106 (38%) were women according to Stats SA's non-financial Census of Municipalities report. Limpopo was the province with the most representation. 18 of the 30 municipalities (60%) were led by a female mayor. The Western Cape had the lowest representation (8 of 30 municipalities, or 27%) Since 2011, the percentage of fencers among people wearing the chain office has decreased from 42 percent in 2011 to 38 percent in 2015. Only three provinces had a higher proportion of female mayors: Limpopo (Mpumalanga), Eastern Cape (42%) and Mpumalanga (38%). A new mayor is elected when the position becomes vacant or after five years. The 2011 figures were collected right before the municipal elections in 2011. Remember that there were some municipalities that merged after 2011, which influenced the shifting and changing of mayoral positions (Statistics South Africa, 2016).

BBBEE policies that encourage inclusion and empower communities to prosper and influence local governance must continue to include the participation of women of color into leadership positions. BBBEE policies are not able to ensure the growth of black-owned enterprises. Inauthentic multiracial businesses as well as the pretense that black owners of businesses is to be able to access government tenders have caused controversy (Southall, 2007). BBBEE policies were intended to empower marginalized people such as workers, youths, people with disabilities, and those who live in rural areas. They also sought to reduce the inequalities still present 27 years after democracy was established (Department of Trade and Industry, 2011). It is difficult to judge the effectiveness of these policies as women of color, who were supposed benefit from BBBEE policies or gender equality policies, continue to occupy low-income positions while BBBEE has instead had an impact on their male counterparts.

BBBEE policies have not made it easier for women to be employed in senior positions and earn the same salary and to be represented in the top management as their male counterparts. South Africa's highest-earners are still men. Gumede (2020; 2021) notes that

income can also be linked with privilege. This is true regardless of whether the jobs are not in their expertise. This means that even though women are skilled, they are not able to get top jobs due to the privilege networks associated with systematic exclusion in institutional structures and policies.

Table 3. Workforce profile at the professionally qualified level by business type, population group and gender in 2019

BUSINESS TYPE	Male				Female				Foreign National		TOTAL
	African	Colored	Indian	White	African	Colored	Indian	White	Male	Female	
National Government	29.7%	4.6%	2.3%	7.4%	37.8%	5.9%	3.2%	8.1%	0.7%	0.3%	100.0%
Provincial Government	24.5%	3.7%	2.1%	4.8%	43.4%	7.4%	4.0%	8.6%	1.0%	0.5%	100.0%
Local Government	35.6%	9.5%	2.6%	10.9%	28.2%	5.5%	1.6%	5.6%	0.3%	0.1%	100.0%
Private Sector	17.7%	5.8%	6.4%	26.8%	12.8%	5.0%	4.8%	17.7%	2.2%	0.8%	100.0%
Non-Profit Organizations	19.8%	2.1%	2.5%	7.6%	45.3%	3.5%	3.5%	12.1%	2.2%	1.5%	100.0%
State Owned Companies	31.0%	4.2%	4.9%	18.3%	26.2%	3.0%	3.1%	7.4%	1.3%	0.6%	100.0%
Educational Institutions	24.0%	3.5%	3.6%	9.0%	30.5%	3.3%	5.1%	17.0%	2.8%	1.3%	100.0%

Source: Department of Labour (2020)

Table 3 illustrates that local governments are best in representing African and other people of color at qualified levels. BBBEE policies allowed Africans and other people of color to access the labor market. Table 1 to 2 reveal that men remain overrepresented at top management levels and that local governments still favor men at this professional level. Table 3 illustrates that there is not much of a skills gap between them.

Table 4. Gender representation of households that reported hunger

Gender	Northern Cape	Free State	Mpumalanga	North West	KwaZulu Natal	Republic of South Africa	Gauteng	Eastern Cape	Limpopo
Male	18.20	14.60	12.60	10.00	12.40	9.70	6.80	9.40	3.90
Female	19.00	16.40	15.50	13.80	11.10	11.10	9.50	6.30	4.70

Note: In the Northern Cape, the figure for women of 19, 0% is nearly 8% points higher than the national average, which is 11.1%.
Source: Statistics South Africa (2019)

As illustrated in Table 4, approximately one-tenth of female-headed households (11.1 percent) reported having suffered from hunger as compared to 9.7 of male-headed households.

Answering the central research question of the study, we will examine whether women influence decision-making at local levels after liberation. We will also investigate whether the ANC-led government has made sure that women's rights remain high up on the political agenda. While significant progress has been made after 1994's structural changes and sound policies, there are still opportunities for greater progressive change. Marais (2001) states that while there are elements of race and classes in this income category, privilege is gendered. Female-headed households are the most vulnerable. According to Statistics South Africa (2020a), households traditionally headed by women are the most deprived, as they have the highest levels of food insecurity and hunger levels, as well as the lowest incomes. The privileged white women, along with a few wealthy black women, have made significant progress in the 27 years since democratic South Africa. This study shows that inequalities persist even within racial/class systems such as the blacks.

Currently, men still enjoy preference rights in practice. The City of Cape Town document, The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Draught Policy Doc (unknown), 1 affirms that South Africa made significant progress in establishing legal frameworks to support women. The Gender Equality Bill of Rights of South African Constitution of 1996 has shown that there have been significant advances towards gender awareness and greater equality, despite the stark reality that women do not always practice at the same level. This is due to historical structural gender inequality. Gender equality has been limited by an authoritarian system based on male dominance and intersecting oppressions relating to race, class and disability.

While South Africa has seen violent political upheavals in recent years, today there are more women serving in South Africa's Parliaments than any other country. Gender-friendly laws are being introduced and reforms to the constitution are on the rise. The efforts to create gender-neutral customary and land law, as well as stricter laws that eliminate violence against women have been a significant step towards success (Tripp, 2013).

When women began to participate in representative politics in large numbers, the GNU was beginning, it raised questions about how electoral politics and institutional restructuring (party/government) could be structured in women's interest. Despite all the formal processes to advance gender equality in South Africa, there was still no social consensus within South African local government regarding the political importance that women's interests have in relation with strengthening racial equity. Because of the superficial support for gender equalization, a large number of women voters do not believe that women should be elected to greater power and authority at the local level (Hassim, 2006a).

Even though women are becoming more prominent in politics, the electorate continues to believe that women can be leaders despite their increasing importance. Cultural and inherent biases continue hindering women's access to political power even after the parties have started this important conversation during the first democratic election. In 2010, the establishment and ongoing maintenance of a solid structure like the Women's Commission of the South African Local Government Association, (SALGA) was an indication of the SALGA Women's Commission's commitment to the advancement of the interests and agenda of women in various political parties who work in local government structures. This is evident in the Journey 2010-2016 Report of the SALGA Women's Commission. The report highlighted the achievements of women in LG participation.

- Increase the participation and representation in leadership positions in organized local governance at the national, provincial and local levels. This includes both administrative and political spheres.
- Adopt 50/50 representations of women and men in local government structures. The 50% quota should be included in the SALGA constitution.
- In order to ensure that the SALGA NEC adopts the 50/50 realignment, and local councils do the same for the forthcoming local elections in 2016 and beyond.
- Ensure that SALGA and its member municipalities establish well resourced gender machinery/structures, SALGA Women Commission, Women Committees, Gender Section 79 Committees and Gender Focal Points to implement the Gender Policy Framework for Local Government.
- Support the implementation and maintenance of the Gender Policy Framework for Local Government.
- Create a Gender Equality Committee at the City Council to oversee Gender mainstreaming, an Inter-Party Women's Committee (Gender Focal Points & Gender Forums), and advocate for a Gender Focal Personal as an administrative position.
- Women's groups must be functional, have budgets and have a plan of action.

Women are often underrepresented in politics and are therefore often overlooked. Their issues are not brought to the attention of decision makers. This is why it is not necessary to act on these issues or acknowledge them. This type of party institutionalization has not always been conducive for the agency of women's challenges, let alone feminist ideals.

It is the ANCs Deployment Committee that makes crucial decisions about which party members are promoted to higher positions in key positions like party mayors or heads parastatals. The proportional representation system allows the leadership of the movement to

reshuffle MPs according to party directives. The proportional system, however, is intended to favor accountability to the party and not to constituencies. This may prevent substantive representation from being developed over descriptive representation.

Furthermore, too much reliance on feminists within the party might have limitations for other reasons. Women are still held hostage to male-dominated and hierarchical party politics. The gender route is not the way to party power. Recent years have shown that democracy is safe. This can be seen in the level and quality of local government engagement, as well as dialogue with communities in public sphere. However, leadership that restores patriarchal power or control could weaken the ruling party (Hassim, 2006a). ANC Women's League is a good channel to help women leaders in local government.

Table 5. Representation of women in local level political office

Year	Women Ward %	Women %	Women Overall
1995	11	28	19
2000	17	38	29
2006	37	42	40
2011	33	43	38
2016	33	48	41

Source: Hicks *et al.* (2016)

As illustrated in Table 5, the target of 50% female local councilors has not yet been met, even though there has been good progress in this frontier since 1995. Despite racial or class divisions, the African continent has been promoting feminism through institutions such the Federation of South African Women (Federation of South African Women) and the Women's League of the African National Congress. These women's rights groups are still advocating for women's participation in governance and participation in decision-making. Despite this, the progress towards gender equality is slow and women still remain out of the decision making process. This is mostly due to South Africa's cultural, religious, and regional dynamics. They are responsible for the division, inequality, patriarchy and discrimination that women frequently fall prey to and are victims to. Women in this region are often left behind in land ownership, have limited income and struggle to find gender equality. Racial, religious, heterosexist, and class prejudices are the main causes of gender inequality (Okin, 1994).

Benjamin (2007) notes that women were previously subordinate to men prior to apartheid. Women in South Africa now share power with their male counterparts, although this struggle is far from over in many aspects, as we'll see in their political lives. The patriarchal power can be exercised in the public and private sectors, where men still control the decision-making process. In certain cases, this power is still linked to the creation value systems in social spaces. Badat (2010) says that this oppression is due to the exclusion of women from the social system under colonial rule, and the legacy of apartheid, which continue to impact gender parity. South Africa's history is one of patriarchy, male supremacy, and class struggle (Hassim, 2003) .This affects women's security as they are not able to get equal access in leadership positions. The local government is still dominated by men, but women are still underrepresented. This has an immediate impact on families' livelihoods and on women's income and access to work. This can be attributed to the fact that many mothers are responsible to provide for their families' needs. These are the essential aspects of human security, which are vital for greater equity and to overcome accumulation for some and deprivation in the majority. It is unfortunate that there are so many identities in society, including race, gender, class and gender.

Benjamin (2006) says that most black women in South Africa are subject to oppression because of their intersection with race, class, and gender. Women at the bottom and most economically marginalized of the food chain are those who are most affected by the patriarchal natures of society. The more a woman is poor, the more patriarchy she experiences from the state, at work and in her own family is a trap.

BBBEE policies aim to empower all black people. It was designed to address the income inequalities and income inequality that persist 27 years after South Africa's democracy (Merrino, 2020). Progress has been made but there is still no progressive change. Many black African

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women remain in low-income positions while their male counterparts are paid higher for the same work. BBBEE, however, has been more favorable to white female counterparts. For example, in South African municipalities, the poor black African female gets a job. But her privileged male counterpart or white female colleague keeps getting promoted and is given high-income jobs. This may be because black women lack the skills or because there are still systemic obstacles that favor others. Sen's (2009) notion of equity states that it is essential to include all people, not just groups or classes based on race, gender, or ethnicity. Human development is access to equal opportunities. The growing inequality in the world, such as increased internet use in richer countries, highlights the increasing global inequality.

Hames (2006) concurs that black African women were always oppressed and treated differently. This is due to a lack of access and participation at high levels in education, labor market and politics. The impact of South Africa's patriarchal discourses on women continues into democratic rule. They have left a significant legacy. This system of black oppression in South Africa has a significant impact on black women, both in the public and private spheres. These frustrations were expressed by organized strikes and massive mobilizations in areas where women's issues were the most compromised, but women still remain somewhat behind. Political movements in the 1960s were primarily focused on liberation. Accordingly, women's issues at the time were not considered relevant or required attention (Benjamin, 2007).

The noble vision of former President Thabo Mugabe and his government was admirable. It is unfortunate that these progressive and futuristic plans, which were supposed to change South Africa for good, have resulted instead in a widening economic gap that has led to more poverty and further decline in the region. This has caused South Africans to be marginalized for their skin color, sexual orientation, and class. Social discipline is an essential aspect of development. It is evident that privileged power can cause states to fall into this category and become chaotic, as shown by the service delivery strike and xenophobic attack. All of these are linked with social discontent. The main causes for insecurity in South Africa include corruption, poor service delivery, inequality, and poverty. This can lead to instability and social discontent that creates turmoil in the region (Marais, 2001). South Africa is still facing structural and systemic problems that make capitalism inefficient for the vast majority (Mbeki, 2009).

4. Conclusion

This manuscript presented data and examined relevant information on the status of women in local decision-making since the inception of the Government of National Unity until 2020. The findings suggest that there were periods when the number of women in local government increased and periods when it decreased, particularly under the Zuma government. Consequently, the number of female councilors remains relatively low compared to that of men at the local decision-making level. The study uses a case study to show that women continue to face intersecting oppressions related to race, class and gender, as well as patriarchal and social norms that continue to be reinforced. As a result, women's concerns continue to be addressed separately, creating a disconnect between women's needs (women make up the majority of the electorate and bear the brunt of service delivery) and the needs of the community. In addition, institutional systems and processes rooted in apartheid structures and systems remain in place and support weak policy implementation in relation to gender equality. The promotion of women as leaders and gender mainstreaming as well as the training of women leaders remains weak and lacks political will.

In this study, desk research was performed. Because of global pandemic travel restrictions, additional documentation may not be available from communities. The current situation could have been better understood if the community had been visited. Future studies could include information on service delivery in three of the 2021 mayoral candidates' municipalities to enhance this study. This study could be used to expand future research. It can also be used to examine how South Africa's municipal gender mainstreaming policies performed during a global pandemic.

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