

# WOMEN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUAL PAY IN THE WORKPLACE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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## Abstract

**How to cite this paper:** Dosunmu, A. G., & Dichaba, M. (2023). Women and implementation of equal pay in the workplace in developing countries [Special issue]. *Corporate Law & Governance Review*, 5(2), 266–277. <https://doi.org/10.22495/clgrv5i2sip14>

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**ISSN Online:** 2664-1542

**ISSN Print:** 2707-1111

**Received:** 25.05.2023

**Accepted:** 12.12.2023

**JEL Classification:** J710, J780, J810

**DOI:** 10.22495/clgrv5i2sip14

The post-apartheid regime introduced reforms in the labor law of South Africa. The reforms aimed to redress inequality among workers regardless of gender. The article engages policies and labor laws under the Labor Relations Act 66 of 1995, to an association of trade unions' rights. Specifically, the labor laws aspect that deals with equal pay was examined for women workers to understand the dimension of gender equality in the labor market of South Africa after 1994. Inequality in pay gaps for professional women across all sectors of the economy is yet to be unraveled. The study explores pay differentiation in the workplace from the dimension of policy review. Concepts of fairness, equity, and the legal framework of South Africa were explored in terms of working conditions and equal pay implementation (Matotoka & Odeku, 2022). The phenomenology approach was used in this study to understand the issues of pay gaps and career experiences of professional women. The findings are counter-intuitive. The analysis reveals the distance between equality policy and conflicting organizational cultures resulting in continued inequality experiences for professional women. This paper contributes to an understanding of corporate law and governance in terms of inequality and social injustice in post-apartheid South Africa.

**Keywords:** Policy, Labor Law, Governance, Inequality, Women, South Africa, Workplace

**Authors' individual contribution:** Conceptualization — A.G.D. and M.D.; Methodology — A.G.D. and M.D.; Investigation — A.G.D. and M.D.; Formal Analysis — A.G.D. and M.D.; Writing — Original Draft — A.G.D. and M.D.; Writing — Review & Editing — A.G.D. and M.D.

**Declaration of conflicting interests:** The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, South Africa's social relations have been shaped heavily by a history of violence (Bridger & Hazan, 2022). Since the late nineteenth century, continuous political and social conflicts have been experienced regarding labor and wages (McDonald, 2023). During the apartheid era and the colonial South African regimes, the British deliberately destabilized black capitalist positions through a process of structural under-unemployment to encourage and protect white employees' socio-

economic positions while the tractable black workers were used as a cheap way of supporting the capitalist white population through the labor of an army which is drawn from an impoverished reserve (Kwenda et al., 2020).

Thus, during the apartheid regime, labor rights were highly unequal, and racial segregation among workers was common (Lemon, 2021). African workers especially women were weakened through the state's efforts or direct attacks by subverting organizational structures to favor white employees who benefitted from unemployment benefits, social

security, access to the labor court, union rights, and medical insurance in addition to employment opportunities (Matambanadzo, 2022). Racial domination and disparity were asserted through white power which thus blurred lines between personal services and productive tasks. For instance, a study by Von Holdt (2003) reveals that white workers were dominant in a highveld steel factory where there were mixed black and white workers in the workplace. In contrast, black workers served as subordinates to them irrespective of whether the latter was their superior (Webster, 2020). Black workers especially women were deprived of many opportunities even as professional workers they were downgraded to the least skilled level and in terms of remuneration most were poorly paid. They were deprived of indirect wages such as insurance and pensions while most black workers found it difficult to contest dismissal or unfair practices which thus affected all of their possible professional development (Chapman, 2020). A minority of the black workers in formal employment had the opportunity and capability to negotiate for better working conditions.

However, the violence of 1973 in Durban led to an awakening regarding improving working conditions in South African workplaces. Individual workers resisted this change from the outset due to the apartheid experience (van Zyl-Hermann, 2020). Racial hierarchies showed a blurring distinction which thus produced frustration and humiliation as a major role that led to unions' emergence in the South African workplace. Through unions, increasingly structured contestations forced the government to recognize black workers through the adoption of the 1979 Industrial Conciliation Act (Money, 2020). The problem is that the workplace and its dimensions have a history and have not changed so much even after the democracy in 1994. The greater challenge is the extent to which power and politics play a role in redistributing opportunities to the women of South Africa.

Therefore, this paper investigated the issues of equal pay in the workplace from a developing country's perspective and it highlighted South African labor law as framing to better understand the dimension of career experiences broadly. However, inequality in earnings for professional working women was argued in this paper and framed around the subjects of the Equity Labor Act. The idea is to connect the discussion of labor laws topic of equal pay gaps based on the South African situation. The labor laws in South Africa seem yet to resolve deep-seated issues of inequality of pay or pay gaps in workplaces. One would expect the labor laws act to have evolved, reformed, and implemented post-1994. In other words, the idea of transformation which emphasis gender should ensure women are protected in terms of career advancement and pay. A section of the literature shows that certain women would not want to attain management roles in Africa due to family responsibilities. This finding still cannot reflect the majority of women who are willing and qualified to be promoted and well compensated equally. This argument explains the inefficiencies of the policies and practices which thus require review. The paper adopted a conceptual framework of labor laws as a focal point to understand the issues of labor

relation acts in terms of equity and equality for women workers in the South African workplace environment. The methodological approach used in this study was phenomenology methods to understand the workplace situations of persistent inequality experienced by women workers concerning their career paths.

Similarly, the paper explores the differentiation in remuneration for professional women in South Africa's workplace eco-system. However, the argument around this debate is about unfair discrimination against South African women in terms of policies and practices that continue to pose barriers for categories of women performing the same value of work (Naicker, 2022). Despite government regulations and efforts in the post-apartheid era to close the pay gaps in South African workplaces there still exists inequality in earnings for women working in both the private and public sectors of the economy (Reid, 2022). Therefore, it becomes imperative to understand why there are pay differences in this context. The paper unravels the inherent conditions of employment foregrounded within the labor laws to argue the implications of pay gaps on the career experiences of women. The Equal Pay Act is used in this study as a lens to understand whether discrimination is a problem of policy or challenges due to something else. Thus, equalizing this disparity is a discussion of focal areas on which the argument is based to understand the implementation processes of the South African labor relations acts. However, this study found that opportunities in the workplace may not necessarily mean job satisfaction for professional working women. Therefore, the study reveals that years of experience and educational attainment of women on the job are yet to quantify the pay women earn in comparison to their male counterparts despite performing the same level of work in the workplace. Hence, the study found a disparity in earnings, experiences, and education. Thus, there is a need to further challenge employment equity acts from bottom-up and grassroots.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature. Section 3 explains the equal pay law as a conceptual framework. Section 4 analyzes the methodology that has been used to conduct this study. Section 5 explains the issues of gender inequality and governance. Section 6 discusses the study findings. Section 7 concludes the study.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of work in South Africa is tied to the struggle against national liberation and racism (Levenson & Paret, 2022). The white workers majority influx into Southern Africa before independence led to the emergence of socialism of trade which also led to the influx of foreign colonialists from across the globe including gold and diamond seekers (Frankema et al., 2023). Forced labor is also the story of labor which thus indicates that the majority of South Africans were intimidated through the forced expansion of capitalism, colonialism, and taxes and forced blacks to work as wage laborers under the apartheid regime whites-owned agriculture, mines, and industries. However, the organized working class continues to exist today

in terms of labor struggle which thus explains the massive struggle of the poor people to overcome inequalities, political, unemployment, and apartheid social legacies.

However, in the history of South Africa, conflict in the workplace and beyond sparked new rights marking a turning point for black workers (Mafolo, 2021). Wage labor became increasingly drastic through modified unions of blacks which eventually played an important role in the political disorder that led to the end of the apartheid era in South Africa. Before 1994, opportunities to access South African resources were skewed and were characterized by gender imbalances that manifested in inaccessibility to the economy for many (Ngwane & Bond, 2020). These structural misrepresentations are still linked to the employment rates of women who have lower participation in economically related formal activities than men (Prihatiningtyastuti, 2020). In this case, women who were frequently underrepresented and employed in low-skill jobs were very poorly paid (Salti & Mezher, 2020). Perhaps this is evidence that the likely candidates for economic strife are mostly women who remain in this position. This issue has led to some reformations in post-1994.

Thus, the emergence of democratic rule in 1994 brought the tripartite alliance between the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the African National Congress (ANC), and the South African Communist Party to power on the basis and hope that this alliance would improve the majority of South Africans' living and working conditions (Mmadi, 2023). However, the Labor Relations Act of 1995 reshaped employees' and employers' relationships. Two years later, in 1997, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) defined and included all employees except self-employed workers thus covering all categories of workers. The working conditions such as sick leave entitlements, twenty-one days of working leave, and forty-five days of working hours per week, were strictly regulated (Bothma & Rossouw, 2019). Thus, the BCEA detailed some of the regulations in all sectors — these regulations covered retrenchment funds, unemployment insurance, and other measures of social protection such as different insurance types and pension funds for workers within each branch or business which depends on the agreements negotiated (James et al., 2023). On these grounds, the BCEA provides the sectoral determination and a mechanism that permits the Minister of Labor to interfere in defining the working conditions and minimum remuneration for all categories of workers in South African workplaces (Devereux, 2020).

Furthermore, the social and economic expectations of many South Africans who are still poor are yet to be met based on the violence associated with strikes, civil unrest, the present political changes and outbursts that draw awareness to the fact that these changes have not yet met the expectations (Ndinga-Kanga et al., 2020). With the adoption of a progressive constitution, the progress made so far with subsequent legislation improving social rights protection cannot be ignored. However, numerous economic and civil dynamics have inhibited the expected improvement of living and working conditions (Mazzucato

et al., 2022). Although the transition of South Africa has had a profound impact on workers, it has not improved the situation as much as they had hoped. The new South African government's desire to change labor regimes has been well-intentioned but rather suffered a setback of economic coercion with little being done on their part to transform the reality in the workplace. In reality, employers have shifted to economic coercion and adapted to political change, which invariably weighed down many workers to dull economic forces (Bottero, 2019). This development has led to racial oppression day by day in a country where working relations have been considered to be formed in violent trends. Although the political expectations of the new government were met through the advent of democracy, the government failed to prevent the persistence of oppression and exploitation of protective labor laws which thus disappointed the hopes of South Africans.

Post-apartheid South Africa's economy has adapted in different ways to a new socio-political context and situation but through active state economic restructuring involving selected national champions and an open international economy. Therefore, labor has responded with capital through the private sector with a substitution and the establishment of provisional enterprises with enormous outsourcing reducing costs and making working activities more flexible. For instance, in the South African forestry and mining sectors there have been strong tendencies toward improved labor conditions during the political liberation era while unions struggled before the end of apartheid (van Zyl-Hermann, 2023). According to the literature, South Africa differs from most other countries in terms of wage relations where periodic crises are characterized by the redefinition of labor relations leading to new relations of production implementation with a new form of consumption and a workplace with new management practices (Maphiri, 2023).

Since 1996, South Africa has not implemented any scheme in terms of structural adjustment plans instead its economy has been liberalized for state economic intervention which shows that the state's role has been greatly limited (Mamogale, 2020). Labor market rigidity is considered by domestic employers as a reaction to what they perceive as labor cost rises and the rising rights of workers. Still, African and South African workers have observed rapid casualization of work conditions through increased use of casual labor with task-based payment and temporary contracts and thus casualisations have impacted their work conditions and status (Naidoo, 2020). As such South African social policy is weak which creates mass unemployment but sometimes workers survive through community-based and family resilience and solidarity (Plageron et al., 2019). Most workers support their families but the consequences of factors like labor casualization are particularly difficult to quantify making it more difficult for the employed to support their families and other dependants who survive through them (Malgas et al., 2020). For instance, workers in the agricultural sectors might not have access to housing and even lose access to land. Casualization and unemployment are leading to an employment crisis regarding social

reproduction thus encouraging a general crisis in the South African workplace (Murray, 2020). Thus, the concept of casualization is conceptualized in this context as bad working conditions in terms of insecurity in employment, irregular hours, low wages, intermittent employment, and the absence of good standards of employment benefits for workers (Olabisi Yusuff, 2023).

Thus, during the last years of apartheid, the improvements in working conditions won through unions' pressure during many battles against autocratic and often violent practices were eroded through compelling economic forces such as casualization that left workers vulnerable (Davies, 2021). After the end of apartheid where an edict segmented society and labor markets over fifteen years it appears that despite progressive intentions the inequality of unfettered markets has been perpetuated by the South African labor market laws.

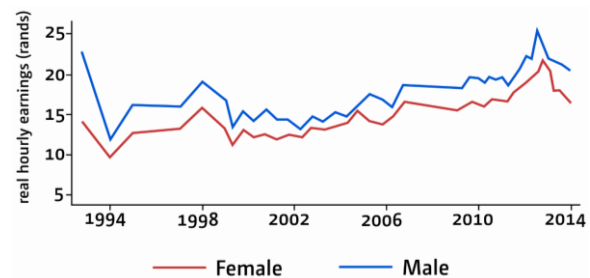
However, after the colonization of South Africa, the formalization of major industries such as gold mining and livestock farming led to the development of the first significant rise of modern labor law in South Africa (Karolia-Hussain & Fourie, 2021). However, when the mining industry attempted to limit the white labor roles between 1913 and 1914 it resulted in labor unrest which was responded to and the evidence shows that the intention was for unskilled positions to be filled with cheaper black labor (Simpson, 2021). Eventually, in the late 1970s when the South African economy began to experience shortages of white skilled labor true labor reforms for black workers emerged and this restructuring created employment opportunities for deprived groups (Kenny & Webster, 2021). This argument highlights why women in particular were disadvantaged and exploited in the workplace in the past regimes. Much of the literature ignores black women in the analysis of the implementation of labor laws in South Africa. There is a general assumption that gender may not significantly interfere with racial issues around laws and policies about equal pay for example. This thinking may also be influenced by a post-colonial mindset toward an understanding of the roles of women in the workplace. Regardless, the labor laws of South Africa are clear about equality and equity for all regardless of gender. The idea of labor laws on equality in the workplace extends to women but is often ignored. However, the law in the text means nothing unless it is implemented in reality. This reality is also constrained by several governance issues that are largely human factors, cultural, social, and an understanding of gender-interplace in the workplace. There is a need to understand post-apartheid labor policy and how it affects women and their remunerations.

### 3. EQUAL PAY LAW AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The South African Labor Relations Act 66 of 1995 (LRA) dealt extensively with employee terminations before this period which provided a basis for the industrial court to apply the principles of a tribunal to resolve disputes and ensure fairness and equity in the workplace (Okpaluba & Budeli-Nemakonde, 2020). Managing the non-voluntary termination of employees required the act to be procedural, substantive, and fair in such situations.

In this context, the labor act regulates employers' unfair labor practices and directs them to act in a fair manner which may probably lead to compensation or reinstatement of any workers treated unfairly (Kubjana & Manamela, 2019). In other words, the LRA and other subsequent amendments encouraged the settlement of disputes and collective bargaining for workers who belonged to a union. A broad range of issues was addressed by the LRA including councils' bargaining, security of union, resolution of a dispute, collective bargaining varieties, freedom of association, medium and small enterprise, biased dismissal, equity in earnings, and employee participation (Maake-Malatji, 2023).

**Figure 1.** Average earnings by gender — South Africa, 1994-2014 (individuals aged 15-65)



Source: UNU-WIDER (2019, p. 1).

The post-apartheid context shows a shift in advancement for women but in the formal economy there seems to be a yawning gap in women's participation (Struggle-Part, 2023). Gender equality framework plans initiated by the democratic government to meet sustainable development goals and to provide opportunities for women in urban and rural areas continue to suffer a setback because of inappropriate implementation of the labor legislative acts (Hope, 2020).

Thus, after the demise of the apartheid government legislative frameworks through legislation to prevent gender injustice in the South African workplace have largely seen a stagnant pay gap with a median varying between 23% and 35% (Bosch & Barit, 2020). This median shows the difference in the gender wage gap between men and women in South Africa for the same value of work which is a stumbling block to achieving gender pay parity in the workplace. Women struggle to earn good pay and are not equally and fairly remunerated by employers despite offering the same jobs (McMunn et al., 2020). These gender disparities are questionable in this context for women who have to handle various issues such as supporting children coping with the alarming issues of domestic violence and struggling to improve their lives with limited access to resources despite earning less than men. This means that power relations in South Africa are skewed and favor men. Therefore, the question is how gender pay can be increased transparently in South Africa.

Furthermore, post-apartheid South African labor law was reformed immediately after the independence in 1994. The legislation changes to labor issues in the new regimes are the LRA later amended to the Labor Relations Amendment Act 2002, BCEA later amended to the Basic Conditions of

Employment Amendment Act 2002, Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and Unemployment Insurance Act, 2001 (Webster & Forrest, 2023). These legislations apply to employment protection for workers who work in South Africa. Partly of the changes to the legislation cover workers who work outside and inside South Africa. However, the legislation frameworks are supported in many cases by codes of practice drawn up by the National Economic Development and Labor Council which might be legislative codes of practice for employers and employees (Wolpe, 2023). The new labor relations act emphasizes regulating organized labor, business, and collective agreement which thus binds the union's members and employers in the workplace.

The South African labor law currently redresses some of the issues in terms of inequality in the workplace related to pay gaps in post-apartheid (Musetsho et al., 2021). However, even after almost thirty years of democracy, there has still been very little change for women and there is still no parity in the earnings of the genders with women still earning far less than men (Mtapuri & Tinarwo, 2021). Arguably the workplace is affected by systemic problems of continuous and unstable policies for gender equality particularly in the new labor act law promulgated after independence.

Moreover, the legal segment of the Labor Relations Amendment Act 127 of 1998, Section 83 explicitly states that workers have the freedom and rights to belong to any union where the freedom, sanctity of contract, and common law surpass all else (Tenza, 2020). This justifies the 1988 South African LRA which emphasized employees' rights to be protected for belonging to trade unions and prohibiting employers from penalizing any workers for union membership as such activities are allowed. This is in contrast with historical laws that excluded and segregated certain workers such as black workers and women from engaging in union activities (Joffe et al., 2019). In other words, the new LRA was introduced towards economic development, labor peace, social justice, and workplace democratization.

Furthermore, the literature holds that Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 was enacted by the government to hold employers to the values of employment equality, and this equity act was set out purposefully to accomplish justice and eliminate practices of unfair discrimination in the workplace against workers of all races (Labour Guide, n.d.). Arguably, the policy of equality compelled some employers to implement specific measures of inclusion of more women in the workplace and address the most important employment concerns of designated groups particularly women and black workers who have been oppressed in the past. However, since South Africa became a democratic nation in 1994 laws addressing race-based issues were the first significant legislative pieces to enter the statute book (Pirtle, 2021). The labor equity laws were set up to advance and protect the constitutional intent of protecting disadvantaged persons — especially women — who have been victims of bias and discrimination in the workplace. Therefore, the mechanism of legislative justification in terms of the employment equity act limited employers' autonomy to regulate their affairs

regarding the diverse workplace compelling employers to implement practices and policies that redress inequity and racial discrimination in employment (Harrison et al., 2023).

Thus, the employment inequalities embedded in the workplaces in the country were addressed and corrected by the equity employment act amending the past and present social imbalances to advance workers deprived of equal opportunities in the apartheid era. In contrast, South Africa's earlier labor laws were designed to deal with and regulate the consequences of industrialization such as unemployment, illness, injuries, and compensation (Barchiesi, 2003). The more recent labor equity laws specifically indicate the government's intent to encourage normative values and support the fairness of workers' rights irrespective of gender and race.

Thus, the provision in the equity employment act plans created opportunities for equitable representation in terms of numerical goals within which the specific goals can be realized in a specific time frame (Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). However, in this context of affirmative action policy regulations, the premise is that equality may not be achieved by just expunging all inequitable laws. Instead, workplace equality in the South African workforce can be attained through procedures that will reverse the harmful effects of previous unfair laws (Smit, 2021). This objective explains the complex dispute resolution system in the pre-apartheid era with lengthy procedures that were later accompanied by a memorandum of the new South African LRA. In other words, the dispute resolution procedures in the workplace were ineffective in terms of arbitration which led to the resurgence of industrial actions around disputes that had already been resolved (Levinson, 2019). Hence justice was not properly regulated in the old systems which were inaccessible, complex, legalistic, and technical to understand, especially for the deprived workers.

Recently, the older dispute resolution mechanisms within the South African labor law have been replaced by the newly designed Commission for the Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) scheme to combat the old system's inadequacies (Dor, 2023). The newly adjusted LRA proved to be more accessible easier to use and inexpensive for workers since its introduction in November 1996. Whereas deprived workers especially women have been victims of unfair treatment in the past they now have access to opportunities for dispute resolution without union involvement or assistance. However, there is a lack of adequate resources to make the new system work effectively in South Africa because of projected and present caseloads therefore most labor disputes can only expect a basic service for any labor issues. Thus, although the creation of new labor laws has remedied the ills of the apartheid regime labor laws these have been proven to be inadequate (van Staden, 2020).

Despite improved post-apartheid labor laws the stability of labor is objectively unfeasible in terms of stability (Maqutu, 2020). The amended labor relations act according to the South African Constitution thus gave the act effect to Section 27 to regulate trade union's rights recognizing the right to strike and promoting collective bargaining (Seun

et al., 2023). Equally, it is noted that despite the new legislation to labor law issues in South African workplaces there are continuing worker demands in terms of conditions of work and wage increases and it is argued as one of the issues of labor unrest in South Africa. For instance, the factors of labor unrest issues in this context include poverty, inequality, apartheid legacies, fear of retrenchment, use of migrant workers, union rivalry, and unemployment.

In addition, the new era of employment equity legislation poses a serious challenge to the success of the CCMA. At the same time, the labor courts' ability has since been jeopardized through the use of CCMA-based resources to resolve categories of equity employment involving disputes through the creation of rules and interpretations (Van Eck & Kuhn, 2019). This explains why the labor courts' interpretations of the equity employment act are negatively impacted due to the reduced opportunity to consider unfair employment equity related to disputes of labor practices.

Post-apartheid evidence shows that the development of normative values based on rules and interpretations in South Africa is fundamental to social change (Enaifoghe & Abosede, 2021). Black African men and women are emboldened by the protection of rights achieved through revolutionizing normative values forcing employers' attitudes and conduct regarding promotion, training, and treatment. The havoc caused during the apartheid era has been amended through the introduction of legislation on normative values which reflects justice and equal protection for the deprived groups and invariably alters patterns of privileges, power, and wealth (Mosomi, 2019). Therefore, the socio-economic life of South Africans has been shaped by the decisions of the labor court which plays an essential role as embodied in the constitution ensuring universal human rights norms for all categories of workers irrespective of gender.

#### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted a phenomenological approach (Lindseth & Norberg, 2022) in this study through the interviews conducted with three senior women managers in one of the corporate organizations in South Africa who have spent more than ten years working as senior executives with the organization. The purpose of the methodology used in this study is to uncover information related to understanding the inherent factors related to women's career experiences in the workplace in terms of work equity including the issue of pay gaps. However, these methods reveal real-life work situations, especially for professional working women, and explain the issues of workplace practices. The alternative method could be a narrative research design. This methodology approach (Clandinin, 2022) is suitable for the same research because it allows the same process of methods of understanding the lived experiences of women on their beliefs, behavior, and attitudes on their career paths in the workplace. In view of this, an interview was conducted with three senior women managers in the telecommunication industry in South Africa to understand their lived experiences. This method allows in-depth discussion

and debriefing on topics related to career experience, pay gaps, and how women perceived inequality in South Africa's work situation. The sample size was deliberately small because the idea is to dig deep into the topics broadly and in detail. The phenomenological and narrative approaches allow this type of design for in-depth analysis. Therefore, findings related to the interview were discussed in the subsequent section.

#### 5. GENDER INEQUALITY AND GOVERNANCE

The post-apartheid working conditions in South Africa are yet to transform the workplace in terms of equality in earnings (Francis & Valodia, 2022). After independence, South African democracy struggled to ameliorate the historical experience of sustaining the inherited structures from colonialism to have an equitable and sustainable development of gender equality in the workforce (Rustin & Shefer, 2022). These conditions continue to persist through government regulations to regulate the workplace culture of promoting social justice for everyone irrespective of gender but the reverse seems to be the case in South African workplaces as the workplace is still gendered in terms of pay, promotions, work culture, structure, and policy (Carrim et al., 2022). The post-apartheid labor laws in terms of equity, equality, and diversity workers are arguable in the context of the impact of the enacted labor relations law still unable to address the discrimination of gender equality in the public and private sectors of the South African workplace (Ndinda & Ndhlovu, 2022).

However, government regulation's interference in labor-related matters through unions of workers continues to pose a setback in terms of issues affecting certain categories of employees, especially the deprived gendered groups. The argument around this debate of different labor unions that were established after South African independence in 1994 is inconsistent in addressing the matter of unequal labor wages among workers (Fourie, 2022). This inconsistency of union leadership determines workplace situations in terms of policy regulation. South African workplace is yet to overcome the history of imbalances in pay structures which thus continues to affect the organization's work culture (Utete, 2022).

Furthermore, the work culture is predetermined by the existing regulations inherited which thus have a negative impact on the current labor relations acts in South Africa today. The labor equity act of employment conditions in terms of remuneration is still unfair to women who engage in the same equal-value work tasks (Brandt, 2022). These issues are considered unfair discrimination in South African workplaces due to underserved indications specified in the employment conditions regulations.

Essentially, the provisions in the employment acts and conditions of work unfairly favored women's employees performing the same work value which thus creates differences in conditions of employment according to South African labor laws (Strah et al., 2022). However, employers use performance evaluation policies to regulate employment conditions in this context to determine employees' wages whereas these policies affect women's employees fairly. It is argued that these



issues possibly change workplace policies due to implementations of labor laws considered unfavorable to women irrespective of their race and gender identity (Gauci et al., 2022). The South African Code of good practice of 2015 was supposed to guide employers to use the principle of remuneration for work equal value and equal wage to promote equity principle of pay equality in the workplace but seems not to change anything yet despite efforts to unravel the historical differences of unequal pay in workplaces (van Zyl & Mans-Kemp, 2022). The provisions specified in the code of practice and employment equity regulations to protect and allow for an equitable workplace environment seem not to be functioning according to the stipulated regulations based on the present reality of wage gaps among genders in the workplace.

The gender pay gap has yet to lead to positive transformation in agencies, corporations, industries, and organizations thus creating inequality in the workplace. However, the government constituted authority CCMA task with the responsibilities to resolve labor matters in collaboration with the Department of Employment and Labor to regulate labor laws issues such as disputes between employers and employees inclusive of wages and good conditions of employment as stipulated in the employment equity act has been politicized as workplace internal policies have overshadowed the specific policies due to inconsistency in labor laws (Dawson, 2022).

Thus, the government continues to push for a balanced workplace in all areas of workers' welfare irrespective of gender in the private and public sectors through new and improved regulations. These efforts have led to promoting gender equality in the workplace to have more women being represented and promoted to managerial and executive positions and adjusting wages through the salary commission to amend the pay gaps and to balance the historical unequal pay gaps that have existed before and post-apartheid era.

## 6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section provides information about the interview that was conducted and how the issues that have emerged are linked to the focus of this paper. The findings show how pay gaps and/or inequality in pay could affect the career progress of women. While the idea is not to generalize, however, the findings provide organizing thoughts of participants which may not necessarily be far from what other women are facing.

### 6.1. Disparity between education, experience and pay

The participants interviewed mentioned why they joined the telecommunication industry and this has been identified as robust pay workers earn but they confirmed that their remuneration is not what they expected. They thought that their choice of careers in the corporate world would create opportunities for enhanced wages for them based on their working experiences in their previous and current careers. The participants believed that their level of educational attainment and the experiences they have garnered should earn them higher pay

irrespective of their gender status. But they revealed that despite the increase in their salary after long years of working in the corporate world their pay is not satisfactory compared to the value of work they do in their workplace. In addition, they mentioned that they have the same equivalent educational qualifications as some of their male counterpart yet there are pay differentiations according to them they believe that the issue is farfetched as corporate policies are usually unfavorable to women workers irrespective of the efforts to compete with men in the workplace. The participants confirmed that they got promoted but very few women have the opportunities to the senior executive positions and that does not change the pay disparity in the workplace. Olaniran et al. (2021) argue that higher pay for women in the workplace could be motivational and necessary factors that may make women feel satisfied and comfortable with their jobs. However, participants felt that pay fairness or equal pay would have made them happier on the job but rather their pay is unsatisfactory to them in the workplace they have worked for more than a decade of their career.

### 6.2. Inverse career growth for women

The participants confirmed that women at the managerial level do not receive the same wage benefits and allowances. For example, despite the positions they hold as a senior manager the salary structure benefits are unequal to what is expected of them to earn. They faulted these issues on the organizational policies which they never envisaged initially the policies of pay allowances for women of their categories vary according to the department, regions, and sections they work. In addition, the organizational policies favour men senior managers because their representations at board levels outweigh the number of women at the top rungs of the workplace. According to the participants, the decisions at the board supersede women who only have a lower percentage of about one and a half percent representation. This occupational segregation makes it difficult for them in their workplace to contest such barriers because the vast majority of the men dominate the labor unions. The pay policies rarely change except for general incentives that are given to categories of women workers who perform extra hours in certain departments but according to the participants such issues have been in existence in the organizational policies which they believe is difficult to change any time soon. Emmanuel and Nwuzor (2021) argue that organizations provide certain benefits such as extra work allowances to enable individuals within the organization to feel satisfied and comfortable on the job. However, the reverse is the case for the participants because the segregation of policies in pay differences indirectly created an imbalance in the workplace atmosphere which affected them psychologically and emotionally despite the hard work on the job.

### 6.3. Job dissatisfaction due to wage inequality

According to the participants, inequality benefits made it difficult for them at times to achieve their goals which thus influenced their inability to enjoy their work and jobs while continuing to pursue their

careers in the organizations that offered outstanding opportunities for generous income but with pay gaps. They maintained that throughout their careers with the organization they somewhat feel satisfied with welfare packages regarding the value offered to women workers especially those at the top echelons of the organization.

The findings of the study suggest that the participants had deliberate expectations of equal pay as they progressed on the job when they decided to join the communication industry. In addition, it was clear from the participant's responses that the organization to some extent met their expectations in some aspects. The participants all agreed that their jobs in the organization would promote their careers and that the organization consistently encouraged them to create opportunities in their careers. However, despite this fair support from the organization the participants all agreed that there continue to be wage gaps between them and their male counterparts which they believe is a form of inequality and that there is a need for organizational policy reformulation to amend the gender pay gaps for women who perform the same value of task in the workplace.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The main findings of this study reveal the workplace opportunities for women in the post-apartheid South African era. Thus, this is evidenced in the improved labor relations acts of conditions of employment and equity policies to encourage gender equality for women. However, it illustrates that pay gaps in South African workplaces are yet to transform into a positive result as expected for women performing the same value of work as their male counterparts. Despite improved labor legislations, the workplaces are gendered whereas the employment equity act and affirmation action have yet to achieve the expectations of equality in earnings for women.

However, there is a shift in the labor movement across all regions of the African continent. Conditions of employment and work are progressively improving to advocate for gender equality in promotions, employment, selections, recruitment, and remuneration. Other findings illustrate that affirmative actions have played a significant role in this context for equality in the workplace changing organizational practices to adopt Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Gender equality and labor law in developed societies have gained high momentum for women in terms of representation and decision-making in the workplace.

Transparency in wage gaps in the workplace is a focal area that needs to be restructured to avoid inequality in earnings in all sectors of the South African economy. The gender wage gaps in the post-apartheid era are declining because of new policies regulating the workplace structure via government legislative acts of affirmative action, labor rights, and social justice for all workers. The South African constitution after apartheid promoted workplace equity and equality in terms of fair remuneration with appropriate guidance and unfair discrimination prevention — promoting equal earnings for equal work — and allowing the state to intervene in the case of unfair practices through the employment

equity act. The government continues to encourage organizations to implement a fair remuneration policy that should reflect impartiality and transparency, particularly for women workers. However, this study proposed that wage gaps can be improved in the workplace if policies can be restructured to include promoting practices of pay transparency, unionization in the workplace increase, providing medical leave and robust pay for women workers, and raising the minimum wage. This could contest pay discrimination at the company, individual, state, and national levels which thus might go a long way to achieving equal work for equal pay in the workplace.

The new South African labor legislation is binding on employers and employees at the national and regional levels to provide opportunities for women and men offering equal remuneration for an equal value of work. This policy is presumed to have been achieved in the South African workplace by implementing the employment equity acts of Section 6(5). However, the identified patterns in gender wage gaps in private and public organizations must be seen as a mandate to promote equality in remuneration and eliminate wage differences by formulating policies to create justice for women. Thus, the Employment Equity Act continues to serve as a regulatory mechanism to flag different intersectional wage inconsistencies at an aggregated level while the labor act specifically addresses the issues of employers' duties through penalties for non-compliance to promote transparency in wage pay and fairness. Therefore, South African legislation can be improved in this area of remuneration inequality as reflected in pay gaps.

Improvements to achieve gender parity through a legislative framework to eliminate labor inequities act at the level of employers' implementation of policies and require pay audits and more encouragement to resolve pay gaps and pinpoint key developmental mechanisms to end disparity of earnings in the South African workplace. Therefore, pay audits within organizations and in the workplace are a way of strengthening legislative transparency concerning pay reporting. For government and organizations' policies to be achievable companies must ensure that equal gender pay is discussed during collective bargaining as reference points. Collective bargaining will in this context create opportunities for employees irrespective of gender to freely participate in companies' decision making which could affect inequality in wage pay gaps. Also, the unionized workplace must continue to protect the interest of workers, especially deprived groups — such as women — via the well-developed structures of collective bargaining to make pay equality policies easier to implement. The debates of reigniting existing government codes on improving interpretations of national legislation concerning enforcement, monitoring, and implementation of gender pay might provide the stimulus for South Africa to achieve the reality of gender equality.

However, a pay audit is another crucial framework that has been identified for organizations in terms of ameliorating pay inequality existing within the workplace which might influence compensation for deprived workers. This can improve workplace situations by ensuring workers



who perform the same similar work earn the same pay to promote equality among workers. In other words, compensation audits are considered to address identified pay gaps. Similarly, pay inequality and exclusion can be addressed and improve the workplace environment through effective collective bargaining for workers as explained in this study to achieve working time flexibility, facilitate just transitions, ensure work security, and pursue an agenda for transformative gender equality. Importantly, the roles of trade unions protect the interest of workers in areas of addressing gender-based violence at the workplace, family and parental leave, working time and thus addressing the issues of gender inequality.

The implications of the result mean that gender pay gaps are segregated in horizontal works which thus tend to be lower since pay schemes and job classification are essential in this context. Work-related choices are the primary cause of the persistent pay gaps and career patterns of women in the workplace. Pay equality for gender equality is not sufficient enough for the same work. Thus, the policy in the text needs to address challenges remaining in an effective and coherent

manner to avoid inequality in the workplace for women and to create a workplace environment that is equitable and sustainable for all workers irrespective of their gender identity. However, in balancing women and men in the working environment worker's unions have a key role to play as argued in this study in supporting more participation to help modify the pay gap. Thus, the limitation of this study is that only three women managers in a communication organization were interviewed which thus may not be generalized in this context. These samples may be small but for the methodological option for this study, it is relevant to obtain detailed stories of participants in relation to the overarching of the study. The idea is to understand their stories and experiences about topics of career paths and the issue of equal pay as experienced by senior managers. However, the findings further suggest the need to use a larger dataset and/or sample size of junior and middle management women workers in public and private sectors and a mixed methods approach to have holistic views of how organizations are implementing employment equity acts in relation to career advancement and equal pay.

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