Challenges to achieve the Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The gender wage gap exists in South Africa because men outnumber women. Women’s standing compared to men shows this. Gender equality requires equal opportunities and resources for women and men. Sustainable Development Goal 5 addresses gender equality. This article examines social, economic, political, institutional, and other factors that hinder SDG 5’s implementation in South Africa to highlight gender inequality’s challenges. The study employed qualitative desktop analysis to acquire data. To learn about gender and related terminology, the literature was reviewed. The literature review required reading journal articles, books, research papers, newspapers, websites, government documents, and acts. The results show that institutional and legal frameworks have been used to address gender equality in the nation. Despite equal prospects for men and women, prejudice against women exists, especially in the workplace. Uneven opportunity, underrepresentation, and gender bias are examples. The findings show that gender equality in South African national, provincial, and municipal institutions requires political, financial, institutional, and capacity-building resources. The essay offers SDG 5 strategies.

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Introduction

The importance of women’s involvement in development processes has been emphasized by international organizations and advocates for gender equality (Beall, 2005, as cited in Todes, Sithole, & Williamson, 2010:72). The underlying justification is in the fact that Sustainable Development Goal 5 places significant emphasis on the imperative to advance gender equality across all governmental policies, initiatives, and projects. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this particular SDG cannot be considered in isolation. The concept of gender has the potential to intersect with and impact all other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SDG 1 endeavors to mitigate poverty and is influenced by gender-based requirements, societal duties, and economic contributions. Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) seeks to eradicate hunger and is intricately connected to gender-related disparities in labor market participation and household income. SDG 3, which aims to promote health and well-being, is influenced by gender-based roles within households. SDG 4 aims to enhance the provision of education of high quality and emphasizes the need for gender-inclusive educational opportunities in order to enhance household economies. SDG 5 is intrinsically connected to the enhancement of gender equality and is of utmost importance in the integration of gender perspectives into all governmental policies and activities. The sixth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 6), which pertains to water and sanitation, encompasses a domain that has historically been associated with gender-specific roles. Consequently, the inclusion of women’s participation in this context is of utmost significance and should not be disregarded. SDG 7 places significant emphasis on energy, an area that has historically been associated with gender-segregated roles within households. Consequently, it is imperative to ensure gender-inclusive engagement in energy-related policies and activities. Sustainable Development Goal 8 aims to foster employment and stimulate economic growth, while also emphasizing the need for gender-inclusive opportunities to enhance economic outcomes at the family, community, and national
levels. SDG 9 is associated with the advancement of industry, innovation, and infrastructure, hence initiating a discourse on the provision of digital-oriented training initiatives for women as a means to mitigate gender disparities. Additionally, the implementation of this initiative will result in the creation of employment prospects specifically for women, thereby exerting a favorable influence on the economy. The primary objective of Sustainable Development Goal 10 is to address and mitigate gender-based disparities, thereby facilitating enhanced access to employment and fostering possibilities for personal and societal development. SDG 11, which aims to foster the development of sustainable and intelligent urban areas, exhibits an interconnection with SDG 9, wherein technological initiatives addressing gender disparities might potentially contribute to the attainment of four IR objectives and have favorable outcomes in terms of service provision. SDG 12 pertains to the domains of consumption and production, which, when examined through a gendered lens, have the potential to aid households in effectively controlling their expenditures and so enhancing their monthly economic foundation. SDG 13 aims to address the challenges associated with climate change, while SDG 14 focuses on the preservation and sustainable use of marine resources. SDG 15 is dedicated to the conservation and sustainable management of terrestrial ecosystems. SDG 16 seeks to promote peace, justice, and the establishment of effective and accountable institutions. Lastly, SDG 17 emphasizes the importance of partnerships in achieving the goals, particularly in relation to gender inclusion. Women globally are actively involved in addressing these matters, and it is imperative to promote and support their engagement within specific national settings.

The incorporation of gender considerations across all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of decision-making processes. As highlighted by Beall (2005, as cited in Todes et al., 2010:72), such inclusion can lead to a transformation of power relations and the implementation of policies and programs that are sensitive to gender issues. The author acknowledges the limitations of the current study in providing a comprehensive analysis of the interconnections between SDG 5 and all 16 SDGs. Subsequent papers will investigate the aforementioned connections within the context of the longitudinal study.

In spite of the ongoing global efforts to promote Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), women persist in experiencing marginalization in terms of their representation in strategic positions and leadership positions. Moreover, individuals belonging to this group frequently encounter restrictions on their participation in political activities, face barriers to obtaining bureaucratic positions, and experience underrepresentation in decision-making procedures. The issues stem from a deficiency in familial support to enhance self-esteem and confidence, the necessity to incorporate considerations in human resource protocols for the recruitment of individuals in strategic positions, endeavors to enhance competence and knowledge through capacity-building initiatives, the allocation of resources to enhance talent, the presence of political determination to establish quotas for equitable representation, and adherence to legal frameworks that advocate for equal representation.

In the South African context, women have played a crucial role in providing support for two separate forms of resistance. Initially, their actions were essential in fostering opposition to the capitalist regime during the period of apartheid. Additionally, women have also been involved in the liberation movements, although these movements were primarily spearheaded by male leaders. The Apartheid regime imposed considerable influence on women in South Africa, encompassing African, white, colored, and Indian populations, albeit with various levels of intensity. The aforementioned women formed a collective front to oppose the authoritarian government (Qoboshiyana, 2011:3–4; as referenced in Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2014:103; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023a:415). Dr. De Matos Ala (2012) posits that within the cultural environment, there exists an enduring preservation of the patriarchal status quo (as stated in Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2014; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023a). There is a contention that in order to bring about substantial changes, it is necessary to aggressively confront the fundamental mindset that sustains gender discrimination. This can be achieved through various methods, including engaging in debates, executing media campaigns, and promoting education.

Additional challenges to achieving gender-based participation in participatory and representative positions encompass inequitable social dynamics, male hegemony, customary norms, and the sway of traditional leaders (Beall, 2005, as cited in Todes et al., 2010:73). McEwan (2003:7) emphasizes the importance of identifying effective ways for acquiring resources that can support women, especially in light of the prevailing inequalities in resource distribution based on race, ethnicity, and gender. The existing inequitable framework requires a reorientation of policies and initiatives, whereby a gender-biased approach is replaced with a gender-based one. This transition will enhance the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5.

The South African government has signed and approved various international agreements that aim to promote and uphold gender equality. These treaties include the following: The text refers to various international agreements and declarations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union (AU) Heads of States' Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Heads of States' Declaration on Gender and Development and its Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children, and the Commonwealth Plan of Action (PoA) on Gender Equality (2005-2015) (Bangani, 2019:40). The regional dialogue organized by the UN Women's Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) focused on the African Union (AU) and the Agenda 2063 strategy framework for socio-economic development in Africa, aiming to ensure the effective implementation of these protocols (UN Women, 2023b:1; as cited in Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023a:414). The purpose of the consultation was to promote gender equality and empower women, implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063, and propose
effective strategies within different developmental frameworks to enhance accountability (UN Women, 2023b:2; as cited in Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023a:414).

In the South African context, there is observable evidence of the country's efforts to combat gender disparity through various statutory frameworks, which are outlined as follows: The legal framework of South Africa comprises several key statutes, including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; the Labour Relations Act of 1995; the Employment Equity Act of 1998; the Skills Development Act of 1998; the Skills Development Levies Act of 1999; and the Public Service Regulations of 2001. The policy frameworks encompassed in this analysis consist of the National Skills Development Strategy of 2001, the Draft National Programme of Action on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality 2005–2015, and Gender Mainstreaming in the South African Public Service 2006. Furthermore, it is worth noting that there exists a legislative proposal known as the Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2015. Moreover, Chapter 3 of the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2001, as referenced by Vyas-Doorgapersad (2023:415), is also of significance in this context. Nevertheless, the extent to which these legislative frameworks have been put into practice is a subject that requires additional examination.

The study places significant emphasis on elucidating the manifestation of inequalities within the South African context, with particular attention given to the local level. This approach aims to foster a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. According to Vyas-Doorgapersad (2015:122, as referenced in Bangani, 2019:99–100, and subsequently modified by Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023b:2062), there has been a lack of gender responsiveness in the formulation and implementation of plans and policies. The authors have failed to take into account the multifaceted gender roles assumed by individuals of different genders, and have also neglected to address the existing gender inequalities that persist in contemporary society. Hence, the participation of women in the development process is constrained due to the oversight of their specific needs and marginalized position within society by development planning and policymaking. According to Hicks and Buccus (2012:38; cited in Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023b:2062), the absence of political participation and involvement in local government entities in South Africa is a noteworthy political factor that contributes to challenges related to gender inequality.

Several factors contribute to the challenges faced by South Africa's general and public service. These include social factors, such as stereotypical attitudes; economic factors, such as poverty resulting from limited access to education and training; political factors, such as a lack of political will; technological factors, such as a lack of opportunities for IT-based capacity-building; and institutional factors, such as a lack of gender mainstreaming policies. (Malesa & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023) During the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), held from March 15–26, 2021, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, the Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities, emphasized the continued significance of gender equality in realizing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Given the limited timeframe of nine years remaining, it is imperative to actively promote women's participation in the workforce. The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) was established in 2021, as mentioned in the work by Malesa and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2023).

The transition of South Africa to a liberal democracy has been widely regarded as a notable example of effective governance, particularly in relation to its endeavors to promote gender equity. Nevertheless, the actualities pertaining to the experiences of women in South Africa have shown to be considerably intricate and contradictory, in contrast to the country's well-acclaimed reputation (Beall, 2005:9). This phenomenon is especially prevalent within the realm of municipal governance. Two salient factors emerge that are of specific pertinence to the location. In Southern Africa, similar to other regions, women have encountered challenges at the local level that are linked to the establishment of local relationships and power dynamics, specifically the influence of traditional authorities. These challenges primarily revolve around land ownership (Whitehead & Tzikata, 2003, as cited in Beall, 2005:9), as well as the consolidation of the role of these authorities within local governance structures. Another element pertains to the concept of decentralization and its correlation with the influence of neoliberalism in the region of Southern Africa. The trends observed in South Africa in this context exhibit similarities to and reflect the effects of structural adjustment measures in the region. Both sets of challenges hinder the realization of a democratic decentralization process that will effectively promote gender equality over a long period of time (Beall, 2005:9).

According to Tshishonga and Mafema (2011:55), the omission of the unequal gender division of labor and the added burden faced by impoverished women due to limited access to resources is a common oversight in critiques of neo-liberalism. This omission also extends to the neglect of the struggles for gender equality, which are often intertwined with those for racial and economic equality. This observation is supported by Bennett's work in 2009. According to Tshishonga and Mafema (2011:62), who reference Walsh (2007), it is emphasized that in the context of South Africa, neo-liberalism is deeply rooted in racial and gender oppressions. These oppressions are manifested in the manner in which class is constructed in the post-apartheid era. According to Tshishonga and Mafema (2011:67), it may be argued that the variations in regional settings have a significant impact on the complexities surrounding women's responsibilities. The assertion posits that the establishment of neo-liberal policies contributes to the perpetuation of gendered roles instead of promoting gender emancipation.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was unanimously endorsed by all Member States of the United Nations in 2015. This comprehensive framework outlines a collective strategy to promote peace and prosperity for both humanity and the environment, encompassing present and future generations. The core of the initiative consists of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which serve as a pressing need for collective action by nations across the globe, encompassing both developed and developing
countries (UN, 2023a:1). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020, as stated in Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2022:266), the interconnection of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is evident, as they together aim to achieve objectives related to environmental sustainability and socio-economic development. The present investigation centers only on SDG 5, which pertains especially to the promotion of gender equality, and examines its progress within the South African context.

The MGE approach, also known as gender mainstreaming, is a contemporary development technique that specifically targets women. Gender mainstreaming is a comprehensive approach that aims to incorporate and solve gender-related concerns and considerations across all levels of society, including political and programmatic domains. The roots of this event may be traced back to the year 1995, namely to the 4th United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing, China (CN2 Collins, 2013, as referenced in Nhlapo, 2020:154). During the conference, a consensus was reached among 189 state leaders that the incorporation of both genders in all development initiatives is vital for achieving success and advancing a nation's economic growth and development (CN2 Collins, 2013, as referenced in Nhlapo, 2020:154). The concept of Mainstreaming Gender Equality (MGE) originated during the latter part of the 1990s. It centers on the endeavors of women's groups at the local, national, and worldwide levels to methodically include gender considerations into many aspects of society, politics, programs, and development initiatives (Martinez, 2012, as referenced in Nhlapo, 2020:154). This paper examines the theoretical framework of MGE, which encompasses a range of tactics aimed at facilitating the equal and active involvement of both men and women.

Following the introductory section, the subsequent segment of the paper undertakes a comprehensive examination of the theoretical and empirical literature. Subsequently, it proceeds to analyze the challenges associated with gender disparity, both in a broader sense and within specific situations. The subsequent section provides an explanation of the methodology, which is thereafter followed by a discussion of the qualitative findings of the study. The final segment provides recommendations for enhancement and highlights potential avenues for future investigation.

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical and Conceptual Background**

The section compiles information on gender equality and SDG 5 in detail.

**Conceptual and theoretical framework**

Gender, according to Bolich (2007:15), is the act of categorizing people into groups and assigning labels to them based on their age, as well as their gender (male and female). Gender equality is attained, in accordance with Kock, Iry, and Brown (2002:188), when men and women share the qualities and opportunities that society values most, to the extent that jobs, roles, activities, and accomplishments are no longer differentiated based on gender, and when gender stereotyping in decision-making is eliminated. Gender equality, for Vyas-Doorgapersad (2018b:10-11), is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, and this includes economic participation and decision making. It is about the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men [being] equally valued and favoured. Gender mainstreaming, according to Verloo (2001, cited in Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2017:104; Bangani 2019:18), “constitutes a clear example of policy succession or policy adaptation, prompted by the desire to overcome the limitations of existing policies, and the need to respond to a changed policy environment”. This explanation is supported by Daly (2005, cited in Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2017:104; Bangani, 2019:19), who highlights that “the primary objective of the gender mainstreaming approach is to institutionalise equality by embedding gender-sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes, and environment of public policy”.

On “the occasion of the General Debate of the 66th Session of the General Assembly held in September 2011, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon highlighted in his Report “We the Peoples”, the crucial role of gender equality as driver of development progress, recognizing that the potential of women had not been fully realized, owing to, inter alia, persistent social, economic and political inequalities” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2023:1). However, “gender inequalities are still deep-rooted in every society. Women suffer from lack of access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. In many situations, they are denied access to basic education and health care and are victims of violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes” (UNDESA, 2023:1). “International commitments to advance gender equality have brought about improvements [whereby] women’s representation in the political arena is higher than ever before. But the promise of a world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality, and where all legal, social, and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed, remains unfulfilled (UNDESA, 2023: 1-2).

To improve the situation, “the vital role of women and the need for their full and equal participation and leadership in all areas of sustainable development was reaffirmed in the Future We Want (paragraph 236-244), as well as in the Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals. Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals. The proposed Sustainable Development Goal 5 addresses this and reads ‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’” (UNDESA, 2023:2). Additionally, it is important to note that the attainment of other SDGs is also impacted by gender disparity, SDG 5. It’s critical to comprehend how SDG 5 connects to both Agenda 2030 and the National Development Plan. The SDGs and their objectives are “integrated and indivisible,” according to the UN (UN, 2015b:14). For the other SDGs to be achieved, one SDG must be successful (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023:1). Governments recognize the need of creating efficient, accountable, and
inclusive public institutions via Agenda 2030 to make societies more peaceful, prosperous, egalitarian, and sustainable (UN, 2017:8). Women are viewed as facilitators for creating a more just and sustainable economy and society for all, and gender equality is seen as a transformative force (UN, 2017:8).

**Gender equality overview in South Africa**

South Africa has a history of institutional racism whereby rights and opportunities depended on race and gender. Socio-cultural theories defined women as inferior to men and regarded them as minors in the private and public spheres of life. This historical patriarchy influenced formal and informal human relationships and the opportunities accorded to women in the workplace (Hendrickse, 2004 cited in Vyasa-Doorgapersad, 2018:a:122; Bangani, 2019:94; Vyasa-Doorgapersad 2023:412). A woman's exclusion from politics has historically been predicated on her gender, color, and class. Long after legal apartheid was abolished, South Africa's apartheid regime had already established a rural and urban environment of racial disparity, as emphasized by Kusambizi-Kiini (2018:33). In South Africa, segregation laws separated Whites from Blacks, Indians, and Colored people. A lack of basic infrastructure and services further split black people into several ethnic groupings. Particularly African women were compelled to live in rural regions due to lack of access to economic, educational, and health services, as stated by Chagunda (2004:29). The fight for independence and their constitutional rights, however, was led by South African women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds in their respective communities.

The Government in South Africa is trying to reduce inequalities, hence adopted a framework called National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP in its Executive Summary (RSA, 2012:33, cited in Jansen, 2023:109) propose the following actions to advance gender equality: expansion of public employment; active participation and empowerment of women in the transformation of the economy; active support of women as leaders in all sectors of society; addressing the educational, social, religious and cultural barriers to women who wish to enter the job market; early childhood education will assist with the freeing of women from doing unpaid work; free from gender based crime; security of tenure for female communal farmers; nutrition intervention programmes; offering of microbicides to women older and the expansion of antiretroviral treatment of all HIV-positive people.

However, the reality is that the implementation status of these action plans is still a matter of assessment. SDG 5 is definitely not fully realised and the causes are discussed in the subsequent section. Note that the SDGs are ambitious global targets. Each government sets its own national targets guided by the global target and taking into consideration the specific circumstances of the country (UN, 2015b:14). The targets should be incorporated into national strategies, policies and planning processes taking into consideration the link between sustainable development and the continuing practices in the economic and social arenas of the specific country (UN, 2015b:14).

**Frameworks to support gender equality**

Various legislative frameworks are established to promote gender equality at global level, whereby member states are obligated to implement the arrangements in their country-specific contexts.

The UN General Assembly in 1979 adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and is generally described as the international bill of rights for women (UN, 2009:1). The Convention consists of thirty articles, describing what is regarded as discrimination against women and included an agenda for national action to end such discrimination (UN, 2009:1). CEDAW provided the basis for recognising gender equality by ensuring equal access to opportunities in political and public life as well as health, education, and employment (UN, 2009:1).


Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted during the Fourth World Conference on Women of the UN in 1995 (UN, n.d.), was held in Beijing. By recognizing that women have an equal voice in economic, social, cultural, and political decision-making, the Beijing Declaration sought to eliminate all obstacles to their full involvement in all spheres of public and private life (UN, n.d.). Governments were urged to take strategic action in twelve key areas of concern, including women and poverty, education and training for women, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, women’s human rights, and women and the media. The declaration reaffirmed that gender equality is a fundamental human right and a precondition for social justice (UN, n.d.).

In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals launched a global initiative (UNDP, 2023:2). A concerted effort will be needed to reach the most disadvantaged people, according to the Millennium Development Goals Report (UN, 2015a:8), even if substantial progress has been made toward the MDG objectives. Uneven representation in private and public decision-making, discrimination in access to employment and financial resources, the likelihood that women will experience poverty more frequently than men, and gender inequality all contributed to the continued challenges that women faced (UN, 2015a:8).

Because it was a 20-year follow-up to the goals established at the 1992 summit, the UN summit on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), which was held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, is often referred to as the Rio+20. Building on the MDGs, which converged with the post-2015 development agenda, this conference voted to start a process to create the SDGs (UN Sustainable Development
Knowledge Platform, 2022). Gender equality is reinforced as a component of human rights and the improvement of gender equality, women's empowerment, and equal opportunity in the vision statement of The Future We Want (UN, 2012:2). Political pledges about the significance of achieving gender equality and the significance of including women in sustainable development policies, programs, and decision-making were reaffirmed (UN, 2012:8-9, 11).

Various frameworks were established in South Africa to address the worldwide need for gender equality and as a real commitment to achieving SDG 5. The Commission on Gender Equality, the Office on the Status of Women, and the Parliamentary Joint Monitoring Committee have all been formed by the South African government as institutional mechanisms for the mainstreaming of gender (Vyass-Doorgapersad, 2018a:119). However, despite of these supportive arrangements, there are varied forms of challenges that hamper the implementation of gender equality, hence negatively impact on the realisation of SDG 5. These challenges are discussed below in South African context, considered as a locus of the study.

### Challenges hampering gender equality

According to the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (2014:8) getting respectable job, or better still, adequate employment rights, is still difficult for women. Men are still paid more than women for doing the same job even though there are pay discrepancies between the sexes in the public sector, economic inequality, and uneven access to opportunities. Men continue to have greater opportunities than women to advance in their careers. Women are restricted to employment and opportunities that are poorly paid and have subpar working conditions due to gender-based discrimination and segregation. This has shown that, regardless of ethnicity, men have an advantage over women in the job market. In comparison to males, women also have less access to resources such as money, time, support, and proper knowledge.

Challenges are also witnessed and recorded at the local government level. Political parties are simply not proactive about altering their nature and promoting greater participation of women in local government, which is why most political parties are dominated by men and lack the desire to expand the participation of women. The number of women holding positions of authority within local government has declined because of the electoral process being rife with corruption, violence, and assaults on the dignity of individual candidates. Other political causes include the lack of accountability and transparency in municipal finances and affairs, which has led to a decline in the public's regard for municipalities and their standing, respect, and trustworthiness (United Nations Habitat, 2008:45; Jansen, 2023:93). Additionally, Budlender (2011:17; Jansen, 2023:93) claims that political elements that contribute to the issues of gender inequality in local government include a lack of openness and accountability in municipal affairs and finances, which has cost municipalities credibility, respect, and prestige in the eyes of the public. Political parties are controlled by men; thus, they lack the motivation to enhance the involvement of women. Political parties also aren't doing enough to alter their ways and encourage more women to serve in local administration. Corruption, violence, and assaults on women's self-esteem are rampant during local government elections, which has resulted in a drop in the number of women who hold leadership roles in local government.

Mbambe (2015:59) examines the intricate relationships between personal and communal capacities, as well as how they influence how women are seen to be under-empowered. The significance of women in municipalities is highlighted in traditional methods to capacity building, which also address the unique difficulties women experience in positions of decision-making in local government. Building capacity is crucial for women who are or will be candidates. Women politicians often struggle to get their voices heard because they are not given enough time for discussions and debates, and once elected, they are not given the chance to serve on important committees or in important positions. As a result, one of the biggest problems in municipalities is the lack of initiative to build capacity.

Women are sometimes discouraged from running for leadership positions in government due to the lack of support from their families. Most civilizations still allow males to have significant authority and influence over their women, and most of the time they forbid them from assuming these roles since doing so would appear to be a challenge to the man of the home (Nandhego, 2018:np). The prevalence of gender-based violence, assault and abuse has forced the nation to look for practical answers since the problem affects women, children, and the weakest members of society. Landsberg, Kruger & Swart (2019) alludes that because of poverty-related stressors such as domestic violence and substance misuse, violence and poverty are connected. Because of this, domestic violence is a significant impediment to human rights and national progress. (Landsberg et al., 2019). Within communities and organizations, there are socioeconomic traditions that support the primacy of masculinity (Myers, Carney, Johnson, Browne & Wechsberg, 2020:1). Sarkodie & Adams (2020:2) suggest that women are prevented from having the chance to empower themselves via pursuing educational or professional possibilities because of the social stigma associated with women's roles in society.

### Research and Methodology

The study is based on qualitative research that Rahman (2016:104, cited in Malesa, 2023:11) defines it as, an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. The information is compiled through literature review. Literature reviews “are designed to provide an overview of sources explored while researching a particular topic and to demonstrate to readers how research fits within a larger field of study” (Labaree, 2009:1, cited in Ncamphalala, 2019:16–17; Sibiya, 2023:8). The information is analysed through conceptual analysis (also referred as concept analysis). According to Furner (2006:233, cited in Sibiya, 2023:8), “conceptual analysis is a technique that treats concepts as classes of objects, events, properties, or
relationships. The method involves precisely defining the meaning of a given concept by identifying and specifying the conditions under which any entity or phenomenon is (or could be) classified under the concept in question”. Hansen (2006:63, cited in Malesa, 2023:13) believes that additional advantages from concept analysis are provided to researchers working on the concept in the future. Concept analysis first aids the investigator in comprehending the fundamental characteristics of the concept. Second, concept analysis aids in defining the concept's nature, characteristics, and differences. Lastly, concept analysis identifies the notion's causes and effects.

Findings and Discussions

Most women activists migrated from local to central level after the first non-racial democratic elections in 1994, leaving a void without preparing any additional women for community work or politics. The political parties currently determine the participation of women in politics. Majola (2019:282) suggests three methods that may be used to boost the number of women who are members of political parties. First, when women are seriously considered for political office and are represented at all levels by political party leadership. In addition to providing tools to help them, they also prepare female candidates for representation and involvement. The quota system is also used to provide women a voice in choices made in various organisations.

The creation of capacity-building programs for both the political and administrative spheres should go hand in hand with initiatives aimed at addressing the unique difficulties women confront in positions of decision-making within local governments. Enhancing women's abilities will essentially increase their political visibility, have an effect on council choices, and also provide them with the chance to share their experiences through organizations, networks, and unofficial groups (Hammer, 2002:13). Family, coworkers, local organizations, and political parties should all support and cooperate with women. Lack of a base of support can cause female politicians to lose hope and perhaps quit, which would restore the status quo. By giving them knowledge that will be useful as they carry out their political duties, elected officials may support women. Support might result in the establishment of a collaboration between and women in local government decision-making bodies (Mbambwe, 2015:50).

According to the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (2015:54) [all levels of] government [national, provincial, local] should prioritize women's participation in the yearly budgeting process, create budgets that strongly reflect the needs of women, and provide greater funding for programmes that advance gender equality. Mputing (2015:np) added that the government may improve gender equality by using gender-responsive budgeting in its planning, programming, and budgeting processes. This method will make it possible to identify and consider the interventions that are required to address sector-specific policies, plans, and budgets in local government (Mputing 2015:np). The impetus behind the gender budgeting process in [all levels of] government may be maintained via budgetary allocation linkages between Parliament, nonprofit groups, academia, and the media, among others. [All levels of government] may increasingly prepare their budgets for future preferences using gender budgeting (Maseko, 2013:48).

Through review of literature, it is realised that to improve the skills of women, it is essential to provide them with suitable training opportunities. For government departments to teach women to do technology-based work, digitalized platforms, structures, and procedures must be established. Departments must help women develop their technological skills so they can fulfill the needs of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), which are more worldwide. This arrangement must form part of gender-based human resource management. To achieve this goal, departments must do a skills analysis to determine where men and women have competency gaps and must then provide the necessary training to close those gaps. The examination of skills must be done at every level of management, including the lower, medium, and top levels, as well as at every horizontal level, which includes all departments and units. As a post-training evaluation, performance reviews must include a section on the knowledge and competency application. This structure must be included in a gender-based performance management system... performance areas (KPAs) and key performance indicators (KPIs), which evaluate managers’ portfolios, must be integrated with the training and capacity-building efforts. With this setup, line managers will be sure to provide these initiatives to the female employees in their departments and units. This arrangement must be incorporated into gender-based organizational development strategy.

In addition, to ensure progress toward gender equality, the Gender Policy Framework suggests using monitoring and assessment performance indicators. It suggests creating indicators to use in monitoring development. (Office on the Status of Women [OSW], 2001:48). These performance indicators will assess the difficulties women face in [all levels of] government, including their involvement in political decision-making, their admission to improved professional opportunities for employment, training programs for women to run for political office, and how many public works tender programs have been awarded to women, among other things (OSW, 2002:48). By putting such indicators in place, [all levels of] government will be able to assess the success of its programmes, policies, and projects promoting gender equality (OSW, 2001:48).

The practical strategies and methods encompassed by the MGE approach (gender mainstreaming) that could foster gender inclusion in development processes are suggested by UN Women (2023a). Actions that result in a positive change in policies, strategies, or approaches, advocacy campaigns, legislation, research and other analytical work, statistics—greater sex disaggregation, improved gender analysis of data, or identifying gaps in the data base—development of indicators and improved monitoring, medium-term plans and budgets, procedures, and processes—could all be considered good practices for gender mainstreaming, as suggested by UN Women (2023a:1). The establishment of a gender unit or focal point with a clear mandate and the resources necessary to promote
and support mainstreaming, the development of guidelines, manuals, and other tools, the development of management commitment to mainstreaming, and other organizational changes suggested by UN Women (2023a:2) could also be included in a good practice example. Changes made to create national settings supportive of the implementation of the mainstreaming plan can also be documented as good practice examples, as recommended by UN Women (2023a:2). These could include giving line ministries mainstreaming training and strengthening the ability of the national machinery to promote mainstreaming (UN Women 2023a:2).

Conclusions
The research examined the GMA approach, which served as the theoretical framework for the study, and provided a comprehensive definition of the concept of 'gender equality'. The data collected in this study was intended to provide a significant framework for understanding the concept of gender equality. The study placed significant emphasis on the diverse range of international agreements that South Africa has ratified. Consequently, the nation has implemented various legislative frameworks in order to conform to worldwide gender equality criteria within a domestic context. The research encompassed a diverse array of social, economic, political, cultural, religious, and traditional obstacles hindering the achievement of gender equality in South Africa. Gender equality is of utmost importance as it facilitates the inclusion of women in various political endeavors and affords them opportunities to assume leadership roles within governmental institutions. The comprehensive implementation of the commission for gender equality across all government departments is needed as a basic legislative measure to effectively attain gender equality in all relevant domains. Departments who fail to adhere to this rule should face significant consequences in order to ensure its comprehensive enforcement. The South African government has implemented various policy measures to advance gender equality. These include the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Public Service Act, No. 103 of 1994; Commission on Gender Equality Act, No. 39 of 1996; Basic Conditions of Employment Act, No. 75 of 1997; The Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998; Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, No. 4 of 2000; White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995; White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service, 1998; the South African National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality; and the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality Within the Public Service. These frameworks are designed with the objective of advancing the principles of fairness and equality in the treatment of both genders, while also seeking to enhance the political representation and influence of women. The pursuit of democracy in South Africa during the apartheid era was characterized by significant sacrifices made by individuals of both genders, who fought together in their collective endeavor for universal liberation. In the era following the dismantling of apartheid, there is a notable tendency for men to consistently outperform women, particularly in positions of high visibility and influence. In order to effectively work towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 5, it is imperative that political and bureaucratic office-bearers possess a shared vision and a well-defined strategy for the future of communities. This collaborative approach is essential in order to reach a common purpose.

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