


GENDER PAY-GAP: UTILISING MULTIVARIATE APPROACH TO UNDERSTAND THE CAUSES OF UNEQUAL PAY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received November, 01st 2023</p> <p>Accepted January, 31th 2024</p>	<p>Purpose: The gender pay gap in South Africa has greatly reduced since the implementation of the Employment Equity Act in 1998. However, there is still a pay gap that cannot be sufficiently explained and addressed by government leaders and scholars. Scholars, policymakers, the radical left, and feminists have carefully highlighted and addressed what is considered to be the major causes, such as segregation of women, women's stereotypes, marginalization of women, wage penalties due to time away from work, child nurturing responsibilities given to women, and inequality in salaries and remunerations. However, the World Bank reported that from 2007 on, the gender pay gap in South Africa was no longer showing any sign of reduction. It was stagnant and thereafter oscillating. As such the purpose of this research is to investigate the causes of the stagnation and the oscillation, and to provide recommendations.</p> <p>Theoretical Framework: This research used multivariate analysis theory to make further contributions on the causes of gender pay inequality in South Africa in order to address the stagnation and oscillation of the existing pay gap.</p> <p>Design/Methodology/Approach: The research method used is qualitative approach. The research design comprises men and women who are already in the work industry in both private and public sector.</p> <p>Findings: This research found that gender pay gap in South Africa is caused by women's family-career crisis as a main contributor, followed by interests and personality traits, equality of opportunity and career selection.</p> <p>Research Implications: This research paper gives light to further research in Women's family-career crisis as it seems to be the major contributor to gender pay gap in South Africa. The assessment of how impactful family-career crisis is on gender pay gap is also essential in order to understand the magnitude of it on gender pay gap in South Africa.</p> <p>Originality/Value: This research paper found significant causes of gender pay gap such as 'family career-crisis' that shows to heavily contribute to the gender pay in South Africa. This might further give clarity to the governments on the existence of gender pay gap. Moreover this research may help in redefining the government policies on the approach of gender pay gap.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p>Gender Pay-Gap; Women; Men; South Africa; Multivariate Analysis.</p> <div data-bbox="172 1025 475 1272" style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<p>Doi: https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2024.v9i2.3304</p>

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**SALÁRIO DESIGUAL ENTRE HOMENS E MULHERES: USANDO A ABORDAGEM
MULTIVARIADA PARA ENTENDER AS CAUSAS DA DESIGUALDADE SALARIAL ENTRE
HOMENS E MULHERES NA ÁFRICA DO SUL**

RESUMO

Objetivo: A disparidade salarial entre homens e mulheres na África do Sul diminuiu consideravelmente desde a implementação da Lei da Equidade no Emprego, em 1998. No entanto, ainda há uma diferença salarial que não pode ser suficientemente explicada e abordada por líderes governamentais e acadêmicos. Estudiosos, formuladores de políticas, a esquerda radical e feministas têm destacado cuidadosamente e abordado o que é considerado como as principais causas, como a segregação das mulheres, estereótipos femininos, marginalização das mulheres, multas salariais devido ao tempo de afastamento do trabalho, responsabilidades de educação infantil dadas às mulheres, e desigualdade em salários e remunerações. No entanto, o Banco Mundial informou que, a partir de 2007, as disparidades salariais entre homens e mulheres na África do Sul já não mostravam sinais de redução. Ele estava estagnado e, em seguida, oscilando. Como tal, o objetivo desta pesquisa é investigar as causas da estagnação e da oscilação e fornecer recomendações.

Estrutura Teórica: Esta pesquisa usou a teoria da análise multivariada para fazer mais contribuições sobre as causas da desigualdade salarial de gênero na África do Sul, a fim de abordar a estagnação e oscilação da diferença salarial existente.

Design/Methodologia/Abordagem: O método de pesquisa utilizado é a abordagem qualitativa. O desenho da pesquisa compreende homens e mulheres que já estão na indústria do trabalho, tanto no setor privado como no setor público.

Constatações: Esta pesquisa descobriu que as disparidades salariais entre homens e mulheres na África do Sul são causadas pela crise de carreira familiar das mulheres como principal contribuinte, seguidas de interesses e traços de personalidade, igualdade de oportunidades e seleção de carreira.

Implicações da Investigação: Este documento de investigação dá luz a uma maior investigação sobre a crise da carreira familiar das mulheres, uma vez que parece ser o principal contribuinte para as disparidades salariais entre homens e mulheres na África do Sul. A avaliação do impacto da crise das carreiras familiares nas disparidades salariais entre homens e mulheres é também essencial para compreender a sua magnitude nas disparidades salariais entre homens e mulheres na África do Sul.

Originalidade/Valor: Este documento de investigação encontrou causas significativas de disparidades salariais entre homens e mulheres, como a "crise de carreira familiar", que mostra que contribui fortemente para a remuneração entre homens e mulheres na África do Sul. Esta situação poderá contribuir para esclarecer os governos sobre a existência de disparidades salariais entre homens e mulheres. Além disso, esta investigação pode ajudar a redefinir as políticas governamentais sobre a abordagem das disparidades salariais entre homens e mulheres.

Palavras-chave: Diferença Salarial de Gênero, Mulheres, Homens, África do Sul, Análise Multivariada.

**BRECHA SALARIAL DE GÉNERO: UTILIZANDO UN ENFOQUE MULTIVARIADO PARA
ENTENDER LAS CAUSAS DE LA DESIGUALDAD SALARIAL ENTRE HOMBRES Y MUJERES EN
SUDÁFRICA**

RESUMEN

Propósito: La brecha salarial entre hombres y mujeres en Sudáfrica se ha reducido considerablemente desde la aplicación de la Ley de equidad en el empleo en 1998. Sin embargo, todavía existe una brecha salarial que los líderes gubernamentales y los académicos no pueden explicar ni abordar de manera suficiente. Académicas, responsables de políticas, la izquierda radical y feministas han destacado y abordado cuidadosamente lo que se considera que son las causas principales, como la segregación de las mujeres, los estereotipos de las mujeres, la marginación de las mujeres, las sanciones salariales por ausentarse del trabajo, las responsabilidades de crianza de los hijos dadas a las mujeres y la desigualdad en los salarios y remuneraciones. Sin embargo, el Banco Mundial informó de que, a partir de 2007, la diferencia salarial entre hombres y mujeres en Sudáfrica ya no mostraba ningún signo de reducción. Estaba estancada y luego oscilaba. Como tal, el propósito de esta investigación es investigar las causas del estancamiento y la oscilación, y ofrecer recomendaciones.

Marco Teórico: Esta investigación utilizó la teoría del análisis multivariado para hacer nuevas contribuciones sobre las causas de la desigualdad salarial de género en Sudáfrica con el fin de abordar el estancamiento y la oscilación de la brecha salarial existente.

Diseño/Methodología/Enfoque: El método de investigación utilizado es el enfoque cualitativo. El diseño de la investigación incluye a hombres y mujeres que ya están en la industria del trabajo, tanto en el sector privado como en el público.

Hallazgos: Esta investigación encontró que la brecha salarial de género en Sudáfrica es causada por la crisis de la carrera familiar de la mujer como principal contribuyente, seguida por los intereses y rasgos de personalidad, la igualdad de oportunidades y la selección de carrera.

Implicaciones de la Investigación: Este trabajo de investigación da luz a más investigaciones sobre la crisis de la carrera familiar de la mujer, ya que parece ser el principal contribuyente a la brecha salarial de género en Sudáfrica. La evaluación de la incidencia de la crisis de la carrera familiar en la brecha salarial de género también es esencial para comprender la magnitud de la misma en la brecha salarial de género en Sudáfrica.

Originalidad/Valor: Este trabajo de investigación encontró causas significativas de la brecha salarial de género, como la 'crisis de carrera familiar', que muestra contribuir fuertemente a la remuneración de género en Sudáfrica. Esto podría aclarar aún más a los gobiernos la existencia de diferencias salariales entre los géneros. Además, esta investigación puede ayudar a redefinir las políticas gubernamentales sobre el enfoque de las diferencias salariales entre los géneros

Palabras clave: Brecha Salarial de Género, Mujeres, Hombres, Sudáfrica, Análisis Multivariado.

INTRODUCTION

During the apartheid era in South Africa, gender inequality was the norm, as men and women were not given the opportunity to perform the same tasks or be involved in the same activities (Sait & Bogopa, 2021). Moreover, women were harshly discouraged from seeking employment, both by the apartheid laws and the African cultural norms and values that viewed the fundamental purpose of a woman as child nurturing and family care. As such, employment and job seeking were left to a male person. The only form of employment that was readily available for women, more specifically black women, was domestic work and other household-related occupations (Anderson, 2000). From the 1960s on, women were gradually beginning to find occupations in factories around the country, such as sewing factories (Xu, 2019). However, they were not valued or regarded as significant members of the organization.

The marginalization, alienation, and segregation of women were upheld in the market industry (Stumbitz & Jaga, 2020). The international labour organisation (Masriani et al., 2023), was not effective in South Africa during apartheid regime. All these factors caused and perpetuated the growth of the gender pay gap in South Africa. The gender pay gap is the average difference in income between men and women (Coe, Wiley & Bekker, 2019). The apartheid system created a system of social and racial hierarchy (Moutinho, 2023; Lestrade, 2022), whereby white men were regarded first and paid more, followed by white women, men of colour, and lastly, women of colour. In this regard, in terms of pay, women of colour, more specifically black women, were regarded last on the pay chain and, as such, paid less. Since the dismantlement of the apartheid system in 1994, the South African government has embarked on a mission to close the gender pay gap.

In 1998, the South African government made the first effort by implementing Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA) (Coe et al., 2019) in order to ensure gender equality

in terms of employment and gender pay, amongst other things in the labour market. Since the implementation of the EEA, the gender pay gap has declined from forty-eight percent (48%) in 1998 to sixteen percent (16%) in 2007, and from there it has been oscillating between 16% and 17% (World Bank, 2023). The World Bank further reported that from 2014 to 2017, the gender pay gap increased from 18% to 23%, respectively.

A further increase was reported, from 23% in 2017 to 27% by the year 2023. Many efforts have been made by scholars and the South African government to address the issue of the gender pay gap. In regard to that, on March 6, 2023, during International Women's Day, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa continued with the government's yearly efforts and addressed the country about efforts to close the gender pay gap in order to award women the financial equality and freedom they require (Mbolekwa, 2023). This highlights the interest of the South African government in closing the gender pay gap, as such efforts are taking place on a yearly basis. However, the gender pay gap seems to be growing even further as the country strives for egalitarianism.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Multivariate Analysis

Multivariate analysis refers to multiple ways of understating a phenomenon (Chatfield, 2018). In this regard, many different factors are taken into consideration to understand why a phenomenon exists. The fundamental purpose of the multivariate approach is to understand if there is more than one factor that causes a phenomenon to exist. The inclusion of multiple factors and outcomes in analysing a phenomenon is required in multivariate analysis. In fact, Henson and Hinerman (2016) contend that the significance of multivariate analysis in research is that it helps to reduce type I error (rejecting a null hypothesis that is actually true), increase power, and assist in the expression of the relationship between variables findings to be flexibly and clearly expressed.

Yoo et al. (2019) argued that a multivariate approach increases the reliability and validity of the findings as outcomes from different factors are analysed, and the more similar the findings, the higher the probability of the finding being reliable or true. In this regard, multiple and varying factors are analysed to understand the causes of the gender pay gap. This theory assisted the researchers to fully unearth and understand the factors that have a major impact on the gender pay gap. Rather than focusing on a univariate or bivariate analysis, a multivariate approach has the highest probability of producing effective and reliable findings

that can be used to successfully address a phenomenon, as many different factors and their outcomes are taken into consideration and succinctly analysed.

Many researchers, such as Jacqueline Mosomi, media depictions, and radical left-wing groups hold the univariate and bivariate view that gender pay is a result of unequal pay of salaries between men and women and/or a lack of representation of women in senior positions. Evidently, Mosomi (2019) argues that the reasons for the gender pay gap in South Africa are salary differences between men and women and a lack of women's representation in senior or managerial positions. The limitation in the author's argument is the failure to back such claims with sufficient data. Currently, South Africa is rated one of the top countries in the world in terms of its high level of egalitarianism because of its Freedom Charter, which primarily advocates for gender equality in all spheres. As already shown by the World Bank, the South African gender pay gap has declined from 48% to 16% between 1998 and 2007, respectively, since the implementation of the EEA in 1998 (World Bank, 2013).

However, instead of continuing to decline, it started oscillating between 16% and 17% until the year 2014 (Mosomi, 2019, as cited in Landman and O'Clery, 2020; World Bank, 2023). From 2014, the gender pay gap started increasing even further (World Bank 2023). As the issue of salary difference has been addressed and carefully monitored by the South African authority through the EEA and other related regulations such as the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (LRA), this paper investigates, through the use of a multivariate approach, not only the salary difference between men and women but also other multiple and varying factors that may be having an impact on the gender pay gap and have not been identified and addressed by the South African government and scholars. As such, the multivariate approach becomes essential in unpacking different and multiple factors that have an impact on the growth of the gender pay gap in South Africa. The essentials of the art of the multivariate approach are employed to guide this paper in meeting the objective of this study.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used a qualitative research approach. The qualitative method is applied because it uses detailed descriptions from the perspectives of the participants. It further helped the researchers to capture the opinions of the participants in an insightful way. Qualitative research has the ability to unearth phenomena in a descriptive and detailed way that quantitative research cannot. As such, it is relevant for the research because the researchers employed a semi-structured interview that allowed the participants to

insightfully share their own views. Furthermore, the researchers wanted to primarily understand the factors that keep the current pay gap growing.

Moreover, the researchers used big five personality traits test to highlight the personalities and interests of the participants. Furthermore, this tool helped the researchers to capture the personalities of the participants through the structured interviews as it is not time consuming.

Settings and subjects

The sample includes both men and women from South Africa, Capricorn District, and between the ages of 22 and 40. The sample comprises of men and women who are already in the work industry (both private (5) and public (35)). The researchers used the non-probability sampling method because it is less expensive and less time consuming. The non-probability sampling method used is quota sampling and convenience sampling. Before the researcher began with the research, the population was first divided into mutually exclusive subgroups (Males and Females). The researchers divided the population into small subgroups based on common criteria. The population was divided by gender. This helped in ensuring that both genders are equally represented. Furthermore, this sampling technique assisted the researchers in understanding and highlighting all causes of the gender pay gap in terms of gender. After the population was divided into subgroups, the researcher used convenience sampling to draw a sample out of the population. As such, twenty men were interviewed and twenty women were interviewed. A total of forty participants were interviewed and that's the participants the researchers were able to conveniently interview based on the available resources and time. Both genders are equally represented in order to increase the reliability of the findings and reduce biasness.

Instruments

The researcher used a qualitative method of data collection. The face-to-face interview method of data collection was employed, and where it was not possible to meet with the participant, telephone interviews and emails were used to obtain data from the participant. Furthermore, open-ended questions were carefully drafted and utilized to get the full insight of the participants concerning the phenomenon. Moreover, the closed-ended questions were used through the big five personality traits test tool to assess the personalities of the participants. This is because big five personality traits test is not time consuming and it is a personality test that displays a wholesome picture of an individual's traits. The meetings were set up at the

convenience of the participants. On the day of the meeting, the purpose of the research was thoroughly explained to the participants. And furthermore, they were allowed to ask questions concerning the study. Those who chose not to participate were excluded. And lastly, those who chose to participate were further informed that they could withdraw their participation at any given time during the interviews if they wished to do so, and their responses would not be included in the study.

RESULTS

The answers provided by the interviewers to the open-ended and closed ended questions were presented in a frequency table. The participants were asked different types of questions related to and encouraging the gender pay gap. The frequency tables are listed to display the results.

Table 1: Description of the participants

Age		
Age of participants	Frequency	Percentage
22-28	18	45%
29-35	12	30%
36-40	10	25%
	40	100%
Race		
Category	Frequency	Percentage
Black	28	70%
White	6	15%
Indian	6	15%
	40	100%
Religion		
Category	Frequency	percentage
Muslims	2	5%
African Traditional religion	10	25%
Christianity	28	70%
	40	100%
Gender		
Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	20	50%
Female	20	50%
	40	100%

Source: Prepared by Authors.

As Table 1 indicates, eighteen(18) out of the total of forty (40) participants are between the ages of twenty-two (22) and twenty-eight (28), twelve (12) out of forty participants are between the ages of twenty-nine and thirty-five (29 and 35), and ten (10) out of 40 are between

the ages of thirty-six (36) and 40. Furthermore, seventy percent (70%) of the participants are black; this is simply because the location in which the research was conducted was black dominated. Twenty-eight (28) or seventy percent (70%) of the participants are Christians and are the majority. This is because the area is predominantly Christian. And both genders are equally represented at fifty percent (50%) each.

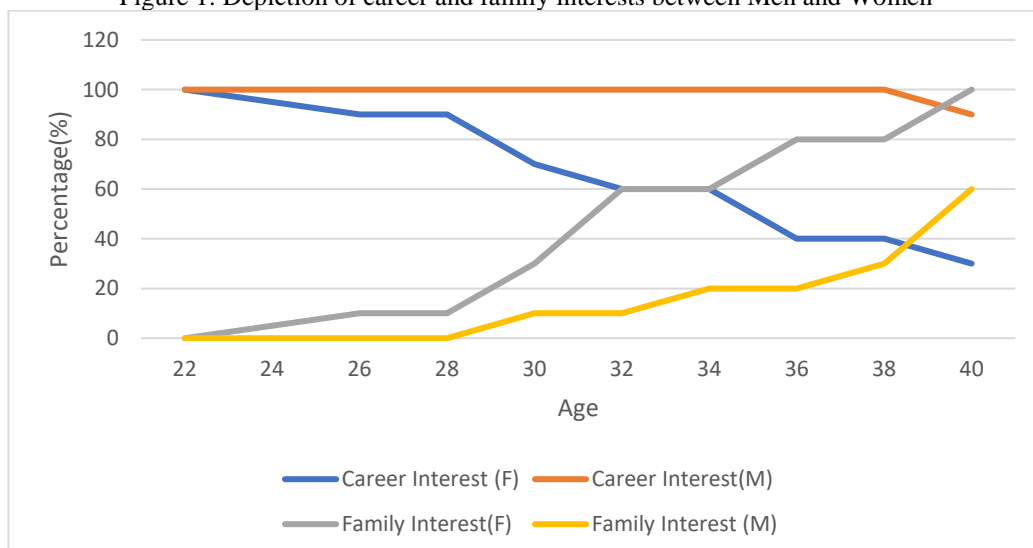
Table 2: interest between Men and Women

Interest					
Gender	Interest (out of 20 participants)				
	family	career	People	Things	Total participants
Females	70%	30%	95%	60%	20
Males	10%	90%	65%	95%	20

Source: Prepared by Authors.

Table 2 indicates that 70 percent of females’ interest lies in building a family before their career, as compared to 30% of those who prioritize building a career. As the table indicates, ninety percent (90%) of males’ interest lies in building their career before focusing on building a family. And lastly, ten percent (10%) of males choose to build a home before a career. Furthermore, thirty percent (30%) of women who are interested in careers are between the ages of 22 and 28. These further highlights that as women grow older, their interests shift from being career-driven to nurturing their families.

Figure 1: Depiction of career and family interests between Men and Women



Source: Prepared by Authors.

Figure 1 indicates that women between the ages of 22 and 28 find interest in building their careers, but their interest in careers declines as they grow. Furthermore, the graph indicates

that women from the age of 28 to 40 begin to prioritize or find interest in building a family as compared to building a career. This indicates the existence of a family career crisis for women over the age of 25. In regard to that, it highlights that, from the age of 25 but below 30, women do not know whether to continue pursuing their career or have kids and start a family. This study reveals that from the age of thirty, the family career crisis still exists; however, women begin to display a high interest in building a family and focusing more on family nurturing than any other pursuit, such as a career. In essence, this drives women to withdraw from seeking promotion or employment as their primary focus shifts from career-oriented to family-oriented. In light of that, this may be one of the major factors contributing to the gender pay gap.

A twenty-three (23)-year-old female participant (teacher) was quoted as saying:

I really enjoy the work that I am doing, and my goal is to develop my career and make my parents proud. Right now, focusing on my career is all that is important to me.

A twenty-nine (29)-year-old female participant (a psychologist) was quoted as saying:

I have two kids that enjoy spending time with... Every day, I am always looking forward to knocking off time so that I can be with my kids. They are my top priority now, and I love them so much.

A thirty-four (34)-year-old female participant (teacher) was quoted as saying:

I just resigned last month so that I can be with my kids. Monna waka o berekela Joburg (Translation: My husband is working in Johannesburg), so I did not see a need to continue working because he is providing for us. And I really enjoy being at home full time because I honestly enjoy spending time with my kids.

A thirty-two (32)-year-old single female parent participant (a nurse) was quoted as saying:

I love my job, but spending time with my kids really gives me pleasure. At this moment, I have to continue working because if I don't, then who is going to pay the bills?

The above statements by the female participants indicate that, from the age of 28, their priorities shift from career-oriented to family-oriented. The reasons for the shift seem to be more innate than social. However, further research on the causes of the career-family shift needs to be conducted for clarity. According to the research findings, it is quite evident that as women grow older, their interests shift from career-oriented to family-oriented, and the shift has a major impact on the gender pay gap that currently exists. As women start to focus on family nurturing

and withdraw from their career pursuits, men continue climbing the career ladder even further. As these shifts gain strength, the gender pay gap grows even further.

Men tend to show a sustainable interest in career building all the time. Although it is still insignificant, from the age of thirty, men's interest in family begins to show, but this does not affect their career interests. Although men begin to find interest in family, their interest in careers remains static. Men over thirty years tend to find interest in searching for a wife and kids while continuing with their careers. Men's top priority remains a career, with or without a family in the picture. Although it is still insignificant compared to career, there is an observable growth in family interest on the side of men from the age of 40. The high regard for careers pursued by males may be perpetuated by one of the nurture drives, such as African cultural norms and values that view men as providers.

A thirty-five (35)-year-old male participant (High school teacher) was quoted as saying:

I am working as a teacher, but eish "zaka ae enough" (Translation: money is not enough). Mara nou ke busy ka course le Unisa (University of South Africa), gore at least ke thule promotion (Translation: But now I am currently busy furthering my studies with Unisa so that I can get a promotion).

A 38-year-old male participant (a computer scientist) was quoted as saying:

I am working as a computer scientist, and I really love my job. I really find joy in creating new software and solving digital problems. I have a wife and three beautiful kids; I do create family time, but hey, a man got to work, right?

In regard to the responses from male participants, it is clear that men's priority lies in their career, and that is driven by the idea that; as a man, you have to be able to provide for your family. In line with the research finding, Pew Research Center data in the United States of America (USA) found that men are less likely, as compared to women, to make career adjustments to accommodate their families (Horowitz et al., 2017). The desire for men to provide for their families is one of the factors driving their enthusiasm and interest in their career. As such, their interest in career and desire to accumulate wealth are some of the factors driving men to have high interest in their career. Moreover, in African society, men are respected and mainly valued depending on their ability to provide for their families. Such nurture factors drive men to solely focus on their careers over anything else.

Table 3: Occupation

Females			
Category	Frequency	Percentage	Minimum Salary per month
Social workers	5	25%	R22 000.00
Nurses	10	50%	R23 000.00
Teachers	3	15%	R23 000.00
Civil Engineer	1	5%	R60 000.00
Psychologists	1	5%	R70 000.00
Total	20	100%	R198 000.00

Males			
Category	frequency	Percentage	minimum per month
Civil engineer	5	25%	R60 000.00
Computer scientist	9	45%	R120 000.00
Mining engineer	4	20%	R90 000.00
Social worker	1	5%	R22 000.00
Teachers	1	5%	R23000.00
Total	20	100	R315000.00

Source: Prepared by Authors.

Table 3 shows that out of 20 female participants, ten (10) or fifty percent (50%) are nurses, five are social workers, three are teachers, one is a civil engineer, and the last remaining is a psychologist. This shows that ninety percent (90%) of females are into the humanities profession, while ninety percent (90%) of males are into the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) field. This further highlight that there is less difference in pay as a result of gender because social workers and teachers of both genders earn the same salary.

The figure further shows that the total income per month for females amounts to R198000, while the total income for males amounts to R315000.00 per month. The gender pay gap of R117000.00 (R315000.00–R198000.00) exists between men and women. However, this gender pay gap is largely caused by occupational choice between men and women and not gender or sex.

Table 4: Participants working extra Jobs.

Gender	Extra Job
Males	70%
Females	10%

Source: Prepared by Authors.

Table 4 indicate that 70% of males work extra job apart from their usual jobs. 10% of females work extra jobs. This is one of the factors contributing heavily to the gender pay gap.

Table 6: Personality Type (the big five)

Category	Agreeableness	extraversion	Neuroticism	Conscientiousness	Openness
Male	55%	60%	45%	80%	85%
Female	90%	75%	85%	80%	80%

Source: Prepared by Authors.

Table 6 shows that out of twenty (20) male participants, eleven (11), or 55%, are agreeable as compared to ninety percent (90%) of females. This further shows that females are more agreeable as compared to males. In addition, women have the highest neuroticism as compared to men. Out of twenty females, seventeen (17) displays a high level of neuroticism, while Nine (9) out of twenty males display neuroticism.

The data indicate no difference between men and women in terms of conscientiousness and a slight difference in openness.

Women scored high on agreeableness, which highlights the reason for the low number of women in managerial positions. Agreeable people are compassionate, considerate of other people, and prefer to put the needs of others before their own. Such factors drive women to be more agreeable to the demands and requests of their employers in the workplace. Furthermore, this makes them fail to put their own demands on the table, such as salary increase negotiations. Employers are more likely to take advantage of individuals with a high level of agreeableness in order to minimize organizational expenditures, more specifically on salaries and wages, by paying them less or resisting to promote them even when necessary.

Furthermore, the high level of neuroticism may hinder the good leadership required in the workplace (Bhullar et al., 2023). Neuroticism involves negative effects, such as anger, emotional instability, and moodiness, and is easily prone to responding negatively to environmental stimuli. Such individuals are easily challenged when faced with occupational challenges. As such, employers highly disregard such traits for managerial positions.

DISCUSSION

Career Selection

Career selection is one of the major contributors to the gender pay gap. This study reveals that women tend to select careers that deal with people rather than things, such as nursing, social work, auxiliary work, and teaching, among others. Most of these careers pay less in the workplace as compared to STEM careers like technology. However, Elsesser (2019) argues that women do not choose careers that pay less, but rather, careers chosen by women are paid less. The author further argued that there is no career dominated by women that pays more.

The limitation in the author's argument is the failure to give reasonable grounds on what prevents women in this era of egalitarianism from entering the STEM field and earning as much as men, as equality of opportunity is well upheld in many countries around the world, including South Africa. Because women are naturally more agreeable, they biologically choose careers that have more to do with the well-being and care of others. D'Acunto (2021) took a diverging perspective by arguing that gender career selection is not driven by innate drives but by gender roles that exist in our society. Although this claim may be somewhat accurate, the current South African gender roles have declined and as such, have had no major impact on the career selection of females. The decline in gender role difference is a result of feminists' movements on gender equality, regulations such as the Gender Equality Act 39 of 1996 (GEA), radical left groups, and other movements within society that champion women's empowerment and gender equality. As such, it is rather naive to conclude that the career choices of both genders are a result of gender roles differences.

Although cultural gender roles may still persist, they have little impact on the career choices of women. As such, the claim that gender role is a contributing factor to women's career selection cannot be put aside; it is acknowledged, but its significance in the contribution to the gender pay gap in South Africa is of little importance to be regarded as the main contributing factor. It becomes evident with time that the main drivers of women's career selection are interests, personalities, values, and perceptions, which are all driven by nature. It may be less accurate to conclude that the gender roles and expectations in our society today are still similar to those of the 19th century, when women were discouraged from certain professions and roles. South Africa has made a major shift towards egalitarianism, and so have gender roles. The explanation for why women continue to choose careers that pay less may be the result of nature such as agreeableness and the sociocultural stimuli that trigger these innate traits.

Agreeableness

Agreeableness is a personality trait that describes a person's ability to display prosocial behaviour or to put the needs of other people before their own (McGinley, 2022). People with a high level of agreeableness are compassionate, kind, respectful, polite, empathetic, understanding, and derive pleasure from helping other people. In regard to that, agreeable people tend to struggle to get a promotion because they are ready to settle for anything and less willing to challenge authority in order to get a promotion or a wage raise. Such a personality trait makes a person comply with every unfavourable command, request, and suggestion of the

employer, more specifically during wage or salary negotiations. Agreeable people are more likely to remain in unbearable working conditions and find it unnecessary to voice their occupational concerns with the employer.

In research conducted on “*the big five personality traits and career success*”, it was found that being agreeable in the workplace can hinder your career success and may even lead to one earning less across their career span (Judge et al., 1999). In fact, one study conducted on personality and earning found that there is a negative linear relationship between wages and agreeableness (Heineck, 2011). The author further found a negative linear relationship between wages and neuroticism and a positive relationship between openness and wages. This supports the research findings because 90% of the female participants displayed a high level of agreeableness, and 95% displayed a high level of neuroticism. Agreeable people display a high interest in social professions that require a high level of emotional engagement, such as nursing and counselling (Sullivan & Hansen, 2004). These research findings further indicate that women have a high interest in social careers. Moreover, this research found that eighty percent of female participants were in the fields of nursing and counselling combined. Furthermore, only five percent are in the STEM field. In terms of wages and salaries, nursing and counselling careers are not paid as highly as careers in the STEM field. These findings highlight one of the reasons for the existing gender pay gap.

Women Family-Career crisis

According to this study, women’s “family-career crisis” is a stage of life whereby women start to grow an interest in starting a family (getting married and having kids or one of the two) and settling down rather than continuing with the career pursuit. In light of that, they do not know whether to continue pursuing their career or start a family. According to this research finding, the family career-crisis stage begins at an early age of twenty-five but becomes discernible at the age of twenty-eight. Their intrinsic desire to perform female natural duties such as giving birth and child nurturing comes into play, and they put their career on hold or completely forgo it. This stage, in which most women begin to focus on childrearing responsibilities, reduces their ability to give their careers the full attention it requires. Edwards and Rothbard (2000, cited in Wei & Taejun, 2013) argue that when the demand in the family domain increases, it limits one’s ability to complete meaningful duties in the other domain. In essence, when one tries to start a family or focus on family nurturing, they abandon their career or dedicate little effort to it. Hirayama and Fernando (2018) found that one of the factors that

prevent women from climbing the career ladder is the work-family conflict, whereby women are trying to fulfil their duties, such as having a child, while trying to continue building their careers. Women's lack of hesitance to abjure their career when faced with a family-career crisis speaks volumes about where their natural or intrinsic interests lie. In a survey conducted on '*millennial women's views on gender and work*', it was found that mothers were more likely to forgo their jobs in order to take care of their families (Graf et al., 2018). However, Abadia (2005) as cited in Bendezu et al. (2023) argues that marriage and family responsibilities serves as limitation and disadvantage for women in the labour market, more specifically in managerial position selection. However, the limitation in the author's argument is the failure to provide empirical evidence. As such, the author's argument in the academia makes insignificant contributions.

While women are battling with their family career crisis stage, men are ensuring their career progression, and this perpetuates the already growing gender pay gap. Women's career crises may be a result of innate traits that are triggered by sociocultural expectations within society. With all major steps taken through the implementation of legislation to ensure equality between men and women, it appears biological traits and intrinsic interests remain largely intact, which account for a large proportion of the current gender pay gap in South Africa.

Equality of Opportunity

Equality of opportunity is a socioeconomic approach that seeks to ensure that both men and women get the same opportunity (Morse et al., 2021). It is a fairness of process of opportunities (Huabis et al., 2023) that will give people from different classes (Lower, middle, and upper) an equal chance to achieve a desired outcome. This approach was proposed and implemented to address the inequality between men and women among other unequal societal issues. It is a strategic tool that seeks to resolve socioeconomic phenomena such as the gender pay gap by offering both men and women the same opportunity in all spheres of society. The marginalisation and alienation of women in all sectors of society gave birth to equality of opportunity as a form of remedy that seeks to get rid of the inequality. As such, equality of opportunity advocates for both men and women to have equal opportunity in every aspect of society they wish to participate in. For example, there should be no field of academia that is reserved only for men; both genders should be given equal opportunity. The rationale is the advocacy of equality between men and women.

However, according to this research findings, when society strives for equality of opportunity between men and women, both gender pursue what they naturally love as there is an equal freedom of opportunity and choice. To support this, in a study conducted on *Gender equality paradox in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)*, it was found that the majority of women are as good as men in STEM subjects but chooses to enrol for Humanities subjects such as Social Sciences (Stoet and Geary, 2018). This opens the gender pay gap even wider because women choose careers that pay less while men choose careers that pay more. This research findings support the findings by Stoet and Geary (2018) who contend that when women are left alone to make choices by themselves, they tend to choose humanity-related careers such as teaching, nursing, and social welfare, among others, while men choose careers related to "things" such as technology and engineering-related careers. Women in high gender equal countries seems to have less enrolment in STEM field as compared to women in less gender equal countries (Stoet & Geary, 2018; 2020). This research findings further support Stoet and Geary (2018) findings and this may be because South Africa is one of the high gender equal countries. The reason(s) why women in high gender equal countries such South Africa, Scandinavia have low enrolment in STEM Field calls for further research. The low enrolment of women in STEM field in South Africa heavily contributes to gender pay gap.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research data indicates that the high percentage on the existing gender pay gap in South Africa is caused by the natural differences between men and women. It has little to do with the organisational inequality between men and women such as pay differences or segregation of women in the managerial positions. However, this does not say that organizational inequality has no effect on the latter. As such, having women doing what they love doing the most, and are most probably good at, may create a better society for all in the society. The findings inform that the current gender pay gap in South Africa is not because of organisational inequality between men and women. However, the paper is of the view that it is because of the natural difference in values between men and women.

In addition, the paper recommends that the closest way to close the gender pay-gap in South Africa is to force men and women to pursue the same interests. However, this may create an unjust society and lead Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) and Maladjustment as both genders have different interests and values. As such, policies, and strategic ways to encourage innovation in men and women's interests would be ideal. This will assist both genders to be at

par with their interest and career choice rather than putting aside these interests and forcing them to see life in a way that conflicts with their natural traits and values. Thus, this can depict that there is more to life and meaning to life in women's interests than career pursued as human beings are social beings.

Furthermore, it is quite evident that in the current pay gap, income inequality makes an insignificant contribution to the current existing gender pay gap. Women's "family-career crisis" as discovered in this research appears to be a major contributor, followed by interests, personality, and career choice. Equality of opportunity between men and women seems to be a contributing factor to the pay gap as well. This is because in the land of equality of opportunity, both genders get an opportunity to do what they have passion in. These research findings depict that the large part of the current gender pay gap in South Africa does not signal the inequality between men and women in the organisational field. However, it is a result of women's natural interests, traits, and values.

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