

AN INVESTIGATION INTO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE
BLUE ECONOMY: A CASE STUDY OF OMANKETE SEAFOOD
PROCESSORS IN WALVIS BAY, NAMIBIA

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ABSTRACT

Namibia's fishing industry is the third largest contributor to gross domestic product (GDP), accounting for approximately 20% of export earnings. Despite such stellar numbers, women are still not sufficiently empowered to gain economic opportunities in this industry due to a lack of knowledge and technical know-how and it being a male-dominated sector, hence the gender disparities. This study explored the opportunities and barriers to women's economic empowerment in the fishing industry, including how their economic empowerment is perceived by women employed by Omankete Seafood Processors Pty (Ltd). The study contributes to the policy changes in the fishing industry. The study was informed by the Women Empowerment Framework (WEF), which aims to move towards gender equity and gender equality. Moreover, the framework takes into consideration the four dimensions of women's empowerment, which are: women to access resources, exercise self-awareness, mobilize their rights, and control their environment. The study made use of the qualitative research methodology employing the case study approach. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, with a total of 28 participants (4 key informants and 24 female factory workers) through purposive sampling. The data was subjected to thematic analysis, from which it was determined that women do derive opportunities and benefits from the fishing industry in the form of monetary compensation and access to pension funds. Moreover, the study found that women are hindered from actively participating in the industry due to certain job opportunities only being available to men. Future studies will benefit from interviewing more fishing companies and employees employed in auxiliary services. This research aimed to examine opportunities for women's economic empowerment in the Namibian fishing industry and explore constraints to women's economic empowerment in the fishing industry. The research study further explored perceptions of the empowerment of women in the fishing industry.

Keywords: Women, Women's economic empowerment, Blue Economy, Fishing Industry

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APS	African Personnel Services
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
FAO	Food Agricultural Organization
FOA	Fisheries Observer Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
ILO	International Labour Organization
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
IT	Information Technology
MFMR	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
NAMFI	Namibia Maritime and Fisheries Institute
NAMFISA	Namibia Financial Institutions
NDP	National Development Plan
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSA	Namibia Statistics Agency
NMC	Namibia Medical Care
NHP	Namibia Health Plan
UN	United Nations
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNHLP	United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel
WEF	Women Empowerment Framework
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SWAPO	South-West Africa People's Organization

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my lovely daughter, Faith Diana Ndemutungilegumbo Iyaloo Sakaria. Your presence in my life encouraged me to work hard and complete this thesis. You are the epitome of my hope and happiness. Your presence in my life drew me closer to God.

DECLARATION

I, Tjova Raulinda Ndalinoshisho Fololindo, by means of this, proclaim that this study is my work and is a true reflection of my research and that this work or any part thereof has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

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April 2025

Student's Name

Signature

Date

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel (UNHLP) (2016) on Women's Economic Empowerment reported that globally, only one in two women aged fifteen and over is in paid employment compared to about three in four men. However, paid employment does not equate to empowerment. The economic empowerment of women became a policy issue at the global level after the crisis and financial restructurings of 2009, which was further proven by the convening of a dedicated High-Level Panel by the Secretary-General and the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (UN Women, 2021). Women's economic empowerment is the process of achieving women's equal access to and control over economic resources and ensuring that they can use them to exert increased control over other areas of their lives (Taylor & Perezniето, 2014). According to Da Silva (2019), the primary responsibilities of fisherwomen are childcare, daily household chores, grocery shopping, meal preparation, supporting their children's education, and providing senior care. Taylor and Perezniето (2014) state that the achievement of women's economic empowerment is now a global policy priority in light of its potential contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as evidenced by the convening of a dedicated High-level Panel by the UN Secretary-General's progress in this area.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (2019), which is currently chaired by South Africa, reported that women are predominantly in the post-harvest sector in both small-scale and industrial processing in the IORA countries, which are comprised of Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, French Republic, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia,

South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Hence, women ought to be economically empowered to contribute to the sustainable development of their communities.

According to Kabeer (2011), women's empowerment is the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. Women should be able to make strategic life choices such as getting an education to secure a good-paying job, campaign for top leadership positions, attain bodily autonomy and make decisions over the number of children they want to bear and the spacing of birthing those children, owning properties and land. The empowerment of women is generally discussed as political, social, and economic empowerment. On that note, the economic empowerment of women has received particular attention and it is often cited as one of the most important ways of promoting gender equality, reducing poverty levels, and improving the well-being of not only women but that of their children and societies too (Khan, 2020). Mujahid et al. (2015) argued that the dimension of economic empowerment of women includes less poverty, access to credit, remunerated work, and sustainable development.

Women have the right to own land and other related properties. These rights include the right of women to own, use, access, control, transfer, inherit and otherwise make decisions about land and related resources (UN Women, 2013). However, emerging technologies are slowly disempowering human beings. The list of new technologies grows every day. Robots, augmented reality, algorithms, machine-to-machine communications, artificial intelligence, 3-Dimensional (3-D) printing, and autonomous vehicles help people with a range of different tasks (West, 2015). On the

contrary, as technological advances expand the capabilities of robots, headlines exploit the fears that emotionless robots stand ready to do paid jobs, work more efficiently and thereby rendering human employees obsolete (Dahlin, 2019). To add to that, there is a social system of patriarchy- a system that oppresses and subjugates women in both the private and public spheres (Sultana, 2010). According to Becker (1999), women are seen as less than fully human and less trustworthy in such a culture. Patriarchal culture is deeply misogynistic and valorises masculinity. Patriarchy is the prime obstacle to women's advancement-and development. Despite the differences in levels of dominion, the broad principles remain the same, in that men are in control (Sultana, 2010). Because of patriarchal institutions, social relations are responsible for the inferior or secondary status of women, argued Sultana (2010).

Economic empowerment involves improving the ability of women to access resources and employment, high productivity, and earnings, and increases in the income, assets, expenditure, and consumption they control (World Bank, 2017). It is worth noting that women's inclusion in the fishing industry does not necessarily amount to women's economic empowerment as many women occupy lower positions in the fishing industry where they are less paid and lack benefits. The International Labour Organization (2019) reported that even when women advance to higher paying jobs in management, a gender pay gap is frequently found. It is one of the most visible examples of structural gender discrimination stemming from the horizontal and vertical segmentation of labour forces. Gender equality and women's economic empowerment are central to the realization of the overarching vision of the United Nations (UN) 2030 agenda, yet gender gaps around the world remain large, prevalent, and persistent noted Tyson and Klugman (2017).

1.1.1 Background

For the longest time, women in Namibia were deprived of access to economic opportunities. This was caused in part by the stringent colonial laws and patriarchal ideologies, in which women were relegated to the household (Edward-Jauch, 2014). The colonial rule brought a new legal, social, and economic basis for women's subjection. Gender dynamics were utterly affected by the system of migrant labour, which was imposed by the colonial administration in 1925, which was primarily intended to ensure a supply of cheap labour to the country's mines (Hubbard & Solomon, 1995). Legislation such as the Native Administration Proclamation of 1922, the Prohibited Areas Proclamation of 1928, the Native Passes Proclamation of 1930, and the Native (Urban Areas) Proclamation of 1951 limited indigenous Namibians' freedom of movement by introducing curfews, removing them from and refusing them entrance to urban areas and exercising influx-control (Botes, 2013). The same laws applied to Walvis Bay until 1994 when the town was annexed back to Namibia (Nambhila & Hillebrecht, 2022).

Under the colonial regime, the government was resistant to allowing permanent urbanization of the black population even though they formed an important source of urban labour (Simon, 1983; Tvedten, 1995 as cited in Liber, 1998). On 12 March 1878, the officer commanding the H.M.S Industry of the Royal Navy docked at Walvis Bay, hoisted the British flag, and proclaimed the annexation of the harbour town to the British Empire as the 'Port of Settlement of Walvis Bay. The boundary of the annexed territory was described in the proclamation (Partington, 1988). The towns in the central and southern parts of the country had a stronger economic base, with better formal employment opportunities and better conditions regarding housing and urban services

(Tvedten, 1995). Tvedten (1995) further stated that towns like Walvis Bay actively discouraged uncontrolled settlement of this type, but most of them saw the informal settlements grow at a largely uncontrolled rate. The assumption that urban dwellers have historically been favoured by the neglect of rural dwellers and that the majority of Namibians reside in rural areas seems to guide policymaking in Namibia (Liber, 1998).

Women live in countries with diverse historical experiences and development levels, and within each country, the issues about women vary according to race, ethnicity, class, religion, tribe, residence, and educational level (Anunobi, 2002). Patriarchal social norms and structures determine what women can and cannot do inside homes and public spaces, including employment (Oxfam, 2019). This predominately means that, women carry the largest burden in terms of unpaid care work. This holds true in majority of African countries, where women spend double the amount of time that men do on caring for families. According to Chacko (2017) as cited in Bohler-Muller (2019), 45% of women's employment is part-time compared to 15% of men's employment due to care responsibilities in the family.

In Namibia, the blue economy encompasses fisheries, marine mining, marine and coastal tourism, maritime transport, and coastal infrastructure that supports ports, towns, and coastal industries (Gertze, 2019). The concept of the blue economy is also known as the blue growth international approach aiming to significantly increase and harness the economic value of the ocean in an environmentally sustainable manner: fisheries, seaweed, kelp and guano, seabed, onshore & coastal area mining, oil and gas, shipping and logistics, tourism, port infrastructure are some of the established

industries in the blue economy. The blue economy approach is an attempt to create a holistic socio-economic development framework that seeks to meet the interests of environmental protection, economic development and social upliftment (Remmert, 2018).

Fishing is one of Namibia's top sectors contributing about three percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since 2007 and about 20% of export earnings (Namibia Country Commercial Guide, 2020). The fishing industry is hosted in the towns of Walvis Bay and Lüderitz, however Walvis Bay remains the preferred hub. The town of Walvis Bay, which means "Whale Bay" in Afrikaans, is one of Namibia's coastal towns situated on the south-western coast of Africa. Importantly, from a national perspective, fisheries is viewed as having great potential to create sustainable jobs and to sustain the livelihoods of the population, as reflected in the government policy to promote the sector for value addition and employment creation (Chiripanhura & Teweldemedhin, 2019).

To counter the cultural aspects that disempowered women in Namibia including patriarchal norms, the country has put in place the following laws and policies to empower women:

- The Namibia Constitution, specifically Article 23(3) and Article 95.
- The Co-operatives Act, 1996 (No. 23 of 1996) which allows women to form cooperatives.
- The Labour Act, 1992 (No. 6 of 1992),
- The Affirmative Action (Employment) Act, 1988, (No. 29 of 1988).

- Married Persons Equality Act, 1996 (No. 1 of 1996).
- Communal Land Reform Act, 2002 (No. 5 of 2002).
- The Maintenance Act, 2003 (No. 9 of 2003).

Moreover, it is also equally important to include the Namibia National Gender Policy (2010-2020); the Fifth National Development Plan of 2017; Namibia's Marine Resources Policy of 2004; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its 169 targets that officially came into effect on the expiry of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on 1 January 2016 and will be in place until 2030. The United Nation's (UN) pledge to 'Leave No One Behind' is underpinned by two other programming principles: Human rights-based approach, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Realizing the human rights of all and achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls; Sustainability and Resilience - ensuring the lasting protection of the planet and its natural and cultural resources (United Nations Namibia, 2018). Lastly, The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that Namibia ratified in 1992.

This study was conducted at the Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd. A fishing company located in Walvis Bay, Namibia. As a holder of hake assigned rights, the company lacked its own infrastructure and had to collaborate with its more established partners to catch fish using their boats and process the fish in their facilities (Real, 2011). The company employs more than 1700, of which two thirds are men and the remaining one third are women.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Women are not well represented in high positions in the fishing industry globally, with only one in two women aged 15 and over having paid employment compared to about three in four men reported the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel (UNHLP) (2016) on Women's Economic Empowerment. To combat the disparities in gender and employment, the Namibian government developed the National Gender Policy (2010-2020) of 2010, and the Fifth National Development Plan of 2017. Namibia is endowed with rich marine resources that provide direct and indirect employment to over 16 000 Namibians, of which are predominately male. Hence, the promulgation of the Marine Resources Policy of 2004, which provide for the empowerment of women (Chiripanhura & Teweldemedhin, 2019). Despite such policies, a paper by Chiripanhura and Teweldemedhin (2019) found that the fishing industry does not provide promotional opportunities for women, in part due to a lack of skills and knowledge. Although women may be included in the fishing industry, they are more likely to occupy low-paying positions. This study aims to investigate women's economic empowerment in the blue economy, specifically in the Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine opportunities for women's economic empowerment in Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd Walvis Bay, Namibia
2. To explore constraints to women's economic empowerment in Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd Walvis Bay, Namibia
3. To explore women's perceptions about their economic empowerment in Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd Walvis Bay, Namibia

1.4. Significance of the Study

Due to its identification of barriers to women's economic empowerment in Namibia's fishing industry, this research study will add to the body of knowledge. The fishing sector will benefit from this thesis' contribution to the design of policies. The study's conclusions will contribute to women's economic empowerment in the blue economy's fishing sector. Additionally, they will support important gender stakeholders and policymakers in their efforts to include women in the fishing sector, particularly at Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd, where they can be applied in ways that would strengthen women's economic empowerment.

1.5. Limitations of the Study

The researcher is not a resident of Walvis Bay and has no relatives there that could accommodate her during the time of her conducting her research. The lack of funds to travel and secure accommodation in the town thus constituted a limitation for this research. Also, another limitation for the researcher was that the research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic when strict travel regulations between the towns were being imposed. The researcher had to wait for two weeks for the traveling restrictions to be lifted before traveling to Walvis Bay for face-to-face interviews with the participants.

1.6. Delimitation of the Study

The study's scope was limited to Walvis Bay's Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd in the Erongo Region. The study did not include the other fishing firms in Walvis Bay and Lüderitz. This indicates that the entire fishing industry and auxiliary industries are not represented in this research study. Participants in this study were limited to

Omarkete Seafood Processors personnel. The findings from this study may not be generalized to include other fishing companies or other sectors within the blue economy.

1.7 Structure of dissertation

This thesis is divided into five chapters.

Chapter One: This chapter provides the introduction and background of the study. This chapter also provides the problem statement, study objectives, the significance of the study, the limitations and delimitations of the study and the argument that forms the basis of the study.

Chapter Two: The second chapter is the literature review, which covers an extensive review of existing literature pertaining to the fishing industry and economic empowerment for women.

Chapter Three: This chapter outlines the procedures that the researcher undertook to conduct the study.

Chapter Four: In the fourth chapter, the findings are presented and discussed thereof.

Chapter Five: The final chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the study findings per study objectives. The chapter concludes with recommendations and implications for practice.

1.8 Argument of dissertation

This study argues that the women are relegated to low paying jobs in the fish factory. Employment and empowerment opportunities are predominately reserved for men. Despite wages, women are not provided with opportunities to empower themselves and acquire higher paying jobs within the company.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Given the vast amount of study literature, this chapter serves as a base to establish meaning in the investigation of women's empowerment in the blue economy of Walvis Bay, Namibia. As such, this chapter fundamentally explores women's empowerment in the Namibian fishing industry. The literature shows that women face gender inequality in all institutions and systems. Some discourses hold that culture hinders women from entering the job market. Research presented in this chapter also reveals how women face the harsh realities of patriarchy in the workplace. The notion of the glass ceiling is presented which reemphasizes the structural challenges women endure which reduces their chance of gaining a promotion. Literature in this chapter shows gender pay gaps on a global scale and unfair division of labour amongst men and women. The sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth of the blue economy is also discussed in this chapter whilst alluding to the severe impact of the pandemic. It is worth noting that there is contention amongst researchers about whether women's labour force participation impacts women's economic empowerment. As such, this literature review explores the dynamics surrounding women's economic empowerment. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical framework that informed the study.

2.2. Women's economic empowerment in Africa

Women are regarded as one of the cornerstones of economic progress internationally and they constitute half of the population in Africa. According to a report on the status of women in the South African economy, Women's Department (2015) states that,

despite education gains, women remain more likely to be employed in low-skilled occupations. Conversely, they experience unfair market practices in addition to an unequal social history. This has an impact on their socioeconomic, educational, and cultural standing. Attempts to address the issue of African women's positionality in social and economic life have made some headway (Klaa, 2020 & Dowie et al., 2021). However, social, and economic obstacles still stand in the way of African women's empowerment. Women in Africa continue to experience violence and discrimination based on their gender, as well as disproportionate amounts of unpaid labour (Klaa, 2020 & Dowie et al., 2021). In addition to that, labour-power was not always a commodity (merchandise). Labour was not always waging labour, i.e., free labour. The slave did not sell his labour - power to the slave owner (Marx, 1910). Injustice may spring from improper welfare or income losses, unreciprocated product flows, or the unequal distribution of asset endowments. On another note; distributive justice prescribes the obligation to reward everyone proportionally according to their worth (Screpanti, 2019). These challenges hamper women's economic empowerment.

At this juncture, it is appropriate to introduce the concept of empowerment. Empowerment refers to the process of change that gives individuals greater freedom of choice and action. The process of economic empowerment for women is contingent upon available resources and whether women have the skills to use them: access to economic opportunities; and control over economic benefits that can be used to achieve positive change. In reality, women face obstacles throughout the process of transforming resources into strategic choices (Tornqvist & Schmitz 2009). According to Hunt and Samman (2016), the process of enhancing women's economic empowerment is enabled or constrained by six key factors directly affecting women's

individual and collective lived experiences; education, skills development and training, access to quality, decent paid work, unpaid care and work burdens; access to the property, assets and financial services, collective action and leadership, and social protection. Decent work is central to economic empowerment, given its inherent importance to women's well-being and ability to advance in areas such as acquiring income and assets.

There is evidence that points to women disempowerment and gender inequality in Africa as a fairly new concept that was introduced by colonial settlers. According to Moagi and Mtombeni, (2019), women in pre-colonial southern Africa were not confined to domestic spheres nor oppressed; instead they played important roles in political, economic, socio-cultural and religious spheres. Women were revered as powerful deities across various cultures. For example, in the Igbo society, a definite bias existed towards the aggressive, successful male (Bhattacharji, 2018). In Namibia, women occupied positions in leadership, this was particularly common amongst the Mafwe tribes (Becker, 2019). However, this was not always the case, as studies by Kinsman (1983) and Mafela (2007) found that Tswana women during the pre-colonial era were regarded as minors; men had to present them in courts and legal transactions, and they were physically excluded from participation in public political debates. The roles and status of southern African women in pre and post-colonial societies has not received enough recognition and acknowledgment. Quinta (1987) pointed out that women occupied noteworthy spaces in the histories of their respective countries' communities and provided inspiration to their own as well as to the later generation of women. Sweetman (1984) who compiled the biographies of women leaders in African history determined that women had political and spiritual powers. The examples given

include Queen Cleopatra of Egypt (C.69-30 BC), who has been contested as having been white (Greek), and Queen Nzinga of the Ndongo in Angola (C. 1581-1663) who has become a legend of her time when she repelled Portuguese slavers and colonizers. Yaa Asantewa of the Asante (C. 1840 160-1921), another famous female leader, was determined to fight the British and summon the men under her to wage war against the Europeans (Akawa, 2014).

However, with colonialism along came widespread ideas of patriarchy, female disempowerment, and oppression as men rapidly becoming literate and making their way into white-collar (high-status) jobs in the wage economy that the Europeans created (Selhausen & Weisdorf, 2016). On the other hand, women took longer to become literate to work in white-collar jobs with remuneration. This was attributed to social exclusion from immutable factors, such as gender, ethnicity, and race, contributing to low education participation for girls and members of subgroups (Lewis & Lockheed, 2007). Consequently, during the first half of the colonial period, gender disparity was elevated. Daughters of African men who worked in the traditional, informal economy were less well-educated, less frequently employed in formal work, and more frequently subjected to marital gender inequality than daughters of men who worked in the modernized, formal economy established by the Europeans (Likuwa, 2020). It can be deduced that limited access to education for women reduced their chances of gaining high-paying jobs and increased work inequalities. In return, this reduced their chances of inclusion in the job market which disempowered them. The increase in economic activities including farming, diamond mining and fishing south of the redline, required large amounts of cheap labour. This forced many men to leave their families in search for work in the mentioned industries, this formed the start of

the contract labour system (Amupanda, 2020). According to Ekström (1998), the contract labour system can be regarded as the cause of oppressive economic conditions for women during the period between the 1920s and 1970s. Ekström (1998), explained that the contract labour system was established by the apartheid regime to recruit Namibians based on racial profiling. Women, being of lesser physical strength were excluded from the contract labour system and from seeking better employment that existed in developed towns south of the redline. This essentially meant that the women's historical subordination was maintained and strengthened, however, new constraints emerged that ensured that the empowerment of women remain subdued. In the absence of men to provide for their families, women were forced to take on extra agricultural responsibilities. As such, food production through agricultural endeavours remained women's source of economic independence. This while, taking care for the elderly and children, and doing household chores (Likuwa, 2021; Edwards-Jauch, 2014). By the 1920s an adverse reaction against female emancipation was well underway, having intensified under the pressure of the Great Depression (Schmidt, 2007). By the 1930s, the colonial state and rural African patriarchs were engaged in full-scale partnership, set on to reassert control over the mobility and sexuality of African women. Similar to women in Zimbabwe, Namibian women similarly took advantage of these opportunities by fleeing to urban areas (Schmidt, 2007). African women who were not disadvantaged by colonial power acquired employment opportunities.

The disempowerment of women continued well after the colonial era and into the apartheid era. In which significant racial and gender disparities hindered women from accessing paid jobs and economic resources. In addition, women faced legislative

limitations on the types of employment that people of colour could do and the places where they could live and work (Casale et al., 2020). Historically, the apartheid regime system has been the main impediment to gender inequality in the workplace in southern Africa. Yet, it can be viewed that apartheid acted as catalyst for women empowerment with the emergence of liberation struggle movements and the subsequent wars for liberation. However, Akawa (2014) found that before apartheid, women in different parts of Africa resisted colonialism and waged wars, thus emphasizing that it was not unheard of for women to wage and participate in wars and that their participation in wars of liberation is not sentimentalized. Akawa in her 2014 book titled: *'The Gender Politics of the Namibia Liberation Struggle'* pointed out that the images of women actively participating in the liberation struggle were striking. Akawa (2014) further noted that the images of South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) soldiers in pre-independence Namibia crossing jungles including women carrying guns and fighting the enemy were powerfully and explicitly portrayed to them.

Black women made up a sizable portion of the domestic labour force at the time of independence, where they were subjected to long hours, pitifully low pay, and a complete lack of benefits and job security. This still characterizes the situation many women find themselves today on the job market. Women did not have substantive or formal equality, nor were they allowed to travel about freely. Women were ruled by patriarchy and treated as minors in law before independence. They could not enter contracts in their own rights (Edwards-Jauch, 2014). These apartheid laws severely impacted Namibian women's economic freedom. This resulted in the overly dependence of women on men, which disempowered them.

Meddy and Sarr (2017) argued that using outside lenses, sources, and frameworks, the commentators, who are mostly anthropologists, Christian missionaries, and later Western feminists, approached African gender topics with non-African centered perspectives. The consensus was that African women were victims of patriarchy and backward customs (Meddy & Sarr, 2017). This was well demonstrated by Amadiume's 2006 study, who found that there was a correlation between femaleness, and political, economic, and social subordination that was obtained in the late twentieth century in cities in Africa, and across the world.

A continuum of uneven power relations connects empowerment and disempowerment. Empowering women is neither a technical endeavour nor a politically neutral endeavour. It occurs within a larger context of patriarchy, along with racial, ethnic, and socio-economic prejudice. The high rates of violence against women in Namibia are a reflection of the fact that many women lack basic rights. The participation of women in politics and the economy is still usually uneven. Female-headed families have greater rates of poverty, and women continue to be overrepresented in lower-level, risky jobs at the bottom of the labour hierarchy (Edwards-Jauch, 2014).

Despite the creation of numerous new laws to address workplace discrimination and gender equality, change has been slow in coming. Musetsho et al. (2021) maintains that countries like South Africa established commissions, policies, and laws to address gender equality and equal opportunity post-apartheid era. Namibia adopted most of these laws from South Africa in this regard. Several international treaties that Namibia has adopted obligate the government to work towards gender equality and women's

empowerment. Many of these treaties obligate Namibia to adopt new laws and regulations that, as part of the domestication process, eliminate prejudice and promote gender equality. The SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (SISDP) 2020-2030 draws impetus from the organisation's Vision 2050, which envisaged; a personal, inclusive, competitive, middle- to high-income sustainable economic well-being, justice, and freedom. In SISDP 2020-2030, cross-cutting issues including Gender mainstreaming are central to ensuring that the formation, deliberation, adoption, and implementation of regional protocols, strategies, policies, and programs are undertaken inclusively (Iipumbu, 2022).

The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children, and the Protocol to the Convention Against Transgender Discrimination are among the protocols that make up this list (Edwards-Jauch, 2014).

2.3. Gender and work dimensions

Globally, women are underrepresented in leadership, particularly in top management and executive positions. Women are less likely to get hired and receive lower salaries than men irrespective of having equivalent skills (Bruckmüller & Braun, 2020; Klugman, 2015). In a more metaphorical sense, women face a glass ceiling that prevents them from achieving high-status positions, and their careers resemble a maze of additional obstacles, dead ends, and detours (Bruckmüller & Braun, 2020; Klugman, 2015). A New Zealand based study by Brower and James (2020), found that

the odds of men becoming professors or associate professors were more than twice as high as those of women with comparable research scores, ages, fields, and universities.

These gender gap trajectories are wide in Pakistan. Men dominate the labour force with 85% whereas 25% of women are employed or actively seeking employment, and only 5% of women hold senior and leadership positions (Bano & Waqar, 2020). This is also echoed by a South African study conducted that revealed that men dominate the top management occupational level by a far higher percentage than women from 2017 to 2019 (Musetsho et al., 2021). Scholars such as Kalev et al. (2018) argue that gender inequality in the workplace stems from the “ideal worker norm”. The ideal worker norm posits that employers seek a worker that is entirely committed to their job and their task, with non-competing demands, throughout the year. The ideal employee is gender neutral. The time commitment and characteristics required of the ideal worker, however, are inconsistent with the gender role of women given that they are often responsible for taking care of the household. As a result, women are less likely to be seen as the ideal candidate for numerous careers and promotions due to reproductive labour. Thus, women’s participation in the labour market is thus hindered by their social responsibilities of unpaid labour.

Gender disparities in labour force participation are associated with gender disparities in unpaid caregiving. Ferrant et al. (2014) asserts that women spend disproportionately on average three to six hours every day providing unpaid care, compared to men between thirty minutes and two hours. Women across diverse geographies, socioeconomic classes, and cultures devote a significant portion of their day to fulfilling the expectations of their domestic and reproductive roles because of gendered

social norms that consider unpaid care work as a female prerogative. This adds to their compensated duties, putting women under a double load of labour. Hence, Ferrant et al. (2014) argues that increasing female educational and employability levels and reducing fertility rates would inevitably result in rising female labour force participation. This is because the labour supply equation also considers time spent on unpaid caregiving duties. On the contrary, Cope (2016) links this to sexism. According to Cope (2016), the longevity of the glass ceiling in female employment and the gradual advancement of women into top positions in businesses around the world are both largely attributable to sexism.

Globally, women are severely impacted by gender disparities, which influences both developing and established economies. Over 2.7 billion women around the world are legally barred from having the same selection of employment as males (UN Women, 2018). Of the 189 economies evaluated in 2018, 104 still have laws prohibiting women from holding certain jobs, 59 have no laws against sexual harassment at work, and 18 allow husbands to forbid their wives from working (UN Women, 2018). Klugman et al. (2014) posit that removing these institutional and legal barriers to productive employment could be an ideal manner to empower women. They add that eliminating women's labour and employment restrictions, and unequal status provisions in family law, such as the head of the household clause, could potentially empower women in the workforce.

In 2018, 73.5% of men and 69 of women participated in the labour force survey in Namibia. The survey found that 47.4% of families' primary source of income is from salaries and/or wages. Subsistence farming is in second place, making up 19.8% of all

Namibian families (NSA, 2018). These findings alluded that women make up more than half of Namibia's employed population. This indicates that initiatives to promote inclusiveness are producing the outcomes needed to achieve gender parity. This may be a result of affirmative action, which aims to use differences in the labour market to achieve equitable representation at all levels of employment (Yeboah, 2021). In addition, Namibia is the highest-ranked African nation in the Global Gender Gap Report of 2021 for closing the economic opportunity, educational attainment, health, and political empowerment gaps between men and women. Namibia is placed sixth overall. Although Namibia's gender wage gap has greatly shrunk, there is still a large disparity in family income (Helmendach, 2021).

Furthermore, in Namibia, only 21% of women hold top-level management jobs in senior, executive, and board positions (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2018). Despite reformative legislation that has given Namibian women supposedly equal and occasionally advantageous opportunities to advance to executive or senior management level positions, they are conspicuously absent from decision-making positions within the higher echelons of organizations. Numerous Namibian women, especially black women, frequently experience complicated job issues that make it difficult for them to move through the organizational hierarchy. This experience is termed the "glass ceiling" in which women encounter obstacles in the workplace and relate to the restricted heights to which they can advance within an organization (see Section 2.3.1). Black women experienced the glass ceiling earlier than their white counterparts despite the wage disparity, women are still paid less than males for the same work roles. The share of black women is even lower (Yeboah, 2021).

There is tokenism when it comes to the issue of gender balance in the workplace. Male-dominated senior management teams and boards of directors frequently nominate women as managing directors or chief executive officers of businesses. Tokenism refers to this flimsy or symbolic endeavour to hire a limited number of individuals from underrepresented groups to create the appearance of gender or racial equality within a workforce. By implying equality that only exists on a symbolic level, this kind of tokenism misses the opportunity to fully utilize the potential of underrepresented groups (Yeboah, 2021). Tokenism has been reported amongst Namibian female executives, who are easily dismissed in comparison to their male counterparts. This was similarly reported by the media (New Era, 2014). In recent years, the status quo has remained, with the latest incidence being the dismissal of Namibia's first female executive in the fishing, Dr. Martha Uumati (Mbathera & Chiringa, 2024).

The Global Gender Gap Report from 2021, indicated that women earn around 37% less than men in equivalent occupations globally. According to the Forum's analysis of 156 countries, progress in closing the gender gap is excruciatingly slow (World Economic Forum, 2021). Similarly, Namibia's 2019 National Human Development Report shows that the gender pay gap decreased from 20.4% in 2012 to 6.4% in 2018. This demonstrates that a woman makes N\$7 462 for every N\$7 975 a male earns on average. However, the National Planning Commission estimates that for men and women to earn the same amount of money annually while performing comparable labour, women would need to put in an additional 25 days of work per year. This means that women work additional hours to earn similar wages for similar work (Ngatjiheue & Petersen, 2021). These challenges are visible in the fishing industry. Women earn a

low income through processing and selling fish compared to men who control fishing quotas and work in vessels (De Silva, 2011).

Although women have successfully joined the labour market, there are many variations in who controls the family's finances. Money is typically regarded as the possession of the individual who makes it (International Labour Organization, 2018). Men often have more control over financial resources than women since they have access to more cash revenue. Some women are occasionally employed as domestic helpers on commercial farms, but their pay is typically lower than that of male farm labourers. Men being the head of the household entails that they control the income earned by women (Tshivoro, 2018). Similarly, women often have no control over the income they generate from fisheries activities. Men dominate the fishing industry in the sense that they have more access to machinery and capital, leaving women to smaller roles such as selling that produce at low income (De Silva, 2011).

The Covid-19 pandemic increased gender inequality in the workplace and hampered women's economic empowerment. Approximately, 3.9% of men who were employed lost their employment, compared to 5% of all employed women (Miranti et al., 2022). The hiring of women for leadership positions has significantly decreased, undoing one to two years of progress in a variety of industries. While sectors like software and IT services, financial services, healthcare, and manufacturing are bucking this trend, sectors with higher participation rates for women, such as the consumer sector, non-profits, and media and communication, are seeing a more severe erosion of total responsibilities. A lengthier double shift of paid and unpaid work has contributed to an overall rise in stress and anxiety related to job instability in the context of school

closures and a lack of available childcare facilities (World Economic Forum, 2021). Women in the fishing industry faced unique challenges. Da Silva (2011) found that women who still sold fish in the markets in Asia, made fewer sales as people hardly left their homes to shop. On the contrary, women in Namibia were forced to close their informal businesses as per the Covid-19 regulations. This resulted in women selling fish from home, and door to door, which resulted in lower income (Nickanor, Kazembe, Crush, Shinyemba., 2021).

There is a need to empower women to enter the labour market to reach gender equality. Gender-related attitudes and norms can be challenged by women's growing participation in the labour force in many nations (Kabeer, 2021). However, the employment of women can be extremely unevenly affected by economic progress. Economic expansion in various areas has been followed in recent decades by significant gains in female employment, most notably in Latin America and the Caribbean. Conversely, economic expansion was accompanied by a decline in female labour participation in many Asian nations, notably China and India (Kan & Klasen, 2021). Chichester et al. (2017) argue that employing women is not enough to empower them economically. Chichester et al. (2017) further maintains that in sub-Saharan Africa, women already play a significant economic role, but their efforts aren't always appreciated, acknowledged, or promoted. To empower women across all spheres of life, all sectors should adopt and implement the European strategy. The European Commission has adopted a Gender Equality Strategy 2022-25, whose focal point is in ending Gender-based violence; challenging gender stereotypes; closing gender gaps in the labour markets; achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy; addressing the gender pay and pension gaps; closing the gender care gap,

and achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics (International Labour Organization, 2020). Women should be provided with the tools, opportunities, safeguards, and skills necessary to realize their full potential and make life decisions through investments in economic empowerment.

2.3.1. Glass ceiling effect in Organizations

Traditional organizations follow a bureaucratic system in which workers are placed hierarchically. In such organizations, power is bestowed on the person as the rest are required to subjugate. Modern rational bureaucracy is defined by written rules in a hierarchy of specialized official positions, impersonal offices that must be distinguishable from incumbents and their private lives and property, and recruitment based on qualifications rather than the master's or leaders' will. Modern rational bureaucracy is dependent on formal procedures, a money economy, the free market, and the expansion of administration (Aneesh, 2009). The notion of the glass ceiling is prominent in bureaucratic organizations.

According to the glass ceiling effect, gender disparities are more pronounced at the top of the hierarchy than lower down. Based on the "glass ceiling," women are subject to racial and gender discrimination at work, which reduces their chances of advancing in their careers (Cotter et al., 2001). Despite their abilities and accomplishment, women are prevented from moving up the corporate ladder by this invisible but impenetrable barrier. The prejudice against women intensifies as they rise through the ranks of these hierarchies, which is another factor to consider in the glass ceiling (Cotter et al., 2001). The observation that the significant promotion of diversity in companies, as well as legislation for equal opportunities for women and men, must be noted that women remain largely in the minority in decision-making (Hansez & Babic, 2021).

In the high echelons of company management over the years, women have only comprised a tiny fraction (Schaap & Shockley, 2020). Women now have positions in government, industry, and educational institutions that they never would have imagined in the 1950s. Despite this, women are still not partners with men at the highest levels of business and the professions, despite decades of economic, political, and social transformation (Schaap & Shockley, 2020).

2.4. Culture constraints and patriarchy

African women experience tremendous psychological and financial constraints as a result of bearing the majority of the burden of household responsibilities. They also experience social and economic uncertainty (Klaa, 2020). These are resultant of internal mechanisms of control in the family and community also had an impact on women's engagement in the labour market. This included gender ideology, the financial dependency of women on men, and social pressure that allowed fathers, husbands, and chiefs to uphold women's traditional duties in procreation and domestic work (Casale et al., 2020). It can be argued that at the centre of these double standards are cultural norms and patriarchy.

Women's economic empowerment entails their capacity to engage equally in current markets, their ownership over productive resources, their access to good employment, their ability to manage their own time, lives, and bodies, as well as their enhanced voice, agency, and meaningful involvement in all economic decision-making processes (United Nations Women, 2018). However, Lesetedi (2018) found that women are less wealthy than men and have less access to socioeconomic resources like land, livestock, and money, and have less control over those resources. Gender-

specific poverty is a result of the social injustices that women experience. The cultural practices in most patriarchal societies in Africa have made the gender gap at the continental level more difficult to address. To the detriment of women, culture, and traditions have given men the advantage in the realms of the economy, society, and politics. Women's economic rights, access to resources, and possibilities have been hampered as a result (Makoko, 2017). Women lack access to resources that may increase their economic production, which keeps them in the background. For example, despite their prominence in agricultural output, women face discrimination in marketplaces for both private and public goods and services and a lack of control over resources (Lesetedi, 2018).

Development toward sustainable agricultural development is hampered by gender inequality which is dictated by culture (Ignaciuk & Tun, 2019). In developing nations, women and girls make up about half of the agricultural labour, which is often substantial in developing nations; women and girls make up about half of the agricultural labour. Women in agriculture are confronted with several challenges and limitations, such as limited access to education, equipment, and modern technology. The bulk of the farming population, especially women, lack the financial means to invest in relevant agricultural technology and the expertise to put better agricultural practices into reality. They also lack the competence to do so. Women farmers suffer a growing knowledge gap because of access disparities (Ignaciuk & Tun, 2019).

Namibia's economy is mostly based on agriculture both commercial and subsistence agriculture. In rural regions, women predominate in subsistence agricultural productive and domestic reproductive work, frequently working on family fields

unpaid. Up to 90% of crops grown for subsistence are produced by women. Their lack of access to money and property restricts their economic options and makes them economically dependent on males (African Development Bank, 2006). Men typically own and have control over land used for agricultural production. Men form part of the land distribution committees in every case. This shows that households led by men have an advantage in all methods of acquiring agricultural land. Most government agriculture programs do not adequately benefit women. Women do not own the land, despite having access to it (Lesetedi, 2018).

In comparison to their male counterparts, female farmers have much less access to, control over, and ownership of land and other productive assets. Even though land is arguably the most valuable resource, only 12.8% of agricultural landowners worldwide are women. Almost a third of all women's jobs worldwide are in agriculture, which includes forestry and fisheries but may not include self-employment and unpaid caregiving (United Nations Women, 2018). However, there are noticeable variances between nations and areas. While agriculture continues to be the most significant job sector for women in low-income and lower-middle-income nations, the share of women employees in agriculture is just 9.5% in upper-middle-income countries and 2.6% in high-income countries (United Nations Women, 2018).

Marriage, divorce, and land rights are primarily governed by customary law. In Namibia, women are losing resources and property when a husband dies women could not inherit land upon the death of their husband, the land was grabbed by the family of their husbands - the widow had to return to her family because the family of the husband took over all the properties, they grabbed all the wealth (Shapi et al., 2017).

The widow usually inherits the land, but only if she pays the sub-headman an amount of N\$ 200.00. If she is unable to pay, the oldest adult son may step in to pay and take ownership of the land. The day after the deceased man is buried, widows are expelled from their homes in most instances. In certain instances, sub-headmen have forced widows off their land even while the families of their husbands declined to do so. The assets that a widow is legally entitled to, and her children may still be taken from her, even if she is permitted to remain in her homestead (Lebert, 2005). Thus, one may deduce that the loss of property through unlawful and discriminatory inheritance practices economically disempowers women in Namibia. Shilongo (2011) added that this culture of inheritance is prominent in the Oshiwambo culture. In the incidents of divorce, separation, or widowhood, women must also have their source of income or assets. Although women can and frequently do benefit from household income. In all of sub-Saharan Africa, the death of a husband and father immediately grants his side of the family the right to claim the majority, if not the entirety, of the belongings he leaves behind, even if it leaves his survivors penniless. In stark contrast to Namibia, inheritance almost exclusively follows a patrimonial paradigm in South Africa, and this is acknowledged in the statutory framework applied to Namibia pre-independence. The property was inherited by the eldest son or senior male in the family. These customary regulations forbade widows from inheriting their husbands' property. Similarly, daughters could not inherit from their parents as these privileges were passed on to sons (Gordon, 2005). Similarly, De Silva (2011) found that in most fishing communities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, fishermen possess land ownership and fishing rights that have been passed down through families. They have access to and authority over property and fishing equipment. However, women had no inheritance right over land or fishing equipment.

2.5. Blue Economy and women's economic empowerment

Women play a crucial role in the continent's fisheries as they rely on fisheries for both their food and their livelihoods (Raemaekers & Sunde, 2015). Women make up about half of the workforce where fisheries are extensively practiced in countries along the Indian Ocean Rim. Fisherwomen make significant contributions to household income and food security, and they are frequently the main source of income for families and communities. However, the fishing industry is still largely male-dominated, and the contributions of women are grossly undervalued. Additionally, women are significantly underrepresented in policy and decision-making, and their contributions to fisheries and aquaculture are frequently not given formal recognition (UN Women, 2020).

A study in India by Samantray and Pathak (2015) shows that an estimated 3.8 million fishermen and 1.6 million fisherwomen are active in the fishing industry. However, the income produced by men and women differs significantly, with the former obtaining more benefits. They further discovered that women in the fishing industry are exploited by their paymasters and are less likely to receive the payments they are owed. Samantray and Pathak (2015) attributes the challenges to low educational attainment. Their study uncovered that women's low literacy levels have hampered efforts to empower them economically. The illiteracy rate among Indian women is over 60%, so efforts to further development must take this into account. In terms of information, knowledge, financial resources, access to infrastructure, and social capital, women are less advantaged than men. Women may be denied chances and training benefits due to their lower levels of education than men. Activities aimed

towards extending fisheries frequently target men. However, when information and knowledge are made available to women, they can considerably benefit, for instance by lowering product spoilage and satisfying the needs of higher specialized markets. Women are particularly constrained by a lack of finance when it comes to starting or growing post-harvest companies and putting their newly acquired skills into practice (Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022).

In Africa, women are mostly employed in post-harvest work of fishing which accounts for more than 90% of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Although women are involved in every aspect of the food chain, post-harvest processing, and seafood trade are where they are most noticeable (Atkins et al., 2021). This means that women are less likely involved in fishing and are more involved in selling. However, research (Silver, 2019; Raemaekers & Sunde, 2015; Fiorella et al., 2015; & Nathenson et al., 2017) found that some women in Tanzania, Zambia, and Uganda exchange sex for fish. In some lakefront villages in sub-Saharan Africa and other areas of the world, men catch the fish, and women sell the catch to local consumers. For instance, in Malawi, women accept a fisherman's catch and promise to pay him after they make a profit. If women fail to make a decent profit, they have to offer sex as means to fulfil their obligation to pay for the fish. These studies found that poverty is the root of transactional sex which women engage in to sustain their families. The findings also uncovered that women lack the resources to fish and are compelled to rely on men. Transactional sex is one of the tactics used by women to gain access to resources in fisheries, where males frequently fish but women make up 90% of traders (Fiorella et al., 2015). Thus, the potent weapon against poverty is women's economic

empowerment (Biswas, 2010). This enables women to exude their capabilities and enhances their living standards.

The idea of an inclusive blue economy is another idea that is increasingly being addressed within the blue economy hypothesis. The maritime industry, including shipping, has long struggled with a lack of gender equality in the various activities it engages in. The shipping industry has historically been dominated by men. Fortunately, during the past few decades, various programs launched at the local, regional, and worldwide levels to promote women to work in this area have been gradually succeeding (Hosanee, 2018). Consequently, gender roles and cultural practices still transcend into the fishing industry regardless of law reform.

An Asian-based study by Kusakabe and Thongprasert (2022) found that fishing in most cultures is believed to be the role of men. Whereas women are more involved in post-fishing activities such as trading or selling. Men fish higher-value species while women collect smaller fish along the shore as well as shells, invertebrates, and seaweed. Similarly, Women in Namibia gather shells along the coast to create jewellery known as "*onyoka*". Among the Oshiwambo speaking people, *onyoka*, is a traditional necklace crafted from mussel shells and is a popular piece of jewellery. A lot of women who have relocated to coastal communities just to operate this company now have a way to make a living thanks to the utilization of seashells in the creation of this jewellery. Even though they are reliant on harvesting marine resources along Namibia's coastline, they are not officially recognized and hence conduct their business illegally (Raemaekers et al., 2015).

Atkins et al. (2021) conducted a study on the impacts of COVID-19 on women fish processors and traders in sub-Saharan Africa. Their study found that fish food systems continue to be characterized by unequal gendered labour divisions (such as a predominance for women in low-paid, informal labour and larger loads of unpaid household care), as well as gender disparities in financial holdings. The difficulties women have faced because of COVID-19 containment measures and food system disruptions have been magnified by these pre-existing patterns of inequality. Women fish traders and processors have had negative economic effects, such as sharp drops in revenue and depleted savings. Some female company owners have consequently completely lost their fish processing or selling operations. Loan repayment has become harder, particularly for poorer women. Due to this, some female business owners are now caught in a cycle where they must seek loans to pay them back. Equivalently, the negative impact of the Covid-19 outbreak were particularly harmful to Namibian women, who are among the most vulnerable. By creating new problems at the home and societal levels, the pandemic has made these already vulnerable and marginalized populations even worse off. This has exacerbated the problem of food insecurity and significantly hampered access to nourishing food and other essentials (UNDP, 2021).

2.5.1. Inclusion and Empowerment Interface

In buttress to the discussions throughout this chapter, it is pertinent to discuss whether inclusion in itself translates to the empowerment of women. Studies (Bruckmüller & Braun, 2020; Klugman, 2015; Brower & James, 2020; Musetsho et al., 2021) indicate that women have thrived throughout the years by joining the job market. These studies reveal that women are now included in the job market. However, they face challenges within the job market which hampers their economic empowerment. Although women

are included in attaining jobs outside of their domestic responsibilities, women are mostly employed in lower paying positions which limits their chances of attaining managerial positions. UN Women (2018) found that women are more likely to be hired for jobs that are ascribed to gender roles such as domestic workers where they earn less. Furthermore, Yeboah (2021) and Helmendach (2021) found that women in Namibia constitute half of the labour market. Yet, Namibia recorded a wide gender pay gap. This then indicates how women are included yet they face gender inequalities that hamper their chances of being economically empowered. This is also evident in how women are empowered to attain similar jobs as men, yet they are paid less than men (Ngatjiheue et al., 2021; Yeboah, 2021).

The latter shows that women are included in managerial positions. However, they are not included in the decision-making. Female executives and those who retain managerial positions are found to be excluded from decision-making processes. It is thus argued that women are mostly promoted to managerial positions as a front to indicate gender equality (Yeboah, 2021). Law reforms empower the economic inclusion of women. However, women are disempowered at household and cultural levels. Research (Legal Assistance Centre, 2021; Chichester et al., 2017; Makoko, 2017 & UN Women, 2018) found that women restricted access to the income they generate. It was established that men have more decision-making power culturally and use this superiority to regulate the proceeds earned by women. De Silva (2011) revealed that women in the fishing industry face similar challenges. Fisherwomen have less access when it comes to resources and their income is more likely controlled by men. Thus, men dominate the fishing industry. These challenges are a clear indication that inclusion does not necessarily mean empowerment.

2.6. Theoretical Framework

This study used Women Empowerment Framework (WEF) as an important tool that aims to move gender equity to gender equality and identifies four dimensions of women's empowerment. These dimensions focus on women accessing resources, exercising self-awareness, mobilize their rights, and controlling their environment (Longwe, 2002). Achieving the full benefits of a blue economy will be greatly enabled by empowering women to allow them to participate fully in and contribute to their development and success (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2018). Mandal (2013) argued that, in almost every society and every sphere of life, women assume unequal positions and status, thus it is necessary to empower them by providing equal opportunities. Women face a myriad of barriers to their economic empowerment. Patriarchal social norms and structures determine what women can and cannot do inside their homes and in public spaces, including employment (Oxfam, 2019).

There is a pervasive misconception that gender issues in development are merely a matter of understanding the gender division of labour, gender division in social location and access to resources, so that a new development program can properly 'fit' into the existing society, without upsetting the existing social order (Longwe, 2002, p.3). Expanding women's property rights can provide tremendous empowerment effects (Women's World Banking, 2012). Although Longwe mentioned participation and access levels in the WEF tool, empowerment and inclusion have not been problematised. Having access to resources and having equal participation in decision making as opposed to owning the resources does not amount to economic empowerment of women. On the contrary, Longwe's empowerment framework has

discussed how patriarchal norms disempower women, however, the framework does not deal with the disempowering effects of robotic technology on women. According to World Economic Forum (2019) the new report, 1.5 million British jobs are at high risk of automation, with women and youth people more threatened than others. More than 70% of the jobs deemed to be at high risk are held by women. Among young people, 16% of those employed between 20 to 24-year-olds are likely to be affected.

This study used Women Empowerment Framework (WEF) as an important tool that aims to move gender equity to gender equality and identifies four dimensions of women's empowerment. These dimensions focus on women accessing resources, exercising self-awareness, mobilizing their rights, and controlling their environment (Longwe, 2002). The strengths and weaknesses of the WEF by Longwe (2002) have been extensively researched. Grant et al. (2019) highlighted the strengths of the framework as its ability in outlining the application of empowerment in development. In addition, it propels empowerment as being intrinsic to development. Thus, it allows development projects to be committed to equality and empowerment, in the process also identifying the achievements and outlining future needs. The Women's Empowerment Framework may assist organizations in developing more explicit programmatic strategies that aim to fundamentally shift the basis of gender inequality. Moreover, the framework provides for researchers to highlight the political scopes of gender. This may include highlighting the positive impacts of programs and analysing the negative impacts (Longwe, 1995).

Grant et al. (2019) also highlighted the weaknesses of the framework as having the inability to account for changes in a situation over a certain period. Moreover, it does

not take into consideration rights, claims and responsibilities between the genders. This holds true in this study, as the application of the framework, the achievements of empowerment as the procurement of assets and the ability to take care of their families. However, due to the limitations of the framework, the study did not take into consideration the rights, claims, and responsibilities of the genders. Moreover, the framework does not allow for an empowerment program or policy to be analysed based on its contributing and/or causal factors that make an impact on the lives of women. In addition, the framework is one-dimensional as it only focuses on three levels of equality, namely, positive, negative, or neutral. Lastly, the framework considers gender equality to be linear (Longwe, 1995). However, this study anticipates that the fishing industry only empowers women based on participation-through low skilled employment.

2.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the reviewed literature indicates that there are multidimensional dynamics to women's economic empowerment. The literature indicates that women are disempowered through powerful institutions like culture and patriarchy. Jobs in the developing world are at risk from new technology. The studies reviewed indicated that gender disparities protrude throughout history to contemporary society. This means that some societies still uphold oppressive cultural and traditional norms that hinder women's participation in the labour force, which in turn, affects their economic growth. There were however researchers that argued that labour participation does not affect women's economic empowerment. Finally, the literature revealed gender inequality in the blue economy and how female participation is barely acknowledged.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine opportunities for the economic empowerment of women in the Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd in the fishing industry in Walvis Bay in Namibia. The aim was to further explore constraints to the economic empowerment of women in the Namibian fishing industry and explore women's perceptions about their economic empowerment. A qualitative approach was employed by this study to fulfil the study's objectives. Haradhan (2018) defines qualitative research as a form of social action that stresses the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals. This means that this kind of approach studies people in their natural settings and gains insight into their interpretations of phenomena. Consequently, the decision to employ a qualitative approach in this study enabled the researcher to gain insights and perspectives on the economic empowerment of women in the fishing industry of Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd.

This chapter explains the methodology that was used in this study. It encompasses and explains the research design, the target population, sample size and research instruments utilized to collect the raw data. The chapter further explains the procedures used to collect and analyse the data. Ethical issues were also considered in this study and are a part of this chapter. An exploratory qualitative approach was employed.

3.2. Research Design

Gerring (2006) defines a case study as a partially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in a short time or over some period. This study was of the Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd. An exploratory case study design was applied to generate in-depth understanding and discover meanings of the economic empowerment of women in the fishing industry of Namibia.

The qualitative approach was best suited for the exploration and for establishing answers to the interview questions and participants' opinions of the phenomenon under study. In this type of design, the data and meanings emerged organically from the research context (Astaline, 2013). As a research approach, case study claims to recommend a wealthy and depth of information which is not usually offered by other approaches.

3.3. Study setting

Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd is a company located in Walvis Bay, in the Erongo region of Namibia. Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd was formed as a partnership between Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd and Seawork Fish Processors, a fishing consortium of black empowerment groups founded in 2005. The company is fully owned by Namibians and inaugurated its fish processing plant in Walvis Bay in 2011. Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd specializes in seafood product preparation and packed food (frozen and fresh) production sector (Harrington, 2016). The majority of men are employed on board the vessels in various capacities ranging from fishing masters, cooks, seamen to marine engineers. All women employed by the company operate the shore-based operations, which includes administration and General Workers in the fish factory.

3.4. Population

Majid (2018) defines population of interest as the study's target population that it intends to study or treat. In this study, the men and women in the fishing industry are the population. The 2018 Labour Force Survey employed persons by industry and sex indicates that fishing, and manufacturing employed a total of 167 242 (23.0%) of which 90 076 (54%) are males and 77 166 (46%) are females. Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd employs over 1 700 people, one third being male and two thirds female.

3.5. Sample

The purposive sampling method was applied to select participants (women) in the company that represented the population of interest. This study was based on a very small number of units. Twenty-eight (28) female participants were interviewed: 4 key informants comprised of middle and senior management and 24 factory workers, of which some are employed as General Workers, production Supervisors and forklift drivers. Amongst these participants, there were new recruits, those employed on a contractual basis, employees who have been there for three to five years, employees who have worked for the company for five to ten years and the line Supervisors. Purposive sampling as defined by Lopez and Whitehead (2013) is the method whereby participants are recruited according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question, as it is designed to provide information rich cases for in-depth study such as this one. This is because, participants are those who have the required status or experience or are known to possess special knowledge to provide the information that the researcher seeks (Lopez & Whitehead 2013). The men and women in the

fishing industry best provided the researcher with the knowledge needed in this study. Those are the participants that were forthcoming and willing to share their experiences.

3.6. Research Instruments

This study made use of semi-structured interview guides to collect the data (Appendix D). The research instruments were designed for interviews held with factory female employees and key informants. Lopez and Whitehead (2013) argued that semi-structured interviews have an interview guide that provides a set of questions for discussion, and also, these interview questions are set to ensure that the objectives of this study are covered. For this reason, the use of semi-structured interviews is the appropriate platform as it allows the participants to express their opinions and views.

Kim (2011) argued that piloting research instruments is essential in ways such as engaging the use of oneself as a researcher in a culturally appropriate way and from a phenomenological perspective modifying interview questions. The research instruments were tested to ensure that the objectives of the study were obtained through the interviews with the participants by improving the questions initially set. The pilot study is crucial for the improvement of the quality and efficiency of the main study (In, 2017). The study was piloted on women who work in the factories of different companies in Walvis Bay, as well as on women vendors who sell fish at the open market. The researcher conducted a pilot study on a smaller scale to identify where changes needed to be made. The aim was only to identify if the participants comprehend the research questions and if they were giving descriptive responses to the questions asked. Later, the researcher changed the questions after she identified

that the questions were too many and made the participants repeat themselves or things they have said before.

3.7. Procedure

The researcher applied for ethical clearance (Appendix A) from the University of Namibia (UNAM) before the commencement of data collection. After permission to research was granted from the UNAM, the researcher also requested permission from the Executive Director (ED) of Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd. The researcher wrote a letter to the ED (Appendix B) and sent it through email and followed with a telephonic conversation pertaining to the study objectives and significance, Upon which an invitation was extended to the researcher to the company's head office in Windhoek West to be followed by a visit to the company's operation base in Walvis Bay to explain the rationale of the research study. Permission to conduct the research study was granted to the researcher by means of a response letter from the ED (Appendix C). The researcher was later informed to go to their fishing factory in Walvis Bay for a meeting with the company management committee. Permission was granted to conduct interviews with the factory women first and later with the key informants. The researcher made appointments with the key informants and had face-to-face interviews with them at their place of work as that is where they felt comfortable to be interviewed. Interviews with the General Workers were facilitated by the Administrator at Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd, to ensure minimal disruption, as the interviews were conducted during working hours.

The study engaged in the following procedures: Data was collected by making use of a semi-structured interview guides (Appendix E and Appendix F). Upon appointments

with key informants, based on their availability, interviews were held in December 2020. Only the interview for the ED was held in March 2021, due to unavailability of the ED during the month of December when the interviews were held. A total of four interviews were held with the key informants, which lasted between 27 to 40 minutes (Appendix G). The researcher made appointments with the women working in the fishing industry. The interviews were done face to face, with each interview lasting between 8 to 37 minutes. The interviews were held between 1st December and 7th December 2020 (Appendix G). The interviews were only held with women that are working in the fish factory. Before interviews commenced, the researcher introduced herself and briefed the participants on the research study, including the aims and objectives of the study. Permission was requested from both the participants and key informants to record the interviews, however two women participants and two key informants refused to be recorded, in this case notes were taken. The researcher recorded the interviews of those who agreed to be recorded throughout for both participants and key informants as provided by the information leaflet (Appendix D).

3.8. Data analysis

The data collected was analysed using the thematic method. The recorded interviews were transcribed and written down as transcripts. Thematic analysis is defined by Braun and Clarke (2012) as a method that systematically identifies, organizes, and offers insights into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data base. This data analysis method requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2009). At first, the researcher prepared the raw data for analysis by transcribing it from the recorded interviews. The data was later checked and cleaned for errors and completeness. The

analysis of collected data will assist in understanding the history of the fishing industry and the opportunities and challenges that women experienced in their pursuit to be a part of the fishing sector and be empowered economically.

3.9. Research Ethics

Concurring to Kothan (2004) as cited in David and Reshik (2015), contended that standards advance the point of the investigation, such as information, truth, and shirking of blunder. The Ethical clearance certificate was obtained from the University of Namibia Ethics Committee, upon which authorization to gather information was granted. Consent to take an interest within the think about was allowed to the analyst by implies of a marked educated assent shape. The shape clarified the point of the investigation.

Participant's consent was sought for permission to record the interviews, and those members who allowed the analyst authorization were recorded. The researcher resorted to note taking the answers on interview guides for interviews with participants who didn't want to be recorded. Issues of confidentiality were discussed. The researcher explained to the participants that participation was voluntary. Also, the researcher ensured that there was no invasion of privacy or any threat to dignity by ensuring that no other participant got to hear about their responses. No names of participants were used during the interviews or report writing. Their privacy will be respected, and data collected was anonymous and not related to names or any other forms of identifications. To maintain confidentiality, the research information was not shared with any third party and was solely used for this study.

The right to confidentiality and autonomy was guaranteed meaning that the researcher did not make use of the participants' names or that of anyone they mentioned in the

interviews, the recordings are kept secure using password protected files and are encrypted when sending information over the internet. The participants were not asked to state their names, and the data provided will not be linked to their names. The interviews were conducted at participants' preferred places, which was their place of work after permission to this place was granted by the company's managing director. The participants thought it was fair enough as their night shift may not allow them to partake in the study. These were less noisy areas to prevent distraction of the recordings. Due to the COVID-19 traveling restrictions, the researcher initially planned on conducting telephonic interviews with the participants. However, traveling restrictions were adjusted and the researcher was able to travel to Walvis Bay to conduct face to face interviews with the participants. Data collected will only be accessible to the researcher and UNAM.

The researcher will not falsify, fabricate nor engage in an act of fraud by creating or inventing fake data or results, or manipulate materials, equipment, processes, by changing results or omitting some data or findings so that the research does not seem to have been well represented or recorded, as one of the ethical principles highlighted by Akaranga and Makau (2016). All primary and secondary sources used to support arguments were acknowledged to avoid plagiarism.

Only the researcher had access to the recordings, which were deleted after the data was transcribed. The data will later be destroyed after the completion of this study and or after five years after the research thesis has been printed and submitted for marking.

3.10. Research Challenges

The researcher did experience challenges in securing a sit-down with the ED of Omankete Seafood Processors Pty Ltd. Initially, the ED refused to accord the researcher an opportunity to present the reason for the study. The ED was under the impression that the researcher is an investigative journalist working undercover on a story. However, after presentation of the supporting documents, the researcher made an appointment with the ED, which was to be held in Windhoek after a period of three weeks. This provided challenges with the time schedule of the researcher. Although the ED was interviewed for the study, the interview only took place in March 2021, due to the hectic schedule of the ED. The interview with the ED was also not recorded due to security concerns.

3.11. Conclusion

This chapter described and explained the research design, procedure, sample, population, research instruments, data analysis and research ethics of how the study was conducted. This study used a qualitative, explorative, and descriptive case study approach. The study had a sample of participants. Data derived from the semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The researcher obtained permission from the Executive Director of Omankete Seafood Processors Pty Ltd. Anonymity and confidentiality was ensured to participants during interview sessions and in report writing. In the next chapter, the researcher will present and discuss the findings.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study as derived from semi-structured interviews that were held with the participants. The study probed the participants on the opportunities for women's economic empowerment, the constraints to women's economic empowerment and the perception of women about their economic empowerment in the Namibian fishing industry.

The data was analysed using thematic analysis, from which the following themes were derived; women's economic empowerment opportunities; barriers to women's economic empowerment in the Namibian fishing industry; women's perceptions of economic empowerment in the fishing industry in Namibia, and women's recommendations for improving women economic empowerment.

4.2. Overview of demographic data of participants

The study interviewed four (4) key informants and twenty-four (24) female participants from the fishing factory. The key informants and participants are identified by means of code and participant number; therefore, key informants are identified as "KI" and the other participants as "P". The tables are categorized into two groups, **Table 1** presents the demographic data of the key informants, and **Table 2** for the participants.

4.2.1. Age and gender dynamics of participants

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020), there are three categories of workers: persons between the ages of 15 to 24 (those entering the labour market after receiving an education), people aged 25 to 54 (those in their prime working lives) and individuals who are at the peak of their career and approaching retirement, between 55 to 64. The ages of the key informants range from 36 to 47, they are in the category of persons that are at prime working time. The participants' ages range from 26-47, which is a mixture of persons who are just entering the labour force and those who are at the prime of their working lives. Out of the four (4) key informants; three are male and only one is female. The study interviewed twenty-four (24) female workers at the factory.

4.2.2. Job description and number of years in a position

The key informants are employed in various positions, namely as Managers, Executive Director, and Office Administrators. All management positions are occupied by males. This finding concurs with those found in a study by Mwetulundila (2019), who highlighted that men are more likely to dominate top management positions.

The participants occupied various roles in the fish factory, the study included 16 permanent General Workers and only four (4) that were still employed on a temporary basis. Only one of the participants occupied the position of Forklift Driver and it is on a temporary basis. Three (3) of the participants were employed as Supervisors and only one Production Superintendent was interviewed. Most of the women have been in their

respective positions for five years (5), with the most experienced women having sixteen years (16) of experience.

4.2.3. Level of education

Out of 24 participants, only one participant did not undergo any formal schooling, while 7 of the participants completed schooling until Grade 10 and one reached Grade 11. 11 participants have Grade 12 certificates. Despite the positions that they occupy not requiring qualifications, 6 of the participants have undertaken short courses in hospitality, 2 undertook computer literacy courses, and one in business administration that were acquired before obtaining employment at Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd. One of the participants holds a degree in financial management. In addition, the women have, through their own efforts, acquired qualifications in various fields. 3 participants are currently enrolled at various institutions undertaking qualifications in education.

4.2.4. Home language

Out of four key informants, two of them are Afrikaans-speaking, and the remaining two are Oshiwambo speakers. Out of twenty-four participants, the majority (20) 83% were Oshiwambo speaking, and (3) 13% were Rukwangali. There was only one (4%) Damara speaker among the participants.

Table 4.1 Demographic data of the key informants

Name	Age	Sex	Position	Home language
KI01	38	Male	Manager	Afrikaans
KI02	36	Female	Office Administrator	Oshiwambo

KI03	47	Male	Executive Director	Oshiwambo
KI04	45	Male	Production Manager	Afrikaans

Table 4.2 Demographic data of the participants

Name	Age	Sex	Position	Number of years in the position	Qualification Held	Home language
P01	37	Female	General Worker	10	Grade 10	Oshiwambo
P02	44	Female	General Worker	14	Short Course in Hospitality (not completed)	Oshiwambo
P03	39	Female	General Worker	8	Grade 10	Oshiwambo
P04	44	Female	General Worker	16	Grade 10	Oshiwambo
P05	38	Female	General Worker	4	Grade 12 Short Courses in Hospitality; Computer Literacy and Office Administration	Oshiwambo
P06	43	Female	General Worker	16	Grade 12	Oshiwambo

					Short Course in Hospitality	
P07	44	Female	Supervisor	9	Grade 5	Oshiwambo
P08	38	Female	General Worker	6	Grade 12 Short Course in Computer Literacy	Oshiwambo
P09	33	Female	General Worker	15	Grade 12	Oshiwambo
P10	26	Female	Forklift driver (temp)	6 months	Grade 12 6 months IT course Bachelor of Education (enrolled)	Damara
P11	35	Female	General Worker (Temp)	6 months	Grade 10	Oshiwambo
P12	28	Female	General Worker (Temp)	3 Months	Grade 11	Rukwangali
P13	36	Female	General Worker	11	Grade 10 Short Course in Hospitality	Rukwangali

P14	37	Female	General Worker	5	Grade 12 Course in Business Administration	Oshiwambo
P15	32	Female	General Worker (Temp)	6 months	Grade 12 Degree in Financial management	Oshiwambo
P16	43	Female	General Worker	14	Grade 10	Rukwangali
P17	29	Female	General Worker	3	Grade 12	Oshiwambo
P18	31	Female	General Worker	3	Grade 12	Oshiwambo
P19	34	Female	General Worker	5	Grade 10 Short Course in Hospitality	Oshiwambo
P20	47	Female	General Worker	6	No formal schooling	Oshiwambo
P21	38	Female	Production Superintendent	12	Grade 12 Bachelor of Education (enrolled)	Oshiwambo
P22	39	Female	Supervisor	9	Grade 9	Oshiwambo

P23	30	Female	General Worker	5	Grade 12 Certificate in Bookkeeping Diploma in Education (Enrolled)	Oshiwambo
P24	42	Female	Supervisor	5	Grade 12 certificate in Hospitality	Oshiwambo

4.3. Findings from semi-structured interviews

Table 4.3 Themes and sub-themes thematic analysis

Four (4) main themes and twenty-three (23) sub-themes that emerged from the data are discussed below. Participants' verbatim statements are in italics.

Themes	Sub-themes
Women economic empowerment opportunities	Women are preferred over men as they are more responsible
	Opportunity for promotion
	Job knowledge acquisition
	Access to Employee benefits
	Ability to take care of their families and obtain assets
Barriers to women's economic empowerment in the Namibia fishing industry	The industry is male dominated
	Unconducive working conditions
	Lack of workmanship
	Women not allowed to work on fishing vessels
	Employed on a contractual basis
Women's perceptions of economic empowerment in the fishing industry in Namibia	Empowering women through job opportunities
	More job opportunities in the fishing industry

	The fishing industry has the potential to offer more than employment opportunities
	Offer dominantly male jobs to women
	High-earning jobs are reserved for men
Women’s recommendations for improving women’s economic empowerment	Increase quotas
	Reserve percentage of quotas for women
	Invest in more fish factories and vessels
	Create more job opportunities
	Reserve key jobs for women
	Implement training schemes for women
	Increase the number of study leave days
Increase and empower auxiliary services	

4.3.1. Theme 1: Women economic empowerment opportunities

The first theme is concerned with the opportunities that are available within Omankete Seafood Processing (Pty) Ltd for women to be empowered. All the participants concurred that within Omankete Seafood Processing (Pty) Ltd, there are opportunities to empower women:

“Women are more responsible, there are the ones that look after the kids. When men stay away from work, women will show up. They are good at flattening knives than most of the men. That is why it makes more sense to have more women than men. Most of our Supervisors and most of our superintendents are women. These are the ladies that started at the bottom, work their way through and showed potential to be promoted to certain positions. If you look at the

quality department, it is mostly ladies. Most of the time women excel better. If you look at the setup, the empowerment of women, they started at the bottom”
(KI01).

According to the Economic Empowerment Section of United Nations Women (2020), the level of empowerment women experience in the fishing sector is linked to the quality of women’s participation and recognition of their roles and contributions. The study found that the contribution of women in the fishing industry was greatly limited to employment in the fish factory. Women were primarily responsible for sorting, skinning, removing bones, and filleting fish. A paper by Sharma and Sharma (2015) stated that there is a link between the employment of women and empowerment.

According to Sharma and Sharma (2015), when women have jobs, they are treated better and feel more confident and powerful in their families. Also, they feel more self-assured, brave, and focused on their careers. Women who have jobs can get money and things they own. Karl Marx disagreed with this idea. Marx argued that when people work for someone else, they are being used and taken advantage of. Instead, working is essential for living (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2022). However, when we think about the good things about having a job, this study doesn't say that having a job is the same as being exploited.

Despite the company not requiring any qualifications nor experience, it was found to not be a hindrance as women can occupy and be promoted to better positions within the factory. Moreover, there is evidence that taking the initiative to upgrade their qualifications leads to growth within the company, in the words of KI04:

“There is a position of a manager, superintendent, Supervisor, acting Supervisor, quality controller, General Workers, and defrosters. There are employment opportunities (sic), and most of our employees are women mostly in the factory. Most of them have gone to improve their grade 10 and 12 results, paying for themselves with their salaries. Women here are promoted according to their potential and capabilities. There is a woman that works here, she has a master’s degree and we are planning on promoting her to a high position. Someone, a woman from the factory, is undergoing administrative training so as to occupy the administrative position and the admin officer will be promoted to the position where she will earn more than what she is earning now. There was one woman, who used to be a fork lifter (work mostly done by men). But she was the only woman”.

The study found that women are frequently employed within the company. According to this study, women are disproportionately engaged in the fishing sector because they are seen as more responsible than men. The study found that women get jobs without experience or training. However, the company does not have a succession policy in place, nor do they have an affirmative action plan, which is a requirement of the Affirmative Action (Employment) Act of 1998. According to the Act, all employers are mandated to have affirmative action plans in place that stipulate specifying the affirmative action measures that must be implemented to eliminate employment barriers against women; make available positions of employment to women as reasonably possible and ensure that women are equitably represented in the various positions of employment. The findings of the study are in direct contradiction with the findings of Kalev et al. (2018), who stated that ideal workers are those who are entirely

committed to their job with non-competing demands. Kalev et al. (2018) argues that women are not regarded as ideal workers because of their competing double roles as mothers and workers. The time commitment and characteristics required of the ideal worker, however, are inconsistent with the gender role of women given that they are often responsible for taking care of the household. As a result, women are less likely to be seen as the ideal candidate for numerous careers and promotions due to reproductive labour. Thus, women's participation in the labour market is thus, hindered by their social responsibilities of unpaid labour (Kalev et al., 2018). Yet, this study found that despite the many competing demands of women, they are the ideal employee due to their responsible nature.

The study found that only one participant was accorded the opportunity to be a forklift driver. The majority of the women expressed that they had the ambition to improve their lives by gaining educational qualifications. At the time the study was conducted, three of the participants were furthering their studies through their efforts and making use of their vacation leave days. A study by Segal (2013) found that women can maintain a work-life balance due to additional assistance in running the household and the children by domestic workers, family members, and neighbours. Women also make use of time management strategies such as making lists and being organized as a way of maintaining balance. Personality characteristics, such as being disciplined and a hard worker also ensure that women can work a full-time job, take care of their children, maintain a household, and still fulfil their educational commitments. Despite the Marxist theory describing education as a means of creating class inequalities through the formation of a workforce that is compliant, education enable women to acquire employment. The study found that the women looked at education as a means

of acquiring employment with higher wages. However, education might not be the answer as Namibia is suffering from a highly saturated job market and an ever-increasing number of graduates. The Ministry of Higher Education, Technology, and Innovation reported that more than 67 000 graduates were unemployed (Haufiku, 2021). From a Marxism perspective, education aims to legitimize and reproduce class inequalities by forming a subservient class and workforce. Education also prepares children of the capitalist ruling class (the bourgeoisie) for positions of power. Education is part of the 'superstructure' (Marx, 1910).

Despite the study findings alluding to women being promoted based on their potential and educational capabilities. The study did not find evidence of the company providing support to women furthering their studies by offering study leave or other incentives. The fishing company does not offer study leave as part of the benefits. The company only offers 24 annual leave days, 1 day's sick leave for every 26 days worked, 5 days of compassion after working consecutively for 1 year, and 12 weeks of maternity leave as per the Labor Act of 2007. The law does not make provision for study leave. Employees take advantage of the mandated "closing season" from 01 October to 31 October to fulfil their educational commitments. Since fishing does not resume immediately, employees only resume work after the 15th of November each year. The closing season for hake was introduced in 2015 as a measure to protect the stock during its peak spawning time, all hake vessels are required to stop operations for the entire month of October (Government Gazette of the Republic of Namibia, 30 April 2015).

A significant number of participants indicated that experience is not a basis from which women are hired. Women were hired with little to no experience. Furthermore, they maintained that the company offers training to their workers, which also increases their

chances of being promoted. The training comes in the form of mathematical literacy, hygiene, food handling, and work safety. Some participants expressed that they have attained job training in fish scaling, filleting, and the removal of bones using tweezers. The participants stated that training is conducted when they are initially recruited in the fishing company by the Superintendents and Supervisors. It is an informal training, hence no certificates are issued, and it lasts for a maximum of two days, for which they receive remuneration.

According to the study's participants, women are given possibilities for economic empowerment in the fishing industry. These take the shape of job opportunities, getting promoted based on work experience rather than qualifications, and learning the skills necessary for the job. Despite their lack of credentials in the fishing sector, women have the chance to advance, according to this study. Women are promoted from General Workers to Supervisors and production superintendents. Women reported obtaining on-the-job training that increased their job knowledge and encouraged career progression even though their position did not require educational degrees. Thus, this study revealed that women are empowered through these pursuits. A study by Ferrant et al. (2014) also shared similar results, which asserted the argument that a woman's education promotes their employability, which in turn increases their involvement in the labour force. Additionally, the high employee retention rates that result from on-the-job training that employees get to reduce the need to hire new workers and retrain them, while also acknowledging the contribution women make to the fishing industry in reducing poverty. On the contrary, Kusakabe and Thongprasert (2022) discovered in their study that due to their lower levels of education than men, women may be

denied opportunities and benefits associated with training. Men are frequently the target of initiatives aiming at expanding fisheries.

In addition to work-based training, participants indicated that working for the fishing company accords them with an opportunity to be exposed to different fish species and meet people that they otherwise would only see in newspapers. This proved to be important to the women as they are exposed to things that they haven't seen before, considering most of the participants are from rural areas in Namibia.

“I have learned to do what I could not do before joining the fishing industry, I have also learnt the different types of fish, I only knew the mackerel and catfish. I also met different prominent leaders when they come to visit the factory. I learnt how to be clean while working with fish and bodily hygiene” (P06).

Participants in this study alluded that the ability to move forward to the next position is present in the fishing industry. This is in line with the glass ceiling effect, which states that women are experiencing difficulties in progressing in their careers. The study found that women are able to progress in their careers, as highlighted by the participant who progressed from General Worker to Superintendent. They explained that women are empowered through the benefits that they are offered, which accords them the opportunity to acquire assets, including houses and cars, and attain educational qualifications. The benefits included medical aid, housing allowance, pension funds, and social security. The medical aid is contributed on a ratio of 1:1. This means that the employee and employer each contribute 50% to the medical aid scheme that is held at either Namibia Medical Care (NMC) or Namibia Health Plan (NHP). According to the website of the NMC, their medical aid plans range from N\$ 309.00 to N\$ 2162.00 per month (www.nmcfund.com/page/options-range). While NHP ranges from N\$ 267.00 to N\$ 3989.00 with the employer contributions of the premium (www.nhp.com.na/plans-and-benefits).

As for the pension fund, the company uses the Old Mutual Pension Fund and Sanlam Pension Fund. The company and the employees pay the same amount of money into the retirement fund. The amount paid into the fund, increases with the same amount as the basic salary. According to the Social Security Act of 1994, both employers and employees are mandated to contribute to the fund, on a monthly or annual basis. The act mandates that 0.9% of the regular wages must be paid over to the fund. The minimum amount that is legally mandated to be paid is N\$2. 70, with the maximum

being N\$81.00. Additionally, P06 and P07 stated that they received incentives such as shopping vouchers, fish boxes, savings accounts at Nampost and Harambee money:

“The salary bonus, we each receive a box of fish end of each year, a food voucher each year for 260 for December Christmas and Harambee money in the middle of the month.”

“Nampost also having savings for everyone in the factory and we get it on 4th January each year. The savings are depending on how much each individual get deducted each month. Then you will end up earning N\$ 1000 to N\$ 2000.”

Participants explained that the Harambee money was a decision made by the company to distribute a million dollars amongst 1700 people equally regardless of their rank and income difference. In essence, it's the company taking a 10% portion of its profits to share equally amongst all its employees. The participants explained that the money they receive from the profit-sharing scheme, improve their lives greatly as it increased their spending power.

Furthermore, some participants mentioned that they have the option to borrow money from their employer, with a monthly deduction from their pay. The company is not involved in funds that were borrowed by employees from external sources. The company does not have borrowing facilities, rather they have internal arrangements where employees can receive an advance on their salary in the event of a death in the family. Moreover, if an employee dies, the company assists the family with the funeral arrangements.

Most participants argued that the fishing sector gives them the means to support their families, accumulate assets, such as houses and cars that make their lives simpler, and retain some measure of dignity. This is in line with the findings of Sharma et al. (2015), that employment may be a measure of empowerment.

4.3.2. Theme 2: Barriers to women’s economic empowerment in the Namibian fishing industry

This theme is concerned with the constraints that exist within the fishing industry that hinder the economic empowerment of women. Although there are opportunities within the company to empower women, barriers still exist that can propel women further. The study findings suggest that there are barriers that hinder women from ascending to management positions. KI03 stated that the fishing company mostly preserves managerial positions that acquire masculine energy:

“The nature of the industry does not allow a woman to be head of the department. It demands energy. The sea industry requires masculinity (sic).”

Although women are frequently hired in the fishing industry, this study discovered that the major barrier is the predominance of men in well-paying and benefit-rich jobs. Men are more likely to hold high-paying managerial or shipboard posts, whereas women are generally restricted to the fish factories where they are paid less. Women in this study asserted that the fishing industry is male dominated and that they are excluded from working in the vessels where the income is high. Thus, this study argues that women are highly populated in lower-paying jobs and are less represented in high-

paying positions. Similarly, studies (Bruckmüller et al., 2020; Klugman, 2015) found that women are underrepresented in leadership, especially in executive and upper management roles. Despite having comparable skills, women are less likely than males to find employment and earn less money. In a more theoretical way, the glass ceiling that hinders women from obtaining high-status jobs and the maze-like nature of their professional paths are metaphors for the barriers, dead ends, and detours that women must navigate in their professions. Therefore, Bruckmüller et al. (2020); Klugman (2015); Brower and James (2020); and Musetsho (2021) indicated that women have been included in the job market throughout the years but are not empowered. The studies similarly show that women face these challenges within the job market which hampers their economic empowerment. Although women are included in attaining jobs outside of their domestic responsibilities, women are mostly employed in lower-paying positions which limits their chances of attaining managerial positions.

This study's findings concur with that of Price (2021) who found that 90% of women occupy land-based jobs, this includes mainly working in seafood processing plants. However, the author also reiterated that women are underrepresented in top leadership and managerial roles, as a result, they do not have decision-making powers, especially regarding working conditions and reasonable compensation. Thus, making women vulnerable to systematic discrimination and abuse. Similarly, participants in this study revealed that women are mostly employed as general workers within the factories whereas men are employed as fork lift drivers, managers, and on the vessels in various capacities. These inequities further inhibit the ability of women to access more secure and better-paying positions in the fishing industry.

A participant highlighted how the working conditions are not conducive for women, especially those with children, and the lack of proper housing in Walvis Bay. Such conditions make it difficult for women to attain empowerment. As explained by KI04,

“...I mean it is sickness due to the coldness inside. We still provide productive clothing and so on, but they experience medical problems like TB and so forth, but also a big problem I see is with the kids. Especially when they come to work night shifts and leave their kids with somebody to look after them, some women even leave kids alone in the house, and that is for me the biggest challenge. Leaving your kids with boyfriends and husbands that drink, that kind of thing... We have places burning down so quickly now, especially the ghettos and kinds of stuff...”

Women continue to be overrepresented in lower-level, risky jobs at the bottom of the labour hierarchy (Edwards-Jauch, 2014). Price (2021) found that women who are employed in post-harvest facilities are more often exposed to dangerous conditions in factories with poor ventilation, limited breaks, and crowded facilities. Similarly, this study found that women work in fish factories that are very cold and their working hours are long, with shifts starting as early as 04:00 in the morning thus increasing the likelihood of these women being robbed and/or raped, while on their way to work. Hence, the women have stated that the work they do is physically and mentally taxing. They agreed that they are paid low salaries and they are not provided with transport when working night shifts. A newspaper article by Muronga (2022) stated that the Erongo Region has the third highest incidences of crime. Most crimes committed in the region include robbery, rape and violence against women and children, and murder. On the contrary, there have been numerous newspaper reports (The Namibian, 2021; New Era, 2022) on the increase in crime against women. Furthermore, the non-

conducive working environment situation was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the World Economic Forum (2021), the impact of COVID-19 on women's empowerment is that COVID-19 increased gender inequality in the workplace and hampered women's economic empowerment. Moreover, the virus also contributed to an increase in working shifts and job instability. Increasing the level of stress due to school closures and unavailability of affordable child-minding services.

The participants described how the COVID-19 pandemic has made things worse for women at work. Women in this study expressed that they worked long hours, as explained by P15:

“Time management, we work 7 to 7 or 7 to 4. Before Covid-19, we used to work 7-5 including lunch between, now we do not get that lunch.”

The findings of the study were further substantiated in a paper by Napitupulu and Tanaya (2020), who stated that COVID-19 affected more women in comparison to men, as they were negatively affected by job losses and loss of livelihoods. Though women were already suffering from low wages in the fisheries sector, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation through the worsening of the economy. This phenomenon was explained in a study by White et al. (2022), who found that there was an increase in the number of hours of fisheries due to declines in profits, which led to retrenchments and hence, a smaller workforce. The decrease in consumption due to the COVID-19 pandemic led to fishing companies switching to direct consumer sales. These factors meant longer working hours for those still employed in the fishing industry.

A number of the participants have described the office atmosphere as hostile. P17 claimed that when she was still in training, her boss yelled at them as they issued commands.

“Their attitudes are not good. They can shout at you and say ‘hey you iron faster, when I came here, I was slow because I am only learning to do the work”.

A 2017 paper by Bucăța and Rizescu highlighted the importance of good communication as making interactions between and amongst the workers possible. Bucăța and Rizescu (2017) highlighted the role of supervisors as establishing bonds with the members of the organization through effective communication. A good supervisor makes use of effective communication to convey the task to the subordinate in a manner that is clear and understandable. If there is good communication between a supervisor and subordinate, it makes it easier to establish interpersonal connections, which, subsequently creates a working environment that is conducive for employees to thrive and empower the employees. This study found that there is indeed very little effective communication between bosses and their subordinates, hence the verbal abuse that women receive.

The same experiences were shared by another participant whom, even in her capacity as a supervisor still finds it hard to navigate the working environment in the fishing industry. This can be explained through the glass-ceiling effect, as in the prejudice and abuse have intensified despite rising in the ranks from general worker to supervisor (Cotter et al., 2001).

“...the manager may come and shout at you, you will have no say because you told them that you can work under pressure. Even when I am here as a supervisor and the general workers make a mistake, the manager screams at me, and then I have to go tell the general workers why the manager was screaming at me.” (P07).

Another concern that the participants expressed was gender discrimination in the Walvis Bay fishing industry which hinders their ability to advance professionally. The women also experience abuse, primarily verbal abuse where they are yelled at to work more swiftly. Not only are general workers subjected to abuse; supervisors are also not exempted. Some women in this study expressed that this discrimination was hindering the growth in the industry as some were opting to resign. Cotter et al. (2001) attributes this form of discrimination to the glass ceiling effect. Women face racial and gender discrimination at work because of their gender.

A lack of teamwork was also put forward as a factor that is hindering the economic empowerment of women. Some of the participants wanted to resign from their jobs due to the attitude of their co-workers. A participant stressed that some co-workers are rude and have no respect. A paper by Koneru (2018) highlighted the need for organizations to have quality circles in a bid to improve issues related to quality and productivity. Quality circles are defined as a group of employees who regularly meet in an effort to solve problems that affect the work area. In addition, the group conducts activities related to self-development and mutual development, control, and improvement within the workplace utilizing quality control techniques. Training is also accorded to its members on problem-solving, statistical quality control, and group process. Quality circles are extremely pivotal in improving job satisfaction. The study

found the women did not experience job satisfaction due to verbal abuse and the negative attitude of other employees. This indicates that little women empowerment.

According to a 2018 Marine Stewardship Council Report, Namibia has more than 340 registered fishing vessels, with Omankete Seafood Processing (Pty) Ltd in collaboration with Seaworks (Pty) Ltd, owning four wet fish trawlers. Despite such a number, the participants have stated that they are not allowed to work on fishing vessels. Working on-board fishing vessels is deemed more attractive due to the high salary that employees earn. The women believed that the fishing vessels were gendered and are only meant for men:

“The women are not allowed to work in the vessels, because the vessels are only for the men. Because, you know if you go in the vessel amongst the men, the crime will be too much because the men will want to force themselves and sleep with you- they will be tempted. Those men in the vessels used to take long in the sea, like 3 to 6 months. It is not safe for a woman to be amongst men. They, can also not put the same number of women and men in the vessels- meaning each person will end up with a partner and the work will not be done well” (P018)

However, some participants noted that there are few women employed to work on the vessels. Moreover, another participant stated that these women are mostly employed by the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources and the Fisheries Observer Agency.

A paper by Edward-Jauch (2014) also highlighted that black women despite making up a large portion of the domestic labour force at the time of Independence, still face

long hours, low salaries, and a complete lack of benefits and job security. According to Atkins et al. (2021), this was contributed to women mostly occupying positions in post-harvest processing. A large proportion of the fishing industry involves the removal of fish from the ocean for processing on board the vessels or in onshore processing facilities. Unfortunately, women are prohibited from working on fishing vessels due to fear of sexual harassment. The fear of being subjected to sexual violence is what prohibits women from working on the vessels, where they can earn more. This cultural belief can be attributed to the patriarchal belief system still prevalent in workplaces. Moreover, the same sentiments were shared by Royeppen (2015), who found that there are few women in the maritime industry due to rampant harassment and discrimination against women, thus further culturing the misogynistic and sexualized nature of the fishing industry. Studies by Klaa (2020) and Laszlo et al. (2021) have highlighted that women, because of their gender, are at risk of experiencing violence, discrimination, and unpaid labour. A paper by Price (2021) also highlighted sexual harassment and gender-based violence as being highly prevalent in the fishing industry. However, this study has not found any evidence pertaining to incidences of sexual abuse made among women within the workplace. A paper by Makoko (2017) highlighted the advantage that men still have over women, that in turn negatively impacts their economic rights and access to resources. By preventing women from going to sea, the economic production of women is greatly lowered and further subjects them to discrimination (Lesetedi, 2018).

Participants further noted that women start out working temporarily in the fishing factory where they are underpaid, as the recruitment agency takes a portion of their salary:

“I got recruited through APS- a recruitment agency. We use to get N\$ 4.00 in 2003, then N\$ 6.00 in 2008 until we became permanent in 2010. African Personnel Services is like doing an internship with them. They recruit people to give to other company for 6-9 months before becoming permanent...” (P11).

Moreover, Price (2021) stated further that women are faced with more inequalities, which come in the form of being employed on a temporary basis. Articles by Mbathera (2021) and de Klerk (2022) found that some African fishing institutions employ women on a contract basis. This implies that benefits like health insurance, childcare, or a severance package are not available to women. The demand for such benefits is much greater for women, who often lack access to adequate housing. The participants in their study claimed that Walvis Bay is not a place where one may flourish. The women who work at the fishing factory earn meagre wages, making it difficult for them to afford decent housing. Hence, they are forced to live in shacks that are at constant risk of burning. However, the findings of the study highly contradict their findings. Some participants in this study indicated that they receive a housing allowance that enables them to afford accommodation.

4.3.3. Theme 3: Perceptions of participants on women’s economic empowerment in the fishing industry in Namibia

The third theme speaks about how women’s economic empowerment is perceived by those in the fishing industry of Namibia. KI02’s perception of the importance of empowering women:

“...it is important to empower them because if you empower a woman, you empower the nation... because they are the mothers, taking care of the kids. If

you empower a woman in every house, you empower a nation because they are not selfish, they are giving, they encourage, and help, so if women are more empowered, then the nation will go ahead, there will have a good nation and good generations to come”.

The study found that the empowering women, has direct benefits to the families of the women and the society at large. The findings determined that women empowerment, means women would be in a better position to take care of their families and obtain assets that will better their lives and those of their families. A paper by Chichester et al. (2017), concurred with the findings of the study. Having found that by providing women with the necessary tools, opportunities, safeguards, and skills, women will be able to realize their full potential. In addition, the study found that despite the job opportunities that are currently being offered by the industry, the fishing industry has the potential to offer more jobs that have substantially higher benefits.

Most participants said that the fishing business has a unique opportunity to reduce long-term unemployment since it doesn't require any special training.

“...there are old people here, some they did not even go to school, if there was no fishing industry, they will be at home. So, the fishing industry has provided job opportunities for these women as factory work does not require any experience. Women are able to earn an income even when they do not have qualifications. It is taking too many people from the streets” (P18).

Although, currently higher earning jobs are dominantly offered or reserved for men. Women maintained that they could only attain low-paying jobs due to gender discrimination. The study thus found that women are subjected to jobs that earn less

than men. On the contrary, Hosanee (2018) found that the fishing and maritime industry has greatly improved in terms of women empowerment and participation. According to Hosanee (2018), the industry has launched various programs focused on training and promoting women in various positions. Yet, this study revealed that women receive on-the-job training as a means to alleviate their lack of experience and qualifications.

Some participants have highlighted that it is the prerogative of the fishing industry to empower women through job opportunities. The study found that because of the jobs, they can afford rent, pay for their studies, and provide for their family through the various job benefits. Yet, some of the participants feel that working in the fish factory is their only hope as the government has not been forthcoming with job creation. The study found the participants perceived that it is the role of the government to create jobs for them:

“This is the only opportunity that is putting bread on the table for most of us. Employment is scarce. This is my last hope. It is cold in here and we use bare hands to do this work, I have no choice” (P16).

However, a participant mentioned that the benefits are not only for those employed within the factories but also spill over to create business opportunities, where the women (those employed by the company and those not) are selling their perishable goods at the fish factories:

“Here, there are women who sell outside the factory, and they sell fish and chips to employees of the fishing companies” (P14).

Some of the participants believed that the fishing industry has more to offer than jobs. According to the participants, despite being employed as general workers, supervisors, production superintendent, and office administrators, they also have their eyes set on positions that are normally occupied by men on-board fishing vessels as seamen. A participant argued that promoting women to higher positions translates to higher income. Furthermore, the participant stressed that women are being undermined thus, excluding them from high-paying jobs preserved for men:

“Through salary increments of promoting women to high positions, giving women the chance to drive the trucks, folk lifters. There are women, getting the fish out of the boards or vessels after they have been caught, fixing the vessels. If a woman has studied carpentry or engineering, they should be given the opportunity to work there in the vessels/ boats. The industry has not empowered women. Women too can be employed to go into the vessels and cook, now men are cooking for themselves because they say women cannot be there.” (P21)

Some of the participants believe that the fishing industry is not doing enough to empower women, as no efforts are made to make vessels more women friendly. P07 also stated that the industry is not empowering women as they perceive that women are only made acting Supervisors. Other participants further claimed that due to the increased possibility of physical harm from trawl doors and dragging heavy nets and even drowning, several positions with better benefits are best preserved for men. Most importantly, the study found that the participants believed that driving heavy vehicles and being at sea leads to infertility. Although such beliefs have been disputed by scientific evidence (Skakkebæk et al., 2022).

“Opportunities such as driving heavy vehicles and being in the vessels are not really for women. They cause infertility in women because of too much shaking of the bodies by the waves and by the trucks but we want to have an equal number of men and women everywhere in the fishing industry departments.”
(P08).

As stipulated by Participant P08, it can be viewed that women stand in the way of their own empowerment due to misguided beliefs that are fuelled by patriarchal society in which the women find themselves in. Furthermore, the perception is still that of women being impacted by gender disparities in laws. However, the study found that the Namibian government and legislation have aimed to reduce disparities in genders as highlighted in the constitution; the Labour Act 6 of 1992, and the Affirmative Action (Employment) Act 29 of 1988. Moreover, policies have been developed and implemented, all with one aim of closing gaps between genders. This includes the Namibia National Gender Policy (2010-2020), the Fifth National Development Plan of 2017, and The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In addition, the Marine Resources Policy of 2004 of Namibia has explicitly highlighted the importance of ensuring that women are participating fully in the fisheries sector. However, Etosha Fishing (Pty) Ltd, a fishing company located in Walvis Bay, Namibia is an exception. Nearly half of the management positions are occupied by women. The departments of quality, labeling and dispatch, are all headed by women (www.etoshafishing.com). This indicates that it is possible for women to occupy managerial positions within the fishing industry, contrary to the statements made by the key informants.

4.3.4. Theme 4: Proposed Recommendations on women's economic empowerment

This theme describes what can be implemented or restructured to improve the level of economic empowerment for women. Most of the participants believed that more women can be recruited if the Government increases the fishing quota that is preserved for fishing companies. Furthermore, the participants mistakenly believed that fishing rights are reserved for men. Participants made suggestions for the government to issue fishing quotas for women that could boost women's labour force participation. Fish quotas are issued by the Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources to individual rights-holders upon application. A fish quota allows a right holder to fish with licensed vessels, as per the quota allocation guidelines stipulated in the Marine Resources Act. Fishing rights are issued for a maximum of twenty years and a minimum of seven years (Iitembu et al., 2021). According to P21:

“...if we are given more quotas, it will help us as a company to recruit more women. Because, sometimes if we are given fewer quotas, we will only be able to recruit a small number of people, but if we are given more quotas, we will be able to recruit more people, especially women. Women are the ones that are doing most of the production line such as filleting of fish, we always recruit women because they are more active, and they are faster. So, the more quotas we are given, the more women we will employ.”

Other participants have recommended improving the fishing capacity by investing in fishing factories and vessels to create more jobs. Moreover, there is a need to advertise vacant positions internally. The participants expressed that internal vacancies give

women an opportunity to grow within the company and retain job knowledge and skills.

Several recommendations were made by the participants on how the fishing industry can be inclusive and empower women economically. According to the participants, they highlighted, increasing quotas, and reserving a percentage of such quotas exclusively for women to create more jobs and reserve a portion of those jobs for women. According to the National Development Plans (NDP) 5 for 2017/18 to 2021/22, the fishing industry will only be able to empower women if dwindling fish stocks are rebuilt. In that case, there will be a subsequent increase in the Total Allowable Catch (TAC), which translates into more jobs at sea. Moreover, the policy dictates that investing in value addition will ensure that more volumes of fish will be available for processing at land-based processing facilities. This means the fishing industry will be in a position to offer more employment.

Moreover, the industry will benefit from diversification into mariculture which is more labour-intensive and less capital-intensive. However, the government and the statistics agency can increase women's participation in the fisheries sector, by updating the gender-disaggregated data on the fisheries sector and its socioeconomic characteristics. This information can be used to identify the gaps that hinder the full participation of women in the fisheries sector. This will subsequently lead to increased access to ownership of the business and/or vessels, access to manage resources, and fully participate in the decision-making processes for fisheries management (Napitupulu & Tanaya, 2020).

The fishing industry can also improve by investing in more fish factories and vessels, thus increasing job opportunities for women. Namibia's Marine Resources Policy of 2004, also known as the White Paper, has highlighted how the country's marine resources can be used to develop the country. In essence, the paper states the importance of the responsibility of the state to encourage investment in offshore processing facilities to increase employment. The policy also highlights the commitment of the government to giving Namibians preference to benefit from their marine resources, while taking into consideration gender issues and ensuring the full participation of women in all spheres of the industry.

Participants also suggested that women be given access to occupations in the fishing industry that are currently restricted only to men. Participants emphasized that women may now have equal prospects as with males. P10 stated that women may be empowered to work as a forklift driver if other women pave the way:

"I believe an opportunity will be given to a woman first before it is given to a man. If the other women see me driving a forklift, it will encourage them to apply and try to get a license to drive as well".

Moreover, participants recommended that companies create women empowerment schemes to allow positions that are dominantly occupied by men to be occupied by women as well. The fishing companies may pay a levy to the Namibia Training Authority (NTA) to develop training programs that will empower women to gain new skills and take up positions within the company. While bridging the gap of skills shortage. Such training may include Marine Capture Fishing Specialists, Maritime

Specialists, Occupational Health Specialists, Marine Engineers, Marine Technicians, and Marine Artisans (Namibia Training Authority, 2014).

The participants recommend study leave days to encourage women to further their studies and increase their employability;

“...a lot of women have certificates, but they still need to be taken to go do various courses to advance their skills and knowledge and... Yes, we need more leave days. Also, getting leave is very difficult; one has to do a lot of explanations before being granted that leave.” (P20)

Moreover, women can benefit immensely from training schemes that will enable them to be trained and subsequently promoted. The study found that women are putting in the effort to attain qualifications in a bid to make them more employable. Since they are employed full-time, they have to take their studies on a part-time basis, hence the need for employers to provide them with adequate study leave days. Hence, fishing companies will do well by implementing the Monterey Framework for Social Responsibility. According to Price (2021), the framework aims to protect human rights, while improving food and livelihood security in the fishing industry. Furthermore, the framework further entails improving environmental sustainability across production lines; protecting human rights to make sure that seafood is sourced without harm being done to persons who are involved in producing, processing, and distributing it, and providing equitable opportunities for all workers (Price, 2021). However, Cotter et al. (2001) argued that despite their abilities and accomplishment, women are prevented from moving up the corporate ladder by this invisible but

impenetrable barrier. The prejudice against women intensifies as they rise through the ranks and hierarchies.

Some of the participants would like to see an increment in the number of auxiliary services:

“They can increase the numbers of departments like laundry, ironing. They can also have a tailored department like now our uniforms are old, instead of bringing them from outside, they can recruit women to sew them. In instances where the jackets are torn.” (P03)

In addition to fishing, there are auxiliary services that are required for the fishing industry to work effectively. Hence the need to empower such industries, in a bid to open employment opportunities. According to the NDP 5 (2017:27), the “fishing industry and the town of Walvis Bay are strategically located, to develop into a key logistical, stevedoring, processing and marketing hub in Africa”. Thus, being in a position to open up employment opportunities.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter presented the demographic information of the 28 participants, including age, gender, job description, number of years in the position, and home language. Furthermore, the chapter presented the findings of the study from which four themes were derived from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the key informants and the participants, namely, women’s economic empowerment opportunities; barriers to women’s economic empowerment in the Namibia fishing industry; perceptions of

women economic empowerment in the fishing industry in Namibia and proposed recommendations on women economic empowerment. This chapter also presented an analysis of the findings of the study with related studies that were highlighted in Chapter 2.

The study has found that with regard to women's access to resources is limited to housing and cars and others not. This may also be attributed to the slow pace at which land is being availed by the Walvis Bay municipality (Remmert & Ndhlovu, 2018). However, women are still lagging in terms of taking ownership of fishing companies and vessels on an equal basis as men. This can be attributed more too patriarchal norms than policies. As stipulated by the Women Empowerment Framework, women use their earnings to improve their family's standard of living. The study has found that women are aware of the patriarchal norms at play that hinder their empowerment. As highlighted by Oxfam (2019), patriarchal social norms and structures determine what women can and cannot do inside their homes and in public spaces, including employment. Despite the country enacting several legislation and policies to empower women, it hasn't been translated by employers to ensure that they empower women in their own establishments. The women attempted to control their environment by taking the necessary steps to upgrade their educational qualifications in a bid to acquire better-paying jobs. The study found that there are opportunities within the fishing industry that women are partaking in and benefiting from, in the form of salaried jobs. However, women are barred from occupying high-paying positions on board vessels, due to fears of sexual abuse. Despite such barriers, the participants had high hopes for the ability of the fishing industry to realize more opportunities and remove the "glass ceiling" effect that hinders women.

Achieving the full benefits of a blue economy will be greatly enabled by empowering women to allow them to participate fully in and contribute to their own development and success (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2018). Mandal (2013) argued that, in almost every society and in every sphere of life, women assume unequal positions and statuses, thus it is necessary to empower them by providing equal opportunities. Women face a myriad of barriers to their economic empowerment.

The study findings conclude that empowerment for women in the fishing industry is limited to participation and not inclusion. The study findings indicate that women are still not included in all spheres of the fishing industry. They are mostly limited to lowly paid jobs in the fish factory. Chapter five presents the summary of the findings and the recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The study aimed to explore the role of Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd in empowering women and the factors thereof that are affecting women's economic empowerment. The study focused on the women working at Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd in Walvis Bay, Namibia. The study had three objectives which were to examine opportunities for the women's economic empowerment in the fishing industry in Namibia; to explore constraints to the women's economic empowerment in the fishing industry, and to explore women's perceptions about their economic empowerment in the fishing industry in Namibia. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews, with twenty-eight participants. The data was subjected to thematic analysis. This chapter will present a summary and conclusion using the study objectives:

- Women's economic empowerment opportunities
- Barriers to women's economic empowerment in Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd
- Women's perceptions of economic empowerment in Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd
- Women's recommendations for improving women's economic empowerment.

This chapter will further present recommendations.

5.2. Study findings

5.2.1. Women economic empowerment opportunities

The study found that Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd offers empowerment to women in the form of employment opportunities and associated benefits. Women were primarily employed as General Workers and Supervisors. The study also found that they receive other benefits in the form of bonuses, Harambee money (profit sharing dividends), medical aid, pension fund, a box of fish, Christmas vouchers, personal loan facilities, and Nampost savings. Women further received training. In turn, this accords them the opportunity to take care of their families and obtain assets such as houses, cars, and furniture, which make their lives easier. The study concludes that the women are included but are not entirely empowered. The study uncovered that women in the Walvis Bay fishing industry are included in this industry but face unique barriers that hinder their empowerment. An analysis of gender dynamics of management, indicated that women predominately occupied positions pertaining to administrative support. This is indicative of tokenism.

5.2.2. Barriers to women's economic empowerment in Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd

The study findings reveal that the fishing industry, in particular Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd is male-dominated, with high-earning jobs reserved mainly for men. The study findings indicated that jobs on-board vessels were characterized by higher salaries and opportunities, however they were reserved for men on the basis that vessels were not suitable for women. However, the findings alluded to women employed by FOA and MFMR who are working on-board vessels. This constitutes gendered barriers. In addition, the study highlighted the uncondusive working

conditions that women are forced to work in, namely, cold factories, long hours, and low salaries. A lack of workmanship amongst the workers was also highlighted as hampering the empowerment of women in the workplace. Thus, the study concludes that women face the glass ceiling effect which hampers their economic empowerment.

5.2.3. Women's perceptions of economic empowerment in Omankete Seafood Processors

The women believed that Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd positively empowers women, through the many job opportunities in the fishing industry. The study found that Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd is a provider of jobs that do not require qualifications, hence it can reduce unemployment. In conclusion, the fishing industry, specifically Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd provides opportunities through job opportunities for women to thrive economically. The study findings alluded to the perception that employment opportunities were commensurate to empowerment.

5.2.4. Women's recommendations for improving women's economic empowerment

The study found that the participants were in favour of increasing fish quotas for companies that provide job opportunities. Although, the Marine Resources Policy does make provision for women empowerment in the industry. Participants contended that women may be empowered to occupy occupations that are male dominated. In doing so, women may gain higher positions and more job benefits which are mostly preserved for men. The study participants alluded to the inclusion of women in decision, hence they recommended that a portion of the quotas be reserved for women.

In addition, the participants recommended that companies create empowerment schemes for specifically for women to drive empowerment. Thus, this study concludes that the proposed interventions do just not focus on inclusivity but rather challenge bureaucratic structures that disempower women.

5.3. Recommendations for future research studies

The researcher makes the following suggestions to address women's economic empowerment considering the conclusions gained from the study's findings and the literature review:

- There is a need to expand this study by including other stakeholders such as other fishing companies to draw a more generalized conclusion.
- The researcher recommends policies that facilitate the active engagement of more women in areas of decision-making that can increase the representation of women in leadership and management positions in the fisheries industry.
- The research study can be expanded to include auxiliary services i.e. vessel maintenance, stevedoring, and ship chandlers in future studies.
- The research study may be expanded to determine how women who work on-board vessels i.e. MFMR, FOA, within the fishing industry and Debmarine are empowered.

5.4. Implications for practice

The Namibian government has implemented incentives to promote onshore processing in a bid to provide more jobs for unemployed Namibians. This shows that there is a potential for the fishing industry to absorb a large proportion of the unemployed as no qualifications nor experience are required. However, the study found that jobs in

Omankete Seafood Processors (Pty) Ltd that offer higher salaries are dominantly offered to men. This is due to the work being at sea, which is believed to be unsuitable for women.

5.5. Overall Conclusion

The study's main purpose was to investigate women's economic empowerment in the fishing industry. The study showed that women are only empowered within the fishing industry, through jobs and employee benefits, thus through participation only. However, women are still excluded from participating fully in the fishing industry. Women were only empowered through wages, and employee benefits on job training and promotional opportunities. However, the study also accorded the participants an opportunity to make recommendations that can be implemented to improve women's economic empowerment and participation in the fishing industry.

The study also included recommendations from key fishing policies, namely the Marine Resources Policy of 2004. A recommendation was made for more investments in fish factories and vessels. Furthermore, they also recommended for some jobs be reserved for women, to empower women. Moreover, companies in the fishing industry are implored to implement training schemes for women, thus encouraging women to occupy positions that were previously dominated by men. In addition, the study has shown that women have taken up the initiative to further their studies in order to be in a position to take up better-paying positions. However, in order to achieve this, companies must increase the number of study leave days for women to empower themselves. Lastly, the fishing industry does not operate in isolation; there are other auxiliary services, which can also be empowered so as to create employment.

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Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate



ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: HREC-NH/15/11/2020

Date: 26-11-2020

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Title of Project: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE BLUE ECONOMY: A CASE STUDY OF THE FISHING INDUSTRY IN WALVIS BAY, NAMIBIA

Nature/Level of Project: M.A. (NON-HEALTH) (NQF9)

Researcher: TJOVA RAULINDA N. FOLOLINDO

Student Number: 201301791

Faculty: HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Supervisor(s): DR. A. NHEMACHENA

Take note of the following:

- (a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
- (b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
- (c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
- (d) The UREC retains the right to:
 - (i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
 - (ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

REC wishes you the best in your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H.L. Beyer', is written over a faint, larger signature.

Prof. H.L. Beyer, Deputy Chair: HREC-NH
pp Chair: HREC-NH

Appendix B: Request to conduct research at Omankete Seafood Processors Pty (Ltd)

Ms. T.R.N Fololindo
Student: Master of Gender and Studies
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Namibia

Mr. Oscar Shigwana
Managing Director
Omankete Investments (Pty) Ltd
PO BOX 70729
Khomasdal
Windhoek

Re: letter of requesting permission to conduct Research interviews with the Omankete Investments (Pty) Ltd Factory employees

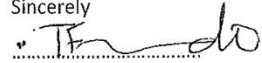
This letter serves to seek for permission to conduct interviews with the Omankete Investments management and the factory employees (women). My name is Tjova Fololindo, a 2nd year Master of Arts in Sociology, Gender and Development studies student from the University of Namibia. I am undertaking a research titled: **An investigation into women empowerment in the Blue economy: A case study of Hake fishing industry, Walvis Bay, Namibia.** The aim of the study is to investigate women's empowerment in the Hake industry particularly in the Omankete Investments Pty Ltd. The study further aims to assess the available opportunities for women in the segments of the fishing industry that are dominated by men such as in the vessels, and to investigate the reason behind the large number of women in the Omankete Investments factory.

Data collection is part of the researcher's final year MA mini thesis at the university of Namibia. This research may contribute towards discourse on knowledge and be instrumental to policy formulations on fishing industry. This study may help empower women through the fishing industry.

I therefore, would like to request for permission to interview a total of 25 employees from your company including management. I am asking for permission to interview at least 3 management members (both men and women) seven new recruits aged 19-20/25, five employees who have worked for the company for three years, seven employees who have worked for the company for 5- 10 years, and 3 line supervisors.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tjova Fololindo', written over a dotted horizontal line.

Tjova Fololindo

MA student

University of Namibia

Appendix C: Permission letter



Omankete Investments (Pty) Ltd

P O Box 70729
Komasdal
WINDHOEK
NAMIBIA

Email: oshigwana@iway.na; tell: 061 23000, fax: 061 233003

Reg. No. 2000/485

Ms T.R.N. Fololindo
Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences
University of Namibia
P.O.Box 13301
Madume Ndemufayo
Windhoek Main Campus

25 November 2020

Dear Ms. Fololindo,

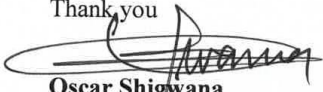
Re: Permission to conduct research interview with our Omankete Investments (Pty) Ltd, Seafood processors employees

In reference to your letter dated 23rd November 2020, we confirm to permit your research exercise at our Omankete Seafood value adding factory at Walvis Bay.

We advise that you meet with our management at No. 6D Ben Amadhila RD boardroom at 14H: 00 on Monday 30th November 2020 for introduction to our team who will be assisting you during your research.

We look forward meeting you

Thank you


Oscar Shigwana
Managing Director

Directors: K. Dumeni, R. Pallais, O.T. Amadhila, J. Nakaambo, O. Shigwana, S Kankondi, U.S Gauseb, M. Shingenge Haipinge, A. Kathindi

Appendix D: Information leaflet and consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM



TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE BLUE ECONOMY: A CASE STUDY OF THE FISHING INDUSTRY IN WALVIS BAY, NAMIBIA.

REFERENCE NUMBER:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: MS TJOVA RAULINDA NDALINOSHISHO FOLOLINDO

ADDRESS: 4043, ALBERT CONRADISE STRAAT, DAMARA LOCATION KATUTURA

CONTACT NUMBER: 0816906853

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask me any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary**, and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at The University of Namibia and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki, South African Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice and Namibian National Research Ethics Guidelines.

1. What is this research study all about?

This research study is about enabling women to participate in the fishing industry of the blue economy in Walvis Bay by finding out the barriers to equal gender representation, as well as opportunities for women in the fishing industry.

2. Why have you been invited to participate?

You are been invited to participate in this study because you have knowledge and experience about the fishing industry and about your company than any other person. Your insights and views as an experienced employee of the fishing sector will add value to this study.

3. What will I ask of better?

You will be required to be in an interview with me for 20-35. in this interview, I will ask you few questions about women empowerment and fishing industry and your views and opinions will be respected.

4. Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

There are no personal benefits in taking part in this research. However, the information that you give in this study might help change the fishing industry in terms of women representation in the fishing sector.

5. Are there in risks involved in your taking part in this research?

There are no risks involved in taking part in this research study. You will not be required to do anything that will injure you or cause any harm.

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

You will not be paid to take part in this research study, and there are no costs involved.

10 Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- a) *You can contact the Centre for Research and Publications at +264 061 2063061; pclaassen@unam.na if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the investigator.*
- b) *You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.*

11. Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study entitled *(An investigation into women’s empowerment in the blue economy: A case study of Walvis Bay, Namibia.)*.

I declare that:

- a) I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.

.....
Signature of investigator

.....
Signature of witness

13. Declaration by participant's consent to be recorded

I (.....) declare that:

- I have agreed to be recorded during the interview session
- I have given permission to the principal investigator to record the interview and use it only for her studies.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 2020.

.....
Signature of participant

Appendix E: Interview Guide for key informants

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

Introduction

My name is Tjova Raulinda Ndalinoshisho Fololindo, I am a student at the University of Namibia. I am currently conducting a research on the empowerment of women in the fishing sector of the blue economy more specifically in Omankete Investments pty ltd to collect insights. The aim of the study is to investigate women's empowerment in the fishing industry. It is part of the researcher's final year MA mini thesis at the university. I would like to hear your opinions and intuition and perceptions, and I would therefore ask for 35 minutes of your time during this interview. I would like to guarantee you anonymity and confidentiality- that the information you will provide in this interview will be kept confidential and your name will not be mentioned anywhere or linked to the views you have given. Your identity will be kept anonymous.

KEY INFORMANTS

1. What are the opportunities and challenges for women's empowerment in the fishing industry?
2. How can women empowerment be enhanced in the fishing industry?
3. What are the opportunities and challenges that women have when they seek promotion in the fishing industry?
4. Kindly narrate to me the challenges and benefits you had experienced working with women in the fishing industry.
5. Can you explain in your opinion, the importance of empowering women?

Appendix F: Interview Guide for participants

Interview guide for participants

Introduction

My Name is Tjova Raulinda Ndalinoshisho student number 201301791, currently studying for a Master of Arts in Gender and Development Studies with the University of Namibia. I am carrying out a research titled: *An investigation into women's empowerment in the blue economy: A case study of the fishing industry, Walvis Bay, Namibia*. The aim of this research is to investigate women's empowerment in the fishing industry, more specifically in the Omankete pty ltd. This study may help empower women in the fishing industry.

INTERVIEW

1. Could you please narrate to me the opportunities and challenges that you have faced in your life as a woman?
2. Kindly narrate to me your experiences working in the fishing industry.
3. Kindly narrate to me the opportunities and challenges that you have met while working in the fishing industry.
4. In what ways have you benefited, if at all, by working in the fishing industry?
5. In what ways, if any, is the fishing industry helping to empower women?
6. How can more opportunities be created for women to work in the fishing industry?
7. How can more opportunities be created for more women to be promoted in the fishing industry?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix G: Date and length of semi-structured interviews

Key informant interview schedules		
No	Date of interview	Length of interview
1	07/12/2020	00:37:23
2	09/12/2020	00:40:27
3	10/12/2020	00:27:29
4	18/03/2021	00:30:00 (not recorded)
General population interview schedules		
1	01/12/2020	00:32:55
2	01/12/2020	00:31:35
3	01/12/2020	00:21:56
4	02/12/2020	00:28:41
5	02/12/2020	00:28:39
6	02/12/2020	00:23:49
7	02/12/2020	00:16:50
8	02/12/2020	00:37:07
9	02/12/2020	00:25:30
10	03/12/2020	00:33:06
11	03/12/2020	00:22:44
12	03/12/2020	00:13:26
13	03/12/2020	00:19:02
14	03/12/2020	00:21:16
15	04/12/2020	00:29:37
16	04/12/2020	00:18:10

17	04/12/2020	00:17:25
18	04/12/2020	00:21:29
19	04/12/2020	00:20:00
20	04/12/2020	00:24:37
21	07/12/2020	00:12:17
22	07/12/2020	00:08:18
23	07/12/2020	00:08:33
24	07/12/2020	00:11:58