



Exploring the incorporation of gender-inclusive indicators in the practices and policies of selected Johannesburg Stock Exchange(JSE)-listed corporations

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Mini-dissertation accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Business Administration* at the North-West University

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Graduation: October 2025

DECLARATION

I, Charity Nomfundo Ndaba (31463347), hereby confirm that the work presented in this mini dissertation titled “Exploring the incorporation of gender- inclusive indicators in the practices and policies of selected JSE listed corporations” is own original work and has not been submitted, in its entirety or part, to any other educational institution for any other degree. All information extracted from other sources is acknowledged as such. Requests for permission to copy or make use of materials in this thesis, wholly or partly, should be addressed to:

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to all the women and marginalised groups whose voices, resilience, and contributions continue to shape the quest for equality and inclusion in workplaces across South Africa. It is a tribute to the leaders and change makers who tirelessly champion gender equity, inspiring organisations to embrace inclusive practices and policies that empower individuals and communities alike.

PREFACE

I embarked on this research to explore how South African corporations incorporate gender-inclusive indicators into their policies and practices, motivated by a personal passion for promoting equity and inclusion in the workplace. Having observed persistent disparities in gender representation and opportunities across various sectors, I felt compelled to contribute to the growing discourse on gender mainstreaming. This study allowed me to delve into the themes that drive gender equality and inclusion in organizations, with the hope of identifying actionable insights that can inspire meaningful change.

Conducting this research has been an insightful journey that deepened my understanding of the complexities and challenges of achieving workplace equity. Through interviews, data analysis, and engagement with organizational practices, I gained valuable perspectives on the progress made and the barriers that remain. I hope this research will serve as a resource for organizations, policymakers, and future researchers committed to advancing gender equity and creating inclusive, supportive environments for all employees.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I extend my sincere thanks to my supervisor, Prof Leon Jackson for his invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and constant encouragement. His expertise and mentorship have been instrumental in shaping the direction and outcome of this work.

Special appreciation goes to my mom - Anne who believes in education. I thank her for staying up with me while I type this dissertation. To my daughter Nomzamo whose mantra is "*singehluwe into engakhulum*", and grandson Ngwedi- "you will get your doctorate, one day". I also want to extend my gratitude to Refiloe for encouraging me to do this. In addition, I want to extend my gratitude to my colleague whose unwavering support, patience, and belief in me provided the strength to persevere during challenging times.

Lastly, this research is for those who tirelessly seek knowledge and innovation, contributing to a better and more informed South Africa and the world at large.

ABSTRACT

Gender mainstreaming is a critical aspect of fostering equality and inclusion in the workplace, yet its implementation varies significantly across sectors and organisational sizes. This study examines the extent to which South African corporations incorporate gender-inclusive indicators into their practices and policies. By employing a qualitative approach, the research analysed data from interviews, and annual reports to identify common themes and disparities in gender mainstreaming efforts. Key themes explored include strategic intent, financial commitment, structural frameworks, gender governance, governance structures, and cultural transformation. Findings indicate that strategic intent, supported by leadership accountability, is a driving force behind successful gender mainstreaming efforts. Organizations with measurable gender equity goals embedded in leadership performance metrics, such as recruitment targets and pay equity audits, showcased higher levels of inclusivity. In addition, financial investment in mentorship programs, Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) initiatives, and gender-sensitive benefits emerged as critical enablers of progress. The *research “exploring the incorporation of gender-inclusive indicators in the practices and policies of selected Johannesburg Stock Exchange(JSE) -listed corporations* also highlights the importance of robust governance structures and transparent reporting mechanisms to track progress and ensure accountability in implementing gender equity policies. This study contributes to the discourse on gender equality by offering actionable recommendations for organizations and policymakers such as strengthening policy frameworks, allocating resources for gender-specific programs, and fostering inclusive workplace cultures through diversity training and leadership development and statutory continuous progress monitoring and reporting. Future research should focus on intersectional analysis and longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of gender mainstreaming efforts and address the unique challenges faced by smaller organisations and marginalised groups.

Key terms: Gender; gender mainstreaming; gender (women) inclusive indicators, gender equality, gender equity, gender indicator

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfDB: African Gender Equality Index

BEE: Black Empowerment

BWASA: Business Women's Association of South Africa

DEEI Diversity Equity Equality and Inclusion

EVP: Employee Value Proposition

EIU: Economist Intelligence Unit

ERG: Employee Resource Groupings

ENG: Employee Network Groups

GGGR: Global Gender Gap Report

GII: Gender Inequality Index

GEM: Gender Empowerment Measure

GDP: Growth Domestic Product

GGGI: Global Gender Gap Index

ILO: International Labour Organization

Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

STEM: Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics

SOE: State Owned Enterprise

UN: United Nations

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter introduces the research study, outlining its background, objectives. It explores the context surrounding gender mainstreaming within corporate South Africa, highlighting the critical need for inclusive and equitable workplace practices. The chapter presents the problem statement, articulates the research questions and objectives, and discusses the scope and limitations of the study. It concludes with an overview of the dissertation structure, guiding the reader through subsequent chapters.

1.2 Introduction

Gender Equality is one of the global Sustainable Development Goals that is crucial in driving social, economic, and environmental challenges and to create a better and more sustainable future for all (Sustainable Development Goals). It is a fundamental human right and a core principle of the United Nations. Gender inclusion is an essential component of sustainable development (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2018). Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations (UN), 2019). Gender inclusion in sustainable development recognises the unique needs and contributions of both men and women to achieve sustainable development, (UN Women,2018).

For women economic empowerment to have a positive impact on economic growth and development, the South African corporate sector should address gender equity and inclusion issues. When women are economically active, they contribute to increased productivity, higher household income, and overall economic stability.

promoting gender equality is not only a matter of justice but also essential for upholding the rights and dignity of all individuals, according to the Commission for Employment Equity (2017). Increasing women's participation and representation in corporate practices can contribute to economic growth and development (Institute for Economic Justice, 2019). Developing gender inclusive indicators is essential for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment not only in South Africa but also in the

region and globally. European Innovation Scoreboard (2016) highlights the importance of tracking gender equality indicators as an endeavour for promoting awareness and commitment to gender equality.

According to the International Labour Organisation (2018), gender inclusive indicators help to address the intersectionality of gender with other social identities such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and socio-economic status. Gender inclusive indicators help track progress towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment goals (Kahn & Louw, 2014). By measuring progress towards gender equality, identifying disparities, and promoting accountability, policymakers can work towards creating a more equitable and just society for all. Gender Equality is one of the global Sustainable Development Goals that is crucial in driving social, economic, and environmental challenges and to create a better and more sustainable future for all (Sustainable Development Goals). It is a fundamental human right and a core principle of the United Nations. Gender inclusion is an essential component of sustainable development (ILO,2018). Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UN,2019). Gender inclusion in sustainable development recognises the unique needs and contributions of both men and women to achieve sustainable development, (UN Women,2018).

Women's economic empowerment can have a positive impact on economic growth and development. When women are economically active, they contribute to increased productivity, higher household income, and overall economic stability. Promoting gender equality is not only a matter of justice but also essential for upholding the rights and dignity of all individuals, according to the Commission for Employment Equity (2017). Increasing women's participation and representation in corporate practices can contribute to economic growth and development, stressed Institute for Economic Justice (2019). Developing gender inclusive indicators is essential for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment not only in South Africa but also in the region and globally. European Innovation Scoreboard (2016) highlights the importance of tracking gender equality indicators and promotes awareness and commitment to gender equality.

1.3 Problem statement

There are progressive legislation, policies, and international commitments aimed at advancing gender equality, significant gender disparities persist both globally, Halliday et al (2021) and within South Africa, particularly in leadership positions, pay equity, and access to opportunities for career advancement, (Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020).

Globally, women remain underrepresented in both political and corporate leadership roles. As of 2025, only 26.5% of parliamentary seats worldwide are held by women (WEF, 2025; SA Business Integrator, 2025), while 28.8% of senior leadership positions globally are occupied by women (Women on Top, 2025; Euronews, 2025). Although there has been a modest improvement from previous years, these figures reflect the slow pace of transformation in achieving gender parity.

In South Africa, the situation mirrors these global trends but shows a slightly more progressive stance in political representation. Women hold approximately 45% of parliamentary seats (Future SA, 2025), outperforming the global average and aligning more closely with the targets of gender-inclusive policies. However, within the corporate sector, the gender gap remains stark. According to the World Economic Forum (2025) and SA Profile Magazine (2025), only 32% of senior leadership positions in JSE-listed companies are occupied by women, with a mere 8% of CEOs and 22% of CFOs being female. Furthermore, Just Share (2024) reports that among JSE Top 40 companies, disclosure on gender pay gaps is inconsistent, with many organizations reluctant to publish detailed data despite evidence showing women continue to earn approximately 30% less than their male counterparts.

These disparities affect not only women who face ongoing barriers to career advancement and equitable remuneration, but also corporate performance, innovation, and socio-economic development emphasized Van der Linder and Baritt (2020),. The lack of women in leadership positions means organizations miss out on the well-documented advantages that come with diverse leadership teams, (Hill, 2015). While legislative measures such as the Employment Equity Act and corporate policies exist to promote transformation, their effectiveness is often undermined by inconsistent implementation, weak monitoring, and a lack of accountability mechanisms.

The purpose of this study is to critically assess how South African corporations integrate gender-inclusive indicators into their policies and practices. It seeks to examine the gaps and challenges in corporate gender mainstreaming efforts, providing evidence-based recommendations to strengthen leadership accountability, improve transparency, and ensure that gender equity goals are translated into meaningful action. By placing the South African context within a global framework, the research adds to the discussion on gender equality and presents findings that may inform national and international policy development as well as corporate strategies.

1.4 Primary research objective

The primary objective for this research is to determine if JSE-listed corporations incorporate gender inclusive indicators in their practices and policies.

1.4.1 Secondary research objectives

The secondary research objectives are:

- **To explore** how the strategic intent of selected South African companies across different sectors and sizes supports gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming.
- **To examine** the extent to which financial commitments within these companies contribute to advancing gender mainstreaming initiatives.
- **To assess** the role of organisational structural frameworks in enabling or constraining gender mainstreaming efforts.
- **To investigate** the implementation and effectiveness of gender-specific development programmes in promoting gender inclusivity.
- **To analyse** how gender mainstreaming efforts are reflected and communicated through organisational policies and formal reports.

1.4.2 Primary research question

Do JSE-listed corporations incorporate gender inclusive indicators in their practices and policies?

1.4.3 Secondary research questions

- How does the strategic intent of selected South African companies across different sectors and sizes support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming?
- In what ways does the financial commitment of these companies contribute to supporting gender mainstreaming efforts?
- How do organizational structural frameworks within these companies enable or constrain gender mainstreaming?
- What role do gender-specific development programmes play in promoting gender inclusivity within these companies
- How are gender mainstreaming efforts reflected and communicated in organizational policies and reports of these companies?

1.5 Overview of the research methodology

1.5.1 Research Paradigm

According to Bergman, *et al* (2010) a research philosophy is a belief about how data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analysed and used. Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis (2019) identified five research philosophies, which are positivism, interpretivism or constructivism, critical realism, pragmatism, and post-positivism.

This study is grounded in the epistemological stance of interpretivism, which aligns with the qualitative nature of the research. Interpretivism holds that reality is socially constructed and subjective, and therefore, understanding complex social phenomena—such as gender mainstreaming—requires engaging directly with the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of individuals, according to Bergman, *et al.*, (2010). In the context of this research, interpretivism provides a lens through which to explore how corporate actors within South African organizations understand, implement, and experience gender-inclusive policies and practices. It acknowledges that gender equity efforts are not universally experienced or implemented in the same way, and thus, multiple realities can exist based on context, organizational culture, and individual roles.

1.5.2 Research Design

According to Myers (2019), a research design refers to the procedure employed to collect data, analyse and interpret results, and disseminate findings. It offers a blueprint for the research strategy by outlining the structured and logical steps necessary for collecting primary data from the research environment (Creswell, 2013). A well-defined research design ensures alignment between the research objectives, questions, data collection, and analysis processes, thereby enhancing the credibility and validity of the study's outcomes.

This study employs a case study research design to facilitate an in-depth exploration of how South African corporations incorporate gender-inclusive indicators into their policies and practices. The case study design is particularly relevant to this research as it allows the researcher to examine contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts (Yin, 2018). It enables a comprehensive investigation into organisational practices, capturing both the complexities and nuances associated with gender mainstreaming initiatives. By focusing on selected cases across various sectors, this design provides opportunities for comparative analysis, identifying sector-specific patterns, challenges, and best practices. The case study design is well-suited to uncovering the intricacies of corporate efforts to achieve gender equality, as it accommodates multiple data sources, including interviews, policy documents, employment equity plans, and diversity reports

1.5.3 Research approach

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation and impact of gender mainstreaming within South African corporations. The qualitative approach is rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, which recognises that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals (Bryman, 2016). This paradigm aligns with the nature of gender mainstreaming, which encompasses complex, context-dependent issues such as organizational culture, leadership commitment, and employee perceptions.

The relevance of the qualitative approach to this study lies in its capacity to generate rich, detailed insights into the lived experiences of those involved in or affected by

gender mainstreaming policies and practices. Through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and the analysis of organizational documents, this approach facilitates the identification of recurring themes, challenges, and strategies related to gender inclusion. According to Myers (2019), qualitative research allows the researcher to interpret the meanings behind participants' narratives, providing a nuanced understanding of how gender equity initiatives are conceptualised and enacted within different organisational contexts. This approach complements the study's objectives by offering depth and context to the analysis of corporate gender mainstreaming practices.

1.5.4 Population

Target Population refers to factors that could lead to the completion of the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). The population is part of the objects that the investigator uses to collect data or data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe inclusion criteria as characteristics that the prospective subjects must have if they are to be included in the study, whereas exclusion criteria are those characteristics that disqualify prospective subjects from the study. The population is classified as the total number of groups, individuals, or organisations that can be part of the research during the study (Kolisang, 2011).

1.5.5 Sample and sampling method

Corbin and Strauss (2008), denoted sampling as a method of selecting a unit from a population and being a subset of the population. The technique is the product of researchers' inability to verify all units within a given population (Howell, 2013). Participants in the study are chosen because they share their perspectives and give a rich insight into their situation Bogdan & Biklen (2006). The test selection methods are sampling which is both likelihood and non-probability. Random sampling techniques are likely to be used, whereas non-probabilistic samples use non-random procedures, such as research sampling or convenience (Edwards & Holland, 2013).

Purposive sampling is described by Bogdan & Biklen (2006) as a technique in which specific settings or activities are purposely chosen to provide valuable information that cannot be accessed from other choices. is judgmental sampling, an instant where the researcher includes cases or participants because they think they deserve inclusion.

The non-probability sampling helps a researcher select sample participants that he or she feels are most suitable for the study. The benefit of this approach is its ability to use research elements whose requirements suggest rich data across corporate entities. The chosen sampling technique allows the researchers to provide information that would make the study effective and provide comprehensive information.

This research study will use a purposive sampling technique. In selecting the sample, the researcher selected participants with knowledge and understanding of gender mainstreaming in the South African public and private sectors. This sampling technique will be appropriate as it will help the researcher to select participants who have relevant knowledge, expertise, and experiences related to gender inclusion in corporate South Africa.

1.5.6 Data collection

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2006), the approach to data collection and analysis is methodical but allows for flexibility. Participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups are textual forms in which data can be collected, explain Denzin and Lincoln, (2011). Types of research interviews include structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). Structured interviews as described by Corbin and Strauss (2008) are verbally administered questionnaires in which a list of predetermined questions is asked, whereas unstructured interviews do not reflect any preconceived theories or ideas and are performed without a well-thought-out plan or no organization.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) highlight that semi-structured interviews may consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored but also allow the researcher or interviewee to deviate to pursue an idea or response in more detail. Semi-structure allows for flexibility, also allowing for the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants that may not have previously been thought of as pertinent by the research team, emphasised Corbin and Strauss (2008).

1.5.7 Data collection process / fieldwork

Data collection approaches for gender mainstreaming indicators will include interviews using an open-ended questionnaire that will be administered over the phone or online. This approach will ensure the gathering of detailed information about participants'

experiences, perspectives, and opinions on gender inclusion issues. In addition, relevant documents such as policies and annual reports will also be collected.

1.5.8 Data analysis

Data analysis will be carried out using a qualitative method of data analysis known as thematic data analysis. This method is appropriate as it is simpler for the user to compile and aggregate information and is more user-friendly. Thematic data analysis as explained by Creswell (2003), is a method of identifying and analysing patterns in the data. The thematic analysis, as adopted from Bogdan and Biklen (2006) follows a six-step processing communicated below:

- **Transcription and Data Preparation**

The interviews will be recorded; the data will be prepared by transcribing the audio recordings into written text. The researcher will organise the data from the interviews into a coherent format for analysis but also reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy and cleaned up any unnecessary information.

- **Familiarisation**

The researcher will familiarise herself with the data by reading and re-reading transcripts, paying close attention to audio recordings, and noting the information gathered.

- **Qualitative Coding**

Qualitative coding will include generation of categories from pre-existing coding themes related to gender inclusion.

- **Reviewing of the themes**

The researcher will use thematic analysis to identify patterns, recurring themes, and key concepts related to gender inclusive indicators. This involves analysing the data iteratively, organising the codes into themes and sub-themes that capture the diverse perspectives and experiences of participants, identifying key findings related to gender inclusion indicators and consider their implications.

- **Data coding and analysis**

The researcher will synthesis the results to provide a comprehensive and coherent narrative that addresses the research objectives. This will involve a systematic

process of converting raw data into meaningful insights that can inform policy and practice.

- **Report writing**

The final step will be to interpret the results and report them in a clear and concise manner. The reporting process will involve identifying key findings, drawing conclusions, acknowledging any limitations or potential biases and making recommendations based on the data.

1.5.9 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the concept of trustworthiness replaces the traditional notions of validity and reliability used in quantitative studies. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), trustworthiness refers to the strategies and processes employed by the researcher to ensure that the study's findings are credible, dependable, transferable, and confirmable. These four criteria are used to evaluate the consistency and quality of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Howell (2017) further explains that trustworthiness is concerned with whether the study presents findings that reflect the realities and experiences of participants, and whether the methods used have been sufficiently rigorous to produce credible and defensible results.

- **Credibility**

Credibility concerns the accuracy and truthfulness of the data and the interpretations derived from it. In this study, credibility was enhanced through member checking, whereby participants reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of their contributions and interpretations thereof. This ensured that the findings reflect participants' intended meanings and perspectives, particularly on sensitive issues relating to gender mainstreaming and organizational practices.

- **Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent to which the study's findings can be applied to other contexts. While qualitative research does not aim for generalizability in the same way as quantitative studies, detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and methods were provided to enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar organizational settings.

- **Dependability**

Dependability relates to the consistency and transparency of the research process. To achieve dependability, a clear audit trail was maintained, documenting how data was collected, analysed, and interpreted. This ensures that another researcher could follow the same procedures and arrive at comparable conclusions, enhancing the study's methodological rigour.

- **Confirmability**

Confirmability ensures that the findings are based on the participants' perspectives and experiences rather than the researcher's bias or assumptions. This was addressed by maintaining transparent records of decisions, reflections, and data interpretations throughout the research process. Triangulation of data sources, such as interviews and organizational documents, further strengthened confirmability.

1.6 Ethical considerations

Research ethics refers to the principles and standards that guide the conduct of research to ensure the protection, dignity, rights, and well-being of participants (Resnik, 2015). Ethical research practice is fundamental in ensuring transparency, accountability, and integrity throughout the research process. For this study, ethical considerations are particularly important given the sensitivity of topics related to gender equality and workplace experiences.

This research will be conducted in compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and other relevant ethical guidelines governing research involving human participants. Participants will be fully informed of the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and how the data collected will be used solely for academic research purposes. Participation will be strictly voluntary, and individuals will have the right to decline or accept the invitation to participate without any coercion.

Prior to the commencement of any interviews or data collection activities, participants will be briefed about their rights, including the assurance that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout the research process. They will be informed of their right to withdraw from the session at any time without providing a reason and without facing any negative consequences. During the sessions, participants will have the opportunity to indicate whether they feel comfortable answering specific questions,

respecting their autonomy and psychological well-being. Furthermore, no form of reward, financial or otherwise, will be offered in exchange for participation, as this could compromise the voluntariness of consent.

1.6.1 Privacy and confidentiality

According to Creswell (2003), privacy and confidentiality is crucial to protect the rights and identities of individuals. The researcher collected data that includes personal information, and corporate sensitive information was stored securely with limited access using POPIA (4 of 2013) and EMS-REC guidelines.

1.6.2 Informed consent

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), obtaining informed consent from participants is essential when collecting data. The participants had a choice to indicate whether they were comfortable in answering the questions. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the data collection, how the data would be used, and any potential risks or benefits. Consent is voluntary, and individuals have the right to withdraw their consent at any time.

1.6.3 Transparency and trust

The researcher will maintain transparency in data collection processes to build trust with participants. The researcher will communicate the purpose of the data collection, how it will be used, and who will have access to the data.

1.6.4 Responsible use of data

Sarantakos (2013) stressed that researchers should not breach the privacy of the respondent in all circumstances. Information gathered from the study will be kept in locked cupboards for at least two years, and thereafter it can be disposed of by shredding all the documents to maintain the anonymity of all the participants and safeguard the integrity of the research. The researcher will maintain transparency in data collection processes to build trust with participants. The collected data will be used responsibly and ethically. It will not be used in a manner that perpetuates discrimination or violates individuals' rights, but to inform evidence-based policies,

strategies, and interventions that are aimed at promoting women's inclusion in the corporate sector.

1.7 Rationale and significance of the study

The rationale for studying the extent to which corporations incorporate women-inclusive indicators in their practices in South Africa stems from several important reasons. Understanding and addressing gender inclusivity in corporate practices is crucial for promoting equality, diversity, and social justice within society and the business sector (Nhlapo & Vyas-Dognapers, 2021). Gender inclusive indicators can contribute to existing knowledge, practices, and policies in South Africa by providing a comprehensive and inclusive way of measuring progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment, and by informing the design and implementation of policies and programs that promote these goals.

According to Naidoo (2013), examining the incorporation of gender-inclusive indicators helps determine whether corporations are complying with regulations such as the Employment Equity Act and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act. It can also identify gaps in the implementation and enforcement of existing policies and contribute to the development of more effective measures (Bangani, 2019). South Africa has historically experienced gender-based inequalities and discrimination (Naidoo, 2013). By examining the extent to which corporations incorporate gender-inclusive indicators, the study aims to assess whether progress is being made towards achieving gender equality. Boikanyo (2017) advocates that identifying gaps and areas for improvement can inform policies, strategies, and interventions to promote equitable opportunities for all genders, not only a matter of social justice, but also has significant economic implications. By evaluating the incorporation of gender-inclusive indicators, the study can give insights on the potential economic benefits of diverse and inclusive business practices.

1.8 Dissertation layout

The study layout is as follows.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background of the Study

This chapter will introduce the research study, outlining its background, objectives, and significance. It will also provide a detailed exploration of the context surrounding

gender mainstreaming within corporate South Africa, highlighting the critical need for equitable and inclusive workplace practices. The chapter would present the problem statement, articulate the research questions and objectives, and discusses the scope and limitations of the study. It would conclude with an overview of the dissertation structure, guiding the reader through subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will examine existing research on gender mainstreaming within corporate structures, with a focus on South African organizations. It will explore global frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5: Gender Equality) and national policies like the Employment Equity Act to understand corporate obligations toward gender inclusivity. The review will highlight key gender-inclusive indicators, including pay equity, leadership representation, and workplace flexibility, while assessing their effectiveness in fostering inclusive workplaces.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter will outline the research philosophy, approach, data collection tools such as surveys and interviews, and sampling strategies. methods and approaches that will be used to examine the extent to which South African corporations incorporate gender-inclusive indicators in their policies and practices. A qualitative approach will be adopted to provide a comprehensive analysis. ensuring a comparative assessment across various sectors and company sizes. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and data integrity, will be prioritized throughout the research process to maintain the credibility and reliability of the study's findings.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This chapter will present and analyse the key findings from the research, providing a comprehensive examination of the extent to which South African corporations integrate gender-inclusive indicators into their policies and practices. The results will be categorized based on themes. Quantitative data from surveys will be presented using tables and graphs to highlight trends, while qualitative data from interviews and document analysis will be thematically analysed to provide deeper insights.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

The final chapter summarizes the key findings of the research, linking them to the study's objectives and research questions. It provides actionable recommendations for enhancing gender mainstreaming in corporate South Africa, addressing gaps in governance and practices. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research and reflects on the broader implications of the study for gender equity and inclusion in the workplace.

1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the foundation of the study, providing an overview of the research problem, objectives, and significance. It introduced the context of gender mainstreaming in corporate South Africa, highlighting its importance for fostering equity and inclusion. The research questions and objectives were clearly articulated, along with the scope and limitations of the study. The chapter also mapped out the structure of the dissertation to guide the reader through subsequent discussions.

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter critically examines existing literature on gender mainstreaming, focusing on theoretical frameworks, global best practices, and the South African corporate and legislative landscape. Key themes, such as strategic intent, governance, and inclusivity, are explored to provide a foundation for understanding the drivers of gender equality and inclusion. The chapter also identifies gaps in the literature, setting the stage for how this research contributes to closing these gaps.

2.2 Conceptualisation of key terms relevant to gender equality

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, and expectations that are associated with being male, female, or non-binary (di Bella, 2023). Gender is distinct from biological sex and is shaped by cultural, historical, and social factors.

Gender Equity refers to the principle of treating individuals fairly and justly, considering their unique needs and circumstances (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017). In the context of gender inclusive indicators, this might involve ensuring that women and other marginalised groups have equal access to opportunities, resources, and support.

Gender Equality refers to sameness between men and women (Ramparsad, 2019). International Labour Office (2005) defines gender equality as a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights, and obligations in all spheres of life.

Gender inclusive indicators are a set of measures used to assess and monitor gender equality and inclusivity in various domains of society (Dörffel & Schuhmann, 2022). They are used to promote more equitable and inclusive workplaces and societies, also to help identify areas where further progress is needed to achieve gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategic approach to achieving gender equality by assessing the implications of any planned action, including policies, programs, or practices, for individuals of all genders (Karakhan, et al. 2021). It aims to integrate

gender perspectives into all aspects of decision-making, ensuring that gender equality is considered as a fundamental component in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of processes across organisational, institutional, and societal levels. This approach seeks to address systemic inequalities and promote equitable outcomes by embedding gender considerations into the fabric of everyday operations and culture rather than treating them as separate or secondary objectives (Bangani, & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020).

Gender Inclusion refers to the process of creating an environment that respects and values diversity, and that actively seeks to ensure that everyone can participate fully and meaningfully (Kabee, 2015)

Gender Indicators refer to the measurable data or information that is used to assess progress towards a particular goal or objective (González, 2012). In the context of gender inclusive indicators, these might include data on pay equity, leadership representation, or workplace policies and practices.

Intersectionality refers to multiple forms of identity (such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, disability, and sexual orientation) intersect and interact to shape an individual's experiences of discrimination and privilege (Rosette, et al, 2018).

Gender equality is not limited to the themes, as there is a psychosocial aspect of gender inclusion as the driver of a culture of inclusion is ignored while tracking equality for women, (Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020). This study aims to develop indicators that measure women's inclusion in the workplace in South Africa. This research offers an overview of the history of gender mainstreaming, gender inclusion, equity, gender (in) equality, gender, but also the gender indicators.

2.3 Gender

Gender is described by Geske (2006) as the sense of identity describing characteristics of individuals, sex differences body, mind, and identity. Gender identities are often thought of as in what is meant to be feminine or masculine (Guidry, 2019). Gender normativity, as described by Ramparsad (2019), can be understood as beliefs and practices where sex (male and female) and gender (masculinity, femininity) are absolute and unquestionable binaries. The concept of gender has

evolved according to masculinity (Guidry, 2019) as has been debated by the LGBTI people who deviate from these norms insofar as their sexual orientation (Lesbian, Gays Bisexual people), or gender identity (trans people), or sex characteristics and intersex people as they may have experienced discriminatory attitudes and prejudice. In this discussion, gender is a collective word for all humankind, however, used interchangeably for men and women (Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020).

2.4 Gender equality and gender equity

Gender equality implies giving different treatment for equal opportunity (Ramparsad, 2019). According to Chen (2013), gender equity puts the focus on fairness and justice regarding benefits and needs for women and men, girls, and boys. Gender equality includes all aspects of gender equity. Mergaert and Lombardo (2017), further states that gender equity may include the treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities. Gender equity is the process of allocating resources, programs, and decision-making opportunities equally to both males and females. (Karakhan, *et al.*, 2021). Gender equity means fairness of treatment for men and women according to their respective needs (Chen, 2013). Steyn (2014) adds that this may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities. Mergaert and Lombardo (2017) highlight that gender equity leads towards a change of gender-based power relations in all sectors of society, private as well as public. According to Naidoo (2013), gender equity is the ultimate indicator of equality. Chen (2013) describes gender equity as the quantifiable activities about the fair treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs and interests. According to Karakhan, *et al.* (2021), gender equity focuses on fairness and justice regarding benefits and needs for women and men, girls, and boys.

2.5 Gender mainstreaming

According to Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad, (2020), driving gender equity in the workplace requires a concerted effort from the collective leadership. It cannot be driven by men providing solutions or women fighting to be heard in silos (Bosch & Barit, 2020). Gender mainstreaming in the workplace can be embraced in its fullest application to both sexes, not just to women or men as targets or obstacles, but rather

as partners. Gender mainstreaming is a process. used by institutions to proactively hire women for senior-level positions and hire young women supported in non-traditional roles for women (Karakhan, *et al.* 2021). That is the visible action of the alternative approach that embeds the meaning and goals in understanding the term “gender mainstreaming.” It also means not expecting the process to deliver the bigger institutional changes instantly in norms and values—those needed to change people’s “hearts and minds. According to Bosch and Barit (2020), gender mainstreaming contributes towards a gender-sensitive society in which solidarity, opportunities, and responsibilities are shared by women and men in equal measure. Karakhan, *et al.* (2021) emphasise that when gender mainstreaming is achieved, equality, women and men will no longer be seen as a uniform group of human beings, but will have their social, ethnic, and age differences considered.

2.6 Gender indicators

Indicators are important measures that make it possible to say something about a complex set of facts (Hedman, 1996). According to Liautaud (2016), the indicators help reduce the complexity of a given phenomenon by expressing the multiple dimensions of such phenomenon in a single figure. Indicators permit a quick overview of the status quo of the phenomenon to be measured (Geske, 2006). They map developments and make trends visible. The purpose of equality indicators, according to Bosch and Barit (2020) is to provide information about the situation of women and men in life and to permit an assessment as to whether actions taken were successful or objectives have been attained. Both Halliday (2021) and Liautaud (2016) emphasised that the gender indicators can be used for holding policymakers to account and institutions accountable for their commitments to gender equality.

2.7 Gender inclusion and sustainable development

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between gender inclusion and sustainable development. Kabeer (2015) found that gender inclusion is essential for sustainable development because it ensures that women's perspectives and contributions are considered. The author argued that gender inclusion promotes social, economic, and environmental sustainability by increasing

the participation of women in decision-making processes and ensuring that their needs and priorities are met.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2018) highlighted the importance of gender inclusion in environmental sustainability. The study found that gender inequalities exacerbate environmental degradation, and gender-inclusive policies and programs are essential to address environmental issues and achieve sustainable development. The World Bank (2012) found that gender inclusion is crucial for sustainable development because it enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of development programs. The study highlighted that gender-inclusive development programs lead to improved outcomes and are more likely to achieve long-term sustainability. Liautaud (2016) emphasises that the need for better measurement of gender equity cannot be understated, given that eighty percent of indicators to monitor SDG lack adequate data, often because of an absence of valid measures.

2.8 Gender inclusive legislation and policy progress in South Africa

The Constitution of South Africa guarantees equal rights for all citizens, irrespective of gender. Gender inclusion in the workplace is an essential component of promoting gender equality in South Africa (Mergaert & Lombardo, 2017). South Africa's Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 is an important legislative tool which forbids discrimination against designated groups, among whom are women, at all levels in the workplace. According to Blackbeard and De La Rey (2015), South Africa has made significant progress in advancing gender equality through policy and legislation and measurement. Gender-specific laws such as the Employment Equity Act and Promotion of Equality, Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) have been sanctioned to address gender discrimination and promote equality in different spheres of society (Hlongwa, 2018).

South Africa introduced the Employment Equity Act (EEA) as part of legislation designed to address entrenched racial and gender inequalities. Through Section 27 of the Act, organisations are required to report on the representation and remuneration of their workers by gender and population group (and especially black and coloured women) continue to be under-represented in high-skilled and management positions (Nduna, 2020).

Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) reflect that EEA requires that the government departments and other state institutions produce annual reports that indicate their employment equality targets. The measuring indicators used are framed around women's participation in executive positions, legislative, judicial, gender parity and public administrative decision-making (Grosser, 2009). Despite the progress made in recent years, gender inequality persists in the workplace, and women continue to face numerous challenges.

2.9 Gender inclusion in the workplace in South Africa

The Commission for Employment Equity (2018) indicates that current data collection tools used by government and corporate institutions, such as the Public Service, do not adequately capture gender equality objectives and outcomes, and there is a lack of disaggregation of service statistics by gender. The discrepancy in the result reveals that in the private sector, women continue to be under-represented on corporate boards and in managerial positions, but also under-represented in senior and middle management positions in all countries with available data.

Bangani (2019) investigates the challenges facing women in the South African workplace. The study found that women face multiple challenges, including discrimination, harassment, and lack of access to training and development opportunities. The authors suggested that gender-sensitive policies and programs are essential to promote gender inclusion in the workplace. Bangani (2019) highlights that there are different types of measures in place to promote internal gender equality and transformation. These measures are often implemented with a lack of sufficient commitment from the senior-level leadership (both political and administrative), leading the process to be uncoordinated and misguided. Tladi and Maleka (2017) reflects that as a result, the departmental officials with the responsibility to promote gender mainstreaming and transformation lack the necessary support from the leadership of their departments to drive gender-mainstreaming programmes effectively

Similarly, Mergaert and Lombardo (2017) explored the barriers to gender inclusion in the South African workplace. The findings point out that gender stereotypes and cultural norms, including patriarchy and traditional gender roles, are significant barriers to women's advancement in the workplace. The authors recommend that gender-

sensitive policies and programs, including gender mainstreaming and affirmative action, are essential to address these barriers and promote gender inclusion in the workplace.

Furthermore, Tladi and Maleka (2017) investigate the relationship between gender inclusion and organisational performance in South Africa. The study found that gender-inclusive practices, such as diversity training and gender-sensitive policies, were positively associated with organisational performance. The conclusions revealed that gender inclusion in the workplace is not only essential for promoting gender equality but also critical for improving organisational performance.

2.10 Gender indicator's themes

South Africa has a constitution that enshrines the principle of gender equality. Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) indicate that various laws and policies have been enacted to protect women's rights and address gender-based discrimination, thus creating an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming. Rees and Budlender (2014) and Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) describe gender mainstreaming indicators as themes that are specific and measurable.

Gender inclusive indicators as described by Marra (2020) are specific gender mainstreaming themes that should be institutionalised. Kalpazidou, *et al.*, (2019) and Shava (2021) emphasises that gender mainstreaming themes include policy and governance, system, and culture. Boikanyo (2017) and Marra (2020) highlights gender mainstreaming structure (alignment of internal policies, legislative and administrative frameworks that address the need for gender equality). The structures also include mainstreaming gender in recruitment (Nduna, 2020), gender budgeting and mainstreaming (Karakhan, *et al.*, 2021), monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming. Rees and Budlender (2019) noted the importance of decision-making in gender mainstreaming but also career development and capacity building for gender mainstreaming.

2.10.1 Diversity and inclusion initiatives

This theme assesses the implementation and effectiveness of diversity and inclusion initiatives specifically targeted at improving gender inclusivity in the workplace.

2.10.2 Leadership buy in enabling environment for gender mainstreaming

The representation of women in leadership positions and decision-making roles within organisations is an essential aspect of gender inclusivity (Nhlapo & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2021). The current research investigated the percentage of women in senior management and executive positions in corporate South Africa.

2.10.3 Barriers to career progression

Shava (2021) highlight that organisations must identify barriers and challenges faced by women in business that will inform strategies to create more equitable pathways for professional growth.

2.10.4 Workplace policies and family-friendly benefits

Boikanyo (2017) advises that achieving gender equality in South Africa requires policies, practices, and challenges. Workplace policies ensure that there is governance that frames alignment of internal policies, legislative and administrative frameworks that address the need for gender equality. This theme assesses the presence and effectiveness of gender-inclusive policies and benefits, such as parental leave, flexible working arrangements, and childcare support (Rees & Budlender, 2019). This indicator includes the availability and uptake of these policies promoting gender inclusivity and work-life balance.

2.10.5 Workplace culture and gender bias

Shava (2021) recommends the importance of understanding organisational culture and identifying gender biases is critical. According to Nhlapo and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2021), this indicator explores employee perceptions of inclusivity, experiences of discrimination, and organisational efforts to address gender-related issues.

2.10.6 Gender-based violence

South Africa has implemented laws and initiatives to combat GBV and provide support for victims, such as the National Council Against Gender-Based Violence. Lombard and Magerman (2021) suggest that there should be policies that guide curbing gender-based violence. The indicator explores policies that address harassment at the workplace.

2.10.7 Employment equity and representation

South Africa has implemented employment equity legislation aimed at promoting representation and addressing historical imbalances in the workplace. Van der Linde and Baritt (2020) highlight that although efforts have been made to increase women's representation in decision-making bodies, both in government and the private sector, there should be a concerted effort to promote women's participation in political leadership roles, corporate boards, and other influential positions. Ramparsad (2019) advises that corporates should have made a concerted effort in driving gender mainstreaming in recruitment. This indicator examines the representation of women in different job levels, industries, and sectors.

2.10.8 Gender-responsive budgeting

Nduna (2020) echoes that implementing gender-responsive budgeting is an essential aspect of ensuring that organisations have budgets and policies that consider the different needs and priorities of men and women. The indicator encourages organisations to have gender responsive budgeting.

2.10.9 Pay equity and wage gap

Tshiwula and Mavhungu (2021) suggest that institutions must conduct gap analysis with regard to the gender pay gap to understand wage disparities between male and female employees performing similar roles. Nduna (2020) echoes that organisations must analyse factors that contribute towards pay discrepancies and evaluate the effectiveness of measures to address them. According to Padayachee and Udjo (2016), the indicators include the average salary by gender, the ratio of women's earnings to men's earnings, and the representation of women in higher-paying roles.

2.10.10 Career development and advancement: capacity building for gender mainstreaming

This theme explores opportunities for career growth and advancement for women. Padayachee and Udjo (2016) point out that these indicators include promotion rates, provision for equal opportunities for skills development, training access to mentorship and sponsorship programs, and participation in leadership development initiatives.

2.10.11 Women's economic empowerment

Tshiwula and Mavhungu (2021) suggest that organisations should prioritise and implement supply chain policy that encourages women's economic empowerment. This indicator includes initiatives to promote women's entrepreneurship, access to finance, and skills development (Nduna, 2020).

2.10.12 Monitoring and evaluation of gender inclusivity initiatives

Nhlapo and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2021) and Nduna (2021) emphasise the importance of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion programs is crucial to understanding their impact on promoting gender inclusivity. These indicators will be used to evaluate if businesses are holistic in addressing gender inclusive barriers, thereby increasing gender diversity in leadership positions, reducing gender pay gaps, and implementing effective diversity and inclusion initiatives. This study aims to provide gender inclusive indicators that can be used as a baseline to guide gender inclusion for South African corporate organisations to enhance their gender inclusivity.

2.11 Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by the critical paradigm, which serves as the guiding theoretical lens for analyzing the research findings on gender mainstreaming within South African corporations. The critical paradigm is rooted in the belief that social reality is shaped by power relations, systemic inequalities, and historical discrimination (Parker et al., 1999). It is particularly relevant for studies examining social justice, equity, and transformation, as it moves beyond descriptive analysis to interrogate and challenge the underlying structures that perpetuate inequality. In the context of gender mainstreaming, the critical paradigm offers a framework for understanding how institutionalized practices and organizational cultures can reinforce gender inequality within the workplace.

According to Marra (2020), the critical paradigm is particularly applicable when examining gender-inclusive indicators, as it recognizes that gender inequality is not an isolated phenomenon but one that is deeply entrenched within broader social, political, and organizational structures. Parker et al., (1999) emphasizes that the critical paradigm advocates transformative, data-driven interventions aimed at challenging

these entrenched inequalities and fostering more equitable systems. Bangani (2019) further explains that within the critical paradigm, gender is understood as a socially constructed category, shaped and reinforced through historical and institutional power dynamics. This perspective aligns with the purpose of this study, which is to examine how gender mainstreaming policies and practices within South African corporations either reinforce or challenge these power structures.

The relevance of this paradigm to the current study is also underscored by its emphasis on intersectionality, recognizing that gender inequality cannot be understood in isolation from other forms of oppression, such as race, class, and sexuality (Marra, 2020). This intersectional perspective is crucial in the South African context, where historical legacies of apartheid, patriarchy, and socio-economic inequality intersect to shape experiences of marginalization within the workplace. Karakhan et al. (2021) highlight that the critical paradigm is essential in gender mainstreaming research because it focuses on addressing the root causes of inequality rather than treating it as an individual problem. This aligns directly with the objectives of this study, which seeks to critically assess the extent to which corporations embed gender-inclusive indicators within their structures, policies, and reporting mechanisms.

Additionally, the critical paradigm provides justification for prioritizing the lived experiences of women and other marginalized groups in the research. As noted by Bangani (2019), this paradigm acknowledges the importance of ensuring that the voices of those historically excluded from decision-making processes are reflected in the design, implementation, and evaluation of gender mainstreaming policies and programmes. In adopting this lens, the study contributes to a body of knowledge that not only critiques existing practices but also advocates for more inclusive, equitable, and transformative approaches within corporate South Africa. This study provides a robust theoretical foundation for exploring the complex realities of gender mainstreaming and supports the study's objective to promote actionable, evidence-based recommendations for enhancing inclusivity and equality.

2.12 Chapter conclusion

The literature review provided a comprehensive analysis of existing research on gender mainstreaming. It explored theoretical frameworks, global best practices, and

the South African corporate and legislative environment. Key themes such as strategic intent, governance, and inclusivity were examined to establish a foundation for the study. Gaps in the literature were identified, emphasising the need for further research to address specific challenges in implementing gender mainstreaming initiatives.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter outlined the research design and methods employed to investigate the research questions. It describes the study's research philosophy, approach, data collection tools such as interviews, and sampling strategies. The analytical methods and thematic analysis are explained in detail, ensuring the study's alignment with its objectives. Ethical considerations, such as participant confidentiality and informed consent, were also addressed and elaborated.

3.2 Research philosophy

According to Bergman, *et. al* (2010) a research philosophy is a belief about the way in which data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analysed and used. Saunders, Thornhill, and Lewis (2019) identified five research philosophies, which are positivism, interpretivism or constructivism, critical realism, pragmatism, and post-positivism.

Interpretivism is based on understanding human nature and its varying role as social actors. Interpretivism refers to the understanding gap between the individual as a social actor and the objects. Bergman, *et al.*, (2010) highlight that interpretivism is acknowledged by the researcher feelings" who is keen on analysing human emotions and social roles. The qualitative approach uses data collection methods like, interview, observation, and analysis of existing texts. An interpretivist believes that truth is distinct from the individual who encounters it. Howell (2013) emphasises that this is because an individual's views of the world are indistinguishable from his or her personal experience.

The interpretivism theory was selected for conducting the research to assist the researcher, to understand the meanings of individual findings and collecting information from the interview. Crowther and Lancaster (2018) contend that the principle of interpretivist analysis suggests that the social world can be viewed subjectively. This study adopted interpretivism philosophy. The design is associated with a philosophy aimed at approaching this analysis from a personal understanding of the model (Howell,2013).

By adopting an interpretivist philosophy, this study focused on gathering rich, detailed data through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The aim was to gain deeper insights into the meanings and values that participants assign to gender mainstreaming efforts, rather than to quantify outcomes. This philosophical stance supports the use of thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to interpret patterns and themes that emerge from the data, while remaining open to the diverse ways in which gender inclusivity is understood and operationalized across sectors and organizations.

3.3 Research design and approach

According to Myers (2019), a research design is a procedure used to collect data, interpret results, analyse data, and disseminate the findings. It offers a blueprint for the research strategy by describing the structured and rational steps taken in the collection of primary data from a research environment (Creswell, 2013). Saunders (2016) proclaims that the research design is characterised as the processes and mechanisms of the method and its procedures that are used to create empirical evidence in a manner that can be pursued or investigated by other researchers. However, Welman *et al.*, (2016), explains that research designs can be categorised according to their intent.

The case study design is chosen because it provides a structured yet flexible framework for examining real-world practices within selected corporate settings. The study aims to compare gender mainstreaming strategies in diverse contexts. This design facilitates an in-depth examination of each organization's strategic intent, leadership commitment, policy environment, and implementation practices related to gender equity. The case study method also supports the use of various data sources, including interviews, corporate documents, employment equity plans, and annual reports highlighted Crowther and Lancaster (2018), ensuring a holistic analysis of gender mainstreaming in corporate South Africa.

The case study design was chosen because it provides a structured yet flexible framework for examining real-world practices within selected corporate settings. By focusing on multiple cases across sectors—such as telecommunications, mining, financial services, and public enterprises—the study aims to compare gender

mainstreaming strategies in diverse contexts. This design facilitated an in-depth examination of each organization's strategic intent, leadership commitment, policy environment, and implementation practices related to gender equity. The case study method also supports the use of various data sources, including interviews, corporate documents, employment equity plans, and annual reports according to Crowther and Lancaster (2018), ensuring a holistic analysis of gender mainstreaming in corporate South Africa.

3.4 Research methodology

There are different methods to conducting research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. This project adopts a qualitative method. According to Howell (2013), qualitative research is a method for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Corbin and Strauss (2008) add that qualitative research is designed to provide the researcher with a way of understanding a phenomenon by observing or interacting with the participants of the study. The qualitative analysis focuses on the analysis of a study sample and, from the perspective of the researcher, deals with behaviours, values, attributes, and meanings Denzin and Lincoln (2011). The process of research according to Creswell (2003), involves emerging questions and procedures, data characteristically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the extent to which South African corporations incorporate gender-inclusive indicators into their policies and practices, and to identify the themes that drive gender equality and inclusion within organizations. A qualitative methodology is particularly well-suited for this research as it enables an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, organizational cultures, and the nuanced processes behind gender mainstreaming. This approach prioritizes understanding over measurement and is grounded in the belief that reality is socially constructed and context-specific, particularly when examining issues such as gender dynamics, inclusivity, and equity.

3.4.1 Ethical considerations

The researcher obtained the research ethical clearance EMS_REC: NWU-01927-23-A4, through a formal approval process that ensured a study adheres to ethical guidelines and principles, protecting the rights and welfare of participants and the integrity of the research itself.

3.4.2. Ensuring no harm comes to participants

The analysis is designed to ensure that none of the respondents during the data collection process were injured. It is the researcher's duty, according to Sarantakos (2013), to ensure that the study does not require any procedures that would hurt respondents. Kolisang (2011) added that other types of damage that researchers should pay attention to include both legal and mental damage. The collected data was used responsibly and ethically. It was not used in a manner that perpetuates discrimination or violates individuals' rights, but to inform evidence-based policies, strategies, and interventions that are aimed at promoting women's inclusion in the corporate sector

3.4.3 Population

The population is part of the objects that the investigator uses to collect data or data, (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe inclusion criteria are characteristics that the prospective subjects must have if they are to be included in the study whereas exclusion criteria are those characteristics that disqualify prospective subjects from in the study. The population is classified as the total number of groups, individuals, or organisations that can be part of the research during the study. (Kolisang, 2011).

The target population for the study included 45 public and private organisations in South Africa ($N = 45$) that are listed on the JSE. The target population for the current study included professionals within corporates such as Diversity, Equality Equity and Inclusion Specialists, EE Transformation Specialists or Employment Equity specialists, human resources professionals. It excludes any individual who might not have information within human resource management.

3.4.5 Sample and sampling methods

Corbin and Strauss (2008), denoted sampling as a method of selecting a unit from a population and being a subset of the population. The technique is the product of researchers' inability to verify all units within a given population (Howell, 2013). Participants in the study will be chosen because based on their capabilities to share their perspectives and give a rich insight into their situation, (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). The test selection methods are sampling that is both likelihood and non-probability. (Edwards & Holland, 2013).

This research study used a purposive sampling approach where selected participants have relevant knowledge, expertise, and experiences related to gender inclusion in corporate South Africa. The sample includes corporate leaders, human resources managers, diversity and inclusion officers, employees at different levels, and representatives from gender-focused organisations.

The study focused on corporate businesses operating within South Africa. The research scope included both large corporations or small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and SOEs institutions that are JSE-listed in South Africa. The research included multinational JSE listed companies in the hospitality, chemicals energy telecommunications, mining and SOE institutions. The sample size included 13 organisations and 13 participants who take part in the interview sessions (n =13).

By focusing on both small and large organisations and SOE JSE-listed institutions, the research explores the gaps, unique challenges, and opportunities for gender inclusion within different types of organisations. The time for the study was cross-sectional. This helps to capture status, recent developments, and changes in gender inclusion indicators. This limitation helps maintain the relevance and timeliness of the research findings.

3.4.6 Responsible use of data

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), obtaining informed consent from participants is essential when collecting data. The participants had a choice to indicate whether they were comfortable in answering the questions. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the data collection, how the data will be used, and any potential

risks or benefits. Consent is voluntary, and individuals had the right to withdraw their consent at any time.

3.5.7. Confidentiality and anonymity

The study ensured that the confidentiality and privacy of the respondents are protected. Research confidentiality can be described as ensuring that unauthorised individuals do not access data collected from a research respondent (Sieber, 2014). Research anonymity, on the other hand, is characterised as the degree to which a research respondent is perceived by the reader of a research paper to be unknown or unspecified (Amichai-Hamburger, 2013). Readers of the research report should not be able to identify which specific respondent contributed to what information.

3.5.8 Informed consent

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), obtaining informed consent from participants is essential when collecting data. The researcher obtained the informed consent from participants while ensuring compliance with the relevant issues concerning the POPIA Act. The participants were informed on what the purpose of the study was, also what the data will be used for in line with the research purpose. 'The participants had a choice to indicate whether they were comfortable in answering the questions. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the data collection, how the data will be used, and any potential risks or benefits. Consent is voluntary, and individuals had the right to withdraw their consent at any time.

3.6 Data collection methods

Data collection approaches for gender mainstreaming indicators included interviews using an open-ended questionnaire that was administered over the phone or online. This approach ensured gathering detailed information about participants' experiences, perspectives, and opinions on gender inclusion issues. In addition, relevant documents such as policies and annual reports were also collected.

3.6.1 Data collection process / fieldwork

A permission letter for conducting the study was sent via email to the gatekeepers who will seek permission from the relevant authorities such as HR executives, Diversity Equality Equity and Inclusion Specialists and executives, and Transformation Managers to ask for permission to conduct the research study at selected corporate entities. The researcher explained to the participants that their participation was entirely voluntary. Once approval was provided, the gatekeepers informed the DEEI and transformation representatives about the purpose of the research.

3.6.2 Primary data collection

According to Creswell (2003), an interview is the primary way to gather data for qualitative research by posing detailed research questions to the participant. The primary data collection instrument was semi-structured, open-ended questions via one-on-one interviews with participants to explore their experiences, perceptions, insights, and challenges related to gender inclusion in their respective organisations.

According to Creswell (2003), an interview is the primary way to gather data for qualitative research by posing detailed research questions to the participant. The primary data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview schedule which consisted of open-ended questions via one-on interviews. The aim was to explore their experiences, perceptions, insights, and challenges related to gender inclusion in their respective organisations. The interviews were scheduled according to the availability of the participants.

The interview schedule was divided into Section A which comprised of the biographical information (to describe the sample and the use of it guided by the POPIA (4 of 2013), Section B comprised of questions for validating the gender mainstreaming indicators and the characteristics, lastly, Section C focused on existence of documents such as corporate policies, diversity reports, and internal communications. This section provided additional context and helped validate the perspectives shared by participants.

3.6.3 Secondary data collection

Document analysis is a systematic method of data collection used in qualitative research in which research relevant printed and electronic documents are selected and interpreted by the researcher to provide meaning on a certain topic. Documents are reviewed and analysed in order to extract meaning, acquire understanding, and formulate empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis included an iterative process of glancing through documents quickly and interpreting them. It involved content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis is a technique for categorising data in relation to a central question for research (Bowen, 2009). Oczkowski et al. (2018) outlines the process of document analysis. The researcher received annual reports and diversity reports to complement and triangulate more information to validate the perspectives shared by participants.

Data was also collected through document analysis. Document analysis is a systematic method of data collection used in qualitative research in which relevant printed and electronic documents are selected and interpreted by the researcher to provide meaning on a certain topic. Oczkowski et al. (2018) outline that the document analysis process includes an iterative process of glancing through documents quickly and interpreting them. It involves content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis is a technique for categorising data concerning a central question for research (Bowen, 2009). Documents are reviewed and analysed in order to extract meaning, acquire understanding, and formulate empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009). Identifying documents requires searching the internet or an organisation's document repository, if the organisation grants approval and access. Once the documents have been identified, they are classified according to organizations.

3.7 Data analysis techniques

Data analysis was carried out using a qualitative method of data analysis known as thematic data analysis. The method was selected because it was simpler for the user to compile and aggregate information and is more user-friendly. Thematic data analysis as explained by Creswell (2003), is a method of identifying, and analysing patterns in the data. The thematic analysis as adopted from Bogdan and Biklen (2006) follows a six-step processing outlined below:

Transcription and Data Preparation: The interviews were recorded; the data were prepared by transcribing the audio recordings into written text. The researcher organised the data from the interviews into a coherent format for analysis but also reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy and cleaned up any unnecessary information.

Familiarisation: The first step for the researcher was familiarising oneself by reading and re-reading transcripts, paying close attention to audio recordings, and noting the information gathered.

Qualitative Coding: The second step included generation of categories from pre-existing coding themes related to gender inclusion.

Reviewing of the themes: The researcher used thematic analysis to identify patterns, recurring themes, and key concepts related to gender inclusive indicator. This involves analysing the data iteratively, organising the codes into themes and sub-themes that capture the diverse perspectives and experiences of participants. identify key findings related to gender inclusion indicators and consider their implications.

Data coding and analysis: The researcher synthesised the results to provide a comprehensive and coherent narrative that addresses the research objectives. This involves a systematic process of converting raw data into meaningful insights that can inform policy and practice.

Report writing: The final step was to interpret the results and report them clearly and concisely. The reporting process involved identifying key findings, concluding, acknowledging any limitations or potential biases and making recommendations based on the data.

Trustworthiness: In this study, trustworthiness was ensured through recognised qualitative research strategies aimed at enhancing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was strengthened through member checking, where participants reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of their interview transcripts and the interpretations drawn from their responses. Additionally, triangulation of data sources, including organisational documents such as policies, Employment Equity (EE) plans, and annual reports, further validated the findings. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed, thick descriptions of the

research context, including organisational settings, sectors involved (such as mining, telecommunications, and SOEs), and participant roles, enabling readers to assess the relevance of the findings within their own contexts.

To ensure dependability, the researcher maintained a detailed audit trail documenting all research decisions, data collection methods, and the thematic analysis process, allowing for transparency and replication. Confirmability was achieved by clearly outlining how themes emerged from the data through a structured analysis process, supported by reflective notes to mitigate researcher bias. The inclusion of direct participant quotations reinforced the neutrality and accuracy of the findings, ensuring they were grounded in the data rather than shaped by personal assumptions.

3.9 Chapter summary

The research methodology chapter detailed the approaches and methods that was used to address the research questions. Qualitative research methodology was employed, qualitative data from interviews and reviews from company reports. The sampling strategies, data collection techniques, and analytical methods is described, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives. Ethical considerations is also addressed to maintain the integrity and validity of the research.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter overview

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the methodology used in the study and described the procedures used to collect and analyse the data. The purpose of this chapter is to report and discuss the research results obtained from the study based on the research objectives and questions. The study aimed to assess the level of gender inclusivity in corporate policies and practices of South African companies and to validate the themes that drive gender equality and inclusion in the organisations. The chapter begins with an overview of the data collected, including participant demographics followed by a descriptive presentation of the findings. Quantitative data is presented using charts, and graphs. These visuals complement qualitative insights, offering a measurable perspective on gender mainstreaming efforts. In the discussion, the findings are compared with existing literature, highlighting alignments, gaps, and implications for corporate South Africa. This analysis integrates participant perspectives, organisational practices to provide a nuanced understanding of gender mainstreaming and its role in fostering inclusivity. To achieve the aim of the study, the following research guided the research:

- To determine if *the strategic intent* of the selected South African companies across different sectors and size support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming.
- To evaluate— if the *financial commitment* of the selected South African companies across different sectors and size support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming.
- To appraise if *structural frameworks* of the selected South African companies across different sectors and size support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming
- To assess if the *gender specific development programmes* of the selected South African companies across different sectors and size support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming.
- To determine if *policies and reports* of the selected South African companies across different sectors and size support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming.

4.2 Demographic information

This research on gender mainstreaming involved interviews with thirteen representatives from a range of industries, including chemicals, telecommunications, energy, mining, SOEs, and pharmaceuticals. The goal was to assess the extent and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming initiatives across diverse organisational settings, examining how these organisations integrate gender equity into their policies, programs, and corporate structures.

The study included organisations of various sizes and types—from large international corporations, in chemicals and beverages, mining to national entities like energy, telecoms, as well as SOE institutions. Most of these organisations are listed entities, with formal reporting structures in place, such as integrated or annual reports, which often include information on diversity, equity, equality, and inclusion (DEEI) strategies. Interviews targeted HR executives, DEEI specialists, transformation executives, and senior representatives involved in diversity and transformation efforts, providing insights into gender-specific initiatives. It encompasses a diverse array of sectors, ranging from SOEs to corporate entities, and the research captures both the shared challenges and unique approaches to gender mainstreaming within South Africa's varied economic landscape.

Table 4.1: Profile of the respondents

Participant code	Industry	Company representative	Number of employees	Type of entity/	Validation of information
C1	Chemicals	DEEI	38973(498) South Africa	International Listed	Minutes Integrated Report
C2	Beverages	DEEI	32974(340)	International Listed	Integrated
C3	Energy	DEEI	29 157	National Listed	Integrated Annual Report
C4	Telecoms	DEEI	13687	National Listed	Integrated Annual Report
C5	Mining	HR Manager	3899	National Listed	Annual Report
C6	Telecoms	HR outsourced	4 637	Listed	Integrated Annual Report
C7	Mining	Transformation Manager	1 582	National Listed	Integrated Annual Report
C8	Pharmaceu tical	HR	5867	National Listed	Integrated Annual Report
C9	Mining	HR	7525	Listed	Annual Report
C10	Mining	HR executive	5156	Listed	Integrated Annual Report
C11	SOE	Statutory Transformation	398	SOE Listed	Annual Report

Participant code	Industry	Company representative	Number of employees	Type of entity/	Validation of information
		Senior Executive			
C12	SOE	Statutory Transformation Senior Executive	592	SOE Listed	Annual Report
C13	SOE	EE Transformation	50364	SOE Listed	Annual Report

Table 1 Profile of Respondent

Table 4.1 indicates that the sample included participants from different sectors of the South African economy as well as SOEs. The participants were drawn from the mining sector (n=5; 38%), SOEs provided 23% (n=3) and Telecoms (n=2; 15%).

4.3 Data cleaning and processing

The coding process for gender mainstreaming research using Excel involved organising and analysing qualitative data to identify themes and patterns. Data was imported into Excel with each response placed in a separate row and structured into columns for Company ID, Response to question, Themes, and Notes. Initial coding involved reviewing responses line by line to identify key concepts like leadership buy-in or policy integration, assigning descriptive notes to summarize each data segment. Visual representation of the data was achieved through pie charts and heat maps to highlight the frequency and importance of themes. A pie chart, for example, illustrated the percentage of responses linked to various gender inclusion indicators, such as key performance indicators, finance intent, reasonable accommodation, gender-sensitive recruitment, budgeting, capacity building, and monitoring. The coding process was iterative, involving multiple rounds of refinement and validation by the research team to ensure the accuracy and reliability of themes and patterns.

4.4 Descriptive statistics: presentation of findings

This section presents the responses to the interview questionnaire as findings of the study on gender mainstreaming, providing a detailed analysis of the data collected from South African corporations. Descriptive statistics of the findings are presented. The findings are structured to address the research objectives and questions, offering insights into the extent of gender inclusivity across various sectors and organisational sizes. It showcases responses from participating organisations into three groups—

those demonstrating strong compliance, partial compliance, and limited compliance—to provide a nuanced understanding of progress and challenges.

4.4.1 Long-term vision and strategic planning for gender mainstreaming

Participants were requested to indicate if the organisation has a long-term vision and strategic planning for gender mainstreaming.

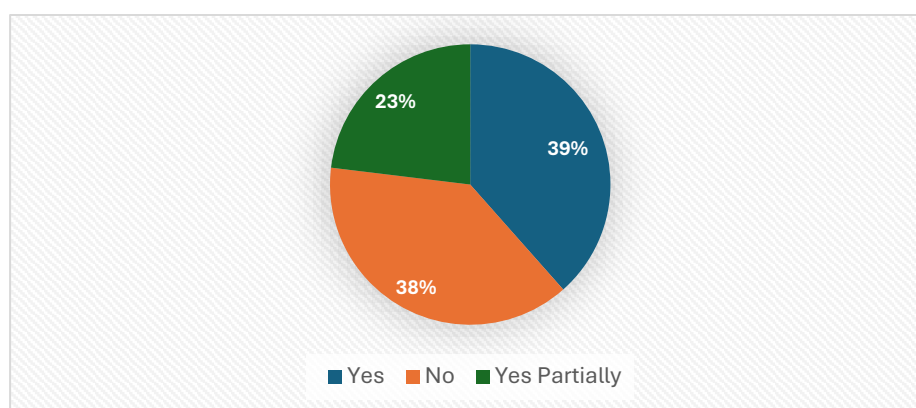


Figure 1: Strategic Planning Intent

The data shows that the participants (39%) indicated that their organisations have a long-term vision and strategic planning for gender mainstreaming, while 38% indicated “no” and 23% provided a response.

4.4.2 Inclusion of gender mainstreaming included in the performance agreement of senior leadership

The study also sought to establish whether gender mainstreaming is included in the performance agreement of senior leadership. The findings are presented below.

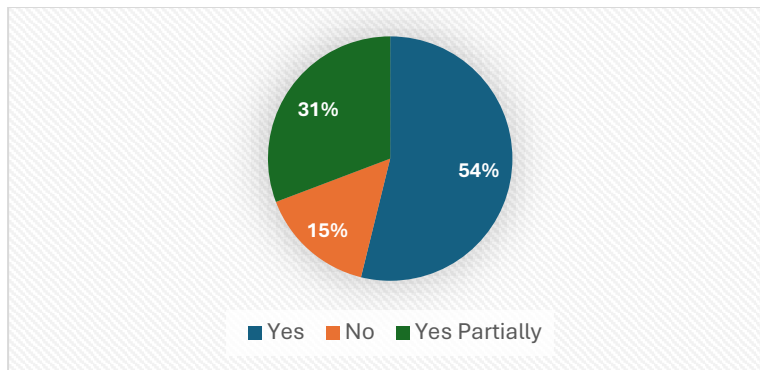


Figure 2: Senior Performance Targets

The data presented in Figure 4.2 shows that the participants (54%) indicated that their organisations have included gender mainstreaming in the performance agreement of senior leadership, while 31% selected the partially yes and 15% indicated with a “no” .

4.4.3 An overall budget allocation for gender mainstreaming

Participants were requested to indicate if the organisation has an overall budget allocation for gender mainstreaming.

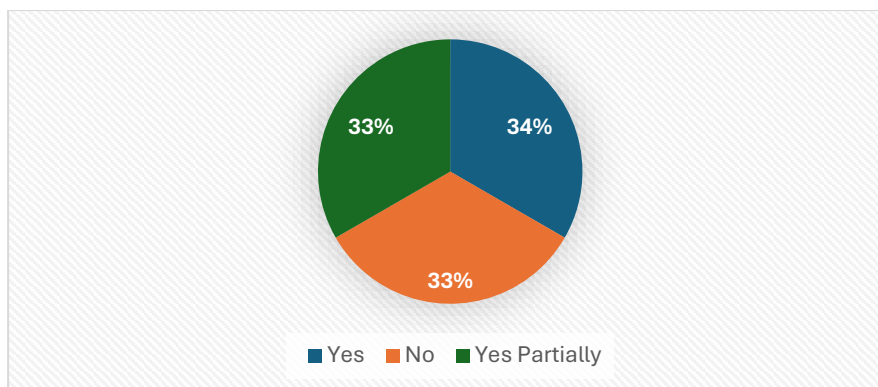


Figure 3: Gender Mainstreaming Overall Budget

As highlighted in Figure 4.3 34% of the participants selected “yes” indicating that these organisations have an overall budget allocation for gender mainstreaming. On the other hand, 33% selected “no” to indicate that their organisations do not have an overall budget allocation for gender mainstreaming. Similarly, 33% of the participants

also indicate a “partial yes” which implies that they are not sure about the existence of an overall budget allocation for gender mainstreaming.

4.4.4 Key performance indicators for gender mainstreaming

The researcher requested the participants to indicate if the organisation is clear on the key performance indicators for gender mainstreaming. The findings are summarised in Figure 4.4.

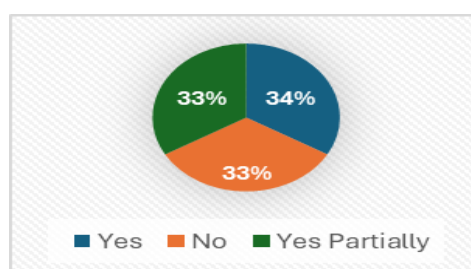


Figure 4: Gender Mainstreaming Key Performance Indicators

From the findings it emerged that 34% of the participants confirmed that their organisations are clear on the key performance indicators, while 33% said “no” and 33% provided a “partial yes” response.

4.4.5 Gender mainstreaming policy

The researcher asked the participants to indicate if their organisations have a gender mainstream policy. The responses from the participants are captured below.

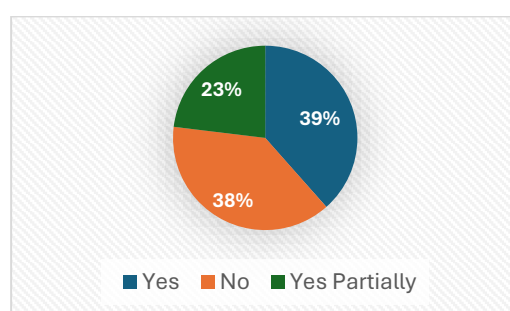


Figure 5: Gender Mainstreaming Policies

The participants (39%) confirmed that their organisations have a gender mainstreaming policy. On the other hand, 38% negatively confirmed the availability of a gender mainstreaming policy while 23% were not sure.

4.4.6 Gender mainstreaming budget allocation

The researcher asked the participants to indicate if their organisations have the overall budget breakdown allocated for gender mainstreaming, gender equity, career pipeline, coaching and mentoring,

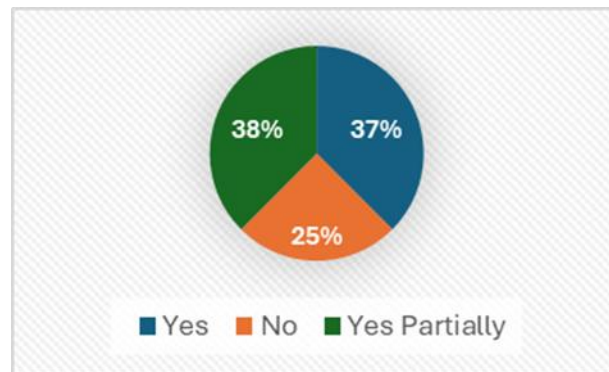


Figure 6: Gender Mainstreaming Budget Allocation

From the findings it emerged that 37% of the participants confirmed that their organisations have allocated budget for gender mainstreaming targeting women, while 25% said “no” and 38% provided a “partial yes” response

4.4.7 Procurement communicated in respective departments

The researcher asked the participants to indicate if gender mainstreaming communicated clearly to the respective departments as and when procuring occurs (female-, black, coloured, Indian and disabled: PDI).

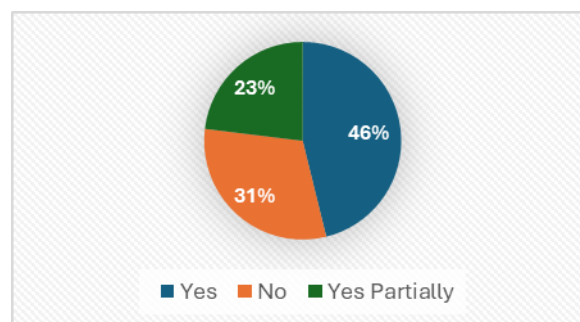


Figure 7: Procurement Policies

The participants (46%) confirmed that gender mainstreaming is communicated clearly to the respective departments as and when procuring occurs while 31% of the participants negatively confirm the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in company policies and 23% provided a partial yes.

4.4.8 Gender mainstreaming communication in the organisational policies

The interview process also required participants to indicate if gender mainstreaming is communicated in the organisational policies such as human resources policies, recruitment policy, training policies, and employee value proposition among others.

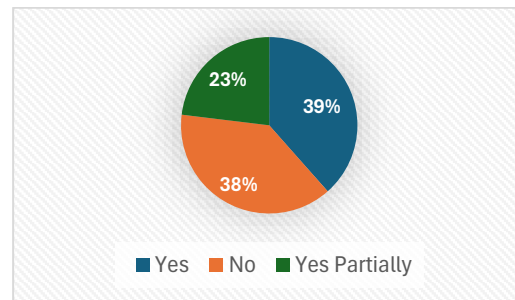


Figure 8: Gender Mainstreaming communication in the organization

Figure 8 indicates that the 39% participants affirmed that gender mainstreaming is communicated through several company policies while 38% of the participants negatively confirmed the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in company policies and 23% provided a partial yes or no answer.

4.4.9 Existence of a policy that highlights inclusivity and accommodation of women in creating a work-life balance

Participants were asked to indicate if their companies or organisations have a policy that highlights inclusivity and accommodation of women in creating a work-life balance.

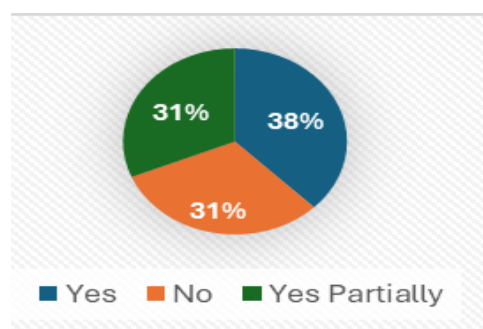


Figure 9: Work life Balance Policies

Figure 9 indicates that the 38% participants indicated that they have policies that highlights inclusivity and accommodation of women in creating a work life balance

whiles other (31%) participants disagreed that there are workplace benefits conscious of gender inclusion while 31% were also not sure.

4.4.10 Availability of workplace benefits conscious of gender inclusion

The researcher asked the participants to indicate if there are workplace benefits which are conscious of gender inclusion, for example, flexi working hours and flexi leave.

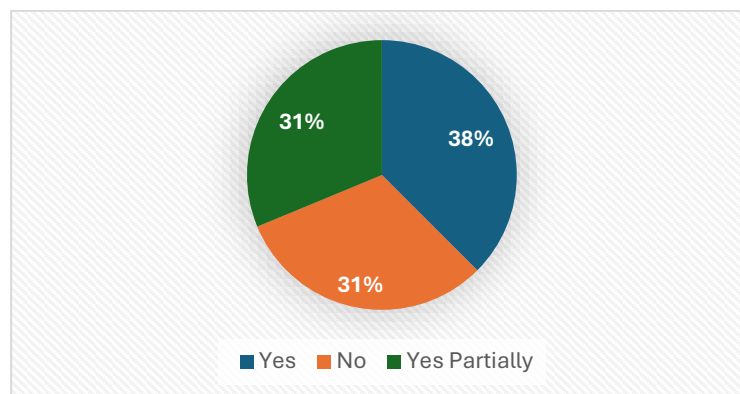


Figure 10: Gender Conscious Benefits

Figure 10 indicates that the 38% participants indicated that in their organisations there are workplace benefits conscious of gender inclusion, whiles other (31%) participants disagreed that there are workplace benefits conscious of gender inclusion while 31% were also not sure.

4.4.11 Gender mainstreaming communication in the EE Plan and monitoring by the EE committee

The researcher asked the participants to indicate if gender mainstreaming is communicated clearly in the EE Plan and whether it is continuously monitored by the EE committee.

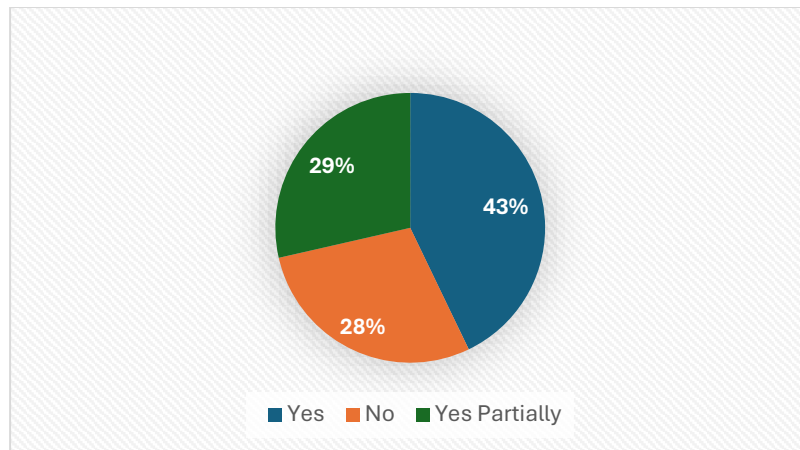


Figure 11: Gender Mainstreaming Communication in the EE Plan

Figure 11 indicates that the 43% of participants positively confirm that gender mainstreaming is communicated clearly in the EE Plan and is continuously monitored by the EE committee. while only 28% said “no” and 29% also provided a partial response.

4.4.12 Gender mainstreaming structures

Participants were requested to indicate if the organisations have structures such as gender mainstreaming executive committees that champion or sponsor gender mainstreaming.

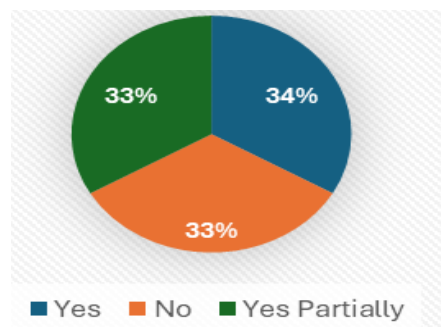


Figure 12: Gender Mainstreaming Structures

Figure 13 indicates that the 34% of the participants agreed that there are gender mainstream structures in their organisations while only 33% said “no” and 33% also provided a partial response.

4.4.13 Representation of women in leadership groups where issues related to gender mainstreaming are tabled

The study also seeks to understand and assess the representation of women in leadership groups where issues related to gender mainstreaming are tabled and discussed.

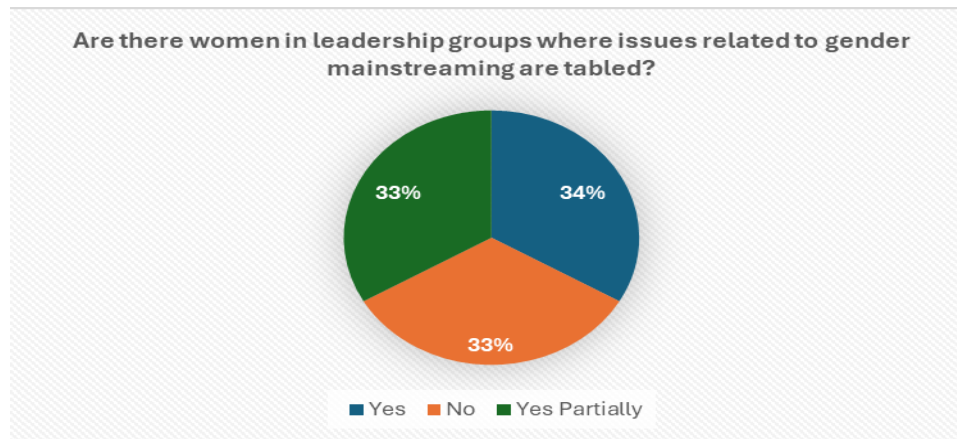


Figure 13: Women Leadership Presentation

Figure 13 indicates that the 34% of the organizations are represented in the leadership groups where issues related to gender mainstreaming are tabled, while 33% said no and 33% provide a partially yes response.

4.4.14 Availability of an outlet/forum where women meet to discuss areas of concern and opportunities in the workplace (manifesto)

The researcher also sought to assess if there is an outlet/forum where women meet to discuss areas of concern and opportunities in the workplace.

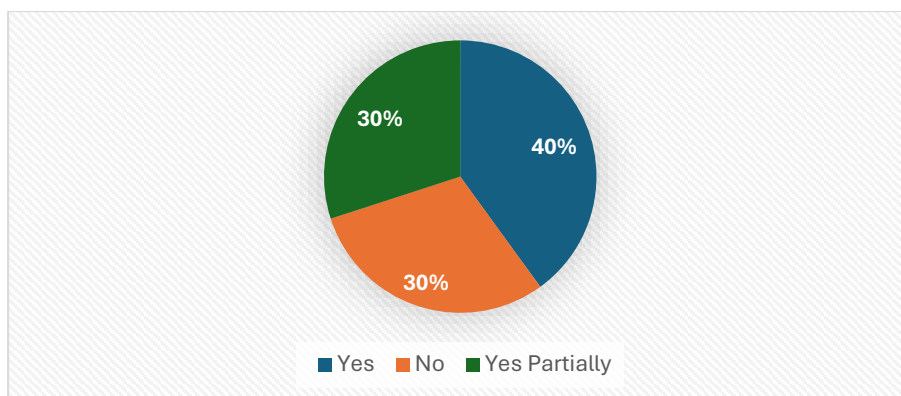


Figure 14: Women Leadership Network

Figure 14 indicates that the 40% of the participants highlights that there is an outlet/forum where women meet to discuss areas of concerns and opportunities in the workplace. On the contrary, 30% indicated “no” and 30% also indicated “partially yes.”

4.4.15 Representative from the gender mainstreaming manifesto groupings in the EE consultative forum

Participants were requested to indicate if there is a representative from the gender mainstreaming manifesto groupings in the EE consultative forum.

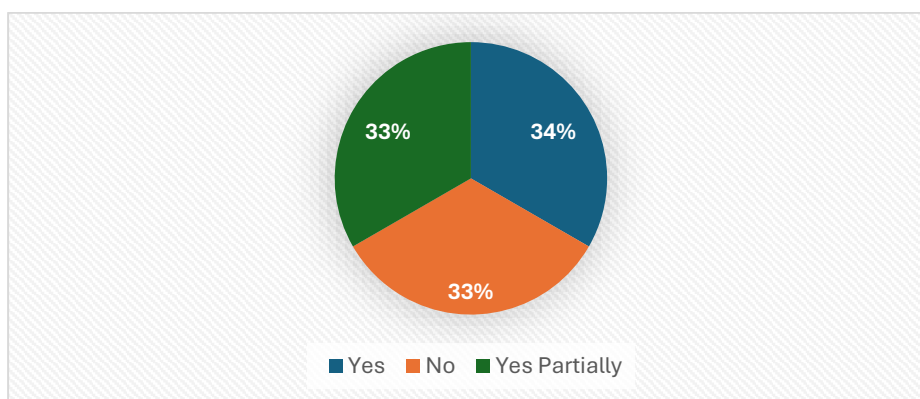


Figure 15: Women Voices in Equality Structures

Figure 15 indicates that the 34% of the participants confirmed that there is a representative from the gender mainstreaming manifesto groupings. On the other hand, 33% negatively confirmed the availability of a representative from the gender mainstreaming manifesto groupings in the EE consultative forum. Lastly, 33% provided a partial yes in response.

4.4.16 A standing report that reflects gender recruitment status

Participants were requested to indicate if there is a standing report that reflects gender recruitment status.

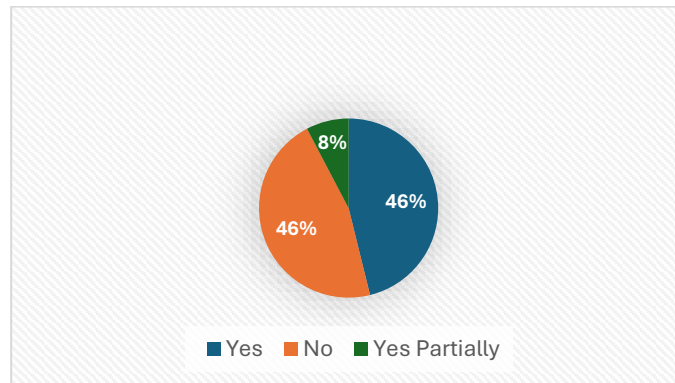


Figure 16: Gender Recruitment Reporting

Figure 16 indicates that the 46% participants indicated “yes” and “no” (46%). On the other hand, 8% selected “partially yes” in response to the research question.

4.4.17 Space planning (reasonable accommodation) for inclusiveness of gender mainstreaming

Participants were asked to indicate if there is space planning (reasonable accommodation) for inclusiveness of gender mainstreaming in the organisations.

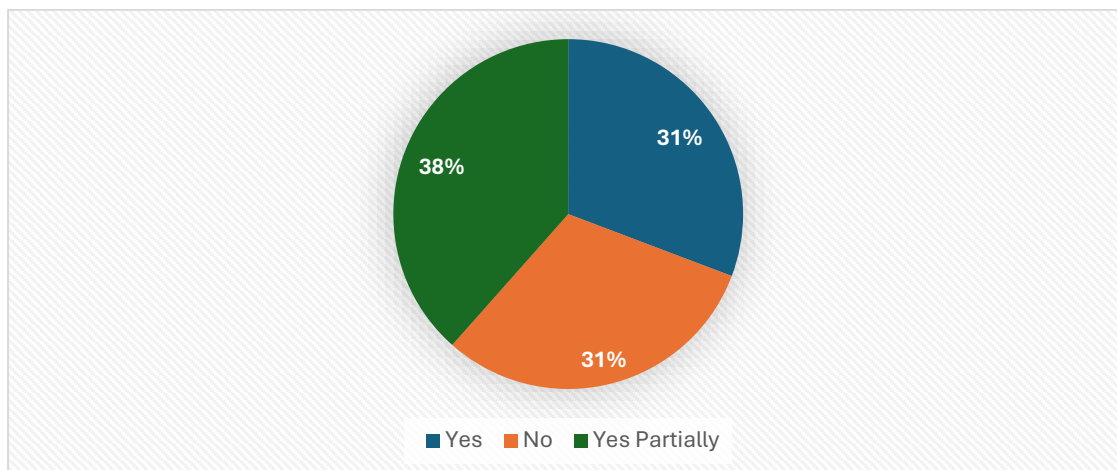


Figure 17: Gender Mainstreaming Inclusive Planning

Figure 17 indicates that the 38% participants indicated “partially yes” responses while 31% provided a “yes” response and the other 31% provided a “no” response.

4.4.18 An approach for the regulation of gender parity in the organisation

The interview questionnaire requested participants to indicate if the organisations have an approach for the regulation of gender in the organisation.

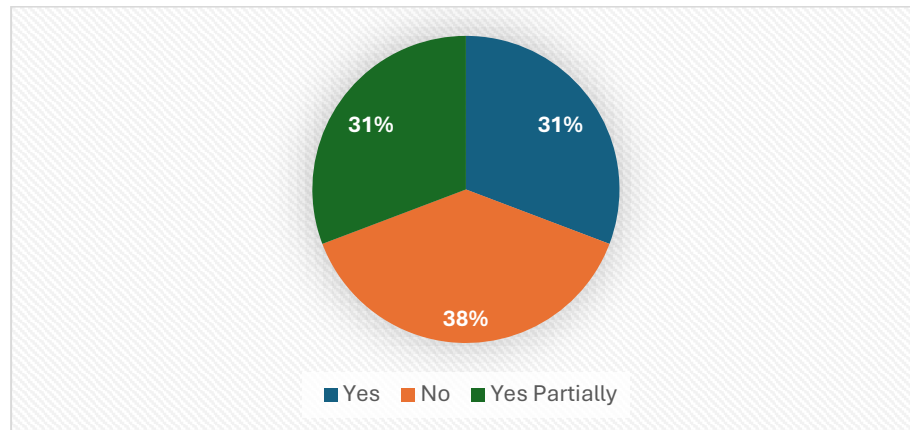


Figure 18: Gender Parity

Figure 18 indicates that 38% participants indicated “no”, while 31% indicated a “yes” and the other 31% indicated a “yes partially” response.

4.4.19 Budget allocated for women-specific awareness campaigns for the organisation

The researcher also seeks to explore if there is a budget allocated for activities such as women specific awareness campaigns for the organisation. In addition, the question seeks to understand if there is a budget allocated for gender-specific communication.

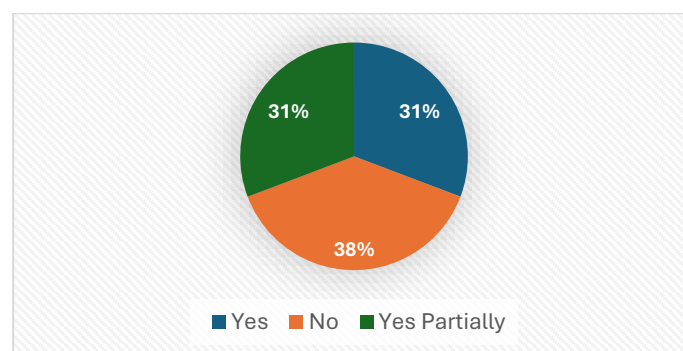


Figure 19: Budget Allocation for Gender Mainstreaming Campaigns

The findings revealed that the 38% participants indicated that there is no budget allocated for women-specific awareness campaigns, while 31% positively confirmed there is a budget and 31% indicated a “yes partially”.

4.4.20 Programmes targeted at the development of women in the organisation

Participants were requested to indicate if there are programmes targeted at the development of women in the organisation.

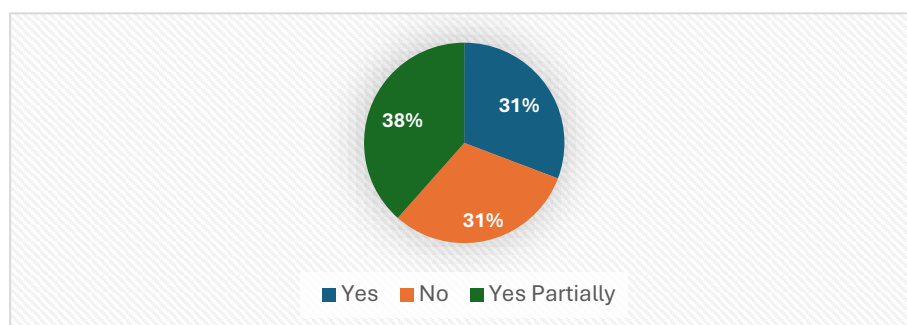


Figure 20: Programmes targeted at the development of women in the organisation

Figure 20 indicates that the 38% participants selected “yes partially) while 31% selected “yes” and 31% selected “no.”

4.4.21 Budget allocated for the capacity building of women managers, specifically for gender mainstreaming

This question requested participants to indicate if there is a budget allocated for the capacity building of women managers, specifically for gender mainstreaming.

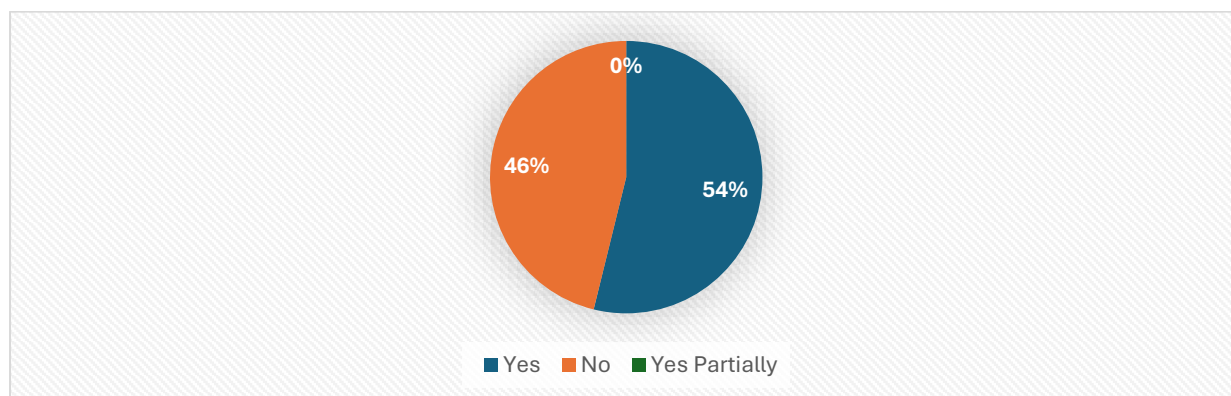


Figure 21: Women Specific Capacity Building Budget

Figure 21 indicates that 54% participants positively confirmed that there is a budget allocated for the capacity building of women managers. On the other hand, 46% indicated that there is no such a budget.

4.4.22 Bursaries allocated for women's empowerment

The researcher asked the participants to indicate if there are bursaries for women's empowerment.

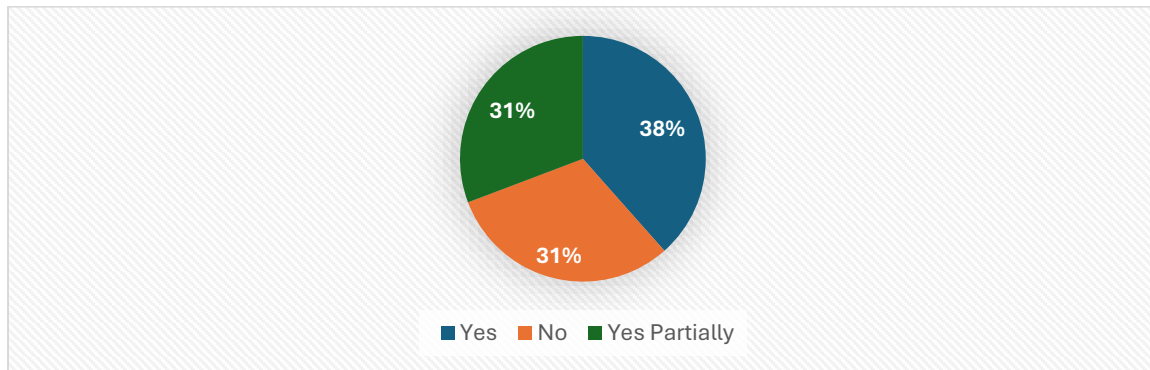


Figure 22: Women Specific Bursary Allocation

Figure 22 indicates that the majority (38%) indicated that there are bursaries allocated for women empowerment. On the contrary, 31% provided a “yes” while 31% chose a “no” response.

4.4.23 Mentorship and coaching programmes focusing on women's empowerment

In an endeavour to achieve the objectives of the study, participants were asked to indicate if the organisation have mentorship and coaching programmes which focus on women's empowerment.

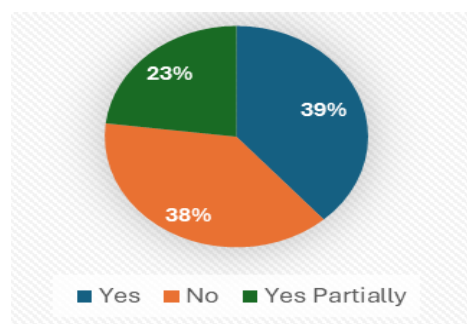


Figure 23: Women Specific Mentorship and Coaching Programme

The findings highlighted that 39% of the participants confirmed the existence of the mentorship and coaching programmes on women's empowerment while 38% rejects that there are such programmes and 23% provided a “yes partially” response.

4.4.24 Learnership programmes that are specific to women's empowerment

To have a comprehensive overview of the gender streaming initiatives in both the private and public sectors the researcher asked the participants to provide information regarding the existence of learnership programmes that specifically seek to enhance women's empowerment.

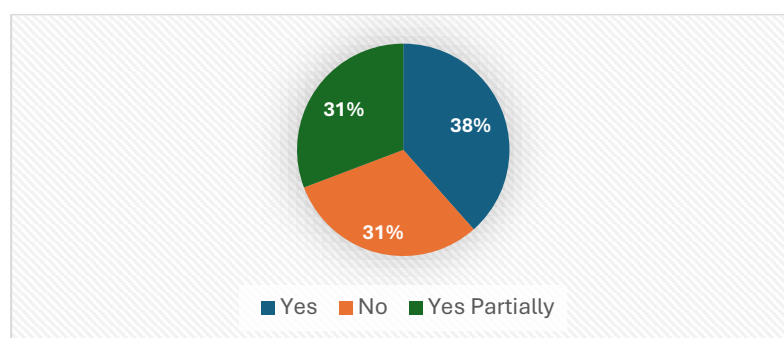


Figure 24: Women Targeted Learnership Programme

Figure 24 indicates 38% of the participants confirmed that such programmes are available, while 31% responded with a “no” and 31% responded with a “yes partially.”

4.4.25 Forum where the gender mainstreaming complaints are handled

Participants were asked to indicate if there is a forum where the gender mainstreaming complaints are handled.

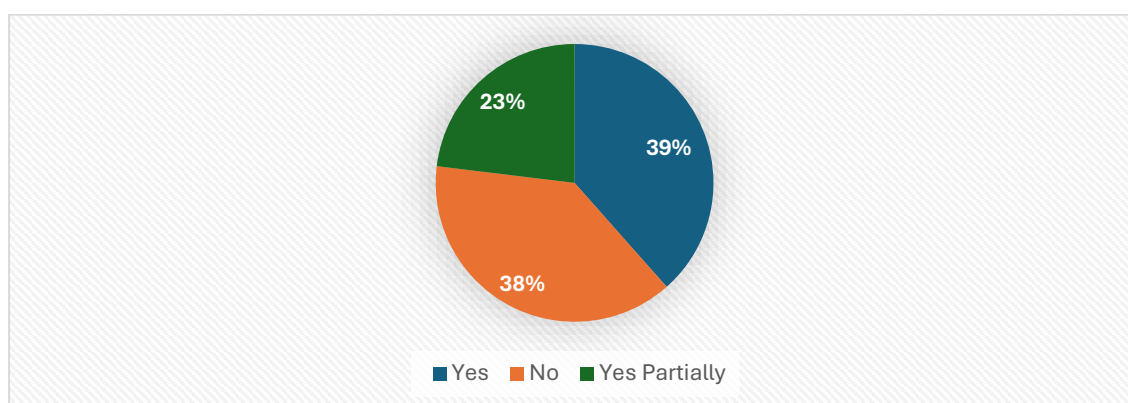


Figure 25: Platform where women specific challenges are handled

Figure 25 indicates that 39% of participants indicated that there is a forum where the gender mainstreaming complaints are handled, while 38% indicated with a “no” and 23% responded with a “yes partially.”

4.4.26 Organisation monitor strategic plans to ensure that they include gender mainstreaming

The participants were asked to indicate if the organisations monitor strategic plans to ensure that they include gender mainstreaming.

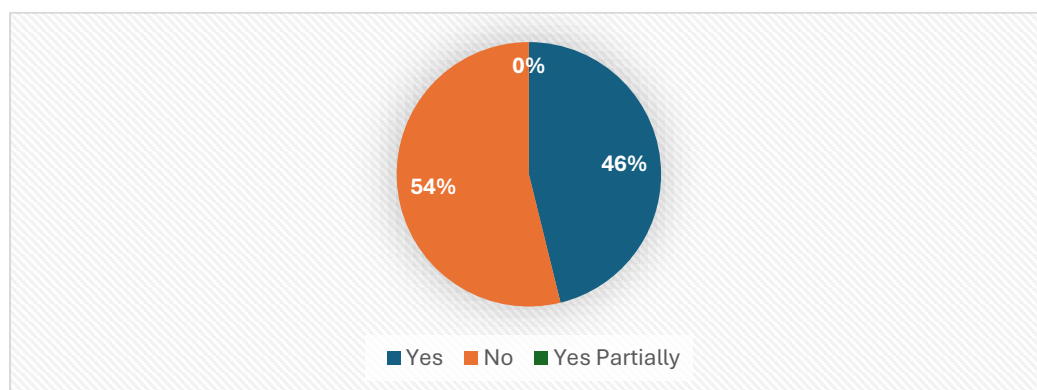


Figure 26: Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plans Monitoring

Figure 26 indicates that the participants (54%) indicated that their organisations do not monitor strategic plans which ensures that they include gender mainstreaming. On the contrary, 46% positively confirm that organisations monitor gender mainstreaming strategic plans.

4.4.27 Reporting timeously to the board and authorities' issues regarding their gender mainstreaming annually

The study also seeks to find out if organisation involved in the study report timeously to the board and authorities' issues regarding their gender mainstreaming annual gender inclusive indicators. Figure 27 indicates that 54% of the organisations do report annually about requirements, whereas 46% does not on gender mainstreaming targets.

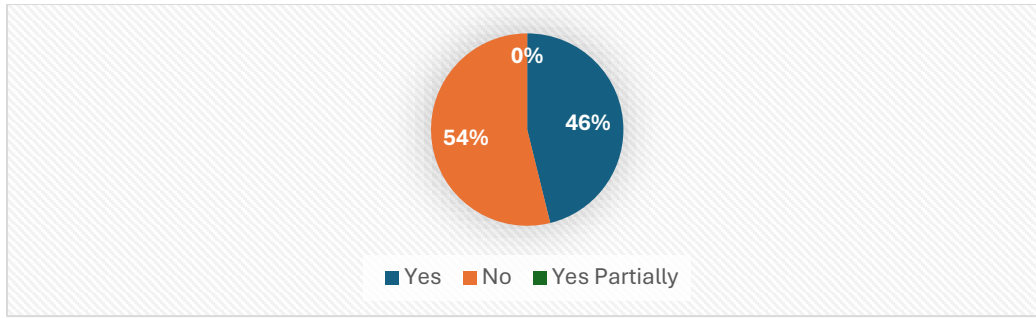


Figure 27: Gender Inclusive Reporting

4.4.28 Reporting performance targets with regard to gender mainstreaming in annual report

The researcher explored the extent at which organisations report performance targets with regards to gender mainstreaming in annual reports.

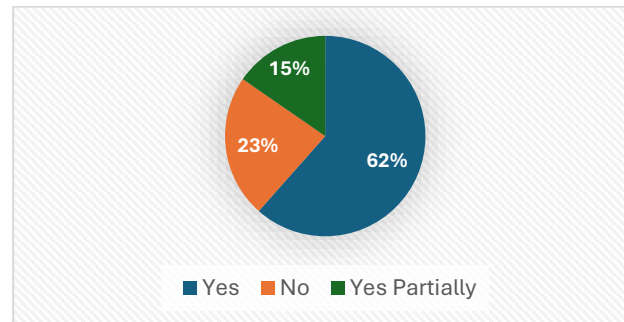


Figure 28: Gender Mainstreaming Annual Performance Reporting

The *Figure 28* indicated that (62%) of organisations report gender mainstreaming performance targets in annual reports, while 23% provide a “no” answer and 15% provides a “yes partially” response.

4.5 Findings from document analysis

4.5.1 Long-term vision and strategic planning for gender mainstreaming

C1, C2, C3 and C4, C10 have developed comprehensive long-term visions and strategic plans focused on gender mainstreaming. C2 aligns its gender goals with international standards, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 for gender equality includes fostering gender diversity,

aiming for greater female representation in leadership roles. C3 has a five-year strategic plan that includes specific targets for gender representation at all levels, with a clear vision to enhance female representation in technical and leadership roles that are regularly reviewed by senior leadership. Similarly, C4 has a roadmap to reach gender parity in management roles by 2030, with strategic initiatives for women's advancement.

C6, C7, C18, C12 and C13. have some level of strategic planning related to gender equity, but it is either less formalized or not fully integrated across all business areas. The leadership may not have a key performance agreement about gender mainstreaming, but complying with the BBEEE Act and Equality Act, and the King Code C12 has set diversity targets as part of its broader corporate strategy, but lacks a distinct, detailed long-term plan specifically for gender mainstreaming. C10 incorporates gender diversity in its objectives but focuses primarily on compliance with employment equity requirements rather than a forward-looking strategic vision.

C5, C9 do not have a formal long-term vision or strategic plan focused specifically on gender mainstreaming. While they may have policies supporting general diversity, there is no structured roadmap or strategic focus on gender equity. C7 and C8 indicated that they view gender mainstreaming as part of overall diversity goals based on statutory reporting but lack specific objectives or timelines.

4.5.2 Inclusion of gender mainstreaming included in the performance agreement of senior leadership

C1, C2, C3, C4, C7 and C8 do have performance agreements for senior leadership in place, which are linked to the Head: DEEI. The role that the Head plays ensures that the leadership is clear about their mandate to propagate the culture of inclusion in the organisation. The executives are held accountable for the diversity and inclusion within the organisations. The performance agreement includes but not limited to recruitment, empowerment initiatives dedicated to women such as mentoring and coaching, bursaries, procurement. This is also encouraged through the performance agreement that is reviewed quarterly.

Organisations C6, C8 and C9 were just recently onboarded on Integrated Reporting which is based on UN SDG's. Chief People Officer's short-term incentives (STIs) are

structured with a 12,5% weight dedicated to achieving ESG targets which emphasize on diversity and inclusion.

C5 performance agreement may not be linked with organisational gender mainstreaming, but based on statutory obligation, partnership with the transformation manager, the organisation is aware of employment equity and women's inclusion. C9 has the key performance indicators that drives their engagements within skills development, career development opportunities for women, strategy for people with disabilities, Inclusion and diversity, Retrenchment and downscaling matters, Employee health and safety, Environmental issues and incidents, Labour relations, Physical and mental health programmes, wage negotiations, Transformation deliverables, financial education and C9 has a Code of Conduct.

For C7 transformation goals are embedded in broader company initiatives where the leadership is incentivized to meet diversity and inclusion goals, and short-term incentives (STIs) are tied to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) targets. C8's performance indicators for diversity and inclusion are infused in performance management process to direct line manager. For companies C5, C11, C12 and C13, gender mainstreaming is not included in senior leadership's performance agreements, but specifically to the Transformation Executive whose responsibility is to report on Employment Equity.

4.5.3 An overall budget allocation for gender mainstreaming

Although specific financial figures were not disclosed in the research data based on companies' policies that restrict document sharing, participants indicated that budgetary resources are allocated towards programs such as women's leadership training and career development workshops. This reflects a structured approach to fostering gender equality within the organization. has a substantial budget for gender mainstreaming. C2 has been recognised for investing significantly in gender equity programs, including mentorship and coaching for women. C2's commitment is exemplified through specific funding for diversity and inclusion initiatives, though exact budget amounts were not provided in the collected data. C3 gender mainstreaming budget supports various initiatives, including scholarships for women in STEM and

leadership development programs. The company's reports highlight a multi-million-dollar investment in broader diversity and inclusion efforts, of which gender-specific programs form a part. C4's commitment is demonstrated through funding allocated for initiatives like gender-equity training, mentoring programs, and career advancement workshops for women. The precise figures were not outlined in the data but indicate a significant portion of the HR budget is directed towards these efforts. The absence of a targeted budget for C4 suggests that gender mainstreaming efforts may be incorporated into general operational expenses without dedicated funding, potentially limiting the scope and effectiveness of specific gender-focused programs. While there are some gender-related initiatives in place, C7 they are not backed by a separate budget. Resources are shared across general training and development programs, which may dilute the focus on gender-specific outcomes.

4.5.4 Key performance indicators for gender mainstreaming

C1, C2, C3, C4, have indicators that are also called Gender Mainstreaming 10 -Point Plan shared as the toolkit by ILO. The key performance indicators are identified as Leadership Commitment, Policy Implementation; Performance Metrics; Inclusive Recruitment and Promotion; Workplace Culture and Environment; Training and Development, Communication and Awareness; Support Networks and Groups, Monitoring and Reporting; Accountability and Recognition. The indicators are used as a tool track performance area when embedding gender mainstreaming.

As much as C5, C7,C10 have strategic intent about diversity and inclusion, the companies do not have a clear performance indicators as the companies have been recently onboarded about embedding SDG's C9 has the key performance indicators that drives their engagements within skills development, career development opportunities for women, strategy for people with disabilities, Inclusion and diversity, Retrenchment and downscaling matters, Employee health and safety, Environmental issues and incidents, Labour relations, Physical and mental health programmes, Wage negotiations, Transformation deliverables, financial education and has a Code of Conduct,C10.

Although the GP C11, C12 and C13, gender mainstreaming is not included in senior leadership's performance agreements, but specifically to the Transformation Executive whose responsibility is to report on Employment Equity. C13 gender

mainstreaming indicators are aligned with national policies, including the National Development Plan 2030 and B-BBEE frameworks.

4.5.5 Gender mainstreaming policy

Organisations such as C2, C3 and C4 have gender mainstreaming frameworks/policies that they use as baseline principles to ensure that the organizations are aware of the intentions and the strategy. The gender mainstreaming framework includes gender analysis, policy development and review, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and implementation strategies. leadership commitment. resource allocation, communication and awareness accountability mechanisms. C1 states that the driving force behind the successful delivery of the strategy is the gender mainstreaming framework and the sub-policies that were developed from it. C2 has a formal policy aimed at promoting gender inclusivity, with specific programs focusing on hiring, promotion, and skill development

C10 introduced an Inclusion and Belonging Policy, which has been communicated to all employees and policy owners. Policies such as the Group Harassment Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy have been aligned with gender mainstreaming principles

C, C9, C11, C12 C13 have statutory policies that informs recruitment, remuneration, leave, skill development, employment equity and code of conduct that dispel discrimination. There is no specific gender mainstreaming policy, a BEE policy guides overall hiring, skills development, and other practices that are inclusive of both men and women. C7 has Fair labour practices and policies that reduce discrimination affirmative action, actively fostering a diverse workforce and an inclusive culture where every voice is heard and valued.

4.5.6 The overall budget breakdown allocated for gender mainstreaming

Organization C1, C2, C3 and C4 have a dedicated budget breakdown specifically for gender mainstreaming. C2 allocates funds for gender equity initiatives, including leadership development for women and career pipeline programs, which are part of their annual diversity and inclusion budget. C4 dedicates resources to gender-focused scholarships for women in STEM fields, as well as mentorship and leadership programs. Similarly, C3 has a portion of its budget focused on advancing women in

technical and management roles, with an emphasis on skill-building and leadership training. These organisations have structured budget allocations that are specifically earmarked for gender mainstreaming efforts.

Organizations such as C6, C7, C9 and C13 have some level of budget allocation for gender mainstreaming, though it is often limited or included as part of broader diversity funding. C10 and C7 have funds dedicated to general diversity and inclusion but do not specify a breakdown solely for gender-related initiatives. C8 and C9 allocate resources for diversity training and workshops that support gender inclusivity, but these initiatives lack a dedicated and detailed gender-specific budget. While gender mainstreaming is supported financially, the budgets are less specific and not consistently allocated to targeted programmes for women's career advancement or leadership development. These organisations tend to integrate gender equity goals into general diversity spending without detailed tracking for gender-specific initiatives. C5, C11 and C12 do not have a specific budget allocated for gender mainstreaming. While some general training or diversity efforts may include elements related to gender equity, there are no distinct funds dedicated solely to advancing gender mainstreaming initiatives. C5 indicated that they rely on broader operational budgets that do not focus on gender-specific objectives. C11 and C12 confirmed that no specific budget exists for supporting gender mainstreaming activities, which may limit the scope and effectiveness of gender equity programs.

4.5.7 Procurement communicated in respective departments

Organizations C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C9, C10, C12 and C13 effectively communicate gender mainstreaming in procurement policies to their departments, ensuring that PDI groups are prioritized and have gender mainstreaming supply chain development strategies. The strategies included the appointment of women owned companies, supply chain development approach to empower and support the women. C2 has incorporated gender diversity into its procurement processes, promoting women-owned businesses and ensuring that diversity is a consideration in its supply chain management. C6 has Gender Procurement Framework that has been recently developed which is intended to guide gender procurement embedding the gender inclusive principles

Regular updates, training sessions, and clear procurement guidelines support inclusive practices. For example, C3 has a dedicated team that reinforces gender and diversity considerations in procurement through workshops and written policies. C3 was highlighted for its comprehensive strategy that integrates gender mainstreaming in supply chain management. C7 emphasizes gender diversity in its procurement processes, particularly in support of female-owned businesses. The company actively promotes gender equality in procurement, with R29 million invested in socioeconomic development through partnerships with black women-owned businesses. C5, C9, subscribes to the Mining Charter that encourages mines to have the Social Labour Plan, which enforces the organization to have quotas for supply chain training within the areas

C13 has an Enterprise and Supplier Development Programme, which includes significant allocations (R935 million) for women's empowerment through procurement practices, supporting women-owned businesses. C5, C8, and C11 have gender and diversity initiatives in procurement policies, but do not consistently communicate these to all departments. While gender mainstreaming is mentioned in procurement documents, it may lack regular reinforcement or monitoring.

4.5.8 Gender mainstreaming communication

Organizations C1,C2,C3 and C4 have a dedicated budget breakdown specifically for gender mainstreaming. C2 allocates funds for gender equity initiatives, including leadership development for women and career pipeline programs, which are part of their annual diversity and inclusion budget. C4 dedicates resources to gender-focused scholarships for women in STEM fields, as well as mentorship and leadership programs. Similarly, C3 has a portion of its budget focused on advancing women in technical and management roles, with an emphasis on skill-building and leadership training. These organizations have structured budget allocations that are specifically earmarked for gender mainstreaming efforts.

Organizations C6, C7,C9, C13 have some level of budget allocation for gender mainstreaming, though it is often limited or included as part of broader diversity funding. C10 and C7 have funds dedicated to general diversity and inclusion but do

not specify a breakdown solely for gender-related initiatives. C8 and C9 allocate resources for diversity training and workshops that support gender inclusivity, but these initiatives lack a dedicated and detailed gender-specific budget. While gender mainstreaming is supported financially, the budgets are less specific and not consistently allocated to targeted programs for women's career advancement or leadership development. These organizations tend to integrate gender equity goals into general diversity spending without detailed tracking for gender-specific initiatives.

C5, C11 and C12 do not have a specific budget allocated for gender mainstreaming. While some general training or diversity efforts may include elements related to gender equity, there are no distinct funds dedicated solely to advancing gender mainstreaming initiatives. C5 indicated that they rely on broader operational budgets that do not focus on gender-specific objectives. C11 and C12 confirmed that no specific budget exists for supporting gender mainstreaming activities, which may limit the scope and effectiveness of gender equity programs.

4.5.9 Gender mainstreaming communication in the organisational policies

C1, C2, C3, C4 have integrated gender mainstreaming into their human resources, recruitment, training, and EVP policies. C1 integrates gender inclusivity in its HR and training policies e.g. Parental Leave Policies, Flexible Work Policies, Equal Pay Policies, Recruitment Policies : Gender-Neutral Job Descriptions, Blind Recruitment, Gender Sensitivity Training, Leadership Development Programs, Inclusive Benefits, Diversity & Inclusion Metrics, Support Networks) prioritizing female representation in hiring practices and offering training programs to promote women's career advancement. C2 includes gender equity goals in recruitment and training policies, ensuring that diversity is a priority at all hiring and development stages. C4 incorporates gender-focused language in its Employee Value Proposition (EVP), emphasizing career growth and inclusivity for women in technical and leadership roles. C3 has embedded gender considerations in its recruitment policies, with specific measures to attract and support women in engineering and managerial positions.

Organisations such as C5, C8, C11, C12 C13 do not explicitly include gender mainstreaming in their HR, recruitment, training, or EVP policies. Gender mainstreaming is partially addressed in recruitment and diversity policies, but these organizations lack comprehensive integration in all policy areas, such as training or

EVP. C8 includes gender equity as part of its HR policy but does not have gender-focused content in its employee development or training, including some references to gender mainstreaming in its HR and diversity policies, but it is not consistently applied across all areas. C13 and C11 address gender equity within their recruitment policies, with a focus on diverse hiring practices, though their training policies do not specifically mention gender equity.

4.5.10 Existence of a policy that highlights inclusivity and accommodation of women in creating a work-life balance

C1, C2, C3, C4 offers a range of benefits aimed at gender inclusivity, including maternity and paternity leave, 48 hours leave flexi-hour leave that can be taken by parents, especially single parents, to assist their children with small stuff such as wellness programs, and leadership coaching for women. Post Covid, C8, C11, C12 and C13 have introduced flexible working arrangements, including hybrid working models and flexible leave policies not based on gender mainstreaming but progressive working places post Covid. C5, C9 and C10 sighted that the mining sector environment limits how the flexi leave is introduced, as the contractual relation with employees is onsite with a minimum number of hours, but also allows for structured leave days.

4.5.11 Gender mainstreaming communication in the EE Plan and monitoring by the EE committee

Organisations such as C1, C2.C3, C4. C7, and C10 communicate the gender mainstreaming roadmap on their EE Plan. This is the compliance requisition for the Equity Act and the BBEEE indicators. C1, C2, C3, and C4 have integrated gender mainstreaming as a significant part of their EE Plans as compliant. The EE committees in these companies meet regularly to monitor the progress of gender initiatives, ensuring that the strategies are aligned with organizational and legislative goals. Strong commitment to diversity, structured review processes, and documented oversight that reinforces accountability. As one participant noted regarding C4, "Our EE committee conducts quarterly reviews to ensure the progress of gender policies is on track."

C5, C8, C9 and C11 have referenced gender mainstreaming in their EE Plans but do not demonstrate continuous, structured monitoring by the EE committee. This results

in limited oversight and less effective implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives. Gender policies are mentioned but lack detailed follow-through and regular assessments. For example, in C11, gender is part of the broader diversity framework but is not specifically highlighted or regularly monitored.

C6, C8, and C10 do not have gender mainstreaming clearly communicated in their EE Plans, and there is minimal evidence of continuous monitoring by the EE committee. While they may have diversity policies, the lack of dedicated gender-specific strategies limits their effectiveness. Gender mainstreaming is often absorbed under general diversity efforts without explicit attention, leading to inadequate tracking and support by the EE committee. A review from a C10 representative stated, "Our diversity goals are broad and do not explicitly detail gender monitoring in the EE Plan."

4.5.12 Gender mainstreaming structures

C1, C2, C3, C4, and C13 have established dedicated committees, councils, or executive sponsors specifically focused on championing gender mainstreaming. C2 integrates gender equity into its broader diversity council, with a subcommittee specifically focused on implementing gender mainstreaming strategies. C1 has a Gender Equity Council that monitors gender-related initiatives and drives strategic decisions to advance equity. C3 includes a Diversity and Inclusion Executive Committee with a specific mandate to oversee gender mainstreaming, supported by senior leaders who act as sponsors for gender initiatives. C4 has a Gender Mainstreaming Task Force, which aligns organizational efforts with legislative frameworks and reports on progress to senior leadership. These structures are formalized, led by senior leaders, and aligned with legislative frameworks. They actively track progress, provide strategic oversight, and advocate for gender-specific initiatives.

C13 recently launched Employee Network Groups (ENG) to enhance connectivity and promote a culture of collective transformation. C6, C7, C8, C10, and C12 organizations have some structures or mechanisms addressing gender mainstreaming, but they are not fully resolute or formalized. C10 and C12 incorporate gender mainstreaming into its EE Committee, though their activities are integrated into general equity discussions rather than as a standalone agenda. C12 has an informal women's leadership group,

which promotes equality within departments but has no formal committee. C13 C6, C7, C8, has periodic gender discussions within its diversity task force but lacks continuous oversight or executive sponsorship for gender equity. Gender mainstreaming is acknowledged and discussed, but the absence of fully structured, gender-specific committees or sponsors limits the impact and strategic focus of these efforts.

C5, C9 and C11 do not have formal structures, such as executive committees or sponsors, dedicated to championing gender mainstreaming initiatives. C11 reported general diversity efforts but no committees or leadership groups focusing specifically on gender equity. confirmed that gender equity discussions are informal and not part of structured frameworks or executive-level oversight. C5 relies on general HR policies to address equity but lacks a dedicated committee or sponsor to champion gender-specific issues. The absence of formal structures or sponsors hinders strategic focus, advocacy, and alignment with gender mainstreaming goals, making it difficult to sustain progress or accountability.

4.5.13 Representation of women in leadership groups where issues related to gender mainstreaming are tabled

Organizations C1, C2, C3 and C4 have formal leadership groups or councils that include women and focus on advancing gender mainstreaming. C2 has a women's leadership network that actively discusses and addresses gender equality issues, contributing to strategic initiatives for a more inclusive workplace. C4's executive women's council meets quarterly to review gender mainstreaming policies, discuss challenges, and track progress on diversity goals. C3 has a women's leadership forum where senior female leaders collaborate to implement gender equity initiatives, often involving board-level discussions. These leadership groups have regular meetings, are integrated into the organization's governance structures, and influence policy changes related to gender equity. C1 has a women's council within its diversity and inclusion framework, focusing on mentorship, policy review, and recommendations for gender mainstreaming strategies.

Organisations C6, C7, C10, C12 and C13 have some involvement of women leaders in gender discussions but lack formal leadership groups specifically dedicated to gender mainstreaming. C13 and C7 have diversity committees where female leaders

can bring up gender-related issues, but these forums do not meet regularly or have a structured agenda on gender mainstreaming. C8 includes gender diversity as part of broader leadership meetings, but gender issues are not consistently tabled or tracked.

Organisations, C5, C8, C9 and C10 do not have women in leadership groups specifically focused on gender mainstreaming issues. C5 and C10 indicated that while female leaders are part of the general leadership team, there is no formal group or agenda dedicated to gender equity. C9 and C8 confirmed that gender issues are not regularly tabled or tracked by women leaders, with discussions on diversity being part of overall business reviews rather than specific gender mainstreaming sessions.

4.5.14 Availability of an outlet/forum where women meet to discuss areas of concern and opportunities in the workplace (manifesto)

Organisations C1, C2, C3 and C4 have established formal forums or networks where women can gather to discuss workplace concerns, share opportunities, and receive mentorship. C1 offers women's groups, focusing on career advancement discussions and peer support. C2 has a women's network that organizes regular meetings, providing a platform for women to discuss challenges and celebrate successes. C3 hosts women's leadership roundtables, which focus on professional growth, mentorship, and networking. C4 has an established women's forum that is integrated within its diversity initiatives, allowing female employees to voice concerns and contribute ideas for improving workplace inclusivity. These forums are well-structured, regularly scheduled, and supported by senior leadership, demonstrating a commitment to creating a supportive environment for women.

Organisations C6, C7, C8 and C10 offer some level of support for women's discussions but lack formal or consistent forums. C7 and C10 have informal groups where women can meet on an ad hoc basis, but these are not structured as official company-supported forums. C13 organizes occasional workshops that allow women to discuss workplace challenges, but there is no continuous platform or regularly scheduled forum.

Organisations, C5, C9, C11 and C12, do not have a formal outlet or forum for women to discuss workplace concerns or career opportunities. C5 and C12 mentioned that they have general employee meetings, but these do not address gender-specific

issues or provide a space dedicated to women's discussions. C9 and C11 confirmed that they lack a structured forum for women's concerns, which can limit their ability to address gender-specific workplace challenges.

4.5.15 Representative from the gender mainstreaming manifesto groupings in the EE consultative forum

Organisations C1, C, C3, C4, C10 and C13 have integrated gender mainstreaming as a significant part of their EE Plans. The EE committees in these companies meet regularly to monitor the progress of gender initiatives, ensuring that the strategies are aligned with organizational and legislative goals. Strong commitment to diversity, structured review processes, and documented oversight that reinforces accountability. As one participant noted regarding C4, "Our EE committee conducts quarterly reviews to ensure the progress of gender policies is on track." C13 has women's representation in the ERG's where concerns such as gender parity, safety, Inclusion Roadmap for women, Safety for women in the workplace, Reasonable accommodation for Women, Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment, Career Pipeline for Women, Digital Readiness for Women.

Organizations C5, C6 and C12 have referenced gender mainstreaming in their EE Plans but do not demonstrate continuous, structured monitoring by the EE committee. Gender policies are mentioned but lack detailed follow-through and regular assessments. For example, in C11, gender is part of the broader diversity framework but is not specifically highlighted or regularly monitored.

C7, C9 and C11 do not have gender mainstreaming communicated in their EE Plans, and there is minimal evidence of continuous monitoring by the EE committee. While they may have diversity policies, the lack of dedicated gender-specific strategies limits their effectiveness. Gender mainstreaming is often absorbed under general diversity efforts without explicit attention, leading to inadequate tracking and support by the EE committee. A review from a C9 representative stated, "Our diversity goals are broad and do not explicitly detail gender monitoring in the EE Plan."

4.5.16 A standing report that reflects gender recruitment status

Organisations C1-C13 report about recruitment status monthly, quarterly and yearly. The reports track gender recruitment as per BBEEE standards. C1, C2, C3, C4 have established regular reporting on gender recruitment status, providing quarterly and annual reports that track gender representation and hiring outcomes. C2 report tracks gender diversity, including the percentage of women in leadership roles, gender pay equity, and overall workforce composition. C4 monitors gender-specific recruitment as part of its diversity strategy, and these reports are shared with leadership to inform decision-making. C3 integrates recruitment reports into its overall diversity and inclusion metrics, reviewing progress on gender targets. Reporting on gender recruitment status, with data used to track progress, set targets, and adjust recruitment strategies as needed.

For C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, C10, C11, C12, reporting exists but is limited in regularity or formality, with data often reviewed as part of general diversity metrics rather than as a dedicated gender recruitment status report. The findings suggest that regular and structured gender recruitment reporting can enhance transparency and support gender recruitment goals by providing insights into recruitment patterns and

C11, C12 and C13 report annually to the DWYP and UN SGD about the gender equality employment tracker. These are results that showcase South Africa in embracing gender mainstreaming. C13 Transnet tracks gender recruitment data and reports monthly, indicating that women represent 32% (16,571) of the workforce, compared to 68% male representation.

4.5.17 Space planning (reasonable accommodation) for inclusiveness of gender mainstreaming

Organisations C1, C2, C3 and C4 have implemented space planning measures to support gender inclusiveness, including facilities such as feeding rooms, day-care centres, and designated rest areas for employees. C4 offers childcare and nursing facilities as part of its inclusive workplace strategy, while C2 has similar accommodations in its main offices to support working parents. C1 and C3 has

established rooms for breastfeeding mothers and rest areas that promote comfort and inclusivity.

Organisations C12, C9 and C6 have made some efforts toward inclusivity through space planning but may lack comprehensive facilities. C12 provides accommodations like breastfeeding rooms in some office locations, though such facilities are not standardized across the organization. Space planning is acknowledged but not uniformly applied. Some facilities exist, but they may be limited in availability or scope. C5, C9, C11, C12 and C13 do not have significant space planning for inclusiveness. C5, C9 and C11 stated that they operate in the mining sector that is regulated differently as a result it becomes difficult to be gender inclusive with regards to space. Lack of infrastructure to support gender mainstreaming through physical accommodations. Organizations that have established comprehensive facilities that demonstrate a commitment to gender inclusivity, supporting work-life balance and accommodating the specific needs of working parents.

4.5.18 An approach for the regulation of gender parity in the organisation

Organisations C1, C2, C3, C4 , C7 and C8 have established formal approaches to regulate gender parity, incorporating specific targets and performance indicators into their diversity and inclusion strategies. C2 utilises a robust framework that aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 5, to ensure gender equality is a core component of their business strategy. C4 has implemented gender parity targets that are regularly monitored and reported to the board, ensuring accountability at all levels. Clear policies and procedures are in place, alongside regular audits and assessments to track progress. C3 conducts annual reviews of gender representation and actively implements action plans to address disparities, ensuring compliance with national regulations on gender equity. C7 analyzes remuneration practices guided by local legislation and best practices. This includes grade benchmarking using the Patterson grading system to ensure market-related salaries across both locations, but also collecting data analysis by identifying and addressing potential wage gaps or remuneration differentials, and putting corrective measures and implementing actions to ensure remuneration equity and address identified disparities.

Organisations C7, C9, C10 and C13 have made strides toward gender parity but lack comprehensive regulations or specific targets. C8 and C7 have set some diversity objectives in line with their broader corporate strategies, but do not consistently enforce or monitor them as part of formal regulations. has established guidelines for promoting gender diversity, but these are not yet fully integrated into operational practices. Gender parity is acknowledged as a priority, but the lack of structured monitoring or enforcement limits the effectiveness of existing approaches. For C10 the basic salary ratio for women to men has improved drastically reflecting our focused recruitment, retention and development of women, as well as salary adjustments where necessary pay parity ratio of basic salary women to men in C11, C12 do not have a formalized approach to regulate gender parity. While they may support diversity initiatives in principle, there are no specific policies or measurable targets in place.

4.5.19 Budget allocated for women-specific awareness campaigns for the organisation

Organisations C1, C2, C3 and C4 have a dedicated budget breakdown specifically for gender mainstreaming. C2 allocates funds for gender equity initiatives, including leadership development for women and career pipeline programs, which are part of their annual diversity and inclusion budget. C4 dedicates resources to gender-focused scholarships for women in STEM(Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), fields, as well as mentorship and leadership programs. Similarly, C3 has a portion of its budget focused on advancing women in technical and management roles, with an emphasis on skill-building and leadership training. These organizations have structured budget allocations that are specifically earmarked for gender mainstreaming efforts.

Organisations C6, C7, C9 and C13 have some level of budget allocation for gender mainstreaming, though it is often limited or included as part of broader diversity funding. C10 and C7 have funds dedicated to general diversity and inclusion but do not specify a breakdown solely for gender-related initiatives. C8 and C9 allocate resources for diversity training and workshops that support gender inclusivity, but these initiatives lack a dedicated and detailed gender-specific budget. While gender

mainstreaming is supported financially, the budgets are less specific and not consistently allocated to targeted programs for women's career advancement or leadership development. These organizations tend to integrate gender equity goals into general diversity spending without detailed tracking for gender-specific initiatives.

Organisations, C5, C11 and C12 do not have a specific budget allocated for gender mainstreaming. While some general training or diversity efforts may include elements related to gender equity, there are no distinct funds dedicated solely to advancing gender mainstreaming initiatives. C5 indicated that they rely on broader operational budgets that do not focus on gender-specific objectives. C11 and C12 confirmed that no specific budget exists for supporting gender mainstreaming activities, which may limit the scope and effectiveness of gender equity programs.

4.5.20 Programmes targeted at the development of women in the organisation

Organisations C1, C2.C3 and C4 have well-established programs aimed at fostering the development of women, including mentorship, leadership training, and career advancement workshops. They are structured programs, dedicated funding, and measurable outcomes focused on empowering women and supporting their career growth.

C3 offers targeted initiatives such as women's leadership programs and sponsorship for women in senior management. provides scholarships for women in STEM fields and runs mentorship programs that pair emerging female leaders with experienced executives. C4 was noted for its capacity-building programs specifically designed to elevate women into higher-level positions.

Organisations C9 and C13 have some programs aimed at the development of women, but they are either in early stages or limited in scope. For instance, C9 has workshops and training sessions that include women as part of broader diversity initiatives, but lacks comprehensive, long-term development programs. C13 supports women through professional development courses, though these are not always consistent across departments. C5 provides general training that includes women but does not have targeted women-centric initiatives.

Organisations C8, C10, C11 and C12 do not have targeted programs for the development of women or rely on generic training programs without specific emphasis on female empowerment. C8 and C10 noted that while they support overall employee development, there are no specific initiatives aimed at advancing women's careers. C11 similarly indicated a lack of gender-focused training or mentorship programs. One respondent from C12 mentioned, "While we have general training and development opportunities, there is no distinct program that specifically targets women."

4.5.20 Budget allocated for the capacity building of women managers, specifically for gender mainstreaming

Organisations, C1, C2, C3 and C4 have a dedicated budget breakdown specifically for gender mainstreaming. C2 allocates funds for gender equity initiatives, including leadership development for women and career pipeline programs, which are part of their annual diversity and inclusion budget. C4 dedicates resources to gender-focused scholarships for women in STEM fields, as well as mentorship and leadership programs. Similarly, C3 has a portion of its budget focused on advancing women in technical and management roles, with an emphasis on skill-building and leadership training. These organisations have structured budget allocations that are specifically earmarked for gender mainstreaming efforts.

Organizations C6, C7, C9, C13 have some level of budget allocation for gender mainstreaming, though it is often limited or included as part of broader diversity funding. C10 and C7 have funds dedicated to general diversity and inclusion, but do not specify a breakdown solely for gender-related initiatives. C8 and C9 allocate resources for diversity training and workshops that support gender inclusivity, but these initiatives lack a dedicated and detailed gender-specific budget. While gender mainstreaming is supported financially, the budgets are less specific and not consistently allocated to targeted programs for women's career advancement or leadership development. These organisations tend to integrate gender equity goals into general diversity spending without detailed tracking for gender-specific initiatives.

C5, C11 and C12 do not have a specific budget allocated for gender mainstreaming. While some general training or diversity efforts may include elements related to gender equity, there are no distinct funds dedicated solely to advancing gender mainstreaming initiatives. C5 indicated that they rely on broader operational budgets that do not focus on gender-specific objectives. C11 and C12 confirmed that no specific budget exists for supporting gender mainstreaming activities, which may limit the scope and effectiveness of gender equity programs.

4.5.21 Bursaries allocated for women's empowerment

Organisations C1, C2, C3 and C4 have dedicated bursary programs aimed at empowering women, particularly in fields where they are underrepresented. These companies have recognized the importance of educational support as a tool for gender equity and have invested in bursary schemes to help bridge the gender gap in their industries. C3 allocates bursaries to support women pursuing careers in engineering and technical fields as part of their diversity initiatives. C4 offers scholarships for women in STEM, promoting educational opportunities and career growth. C2 focuses on leadership development programmes that include scholarships for higher education and executive training.

C6, C7, C8, C9 and C10 provide general bursaries for employees but do not have specific allocations exclusively for women. C6 offers educational bursaries and scholarships that can be accessed by all employees, including women, but these are not targeted specifically at empowering women. C7 has been directed towards bursaries, reflecting an investment of R5 740 577 in course costs for 126 permanent employees. C10 Goldfields offers training bursaries of \$1,400 per employee, and these include support for women in various programs aimed at reskilling and career advancement.

C5, C11, C12 and C13 do not have bursary programs specifically dedicated to women's empowerment. C5 and C11 also confirmed the absence of gender-targeted educational support within their current frameworks.

4.5.22 Mentorship and coaching programmes focusing on women's empowerment

C1, C2, C3, C4 and C9 organizations structured mentorship and coaching programs focused on developing women leaders and empowering female employees. C1 also offers tailored coaching initiatives aimed at preparing women for leadership roles within the company, fostering both career growth and confidence. C2 offers a comprehensive women's mentoring network, pairing junior women with senior leaders to promote professional growth. C3 continues to identify high potential developing individuals in middle management roles through their Learning, Experiencing, Accelerating and Potential programme (LEAP), where they conduct integrated and accelerated talent development, career planning and mobility leadership, alongside regular coaching sessions to support their career development. C4 invests in leadership coaching for women and has specific mentorship tracks for women in technical roles.

C6, C7, C9, C13 have general mentorship and coaching programs accessible to all employees, including women, but lack a specific focus on women's empowerment. C13 offers mentorship opportunities as part of its general professional development programs, but these are not tailored specifically for women. C9 offers personalised mentorship and strategic support that aims to unlock their utmost capabilities, bolster leadership competencies, and foster both enhanced performance and greater job satisfaction. Delivered by accredited coaches, this exclusive coaching is available to the upper tiers of our leadership teams. C6 and C7 also provide access to coaching for employees but have no structured women-focused initiatives. These programs exist but do not specifically address the unique needs of women or focus on removing gender-related career barriers. While women can participate, the programs are broad and lack targeted support that addresses specific challenges women may face in the workplace.

C5, C8, C11, C12 do not have formal mentorship or coaching programs specifically focused on women's empowerment. C8 and C12 offer some informal mentorship opportunities within teams, but there is no structured program aimed at advancing women's careers. C5 confirmed the absence of targeted support for women's career growth through mentorship or coaching. The lack of structured mentorship and

coaching programs for women limits the support available to female employees seeking advancement. This absence can contribute to slower career progression for women and fewer opportunities for leadership development.

4.5.23 Learnership programmes that are specific to women's empowerment

C1, C2, C3 and C4 organizations have established women-specific learnership programmes, particularly in STEM, and allocate a budget for gender-specific awareness campaigns to support women's empowerment. C1 runs STEM-focused learnerships for women and allocates funding for campaigns that highlight gender equity, promote female leadership, and support diversity initiatives. C4 provides scholarships for women in STEM fields, and it has a budget for communication campaigns aimed at promoting women in tech and leadership roles.

Structured programmes aimed at building women's skills in high-demand fields, paired with dedicated funding for communication campaigns that raise awareness on gender issues and support women's visibility within the organization. C2 and C3 similarly have targeted budgets for learnerships and gender-focused initiatives, ensuring sustained support for women's advancement

C7, C9, and C10 offer general learnership programmes that are open to women but are not exclusive to them. They also allocate limited budgets for gender-specific communication, usually within broader diversity initiatives. C13 includes some gender-related topics in its diversity campaigns and training programs, though there is no dedicated budget exclusively for women's empowerment messaging. C9 supports STEM training for all employees and includes gender inclusivity within broader awareness campaigns, but these do not specifically target women. These organizations support gender inclusivity through general training programs and diversity budgets, but the lack of specific focus on women's learnerships or exclusive funding for women-centred communication limits their ability to drive targeted impact.

C5, C10 and C12 do not have dedicated learnership programs targeting women's empowerment nor a specific budget for gender-focused communication campaigns. C10 and C5 have general training programs and diversity statements, but there is no structured support for women's learnerships or gender-specific awareness campaigns. C12 confirmed that they do not have a targeted budget or specific

communication strategy focused on promoting women's roles or achievements within the organization.

4.5.24 Forum where the gender mainstreaming complaints are handled

C1, C2, C3 and C4 have established formal forums or networks where women can gather to discuss workplace concerns, share opportunities, and receive mentorship. C1 offers women's groups, focusing on career advancement discussions and peer support. C2 has a women's network that organizes regular meetings, providing a platform for women to discuss challenges and celebrate successes. C3 hosts women's leadership roundtables, which focus on professional growth, mentorship, and networking. C4 has an established women's forum that is integrated within its diversity initiatives, allowing female employees to voice concerns and contribute ideas for improving workplace inclusivity. These forums are well-structured, regularly scheduled, and supported by senior leadership, demonstrating a commitment to creating a supportive environment for women.

C6, C7, C8 and C10 offer some level of support for women's discussions but lack formal or consistent forums. C7 and C10 have informal groups where women can meet on an ad hoc basis, but these are not structured as official company-supported forums. C13 organizes occasional workshops that allow women to discuss workplace challenges, but there is no continuous platform or regularly scheduled forum.

C5, C9, C11, C12, do not have a formal outlet or forum for women to discuss workplace concerns or career opportunities. C5 and C12 mentioned that they have general employee meetings, but these do not address gender-specific issues or provide a space dedicated to women's discussions. C9 and C11 confirmed that they lack a structured forum for women's concerns, which can limit their ability to address gender-specific workplace challenges.

4.5.25 Organisation monitor strategic plans to ensure that they include gender mainstreaming

C1, C2, C3 and C4 have established frameworks to regularly monitor and evaluate strategic plans for the inclusion and progress of gender mainstreaming. These organizations have formalized monitoring processes, regular reviews, and integration

of gender equity indicators into organizational KPIs and strategic performance tracking. C1 tracks gender mainstreaming initiatives as part of its strategic planning reviews, ensuring alignment with its global diversity and inclusion goals. C2 integrates gender mainstreaming objectives into its corporate strategy, with periodic reviews by its Diversity and Inclusion Council to ensure alignment with organizational goals. C3 conducts quarterly reviews of its strategic plans, focusing on progress toward gender equity metrics, such as female representation in leadership and technical roles. C4 incorporates gender equity indicators into its strategy performance reviews, ensuring that all departmental plans align with broader gender mainstreaming objectives.

Gender mainstreaming is included in strategic plans, but the absence of structured monitoring mechanisms or consistent evaluations limits effectiveness. These organizations include gender mainstreaming in their strategic plans, but monitoring efforts are inconsistent or limited in scope, and incorporate gender diversity metrics in their overarching plans, but do not have a standardized monitoring process to track progress regularly. C9 includes gender goals in some strategic areas but relies on general diversity tracking rather than gender-specific monitoring. C11 reviews gender mainstreaming as part of its Employment Equity (EE) compliance checks but lacks a broader framework for strategic alignment across all departments. C13 acknowledges gender mainstreaming in its diversity strategy but does not systematically monitor or report progress within its strategic plans.

The absence of structured monitoring processes results in limited accountability, unclear progress tracking, and missed opportunities to integrate gender equity into broader organizational strategies. These organisations do not actively monitor strategic plans to ensure the inclusion of gender mainstreaming. C3 Indicated that while gender diversity is a recognized goal, there is no formal process to integrate or monitor gender mainstreaming within their strategic plans. C7 and C9 lack structured alignment between gender initiatives and organizational strategies, with progress dependent on informal efforts or individual departments. C11 relies on compliance-driven reporting for general equity, with no dedicated monitoring of gender-specific goals in its strategic plans.

4.5.26 Reporting timeously to the board and authorities' issues regarding their gender mainstreaming annual gender inclusive indicators

C1, C2, C3 and C4 consistently report on gender mainstreaming initiatives and gender-inclusive indicators to the board and relevant authorities on time, typically on a quarterly or annual basis. C2 aligns its reporting with internal diversity goals and external compliance standards, ensuring board members are regularly informed of gender equity progress. C3 provides structured updates to the board, integrating gender-related metrics into its broader diversity and inclusion reports, with data aligned to strategic objectives and compliance requirements. Regular, structured reporting that includes gender-specific indicators and mainstreaming progress, shared both internally and externally to ensure transparency and accountability. C4 also provides the board with detailed reports on gender initiatives as part of its corporate governance and sustainability reporting practices.

Organizations C5, C6, C7, C9 and C10 provide some reporting to the board or authorities on gender equality as per statutory reporting, but it is either not done regularly or lacks detail in specific gender-inclusive indicators. C8 and C10 provide gender diversity updates as part of their overall performance reviews, but may not focus on specific gender mainstreaming indicators. C5 reports gender data in compliance with employment equity guidelines but does not consistently include detailed gender mainstreaming progress in board presentations.

C5, C8, C9 and C13 organizations do not have a structured reporting process to the board or authorities specifically for gender mainstreaming indicators. While general diversity of workforce reports may be shared, there is no formal requirement or scheduled process to report on gender-specific indicators.

4.5.27 Reporting performance targets with regard to gender mainstreaming in annual report

C1, C2, C3 and C4 use annual reports as tools for transparency and accountability, providing stakeholders with clear updates on gender mainstreaming targets and achievements. These organisations explicitly include gender mainstreaming performance targets and progress updates in their annual reports. C1 highlights

gender equity goals, progress toward increasing female representation in leadership, and key diversity initiatives as part of its sustainability and corporate responsibility sections. C2 provides detailed metrics on gender diversity in its annual report, including workforce gender composition, leadership representation, and specific initiatives aimed at improving gender equity. C4 includes gender equity KPIs in its integrated report, tracking progress against set targets, such as achieving parity in management roles and advancing women in the STEM field.

Organizations C7 and C9 report global and regional gender statistics, outlining the alignment of their performance with diversity and inclusion goals. C9 references diversity initiatives in its annual report but does not isolate specific gender mainstreaming performance targets. C8 provides high-level statistics on workforce gender composition but lacks detailed tracking or progress updates on gender equity goals. C8 and C9 include general diversity goals but do not consistently report on gender-specific KPIs or progress toward mainstreaming targets.

Organizations C9 and C11 confirmed that diversity and inclusion are addressed informally within operational discussions but are not included as measurable outcomes. C11 mentions gender equity within its Employment Equity compliance reporting but does not include a detailed section on gender mainstreaming in annual reporting. C8 lack dedicated sections for gender equity in their reports, with no mention of progress toward gender mainstreaming goals.

4.6 Gender mainstreaming themes

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), thematic analysis is a method used to detect themes or the most important perspectives in unstructured qualitative data. Thematic analysis of data encompasses relationship recognition within qualitative data and the emerging themes become the categories for qualitative analysis. Ramparsad,(2019) clarified that thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be generally applied through a collection of methodologies and research questions.

Table 4.2: Gender Mainstreaming Indicators

	Common themes	Question
Strategic Intent	Long-term vision and strategic planning for gender mainstreaming.	Is there a long-term vision and strategic planning for gender mainstreaming? If yes, provide evidence.
	Integration of gender mainstreaming into leadership performance agreements.	Is gender mainstreaming included in the performance agreement of senior leadership?
		Is the organisation clear on the key performance indicators for gender mainstreaming?
Financial Commitment	Budget allocation	Is there a budget allocated for the capacity building of women managers, specifically for gender mainstreaming?
	Budget Breakdown	What is the overall budget breakdown allocated for gender mainstreaming, e.g. gender equity, career pipeline, coaching and mentoring, etc.?
	Financial Commitment	Do you have an overall budget allocation for gender mainstreaming?
	Budget allocation for gender-specific programs, campaigns, and capacity building.	Is gender mainstreaming communicated clearly to the respective departments as and when procuring occurs (female-, black, coloured, Indian and disabled: PDI)?
		Is there an approach for the regulation of gender parity in the organisation? If there is, how has it been addressed?
	Financial Commitment	Is there a budget allocated for activities such as women-specific awareness campaigns for the organisation (budget allocated for gender-specific communication)?
	Budget	Are there bursaries allocated for women's empowerment?
Structural Frameworks	Spaces	Is gender mainstreaming communicated clearly in the EE Plan and is it continuously monitored by the EE committee?
	Forums and spaces for women's engagement and support.	Is there a representative from the gender mainstreaming manifesto groupings in the EE consultative forum?
	Structure	As per the legislative and administrative frameworks, are there structures such as gender mainstreaming executive committees that champion/ sponsor gender mainstreaming?
	Representation	Are there women in leadership groups where issues related to gender mainstreaming are tabled?
	Spaces	Is there an outlet/forum where women meet to discuss areas of concern and opportunities in the workplace (manifesto)?
	Outlet	Is there a forum where the gender mainstreaming complaints are handled (data collection/hotline)?
Gender-Specific Initiatives	Programme	Are there any programmes targeted at the development of women in the organisation?
	programme	Does the organisation have mentorship and coaching programmes focusing on women's empowerment?
	programme	Are the learnership programmes (e.g. STEM) that are specific to women's empowerment?
Gender Governance	Policies promoting inclusivity and work-life balance.	Gender mainstreaming is communicated in the organisational policies, e.g. human resources policies, recruitment policy, training policies, employee value proposition. Is there a policy that highlights inclusivity and is it accommodative of women in creating a work-life balance?
	Policy	Are there workplace benefits conscious of gender inclusion? For example, flexi working hours, flexi leave.
	Policy	Does the organisation monitor strategic plans to ensure that they include gender mainstreaming?
	reports	Is there a standing report, quarterly and annually, that reflects gender recruitment status?
	reports	Does the organisation report timeously to the board and authorities' issues regarding their gender mainstreaming annual gender inclusive indicators?
	reports	Does the organisation report its performance targets with regard to gender mainstreaming in its annual report?

Table 2 Gender Mainstreaming Themes

4.7. Summary of the qualitative research and insights

Results showed significant sectoral and organizational variations. Organizations with formalized gender frameworks are able to demonstrate higher employee awareness of inclusion policies (65%) than those without structured approaches (35%). These

insights provided a measurable perspective on gender mainstreaming practices across diverse organizational contexts. Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews with additional sources including annual reports, policies, Employment Equity (EE) plans, and diversity reports. Key focus areas were leadership accountability, policy implementation, and capacity-building initiatives for women. Participants shared experiences highlighting both progress and challenges. For instance, organizations like C1 and C3 showcased structured frameworks for gender equity, while C6, C7, and C8 cited resource limitations and inconsistent implementation as barriers. Recurring themes and patterns were identified through systematic coding and analysis.

4.8 Discussion of key themes in gender mainstreaming

This response explores the key themes of Strategic Intent, Financial Commitment, Structural Frameworks, Gender-Specific Initiatives; Gender Governance and Gender Mainstreaming Reporting, interpreting the findings from the sources within the context of the questionnaire but also responding to the research objectives. It highlights organizational gaps, successes, and opportunities for improvement in gender mainstreaming efforts across various South African corporations.

4.8.1 Strategic Intent (Leadership Accountability and Vision for Gender Mainstreaming)

The first objective of the study was to determine if *the strategic intent* of the selected South African companies across different sectors and size support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming. According to Muller et al (2020), distinctly articulated long-term vision and strategic plan for gender mainstreaming is essential to guide actions and ensure sustained progress. Muller et al (2020) emphasizes the importance of setting out objectives, timelines, and specific areas of focus to effectively implement gender mainstreaming.

Organizations like C1, C2, C3, and C4 demonstrate a strong strategic intent toward gender mainstreaming. They have established long-term visions and strategic plans, often aligned with international standards like the UN SDGs and industry related statutory obligations. These organizations also incorporate gender mainstreaming into

senior leadership performance agreements, holding executives accountable for diversity and inclusion targets. Gender mainstreaming includes understanding the importance; therefore, education and awareness is important ILO(2019). Mehra and Gupta (2006) highlight the importance of educating leaders on gender mainstreaming as it is crucial to foster a shared understanding and promote active participation in the process.

Organizations C1 and C2 have demonstrated the importance of providing training seminars for top-level management to equip them with the knowledge and tools to effectively mainstream gender perspectives into their respective fields. Organizations like C1, C2, C3, and C4 exhibit a strong strategic intent toward gender mainstreaming. They have established long-term visions and strategic plans, often aligned with international standards like the UN SDGs. These organizations also incorporate gender mainstreaming into senior leadership performance agreements, holding executives accountable for diversity and inclusion targets.

Organisations C6, C7, C10, C12 and C13 have recently onboarded their executives including the board of directors about the Sustainable Development Goals(SDG). That is evident in the intention to adopt the SDG as drivers of economic sustainable development strategies. Resulting in the partially formalized plans that are not fully integrated across all business areas, limiting their impact. C5 and C9 lack a formal long-term vision or strategic plan specifically dedicated to gender mainstreaming, hindering their ability to track progress and allocate resources effectively.

4.8.2 Financial Commitment (Budgeting for Gender-Specific Initiatives)

The second objective of the study was to determine if the *financial commitment* of the selected South African companies across different sectors and sizes support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming. Nguyen,et,al,(2021) stresses the need for adequate financial and human resources dedicated to gender mainstreaming efforts which includes allocating funds for specific gender parity, gender equality, initiatives, training programs, and the development of necessary tools and mechanisms.

Organizations like C1, C2, C3, and C4 demonstrate significant financial commitment by allocating dedicated budgets for gender mainstreaming initiatives. These budgets support programs like leadership development, mentorship for women and gender parity contributing to tangible progress in closing the gender gap.

Organizations C5, C11 and C12 lack specific budgets for gender mainstreaming, limiting their capacity to invest in targeted programs. C6, C7, C8, C9 and C13 include gender-related initiatives within broader diversity funding, which may dilute the focus and impact of these programs.

4.8.3 Gender Mainstreaming Governance Policy and Guidelines

Another objective of the study was to determine if *policies and reports* of the selected South African companies across different sectors and size support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming. According to Ely and Thomas (2020), effective gender governance relies on the presence of a comprehensive gender mainstreaming framework or guidelines that promote equity and inclusivity. DiMaggio and Powell (2020) indicates that the gender mainstreaming policies should emphasise accountability mechanisms to ensure compliance with organizational and legislative standards but also outline measurable goals for gender equity in leadership, recruitment, gender capacity building and gender monitoring.

C2 and C3 have detailed gender equity guidelines and the gender main streaming policy but also embedded in the HR policies, ensuring inclusivity in recruitment and retention strategies. C4 incorporates gender equity targets into its broader diversity and inclusion policies ensuring that progress is reviewed.

Nguyen, et al. (2021) states that the gender mainstreaming framework serves as a founding roadmap about the organizational intentions to drive gender mainstreaming initiatives. The initiatives are grounded in the gender policies that provide for flexible working arrangements, such as remote work or adaptable hours, parental leave policies that accommodate both genders but also providing additional support for caregiving responsibilities but also being able to provide the gender-sensitive facilities, such as nursing rooms and wellness spaces.

C1, C2, C3, and C4 have effectively integrated gender mainstreaming principles into various policies, including human resources, recruitment, training, and employee value propositions. These policies prioritize female representation, support work-life balance through flexible work arrangements, and foster an inclusive workplace culture. C1, C2, C3 and C4, offers flexible work schedules and wellness programs tailored to the needs of women in male-dominated industries, provides childcare subsidies and remote working options to support work-life balance.

C5, C8, C11, C12, and C13 lack comprehensive integration of gender mainstreaming in all policy areas, particularly training and employee value propositions. Organizations C6, C8 and C10 have policies that address gender equity but do not consistently apply them across all departments or functions.

Gender mainstreaming transparent monitoring and reporting mechanisms are essential for tracking the effectiveness of gender governance initiatives. According to Nguyen, et al. (2021) organisations that have a gender mainstreaming framework should have regular audits to assess compliance with gender equity goals. This can be done via quarterly or annual reports that detail progress in recruitment, retention, and leadership representation metrics, but also through stakeholder reviews to ensure alignment with corporate social responsibility goals and legislative requirements.

Organizations like C1, C2, C3, and C4 have implemented robust reporting mechanisms, providing timely updates on gender mainstreaming indicators to the board and relevant authorities. These reports track progress, enhance transparency, and promote accountability, contributing to consistent advancements in gender equity. C4 uses a centralized diversity dashboard to track recruitment and retention metrics, presenting these results to senior leadership for action.

4.8.4 Structural Frameworks (Forums Supporting Women's Engagement)

Another objective of the study was to determine if *structural frameworks* of the selected South African companies across different sectors and size support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming. Muller, et al. (2020) recognize the important role of specialized gender equality units or machineries within government structures. These units serve as centres of expertise, providing knowledge, resources, and support to

other departments in mainstreaming gender perspectives into their policies and programs.

C1, C2, C3, and C4 have implemented strong structural frameworks to support women's engagement, including dedicated committees, councils, and executive sponsors for gender mainstreaming. These structures provide strategic oversight, advocate for gender initiatives, and ensure alignment with legislative frameworks, driving meaningful progress. Establishing formal networks and forums specifically for women's engagement and participation is crucial for amplifying their voices, sharing experiences, and fostering a sense of community, added Ely and Thomas (2020). These platforms provide valuable spaces for women to connect, discuss concerns, and collectively advocate for change within their organizations, emphasized RRRR.

Other organizations have partially formalised structures for C6, C7, C8, C10 and C12 that lack consistency or dedicated leadership, limiting their effectiveness as per legislative requirements through the EE Act. Organisations like C5, C9, and C11 lack formal structures dedicated to championing gender mainstreaming, hindering strategic focus and accountability.

4.8.5 Gender-Specific Initiatives

Another objective of the study was to determine if the *gender specific development programmes* of the selected South African companies across different sectors and size support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming. The theme of Gender-Specific Initiatives focuses on targeted programs such as mentorship, coaching, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) learnership initiatives designed to address gender disparities and empower women in the workplace. Mentorship and coaching programs are widely recognized as essential tools for advancing women's careers, particularly in leadership roles, added Nguyen, et al (2021).

Organisations C1, C2 and C3 have established formal mentorship and coaching initiatives aimed at equipping women with the skills and confidence needed to excel. C2 operates a structured mentorship program that pairs junior female employees with

senior leaders, fostering career development and networking opportunities. Coaching sessions are also tailored to address challenges such as leadership readiness and work-life balance. C3 Focuses on preparing women for executive roles through coaching initiatives that develop strategic thinking, negotiation skills, and confidence in decision-making. C4 Provides mentorship and coaching programs targeted at women in technical and operational roles, emphasizing leadership and industry-specific competencies. C10, C12, C1 and C3 lack formalised mentorship or coaching programs, relying instead on informal support networks that often fail to reach all women employees.

4.8.6 STEM learnerships programmes for women

According to Nguyen, et al. (2021), lack of STEM training for women has resulted in the barriers for participation. STEM learnerships programs are essential for reducing gender disparities in technical fields and promoting diversity in innovation-driven industries. STEM learnerships programs are particularly important in industries where women are underrepresented as it broadens the talent pool and enhances organizational competitiveness, according to Ely and Thomas (2020).

Companies like C1, C2, C3 and C4 have implemented initiatives to attract, train, and retain women in STEM fields, helping to bridge gender gaps in high-demand technical roles. C3 offers comprehensive STEM-focused learnerships that include technical training, internships, and mentorship opportunities for women in engineering and technology. C4 runs a Women in Technology initiative that provides scholarships, internships, and leadership development for women in ICT (Information and Communications Technology) C2 Invests in apprenticeships and skill-building workshops that prepare women for success in scientific and engineering roles.

Organisations C6, C7, C9, C8 and C13 have skills development budget allocation that is not necessarily linked to the gender mainstreaming budget that is allocated to employees at large. C6 has the budget allocated or allocated to all employees, C8 has an internal online training programme that is within their strategy to automate and digitalise processes. C5, C11 and C12 reported a lack of dedicated STEM programs for women, often citing resource constraints or competing priorities as barriers to implementation.

4.9 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the findings and discussed them in relation to the research objectives and existing literature. Key themes identified through thematic analysis included strategic intent, financial commitment, gender mainstream governance, and gender-specific initiatives. Quantitative data supported the qualitative findings, providing a holistic understanding of gender mainstreaming practices in corporate South Africa. The discussion highlighted areas of progress and gaps, offering insights into the effectiveness of current policies and practice.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter overview

This chapter summarises the key findings of the research, linking them to the study's objectives and research questions. It provides actionable recommendations for enhancing gender mainstreaming in corporate South Africa, addressing gaps in policies and practices. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research and reflects on the broader implications of the study for gender equity and inclusion in the workplace.

5.2 Reiteration of the study's objectives and research questions

The interpretation of findings demonstrates that while progress has been made in advancing gender inclusivity within South African corporations, there remain significant gaps. The validation of key themes such as strategic intent, financial commitment, and governance underscores their importance in driving meaningful change. The study explored the extent of gender inclusivity in corporate policies and practices by analysing how South African organizations integrate gender equity into their frameworks. Findings indicate significant disparities across sectors and organisational sizes. It will be critical to address sectoral disparities and foster a culture of accountability and inclusivity to achieve sustainable gender equity. This study not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge but also provides a foundation for actionable recommendations and further research in this vital area

5.3 Summary of key findings

The primary objective of this study was to determine the extent of gender inclusivity across various sectors and organizational sizes in South Africa. The research sought to examine how corporations integrate gender equity into their practices and whether these efforts align with legislative and ethical standards. The findings revealed significant disparities in gender inclusivity based on organisational size and sector. For example, larger corporations such as C2 and C4 demonstrated comprehensive gender mainstreaming frameworks, while smaller organizations faced challenges in resources

and implementation (ILO, 2019). This underscores the need for targeted strategies tailored to the unique circumstances of different sectors and organisational scales.

5.3.1 Research Objective one: Strategic intent

The research objective explores how the strategic intent of selected South African companies across different sectors and sizes reflects gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming practices. The findings indicate that the strategic intent of selected South African companies varies significantly across different sectors and organizational sizes in terms of supporting gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming. Large, JSE-listed corporations, particularly in the financial, telecommunications, and consumer goods sectors, demonstrate a stronger commitment to gender inclusivity. Companies such as C4, C2, and C3 have integrated gender mainstreaming into their corporate strategies, with measurable targets for female representation in leadership, gender-sensitive policies, and dedicated budgets for diversity initiatives. These organizations align their gender equity strategies with both national frameworks, such as the Employment Equity Act, and global commitments like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (World Economic Forum, 2021).

However, the study also revealed that smaller organizations and companies in traditionally male-dominated industries, such as mining and engineering, show less alignment between strategic intent and gender mainstreaming practices. While some organizations have gender equity policies in place, these often lack clear implementation frameworks, monitoring mechanisms, or financial support for meaningful change (ILO, 2019). Many SMEs and non-listed companies face resource constraints, making it difficult to prioritize gender mainstreaming as part of their broader corporate objectives. In such cases, gender inclusivity is often treated as a compliance requirement rather than a core strategic priority, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent implementation across different business units.

The study found that while strategic intent exists in some form across most companies, the level of leadership commitment and accountability plays a crucial role in determining success. Organizations that embed gender equity goals into leadership

performance agreements and corporate scorecards tend to exhibit stronger progress in mainstreaming gender inclusivity (Nguyen et al., 2021). In contrast, companies where leadership buy-in is weak often struggle to translate policy into practice. This highlights the need for organizations, regardless of sector or size, to institutionalize gender mainstreaming as a fundamental part of their strategic vision rather than a peripheral initiative. Strengthening leadership accountability, increasing financial commitment, and integrating gender equity into long-term business objectives are critical steps for ensuring sustainable progress in corporate gender mainstreaming, emphasized Ely and Thomas (2020).

5.3.2 Research objective two: financial commitment

The research objection two examines the extent to which financial commitments within selected South African companies contribute to advancing gender mainstreaming objectives. The findings reveal that the extent to which policies and reports support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming varies across South African companies, depending on sector and organizational size. Large, JSE-listed corporations, particularly in the financial services, telecommunications, and consumer goods industries, have well-documented policies that explicitly promote gender equity. Companies such as C1, C2, C3, and C4 publish annual sustainability and employment equity reports detailing their progress in gender representation, leadership development programs for women, and inclusive workplace policies.

The study revealed a stark contrast between JSE-listed companies and locally listed companies in the adoption and implementation of gender-inclusive indicators. JSE-listed companies, such as C1, C2, C3 and C4, are more likely to integrate gender equity into their corporate governance frameworks. These organizations commonly set measurable recruitment targets for female representation, especially in leadership roles, and align their practices with global reporting standards such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). They also regularly publish detailed diversity and inclusion metrics in their annual sustainability reports, reflecting a higher level of transparency and accountability (World Economic Forum, 2021). In contrast in South Africa businesses are governed by The Constitution Act, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), The Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act 55 of 1998) 81, The Labour Relations Act, 1995

(Act 66 of 1995), The Basic Conditions of Employment, 1997 (Act 75 of 1997), The Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998) which often lack in the locally-listed formalised gender equity frameworks, with efforts being more ad hoc and less structured due to limited resources. .

Conversely, smaller companies and those operating in male-dominated industries, such as mining, engineering, and construction, often lack comprehensive policies or transparent reporting on gender mainstreaming efforts. While some organizations comply with basic employment equity requirements, their reports often provide limited detail on the implementation and outcomes of gender equity initiatives (ILO, 2019). Many of these companies have policies in place but lack clear accountability mechanisms or dedicated financial investment in gender mainstreaming. Additionally, non-listed companies are less likely to publish gender-specific reports, which affects transparency and makes it difficult to assess their commitment to inclusivity. These findings highlight the need for stronger policy enforcement, improved reporting mechanisms, and increased leadership accountability to ensure that gender mainstreaming is embedded across all sectors, regardless of company size (Nguyen et al., 2021).

5.3.3 Research question three: organizational structural frameworks

The research objective assesses the role of organizational structural frameworks in supporting gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming initiatives. The findings indicate that the structural frameworks of selected South African companies vary significantly in their support for gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming. Large, JSE-listed corporations, particularly in sectors such as telecommunications, finance, and consumer goods, have well-established gender mainstreaming structures. Companies such as C1, C2, C3, and C4 have formalized Gender Equity Committees, Diversity and Inclusion Boards, and Employment Equity (EE) Committees that oversee gender-focused policies and initiatives. These structures ensure that gender inclusivity is embedded in decision-making processes, recruitment strategies, and leadership development programs. Additionally, these companies integrate gender equity into their corporate governance frameworks, with direct reporting to executive leadership teams or board-level committees, ensuring accountability and progress monitoring (World Economic Forum, 2021).

In contrast, smaller companies and those in traditionally male-dominated industries such as mining, engineering, and logistics often lack dedicated structural frameworks to support gender mainstreaming. While some organizations comply with employment equity regulations, they frequently do so without formalized structures to drive gender inclusivity initiatives (ILO, 2019). Many non-listed companies rely on generic Human Resources (HR) departments to address gender equity concerns rather than having specialized committees or frameworks focused on strategic gender transformation. As a result, gender mainstreaming efforts in these organizations are often inconsistent, reactive, or underfunded. This highlights the need for broader institutionalization of gender equity frameworks across all sectors and company sizes highlighted by Ely & Thomas (2020) but also ensuring that gender inclusivity is not only a policy goal but an integral part of corporate governance and operational strategies as reflected by Nguyen et al., (2021).

5.3.4 Research objective four: What role do gender-specific development programs play in promoting gender inclusivity within these companies

The findings indicate that the level of financial commitment to gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming varies widely among South African companies, depending on their sector and organizational size. Large, JSE-listed corporations, particularly in industries such as telecommunications, financial services, and consumer goods, demonstrate a stronger financial commitment to gender equity initiatives. Companies like C1, C3, C2 and C4 allocate specific budgets for mentorship programs, leadership development for women, STEM learnerships, and diversity training. These organizations also invest in workplace infrastructure that supports inclusivity, such as childcare facilities, parental leave benefits, and flexible work arrangements. Additionally, financial resources are directed towards gender equity audits and pay gap analyses, ensuring that compensation policies align with inclusion objectives (World Economic Forum, 2021).

In contrast, smaller companies and those operating in traditionally male-dominated sectors, such as mining, construction, and engineering, tend to show lower levels of financial investment in gender mainstreaming. Many of these organizations comply with basic Employment Equity (EE) Act requirements but do not allocate dedicated funds for gender-specific programs, often citing budget constraints as a key barrier

(ILO, 2019). While some companies provide financial support for general diversity initiatives, they lack targeted investment in advancing women in leadership, gender-sensitive training, or work-life balance programs. The findings suggest that without sustained financial commitment, gender mainstreaming efforts in these organizations remain fragmented and largely symbolic. Strengthening financial accountability and integrating gender equity into corporate budgets is essential to ensure that gender mainstreaming moves beyond compliance into meaningful, long-term transformation (Ely & Thomas., 2020).

5.3.5 Research question five: organisational policies and formal reports

The research objective is to analyze how organizational policies and formal reports reflect and support gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming. The findings reveal that gender-specific development programs play a crucial role in supporting gender inclusivity through gender mainstreaming, but their implementation varies across South African companies depending on sector and organizational size. Large, JSE-listed corporations, particularly in industries such as telecommunications, finance, and consumer goods, have well-structured programs designed to empower women through mentorship, leadership training, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) initiatives. Companies like C4, C2, and C3 invest in women-focused leadership pipelines, coaching programs, and networking platforms that enable female employees to access senior roles and decision-making positions. These organizations also participate in global gender development initiatives, aligning their efforts with international best practices such as UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which promotes gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Conversely, many smaller companies and those in traditionally male-dominated sectors, such as mining, construction, and logistics, lack structured gender-specific development programs. While some organizations comply with Employment Equity (EE) requirements, their initiatives tend to be ad hoc and lack sustained investment (ILO, 2019). In many cases, these companies rely on generic professional development programs rather than tailored initiatives that address the unique barriers women face in career progression. As a result, gender mainstreaming efforts in these organizations remain limited in scope and impact. The findings highlight the need for broader adoption of gender-specific training and leadership development programs,

particularly in sectors where women remain underrepresented. Providing structured, well-funded career development initiatives for women is essential for ensuring long-term gender inclusivity in South African corporations (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Organizations like C3 and C4, which are listed on the JSE, invest heavily in structured mentorship programs aimed at preparing women for leadership roles. These programs include coaching, skills development workshops, and networking opportunities designed to address systemic barriers to advancement. Non-listed companies, on the other hand, often struggle to implement such initiatives due to financial and operational constraints, despite recognizing their potential benefits. This disparity suggests that JSE-listed companies benefit from external pressures to meet diversity benchmarks, while non-listed companies may require additional support or incentives to adopt similar practices (Nguyen et al., 2021).

5.4 Alignment with national and global gender equity objectives

Alignment with national and global gender equity objectives also has broader societal implications. Organisations that prioritize gender mainstreaming contribute to reducing systemic inequalities and fostering inclusive economies. This alignment drives innovation by leveraging diverse perspectives and enhances societal trust in corporate entities. The findings suggest that sectoral collaborations, especially in lagging industries, such as mining and engineering, are critical for achieving these objectives. By adopting tailored strategies informed by both national policies and global standards, South African corporations can play a pivotal role in advancing gender equity while building a robust and inclusive economy (ILO, 2019).

On a global scale, the study reinforces the importance of aligning corporate gender mainstreaming practices with frameworks like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) five, which advocates for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Leading organisations such as C3 exemplify this alignment through robust policies that prioritize female representation in leadership, pay equity, and gender-specific development programs. These efforts position South African corporations as contributors to global gender equity targets, showcasing their commitment to fostering inclusive and sustainable business practices (World Economic Forum, 2021). Furthermore, the study underscores that adopting global best

practices, such as transparent reporting and accountability measures, enhances organizational reputations, and attracts international partnerships, creating a competitive advantage in the global market.

Gender mainstreaming is closely aligned with South Africa's national policy frameworks, particularly the Employment Equity Act (EEA) and the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030. Both emphasize diversity and inclusion as critical components of economic transformation and sustainable growth. The findings of this study highlight how organizations that integrate gender equity into their strategic frameworks contribute significantly to these national objectives. For example, companies like C3 align their gender mainstreaming efforts with EEA guidelines, ensuring compliance while fostering inclusive environments that enhance workforce diversity and productivity. By embedding gender equity into corporate governance and operational strategies, these organizations not only meet regulatory requirements but also advance national transformation goals (South African Department of Labour, 2022).

5.5 Gender mainstreaming implications for corporate South Africa

The findings of this study highlight the transformative potential of gender mainstreaming in corporate South Africa, emphasizing its significance as a strategic priority. Leadership accountability emerged as a critical driver of progress, with organizations such as C3 and C4 leading the way by embedding gender equity goals into leadership performance metrics. This approach aligns inclusivity with business objectives, ensuring consistent focus and measurable outcomes (Ely & Thomas, 2020). Similarly, financial commitment to gender equality was found to be a key enabler, with investments in mentorship programs, STEM learnerships, and gender-awareness campaigns fostering inclusivity and building robust talent pipelines in underrepresented fields (Nguyen et al., 2021). Companies like C3 and C4 have institutionalized robust monitoring frameworks, like to track progress, and identify areas for improvement, enhancing both internal accountability and external stakeholder trust (Kanter, 1977).

Companies that promote inclusive work environments through gender-sensitive policies, such as flexible working arrangements and parental leave, report higher

employee satisfaction and retention rates, particularly among women (ILO, 2019). However, findings also reveal persistent challenges related to unconscious bias, particularly in male-dominated industries such as mining. Sustained investment in diversity and inclusion training is required to address these biases requires to challenge stereotypes and cultivate a culture of mutual respect (Muller et al., 2020). Furthermore, empowering women through increased representation in leadership roles remains pivotal according to Maleka and Rankhumise (2014). As demonstrated by the success of organizations like C3, which prioritise mentorship and leadership pipelines for women, catalysing cultural shifts and innovation (World Economic Forum, 2021).

The study also underscores the importance of policy development in advancing gender mainstreaming. Comprehensive policies, as implemented by leading organizations, provide a roadmap for embedding equity into corporate governance structures (Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020). Companies that align the internal policies with national legislation, such as the Employment Equity Act and global aspirations in the Sustainable Development Goals but also integrate clear gender equity metrics into performance reviews and sustainability reporting, ensure consistency and accountability. In addition, it is important to address sector-specific disparities is vital, as industries like telecommunications and finance demonstrate significant progress, while mining and agriculture lag behind due to entrenched stereotypes and operational barriers (ILO, 2019). Tailored policy development for lagging sectors can drive progress and ensure all industries contribute meaningfully to national equity goals.

In conclusion, the findings imply that gender mainstreaming is not merely a compliance exercise but a strategic imperative that influences corporate practices, workplace culture, and policy development. South African corporations have the opportunity to foster a more inclusive economy by aligning with national and global gender equity objectives, thus enhancing their competitiveness and social impact. A holistic approach that integrates gender equity into strategic priorities, operational frameworks, and cultural transformation initiatives is essential for achieving meaningful and sustainable progress.

5.6 Institutional implication

The findings of this study emphasise the need to enhance gender mainstreaming frameworks in South African corporations. Comprehensive and well-defined policies provide the foundation for consistent and effective implementation of gender equity initiatives (Boikanyo,2017). Organisations like C1 and C4 serve as examples by integrating a gender mainstreaming framework into their strategic objectives and developing policies that address recruitment, retention, and leadership development for women (World Economic Forum, 2021). To replicate such successes, corporations must adopt global best practices (World Economic Forum, 2021) but also align their policies with national legislation such as the Employment Equity Act. These frameworks incorporate approaches for addressing workplace gender barriers, ensuring that policies translate into tangible outcomes (ILO, 2019).

Increasing financial commitment to gender equity initiatives is critical for addressing systemic barriers and fostering a culture of inclusion (Nguyen et al., 2021). Companies like C2 and C1 have demonstrated the impact of allocating dedicated budgets to mentorship programs, STEM learnerships, and gender-awareness campaigns. Such investments not only strengthen organizational performance by leveraging diverse talent but also empower women. Organizations must prioritize gender equity in their budgeting processes to scale the efforts, ensuring that financial resources are consistently directed toward initiatives that advance women's career progression and leadership representation (Nguyen et al., 2021). In addition to direct investments, Bangani (2019) emphasises that companies should explore partnerships and sponsorships that amplify the reach and impact of their gender equity programs socially.

Embedding accountability in leadership performance agreements and enhancing monitoring and reporting mechanisms are essential for ensuring sustained progress in gender mainstreaming (Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad,2020) The study revealed that organizations with leadership accountability measures, such as gender equity KPIs in leadership scorecards, demonstrate greater alignment with gender equity objectives (Ely & Thomas, 2020). Monitoring frameworks, as implemented by companies like C1, C2, C3 and C4, allow organizations to identify gaps, track

progress, and refine strategies over time. To drive impactful change, corporations must institutionalise these processes, incorporating transparent reporting practices and regular reviews (Hughes, 2018). Additionally, publishing gender equity metrics in sustainability or annual reports can enhance stakeholder trust and reinforce organisational commitment to inclusivity (South African Department of Labour, 2022).

5.7 Recommendations for future research

An intersectional analysis of gender with other diversity dimensions, such as race, disability, age, and socioeconomic status, is another critical area for future research. South Africa's complex socio-political history has resulted in overlapping systems of inequality, making it essential to examine how these factors interact with gender in the workplace (Nguyen *et al.*, 2021). For example, women from marginalized racial groups or with disabilities may face heightened challenges in accessing leadership roles or equitable opportunities. Addressing these intersectional dynamics would enable organizations to develop more inclusive strategies that cater to the diverse needs of their workforce. Such studies would also align with global frameworks like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which emphasise leaving no one behind in the pursuit of equity and inclusion (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Standardizing quantitative metrics for gender-related data is essential to address inconsistencies in how organisations measure and report gender equity initiatives. The lack of standardized indicators limits the ability to perform robust quantitative analyses and compare progress across sectors or organizations (ILO, 2019). Establishing a common framework of metrics—such as gender pay gaps, female representation in leadership, and participation in STEM initiatives—would provide a reliable foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming efforts. Standardized metrics would also enable organizations to benchmark their progress against industry norms or national targets, fostering accountability and transparency. For instance, such frameworks could align with international standards, like those proposed by the Global Reporting Initiative, to position South African companies as leaders in gender equity reporting (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Future research should also prioritize employee perspectives to bridge the gap between organizational policies and workplace realities. While many studies focus on

top-down strategies for gender mainstreaming, understanding the lived experiences of employees offers valuable insights into the actual effectiveness of these initiatives (Ely & Thomas, 2020).

5.8 Limitations of the study

One of the key limitations of this study is the narrow focus on large corporations and public sector organisations, which may not fully capture the dynamics of gender mainstreaming in smaller entities or the informal sector. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which form a significant part of the South African economy, often operate under resource constraints and informal structures, making their approaches to gender mainstreaming fundamentally different. As a result, the findings may not be generalised across all organisational types, necessitating future research that includes SMEs and informal businesses to provide a more comprehensive view of gender equity practices in South Africa.

Another limitation lies in the reliance on self-reported data from interviews and organizational surveys, which introduces the risk of response bias. Organisations may overstate their progress in gender mainstreaming or omit significant challenges to project a favourable image. This reliance on self-reported information can lead to gaps in understanding the actual implementation of gender equity policies. Future studies should consider incorporating independent evaluations, such as third-party audits of gender-related initiatives or anonymous employee surveys, to validate self-reported data and provide a more balanced perspective.

Lastly, the cross-sectional nature of the study provides only a snapshot of gender mainstreaming practices at a single point in time, limiting the ability to assess the long-term effectiveness of initiatives. Gender mainstreaming is an evolving process influenced by changing societal norms, legislative frameworks, and organizational priorities. Without longitudinal data, it is challenging to determine whether the observed efforts result in sustained progress. Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to track changes over time, offering deeper insights into the durability and adaptability of gender equity initiatives within South African organizations.

5.9 Contribution to the field

This study significantly advances the understanding of gender equity and inclusion by providing insights into the practical application of gender mainstreaming within South African corporations. It highlights how companies across various sectors address systemic gender inequities and identifies the critical enablers and barriers to achieving workplace inclusivity. The validation of key themes such as strategic intent, financial commitment, and governance adds depth to existing literature while offering a nuanced perspective on the interplay between policy, culture, and leadership accountability. By focusing on sectoral and organizational variations, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how gender mainstreaming efforts can be tailored to meet specific challenges, filling an important gap in the field.

The practical value of these findings for organisations lies in their ability to guide strategic and operational improvements in gender equity initiatives. For instance, actionable insights such as embedding gender equity goals into leadership performance metrics, allocating resources for mentorship programs, and fostering inclusive workplace cultures provide organizations with a roadmap for meaningful progress. Policymakers also stand to benefit from the study's recommendations, which emphasise aligning corporate efforts with legislative frameworks like the Employment Equity Act, King Code. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of incorporating sector-specific policies to address disparities in industries where gender inclusion remains limited, such as mining and engineering.

The study's emphasis on monitoring and reporting mechanisms offers a practical framework for organizations and policymakers to track progress and ensure accountability. By encouraging data-driven approaches and transparent reporting, the findings contribute to the development of more effective gender mainstreaming strategies that align with both national goals and global frameworks like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5. This dual alignment reinforces the broader societal impact of the study, showcasing how gender equity in the workplace can drive economic growth, innovation, and social cohesion. As a result, the study not only contributes to the academic discourse on gender equity but also provides a valuable tool for implementing and sustaining inclusive practices in diverse organizational contexts.

5.10 Conclusion and recommendations

This study also advances the understanding of gender equity and inclusion by providing critical insights into the current state of gender mainstreaming within South African Corporations. The study's findings contribute to the broader discourse on diversity and inclusion, offering a nuanced perspective on the challenges and successes faced by organizations. It reveals how organisations that embed gender equity into their strategic frameworks and operational processes achieve more significant progress. On the contrary, it also identifies gaps in smaller or resource-constrained organisations, emphasising the need for targeted interventions and support.

It highlights the varying levels of awareness, commitment, and implementation of gender-inclusive policies and practices across different sectors and organisational sizes. By validating key themes—such as strategic intent, financial commitment, governance, and cultural transformation, the research underscores the foundational elements that drive gender equality in the workplace.

The reflection on the role of gender-sensitive policies, such as mentorship programs and STEM initiatives, provides a roadmap for fostering inclusivity. Additionally, the research aligns its findings with national and global gender equity objectives, demonstrating the dual importance of compliance and innovation in advancing workplace equality.

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ANNEXURES

APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) on, 10/05/2024 the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Exploring the extent to which the South African corporations incorporate gender (women) inclusive indicators in their practices and policies.

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof. LTB Jackson

Student: C. NDABA (31463347)

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Institution			Study Number			Year			Status					

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type:

Commencement date: 10/05/2024

Expiry date: 10/05/2025

Risk:

Minimal

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

- None.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

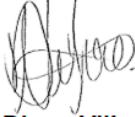
- The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EMS-REC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EMS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.

In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and EMS-REC reserves the right to:

- *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
- *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
- *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
 - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
 - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EMS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
 - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
 - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*

The EMS-REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EMS-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Diana Viljoen-Bezuidenhout
Chairperson: NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

ANNEXURE E: KEY PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE: COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE

You are being identified to take part in a research study that aims to explore the extent to which South African corporations incorporate gender (women)-inclusive indicators in their practices and policies. This study has been approved by the North-West University Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles applicable to this study.

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Thank you for finding time to provide us with answers to the questions posted below.
2. **Name and position:** I am an MBA student at the North-West University who is conducting research on exploring the extent to which your company incorporates gender mainstreaming-inclusive indicators in its practices and policies. We are looking at the state of gender mainstreaming in several organisations.
3. **Purpose:** The objective of the research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent to which South African corporations prioritise and integrate gender inclusivity into their practices and policies, shedding light on areas of success, gaps and areas of improvement.
4. **Confidentiality:** In line with the POPI Act 4 of 2013, the outcome of the evaluation report will not identify any of the participants involved.
5. **Duration:** The interview will take **40 minutes**. However, you have **14 working days** to provide us with the documentary evidence.

B. RESPONDENT INFORMATION (This is included to describe the sample)

2.1 . Number of employees: _____

2.2 . Sector: _____

2.3 . Role within the organisation: _____

2.4 . Demographic information: _____

C. QUESTIONS

Focus areas	No	Indicator	Yes/No	Proof/comments
Strategic intent	1.	Is there a long-term vision and strategic planning for gender mainstreaming? If yes, provide evidence.		
	2.	Is gender mainstreaming included in the performance agreement of senior leadership?		Memo for gender mainstreaming / performance agreements
	3.	Do you have an overall budget allocation for gender mainstreaming?		Total annual budget allocation for gender mainstreaming
	4.	Is the organisation clear on the key performance indicators for gender mainstreaming?		Excel of gender mainstreaming indicators
	5	Does the organisation have a gender mainstreaming policy? If yes, attach the policy.		Gender mainstreaming policy
Finance strategic intent	6.	What is the overall budget breakdown allocated for gender mainstreaming, e.g. gender equity, career pipeline, coaching and mentoring, etc.?		Overall spreadsheet of budget Allocation of gender mainstreaming items for respective gender inclusion themes
Gender procurement	7.	The supply chain is an outward-looking gender mainstreaming opportunity. Is gender mainstreaming communicated clearly to the respective departments as and when procuring occurs (female-,black, coloured, Indian and disabled: PDI)?		Report about disaggregated data procurement allocated to different groupings
	8.	Gender mainstreaming is communicated in the organisational policies, e.g. human resources policies, recruitment policy, training policies, employee value proposition		Policy updates list on gender mainstreaming and examples of those policies

Focus areas	No	Indicator	Yes/No	Proof/comments
Gender governance	9.	Is there a policy that highlights inclusivity and is it accommodative of women in creating a work-life balance?		Policies
	10.	Are there workplace benefits conscious of gender inclusion? For example, flexi working hours, flexi leave.		Policies
	12..	Is gender mainstreaming communicated clearly in the EE Plan and is it continuously monitored by the EE committee?		Minutes of meetings
Gender mainstreaming support groups	13.	As per the legislative and administrative frameworks, are there structures such as gender mainstreaming executive committees that champion/ sponsor gender mainstreaming?		List of the committee members
	14.	Are there women in leadership groups where issues related to gender mainstreaming are tabled?		List of groupings
	15.	Is there an outlet/forum where women meet to discuss areas of concern and opportunities in the workplace (manifesto)?		Manifesto: Table of concerns
	16.	Is there a representative from the gender mainstreaming manifesto groupings in the EE consultative forum?		List of representatives
	17.	Is there a standing report, quarterly and annually, that reflects gender recruitment status?		Gender mainstreaming report
Gender mainstreaming planning	18.	Is there space planning (reasonable accommodation) for inclusiveness of gender mainstreaming (feeding room, day bed, daycare, etc.)?		Report and plans
Gender equity	19.	Is there an approach for the regulation of gender parity in the organisation? If there is, how has it been addressed?		Approach document
Gender awareness training	20.	Is there a budget allocated for activities such as women-specific awareness campaigns for the organisation (budget allocated for gender-specific communication)?		Budget allocation for gender mainstreaming, specifically for communication
	21.	Are there any programmes targeted at the development of women in the organisation?		Description of programmes targeted at women's development
	22.	Is there a budget allocated for the capacity building of women managers, specifically for gender mainstreaming?		Budget amount
	24.	Are there bursaries allocated for women's empowerment?		Total value
	25.	Does the organisation have mentorship and coaching programmes focusing on women's empowerment?		Description of the programme

Focus areas	No	Indicator	Yes/No	Proof/comments
	26.	Are the learnership programmes (e.g. STEM) that are specific to women's empowerment?		List of programmes
Gender analysis/data	27.	Is there a forum where the gender mainstreaming complaints are handled (data collection/hotline)?		List and number of concerns
Gender monitoring	29.	Does the organisation monitor strategic plans to ensure that they include gender mainstreaming?		Monitoring and evaluation guidelines for gender mainstreaming in the organisation
	30.	Does the organisation report timeously to the board and authorities issues regarding their gender mainstreaming annual gender inclusive indicators?		Annual reports
	31.	Does the organisation report its performance targets with regard to gender mainstreaming in its annual report?		Annual reports

D. CLOSING

Is there anything else that you would like to mention in relation to institutionalising gender mainstreaming that I have not asked you about?

Thank you once again for your time.

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

REQUEST FOR THE PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR MY MBA STUDIES

Dear Sir/Madam

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to formally request permission to conduct research within your esteemed organisation, as part of my MBA under the supervision of Professor Leon Jackson. The purpose of my research is to explore gender mainstreaming practices in organisations, with a particular focus on the policies, initiatives and strategies that promote gender equality and inclusivity.

The significance of this research lies in the increasing importance of gender equality in the workplace and the role that organisations play in achieving this goal. By conducting this research, I will gain a better understanding of the gender mainstreaming practices that have been implemented within your organisation, with a view to sharing best practices and contributing to the broader discourse on gender equality.

I kindly request your permission to access the premises of your organisation for the purpose of data collection. The research will involve interviews with key personnel, as well as a review of relevant documents and policies. I assure you that all data collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality in line with the POPI Act 13 of 2013 and will be used exclusively for research purposes. I would, therefore, appreciate the opportunity to speak with relevant key personnel. I am committed to adhering to your organisation's rules and regulations and ensuring that the research process is conducted in a non-disruptive manner. I am also willing to provide any additional information or credentials to assure you of my research's legitimacy and integrity.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with your organisation in advancing the understanding of gender mainstreaming practices in organisations.

Sincerely

Fundi Ndaba
MBA candidate
0735533587



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: *Exploring the extent to which South African corporations incorporate gender (women) inclusive indicators in their practices and policies*

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS:
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof LTB Jackson
POST-GRADUATE STUDENT: Ms CN Ndaba
CONTACT NUMBER: 082 840 1135 / 073 553 3587

You are being identified to take part in a research study that aims to explore the extent to which South African corporations incorporate gender (women) inclusive indicators in their practices and policies. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can say no or opt out of participation at any time. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the North-West University Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

- This study will be conducted in South African corporations and will involve professionals within corporates such as diversity, equality equity and inclusion specialists, EE transformation specialists or employment equity specialists, and human resources professionals. Twelve (12) participants will be included in this study.
- We plan to determine the level of gender inclusivity in corporate policies and practices of South African companies, to validate the themes that drive gender equality and inclusion in the organisations, and to identify the gender inclusive indicators commonly incorporated by South African companies in their policies and practices.

Why have you been invited to participate?

- You have been invited to be part of this research because you have information that could assist the researcher in reaching the objectives.
- You will not be able to take part in this research if you are a direct report to the researcher and/or student.

What will be expected of you?

- You will be expected to share your knowledge of your company's gender inclusivity policies and practices through a semi-structured interview.

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

- The gains for you, if you take part in this study, will be the opportunity to voice your opinion on your company's gender inclusivity policies and practices.
- The other gains of the study are for the organisation and women working in the organisation to benefit from possible changes in the organisational policies.

Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?

- The risks to you in this study are the fear of stating true experiences but will be limited by confidentiality and anonymity.

How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?

- The anonymity of your findings will be protected by not mentioning your name in any of the project records. Your privacy will be respected by not sharing any personal information and the interviews will be conducted one-on-one. The researchers will be able to look at your findings. Findings will be kept safe by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researcher's office and electronic data will be password protected. As soon as data has been transcribed, it will be deleted from the recorders. Data will be stored for five years.
- A section of the measuring instrument will focus on the basic *demographic questions* about the respondents, such as their year of birth, gender, education, level of employment and years of experience with their current employer **to describe the sample**. In line with the POPI Act, Act 4 of 2013, the researcher will adhere to the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy when processing the demographic data. Please note that your answers are entirely confidential.

What will happen with the findings or samples?

- The findings of this study will only be used for this study and will be reported in a mini-dissertation format that will be submitted to the NWU and the organisation. The findings might also be published in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

How will you know about the results of this research?

- On request, we will give you the results of this research when the study has been concluded by the researcher.
- You will be informed of any new relevant findings by the researcher.

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?

- This study is not funded. You will not be compensated for taking part in the study because participation is voluntarily.
- There will be no costs involved for you if you do take part in this study.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact Nomfundo Ndaba at **0735533587** or ndaba.fundi@gmail.com if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the study leader, Prof Leon Jackson, at 082 840 1135 or Leon.Jackson@nwu.ac.za, if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the researcher.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your record.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I the undersigned agree to take part in the research study titled:

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

Signature of participant

Declaration by researcher

I declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to the participant.
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I was available should she want to ask any further questions.
- I am satisfied that she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that she had time to discuss it with others if she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*)

APPENDIX E CERTIFICATE OF EDITING AND PROOFREADING

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING AND PROOFREADING

This serves to certify that the dissertation reflected below was edited and proofread for English Language by a professional proofreader and text editor in respect of format, language, and quality.

Dissertation Title

Exploring the extent to which the South African corporations incorporate gender (women) inclusive indicators in their practices and policies

Author

Charity Nomfundo Ndaba

Date issued

5 December 2024

Issued by

Terrestrial Heights Copy Editors

Certificate number

5/December/2024

This certificate is issued and verified by Terrestrial Heights Copy Editors, editing and proofreading services. Terrestrial Heights Copy Editors confirms that it did not change the aims and ideas of the author.

Signature: *T. Mahafu*