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Emashumini:

The Gendered Restrictions in an Ekurhuleni Taxi Association



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Abbreviations

BEE- Black Economic Empowerment

CIT- Corporate Income Tax

DoEL- Department of Employment and Labour

DoT- Department of Transportation

GITOC- Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime

MEC- Member of Executive Committee

RTA- Rando Taxi Association

SANTACO- South African National Taxi Council

Abstract

This research report is about the place of women in South Africa's predominantly black-owned mini-bus minibus taxi industry. Currently, the industry is situated at the cusp of the informal economy and government regulation. Although women are slowly entering the industry it remains among the most male-dominated institutions. I argue that women in the minibus taxi industry are challenged with social and cultural norms which hinder their upward mobility in the industry. These unwritten gendered norms determine which women are fit to join the industry. In this work I explore participants' perceptions and experience of gendered violence in the industry, the gendered distribution of labour, security (squad cars guarding routes), and the challenges the industry poses for widows. This report is based on my study of the restrictions and regulations of the Rando Taxi Association* during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. I engaged with fifteen participants, both men and women, by using a combination of telephonic interviews and voice diaries. I found that women in this association enter the industry in one of two ways: by 'camping' at the taxi rank for an opportunity to drive a route, or through widowhood. Significantly, widowhood automatically provides women with a seat on the executive committee of the taxi association. The death of a husband is a route to its upper ranks. However, to be a woman in these ranks comes at a great cost.

1

‘An extraordinary Phenomenon’:

The Political Economy of the Minibus taxi industry in South Africa

The South African minibus taxi industry is a critical pillar of the economy and of public transportation (Fobosi 2019, 1). It is the most available and affordable transportation system which serves mostly the urban poor by providing employment for many people and by enabling their mobility across cities and between their rural and urban homes. It is mostly black-owned and is commonly understood to be part of the informal sector. It has been celebrated as an extraordinary socio-economic phenomenon over the years (Khosa 1992, 234). During the 1940s and 1950s period, African entrepreneurs were faced with employment and trading restrictions. The Motor Carrier Act of 1930 effectively outlawed competition with rail transportation, affecting the minibus taxi industry. The main aim for the government of that time was to discourage black-owned businesses through various repressive and brutal acts including the one-man-one-business policy (Khosa 1997, 234). Black-owned taxis were restricted to carrying five passengers and were constantly harassed by traffic officials, regardless of them being legalised, a practice that persists into the present.

The general structure of the operative part of the minibus taxi industry is comprised of five role players: the fleet owner, the owner-driver, the taxi driver, queue marshals and squad car drivers (who are usually taxi owners). The fleet owner usually owns more than three taxis (Khosa 1997, 236) and hires taxi drivers while he focuses on the daily running of the business. The owner-driver has one taxi which he operates himself while saving for the purchase of a new taxi. Once a new taxi is bought the owner-driver hires someone to drive that taxi. Squad cars were put in place to guard association routes from pirate taxis and are operated by taxi owners. There are also different players in the industry, like SANTACO, which is a business association that negotiates on services, maintenance, and supply on behalf of the industry members. It also acts as a mediator between taxi associations. There are local associations of taxi owners, which were formed as a way of accessing routes and obtaining permits. Taxi associations, also known as motherboards, are a state-like body which acts as an informal agent in response to the need for regulation and the protection of the industry, which is why they have their own ‘police force’ (squad members), although informal and criminal (Moloto 2017, 28). Associations have offices, often housed in a shipping container next to a taxi rank, or in a taxi owner’s home

(Barret 2003, 22). Taxi associations control routes, fares, and ranks for their members while establishing taxi squads to police pirate taxi drivers. SANTACO represents almost ninety percent of taxi owners and tries to build a relationship with the government. There have been disputes in the industry, especially when it comes to pirate taxis and the invasion of routes, which is still a threat that has been heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has been blamed for most of the taxi violence that occurred when the industry first started, because there were many opportunities opened for operators while there was very little business, and people were bound to react when their source of income was threatened.

There are almost 123 000 individual taxi associations, and the industry contributes thirty-nine billion rands a year in fuel costs. The Competition Commission also estimates that the industry spends close to two billion rands on insurance, which makes it a contributor to the economy. The industry is said to generate ninety billion rands of revenue and pays five million rands in taxes (Fobosi 2021, 2). The then minister of finance, Tito Mboweni, announced that the five-million-rand tax was collected from the industry, which includes tax collected from the employment income. The biggest challenge when it comes to the taxation of the industry is that the industry does not correctly disclose the income received from the business on their CIT.

The industry has been growing at an extraordinary rate. Loans increased by fourteen percent to more than R10. 1 billion (as of the 31st of March 2019), despite no government subsidy (SA Taxi 2019). The industry is valued at almost R 50 billion per annum in 2019 (Fobosi 2019, 1). It is known for its exploitation of drivers and queue marshals who seldom voice their concerns because of the informality of their work contracts. Government attempts to formalize the industry and to introduce labour regulations have been unsuccessful. Daily operations of the industry are complex partly because of its dynamism and informality. That said, Fobosi (2019, 5) argues that the industry works better than any government-run service and provides affordable transportation.

Government statistics on transportation usually excludes the minibus taxi industry, because it is informal, however, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of the industry. The minibus taxi industry has a huge impact on the public transportation system, in both mobility and economic terms (Fobosi, 2019). It employs between 400 000 to 600 000 people while circulating large amounts of money into the economy (Muthige, Machobane & Masela 2020, 1). Before COVID-19 pandemic, it is estimated that fifteen million commuter

trips were undertaken daily (Nomjana 2020), and the importance of this heightened during the peak of the lockdown period.

The payment of minibus taxi drivers comes in various ways (Nkete 2015). The wage plus system is one way, where they have a basic wage and a certain percentage of the weekly earnings, with the rest of the money going to their employer (Nkete 2015, 1). A second is to hand in a specific percentage of daily earnings to the taxi owner and to keep the rest of the money as their payment. A third is to take the money made for a day in the week and to give the rest of the money made for the entire week to the owner. Taxi drivers make up most of the industry. Although there is no available gender breakdown, women drivers and owners constitute a minority (Barret 2003, 6) and the few women workers are mainly employed in administration.

The minibus taxi industry during Covid-19

Like other industries across the global economy, the COVID-19 pandemic caused and continues to cause great difficulty for the minibus taxi industry. During lockdown, from Alert Level 5 in March 2020 to Alert Level 1 in December 2021, taxi operators raised concerns that they were losing profit due to the lockdown (Fobosi 2021, 1). When the nation went into Level 5 lockdown, no other forms of public transportation were allowed to operate, apart from minibus taxis, which transported essential workers. They were told to only carry 50% of passengers, which was gradually increased to 70% carrying capacity in April 2020, as the lockdown progressed (Nomjana 2020). During Level 4 and 5, long distance trips were not allowed, thus greatly reducing the industry's revenue. When the lockdown began, the government did not consult with the minibus taxi industry, seemingly, there was no consultation between taxi associations and their taxi drivers on how they will work during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fobosi 2021). When the lockdown was at its peak, the importance of the minibus taxi industry to the livelihoods of ordinary South Africans and the local economy was stressed as the only public transportation allowed to operate. The COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown revealed the precariousness of the minibus taxi industry, and the pressure taxi operators put on taxi drivers when it comes to making profit (Fobosi 2021). The industry operates in a context where the economy is continuously facing issues of inequality, hunger,

and joblessness which were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the lockdowns imposed on the nation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a huge disruption was caused on the operations of the industry, which led to further precariousness (Fobosi 2021, 3).

Taxi drivers raised concerns that they were making less money through taxi fares because fewer people travelled around cities and townships. This is not surprising given that taxi drivers are expected to give their daily collected fares to their employers, while putting money on the side for petrol. This highlighted drivers' lack of job security and financial protection. The DoEL issued a Sectoral Determination (Basic Condition of Employment Act 95 of 1997, Sectoral Determination II: taxi Sector 2005) for the industry which specifies basic employment conditions. However, the industry is still informal with no protection for its employees (Fobosi 2021, 1). Taxi drivers remain marginalised when it comes to job related benefits such as the Unemployment Insurance Fund, an important, if meagre, cushion during difficult times like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The minibus taxi industry has been operating in an unregulated and informal context even before the COVID-19 pandemic, hence the DoEL finds it hard to enforce labour regulations for employees (Fobosi 2021, 4). Queue marshals and taxi drivers have historically faced exploitation due to their employers being concerned about their maximum profit. This exploitation still continues, where taxi drivers are expected to drive as much as they can in order to generate the required income, while being underpaid. They are also not protected against any form of exploitation and unfair dismissal. In March 2020, when South Africa was put under a strict, military-patrolled lockdown, the government limited the number of hours a taxi could operate, while the fifty percent passenger capacity was put into action (Fobosi 2021, 6). Some taxi operators were unable to repay the taxis to banks, putting them at risk of their taxis being repossessed. The government allocated a R 1. 135 billion relief package that came in a form of a concept *ex gratia* payment to taxi operators (Fobosi 2021, 6). This package was not welcomed by the minibus taxi industry, leading to SANTACO urging the government to increase the money to avoid shutdown. This was understandable given that the industry has a long history of lack of government financial support, hence the precarious nature of the industry. Given that taxi operators earn much more, the belated relief fund of five thousand rands per taxi was doomed to fail. The industry was not willing to accept this fund.

On June 28, 2020, SANTACO called its representatives to openly defy the seventy-five percent carrying capacity because it greatly affected taxi drivers who work on a quota system. This system implies that a taxi owner sets a deadline for a taxi driver to be met by evening. This means that taxi drivers should desperately attempt to meet the required target or stand at risk of being dismissed if that target is not met (Fobosi 2021, 6). Taxi drivers are therefore overworked, which puts their lives and the lives of their passengers and fellow road users at risk. The shows that the precarity of the minibus taxi industry is characterized by insecure representation due to the lack of union participation, especially for workers on the ground.

The work that taxi drivers do is highly reliant on irregular working hours and the availability of passengers, which were both affected when the COVID-19 pandemic started, following the subsequent lockdown. The industry is most profitable when it operates with maximum commuters and in most instances, there are fewer commuters after 6 pm, which is when most taxis stop operating unless they have their regular 'staff' commuters. These are usually a group of passengers, from one company or various companies in the same area who negotiate with drivers to fetch them when they know that there are no taxis available when they knock off work. They then become regular 'staff' passengers for that driver. This is sometimes problematic because some drivers face intimidation from taxi squad members, since this is deemed 'unfair' to other taxi drivers, however, this will be discussed further in chapter five of this paper. The irregular working hours are tied to a particular payment system, as mentioned above (Fobosi 2021, 8). This quota system dictates the hours each driver has to work, and how much they get to pocket once the target is met. With the lockdown in place, it meant that drivers worked fewer hours, with fewer commuters, subsequently leading to them not meeting the target, and not having any left-over money even for petrol. This was not the only issue that taxi drivers faced, some were faced with getting unfair job distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant that they were not getting enough money to make ends meet for themselves and their families.

While this COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of the minibus taxi industry, it has also shown the inequalities that women face in the industry. Women are generally underrepresented in this industry. Literature that focuses on the minibus taxi industry does not accommodate women, especially women taxi drivers and taxi owners. Associations now have

women as part of their executive committees. However, those women do not have much power or say in the decision-making processes. This makes it harder for those women at the bottom of the hierarchy because they are faced with inequalities and unfair treatment, with no possible attempt of getting help. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is felt in the economy, societies and globally, however, women suffer the most (Parry & Gordon 2020, 791). Yet, government reports and policies on the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are few.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic managed to clearly showcase the issues around the regulation of the minibus taxi industry, an ongoing debate that has its own benefits and flaws. Working throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for the industry as taxi drivers felt they were not given the recognition they need because they were the only mode of public transportation that was allowed to operate. It came across as unfair that they could not get the benefits that other industries were receiving, although they declined the offer made by the government. The informality of the industry has created unbearable working conditions, especially for taxi drivers and queue marshals.

2

This Research

For my honours research essay in 2020, I wanted to explore the daily experiences of female taxi drivers working in a male dominated industry (Dlamini, 2020). I found that women taxi drivers challenge the dominance of men in the industry by performing hegemonic masculinity. I also found that they are dependent on sisterhood solidarity to help them deal with the challenges they face in the industry. During the data gathering period of that research, I had an interview with one female participant about her perspective on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the minibus taxi industry. She explicitly shared how her employer was not fair in distributing working hours and how drivers were to take turns working during lockdown, because she felt that she was not given equal opportunities compared to her male counterparts. According to Mtetwa (2021), there is an unequal distribution of power between women and men in the minibus taxi industry which became visible to her when she asked her female participants to describe their daily challenges. From the employee's perspective, there is no blame placed on the government for the inequality, especially based on the Covid-19 restrictions, but is placed on taxi operators who also get instructions from their associations. This, therefore, highlights that, in as much as the government placed Covid-19 regulations on the minibus taxi industry, there are other regulations on the ground that further impact taxi drivers, especially women. The aim of this research is to investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the gendered division of labour and inequality in a taxi association located in Ekurhuleni. The theoretical focus of the research was on the relationship between gender and upward mobility (moving up the minibus taxi industry hierarchy), alongside the relationship between power and gender roles.

Rando Taxi Association: a case study

Rando Taxi Association* (RTA) in Ekurhuleni – the focus of my research - was established in 1994. It has a total of nine clusters. Clusters are sub-branches of the association which also have their own offices apart from the RTA office. These clusters operate on different routes, although there are some routes that intersect. I worked with two of its nine clusters: Zinga

Cluster* and Donda Cluster*. These two clusters are a part of those clusters that work in different routes that intersect, which is the point where their squad members are mostly stationed. This is to ensure that there is no pirating or poaching of passengers since there are an 'agreement' on how passengers would be divided. Zinga Cluster has nineteen executive members who are also taxi owners, twelve women and seven men. Donda Cluster has seventeen members, nine women and eight men. Members of these clusters are predominantly from KwaZulu Natal and often reference what are understood to be Zulu cultural norms. The aim of this research was to investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the gendered division of labour and inequality in RTA in Ekurhuleni.

Central Research Questions

1. In which ways have Covid-19 restrictions affected RTA?
2. What role did RTA play in implementing Covid-19 regulations on its Zinga and Donda Clusters?
3. How did these restrictions affect the working lives of taxi drivers in each cluster?
4. What was the gendered distribution of labour during lockdown in the two clusters?
5. What possibilities are there for women in this association to rise in its ranks?

Methods

Conducting research in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic was difficult, especially since the field of Anthropology is mostly dependent on participant observation (Fine et.al 2020). This was worse because the initial aim was to observe how women and men in the association the interact. The research was conducted among fifteen participants, which consisted of four female taxi drivers, one male taxi driver, five women taxi owners (also part of the association's executive committee), and five male taxi owners (also part of the executive committee). The sample of executive members or taxi owners (both male and female) was to try and determine the decision-making process in the two clusters, especially when it comes to the division of labour, rules and regulations, the hiring process, and the promotion process. The sample of taxi drivers was to shed light on the working conditions, especially during the COVID-19

pandemic, how they started working, and their views on the process of promotion. The relationship between these two sets is important because it demonstrates how power sometimes works as a form of domination, where subjects do not have enough power to fight back or engage in the decision-making process that impacts their lives. Working with both men and women enabled my understanding of gendered roles in the association.

Snowballing

The participants were obtained through a snowballing technique, in which the researcher starts off with a smaller population which gets bigger and bigger as the research progresses, through referrals (Pandey & Pandey 2015, 55). I started with an informant from my previous research, who put me in contact with women in the two clusters. It is not easy to find willing participants in the minibus taxi industry, especially because it is very hostile. People are often reluctant to tell their stories. I was privileged to have an interlocutor who works with the participants and who referred me to them. This also made it easier for me to build rapport with the participants.

Semi-structured interviews

I conducted a total of six semi-structured interviews, which are a series of prearranged open-ended questions that allows participants for further input. These interviews were characterised by a more flexible approach in questioning participants and allowed greater freedom to omit or ask supplementary questions where needed (Kothari 2004, 98). This method allowed me to explore the experiences of the participants, while also guiding them in the direction of the research. The interviews were conducted via telephone, to avoid face to face interactions, as per Covid-19 regulations. A total of three interviews were conducted with male taxi owners, which was their preferred method as keeping diaries was too much of a task for them. The other three interviews were conducted with three female taxi drivers, who also kept voice diaries. The interviews were conducted in IsiZulu, a language that participants felt comfortable in.

Voice diaries

This method of data collection involved participants using voice recordings about their everyday practices and interactions which were then shared with me as the researcher (see Lupton, 2020). Recordings were in IsiZulu. I provided participants with questions and prompts to guide their recordings of their everyday lives at work. Such recordings were kept by five women taxi owners, one male taxi driver and three female taxi drivers who were 'committed' participants. These three women kept voice diaries for four weeks. Each week they sent me all the recordings for that week. These recordings gave me more insight into participants' views of their work as it unfolded daily. It allowed me to pick up on their change in emotions, as it happened.

Data analysis

Data analysis refers to when the interpretation of data is done through the usage of specific analytical strategies that transform raw data into a coherently new depiction of what is studied (Thorne 2000, 68). As a researcher, it was crucial for me to recognize and understand that the data analysis for qualitative research is not entirely separated or differentiated from the actual data. What I understood to be important and relevant data, and the theoretical lens that I used to collect my data, were analytical processes that influenced my overall data. For the purposes of this research, I used ethnographic analysis, comparative analysis and narrative analysis.

Ethnographic analysis is a process in which ideas that arise during fieldwork are translated, transformed or represented in a written document (Thorne 2000, 69). The interviews were conducted in IsiZulu, which meant that all the data had to be translated and transformed into English for the purposes of this report, although some phrases were kept in Zulu and translated for the reader. The data was sifted and sorted to search for contradictions or inconsistencies, while interpreting thematic categories, which helped me gain insight into what was happening in the RTA and why it was happening. Comparative analysis is when one piece of data is compared or contrasted with similar or different data to develop conceptualisations of possible relations taken from various pieces of data (Thorne 2000, 69). The comparison of data on

women from the two clusters who had similar experiences helped me gain overall insight into the ideas behind the rules and regulations of the association and how they impact the working environment and self-esteem of these women. This also helped me generate knowledge about common themes and patterns of violence, bullying, widowhood, and security (guarding routes from pirate taxis) from participants' experiences.

Narrative analysis is a process in which human experiences are understood, transformed and shaped through linguistic representation (Thorne 2000, 69). This analysis was crucial for this research because it recognized the importance of stories from when the participants first joined the association, how they were welcomed or not welcomed and how they have managed working through the COVID-19 pandemic. This process helped me understand how my participants make sense of their lives in the minibus taxi industry, how they view their importance, or lack of importance in their work environment. Getting different perspectives from both men and women helped me understand the different roles that men and women in this association occupy how they got into these roles.

Ethics

Doing research during a COVID-19 pandemic meant that there would ethical considerations to be adhered to. The first was ensuring that participants were aware of what the research required of them and that they understood that parts of their data would be used in the final research paper. All participants received participant information sheets and consent forms, where they offered their consent verbally since physical interactions were not allowed. This occurred once they were carefully taken through the process of how data would be gathered.

I ensured that all my participants were aware of where and how I got to know of them, and then requested for their participation. I also ensured that participants were fully aware that they will not be coerced into using data collection methods they were not comfortable with. In terms of confidentiality and anonymity, I told all my participants before-hand that I could not guarantee confidentiality because as much as I would not be conducting group interviews, I would be working with people from the same organization who may be able to identify each other from

the results, especially given that I used snowballing to recruit participants. I ensured that participants were fully aware of this before participating. Ethically, it was important for them to know that their stories may be identifiable by those in the association, even though these would not be identifiable by outsiders. I also explained the process of anonymity to all my participants, explaining that anonymity will not be as guaranteed during the data collection process, because I would be able to identify them, and that their names would not be disclosed, hence the use of pseudonyms was agreed upon.

3

'Sikhathele Ngokomoya':

Rising up the ranks

"Violence brings order"

It is now quite a familiar phenomenon to see women joining industries that were historically deemed to be male dominated. We see women working in construction companies not just as administrators or cleaners, but on the ground. Their presence does not however mean that they are welcomed. In this chapter I argue that acts of violence in the minibus taxi industry are a requirement to enter and move up its hierarchy. I show that a normative organizational culture of violence in this industry hinders women from moving up its hierarchy.

Violence has been historically used as a tool for building and maintaining a local social order, a tool that is still used in the minibus taxi industry (Moloto 2017, 3). This form of violence today is dynamic, creative and complex in form, because of the transitions and mechanisms that were used by the apartheid government (Dugard 2001). It has been turned into an unwritten organisational rule or requirement in the minibus taxi industry. Moloto (2017), uses the concept of 'violent democracy' to try and explore the ongoing use of violence in the industry, however, it is not only this concept that surrounds the use of violence in the industry. This concept is useful because it offers an insightful analysis, which is specific to South African realities, that crucially investigates the relationship between formal democracy and violence. This is because the minibus taxi industry was one of the first major business sector to be developed and run by black entrepreneurs, therefore it stands symbolic of economic hopes of many ordinary South Africans. Violent democracy speaks to the root problem of taxi violence in South Africa- the apartheid policy.

The minibus taxi industry is seen as a flagship for Black Economic Empowerment, although it is plagued by illegality and violence, a legacy left by the apartheid government through laws that were restricting economic opportunities for black people (Khosa 1997). The industry has constant spurts of deadly confrontations, that are commonly known as turf wars, taxi violence,

or taxi wars, which are fights between associations and taxi operators. The background of the violence in this industry dates to the late 1980s and continues today (Ngubane, Mkhize & Olofinbiyi 2020, 86). Violence was one of the things that the apartheid government used to cause a rift between operators because it refused to produce permits for them, while creating a competition through the introduction of buses and trains. The minibus taxi industry started losing commuters, however, it defied all these odds and continued to offer the transportation service to black communities. Moloto (2017, 11) argues that the minibus taxi industry is an oligarchy which coexists with South Africa's violent democracy in a democratic state. This is because a society governed by democratic institutions is often void of violence unless the violence is instigated by perceived legitimate forces like the army and the police (Moloto 2017).

Violence in the minibus taxi industry occurs in a very particular context, which should be further explored than this. The colonial and apartheid history in South Africa produced a system in which political, economic, and racial domination of subalterns was allowed. It is the policy of apartheid system where separate townships outside white areas had very little to no infrastructure were allocated to black people led to the birth of this industry (Moolman & Kgosimore 1998, 33). Buses and trains that were meant to transport commuters from these homelands to the factories and industries they worked became inadequate and inconvenient. This led to the demand for a more adequate, faster and convenient transportation, paving way for the emergence of the black minibus taxi industry. Those who were oppressed by segregation used violence as a form of retaliation which started to manifest through gang violence and faction fighting (Moloto 2017, 12). Labour conflicts and tensions have further perpetuated the use of violence because institutions do not empower everyone equally, the minibus taxi industry being a perfect example of this. The historical harassment of taxi operators by provincial and local authorities, red tape around the application and permits for the industry could be blamed for this (Moolman & Kgosimore 1998). At times, literature that speaks to the violent nature of the industry disregards the apartheid history of this country, which is responsible for the violence we see now.

The cycle of violence is unending because violent repertoires have a long life, and reproduce themselves in organisational cultures and structures, where they are always available as a

resource for future conflict (Moloto 2017, 20). The marginalized use their agency from below to establish their own symbolic social orders, morale, and principles in an attempt to try and create order within their surroundings. The minibus taxi industry has always demonstrated a level of mistrust in the government, especially since the industry is not fully formalized, hence they see the need to create order within their industry the best way they see fit. Violence then becomes a form of social power that is used to maintain or disrupt a certain social order. The DoT has legal authority over the minibus taxi industry, and it also has the power to award routes to associations, which has now become a matter of bribery or good political connections, perpetuating the use of violence in the industry (Moloto 2017, 22). Although the DoT has this power, associations have their own way of running their businesses the way they see fit.

Obtaining lucrative routes is an integral part of the minibus taxi industry because that is how taxi owners get to make money, therefore, protecting those routes becomes even more important. Taxi associations have seen it fit to eliminate any competition that will hinder their stream of income, and this elimination usually comes in a form of death or physical harm. Violence, here, is a tool used to attain and maintain order, while also being an important aspect in the preservation of interests for a particular social group (Moloto 2017, 22). In the Ekurhuleni minibus taxi industry, there is a huge element of competition between associations and association clusters, with a degree of violence in-between. Moloto's (2017) exploration of oligarchy is a more appropriate concept in explaining the violent nature of the minibus taxi industry as it reveals the inequality seen between men and women. In a study conducted by Moloto (2017), on the violent nature of the minibus taxi industry, the participants expressed how the associations demonstrate a 'democratic' way of doing things, while that democracy is staged. The taxi association has an executive committee which is said to be elected democratically. Members of the executive committee are taxi owners, who attend meetings and get to make decisions with regards to the running of the association. Taxi owners who started off by being taxi drivers often have an unclear answer on how they managed to buy their taxis because most of their journeys are laced with violence (Moloto 2017).

Women in the minibus taxi industry are faced with a major problem as they try to manoeuvre the industry because it already has an organisational culture that excludes them. Although women can see all the opportunities to move up the hierarchy, they cannot reach these positions

because of discriminatory barriers (Mathur-Helm 2006, 317). In the minibus taxi industry, women face barriers in advancing their careers, despite having similar credentials to their male counterparts. Many organizations discourage women from their initial placement in its top ranks, although there are places in the hierarchy, while raising the number of men in top positions (Mathur-Helm 2006, 312). Women can join the minibus taxi industry, however, with violence being seen as the underlying requirement for making it into the executive committee of the association they are discouraged to join. This brings the idea that organizational cultures, policies, and practices have the tendency of fostering unfavourable processes for job advancements which work against women, making them feel excluded (Mathur-Helm 2006). This may be because the labour force was naturally believed to be for men because it started in an era where their labour was mostly required. Men have a much greater understanding of work-related male culture because they are the creators and beneficiaries of it, with little to no space left for women (Mathur-Helm 2006). This causes women to find it hard to develop a sense of belonging in that system, hence, they end up feeling left out.

Traditionally, being a breadwinner and provider was a role associated with manhood and power, which is still a predominant societal norm. Women have started joining the workforce. However, this breadwinner 'form' of power has not changed (Mathur-Helm 2006, 319). This is due to the fear that men have over the shift of power from them to women, although women are increasingly becoming sole breadwinners. There are female-headed homes which require the woman to enter the workforce for her to be able to provide for her children, while some women join the workforce through their husbands, which is common in the minibus taxi industry. Women are starting to occupy executive positions, however, men's domineering and traditional stance towards working women has not changed because they are still seen as inferior to men. Some authors have argued that this has allowed women to think that getting more qualifications or education could grant them the opportunity to fully occupy these spaces, however, for an informal minibus taxi industry, getting qualifications makes no difference to women's chances of rising up the ranks. This demonstrates that the working environment in South African organizations still reflect and uphold hierarchical and traditional male-dominated work cultures which do not promote women (Mathur-Helm 2006, 320). This lays a burden on women because it is difficult to understand an organizational culture that does not necessarily directly discriminate women, but also does not welcome or accept them.

"Imizamo Yabafelokazi"

Female participants in this study mentioned that for them, getting into the minibus taxi industry and the association's executive committee happened in one of two ways. The first way is if you start off as a taxi driver, and if you are lucky enough, you get promoted into the executive committee. The other way of getting into the executive committee is through taking over from your spouse in the event that he passes on, which means that you automatically jump the stage of being a taxi driver. Previously, there were not many women who had the opportunity to be hired as taxi drivers, but since there have been 'loyal'[1] female taxi drivers who have worked in this association, it has made the journey a bit bearable. Esther* is a 30-year-old female who joined the industry in 2006 but has been in the RTA since 2016.

> "I am very grateful that there have been women like MaMsibi and MaDlamini who have walked this path and actually paved a way for us. I would have never thought that I would find myself driving a taxi, especially after the experiences I have had with taxi drivers prior to me working here. The journey never gets easy here, it is just bearable from time to time, but it is definitely not easy. You would think that because we have women leaders, things would change and accommodate us more, but that has not happened yet.

She then went on to explain what women need to look out for if they wish to be part of the industry and the working requirements.

> There are many things to consider as a woman if you want to join this industry, the first one being the working hours. It is hard if you have a family or if you are married, your husband would find a *makhwapheni* to replace you. I wish I had someone with connections who spoke for me to join the industry, but since I did not, I had to come here almost every morning and just camp here, hoping someone would ask me to just take one load". - Esther, August 2021.

[1] 'Loyal' in this instance refers to women who worked and did not steal from their employer, unlike other employees (especially men). They are women who have worked diligently and taken care of their working vehicles

Going to the taxi rank to 'camp' is a common phenomenon in this association because even men were doing this for them to be seen and given a chance to drive. It is almost similar to an interview process because if one person gives you their taxi to take that one particular 'load' of passengers, others (mostly owner-drivers) are also able to see your driving skills which will open doors for you. Based on how women are sometimes treated in taxi ranks, this process is much easier for men compared to women. This is due to issues of harassment and victimization that women sometimes face in taxi ranks at the hands of taxi drivers. The downside to this route into the minibus taxi industry is that there is less to no opportunity for female taxi drivers to be 'promoted' to being taxi owners.

A 'promotion' in this association refers to being given *iskhala/ulayini* (space/line) to register your own taxi and become a taxi owner. This means that you will now form part of the association's executive committee. "*Only the likes of MaMsibi were lucky enough to get into the association from starting off as a driver*", said Esther as she narrated how her female counterparts have not had success in getting promoted. It does not matter the number of years you have worked, there is just no clear way of being promoted. This is an issue for most female drivers because it means that they will always be at the lower level of the association, working hard but not seeing the rewards of their hard work. Obtaining the executive seat for women in this association is commonly through widowhood, another route that directly links women to men in the industry. Women in the Zinga and Donda clusters shared the same sentiments because there has not been any woman who has made it to the upper level where they form part of the regional 'motherboard'[2]. "*The opportunities are there, we see the men being promoted, but we do not have the will power to do what they do to gain these seats*", MaBhanda, a female executive member of the association, expressed as she shared her thoughts on the flexibility of the industry for women.

MaLinda*, is a 48-year-old female, who is a taxi owner and part of the association's executive committee. She is a widow who took over the reign when her husband passed on in 2014, as

[2] The regional mother board is a higher level 'association' which is comprised of members from different associations in the region. They are mostly the members who can get into contact with organisations like SANTACO.

she was the sole beneficiary of her husband's assets. Her transition into the executive committee was not easy, and she also had not imagined that it would be.

> "I would see from my husband, how stressed he would be after the weekly meetings they have (Cluster meetings), that being a leader is not easy, not *emataxini* (not in the minibus taxi industry). I had not anticipated that he would put me as the sole beneficiary because we have sons, and he had his brothers who could have taken over. I felt like he just threw me in the deep end and expected me to swim with no lessons. It would have been better if he taught me how all this works, because once you are inside, you do not have time to learn the ropes. Many women who took over have lost their taxis, some stolen while some break down and cannot be fixed. I will tell you that this industry is not lenient on us, especially should (this) violence start. We are not directly targeted, but we do feel the heat if our male counterparts are targeted. As women owning taxis, the people who are mostly affected by the violence are our drivers, because they are usually on the frontline fighting. Violence is a must here, otherwise you will suffer". - MaLinda, August 2021

These are words MaLinda shared, and they demonstrate that the only way for women to make it to the executive committee is through widowhood. Women who are in the executive committee are mostly regarded as 'prayer warriors' and are good for the general publicity when it comes to gender equality. *"We were at the forefront during the opening of our new office, but in the agenda, we were included for opening prayers, entertainment and closing prayers",* and this gives the impression that this is the only thing they can contribute as women to the association. What is interesting is that these women are put into the association by their husbands before they pass on, and it is most likely that the other men also have their spouses as beneficiaries. Mkhize*, one male executive member expressed that woman make more sensible decisions, therefore their husbands know that their legacies would not be sold off if they pass on. He also noted that men know that women are strong, especially *Abafelokazi*, and can maintain the business, but as male leaders, they cannot openly express that. The problem is that this industry is not only one-sided[3] that it focuses on commuting passengers, but it also

[3] The industry is not one-sided in a sense that it only focused on commuting passengers; there is also the pressure to attain more routes and make more money which then leads to route wars and turf wars. Women are said to not be able to fight back when these wars start because they are not 'equipped/made' for war and violence.

sometimes engages in violent fights which women "cannot handle" (Mkhize 2021). As found in my Honours research, widows in the executive committee have found comfort in each other and help each other form a solidarity that eases the hardships of going against men. They see themselves as widows who are trying to make a living for their children (*imizamo yabafelokazi*), although it is not easy.

Izinkabi: An Alternative to Entering the Association

"*There are many ways of joining this industry, some are thought to be a secret, but we know that it is the most rewarding way of joining*". These are words shared by Mkhonza* who was explaining how he got to join the minibus taxi industry. Mkhonza is a 29-year-old male taxi driver from the Zinga cluster, who was born in KwaZulu Natal and later moved to Johannesburg during his early twenties. His father has taxis that are operating locally in Mbongwa*, with some working on the long-distance route from Mbongwa to Johannesburg and Pietermaritzburg.

> "After I finished my matric, I stayed at home for almost six months, until I decided to apply at a college in Springs. I did not enjoy what I was studying there, but I finished that course and graduated. After graduation, I had to start planning how I was going to get a job and where I would work. One day, my father asked me to stand in for one of his drivers who was sick that week. Since I already had a license, I saw no problem in helping him. I worked for that week, and when it ended, my father was quiet on updating me how his driver was now feeling. This was surprising, but I couldn't confront him because that man is scary. I continued working for over a month, until he told me that I should take over permanently. Long distances are exhausting, but that is how I got to know Johannesburg. In 2017, I moved from home and came here permanently because he found me an opening in this association, and I have been here ever since". -Mkhonza, August 2021

Mkhonza's way of joining the industry is unlike the stories shared by his fellow male colleagues as his father used his connection (in the association) to get him the job, but what was interesting during our conversation was that he introduced the idea that some of his fellow

colleagues joined through being hitmen. "*No one would come out and tell you, but we talk among ourselves, and they share their experiences*", he said as he continued to express that the people he talks about, do not necessarily start at the bottom like he did, they fall under the category of taxi owners who drive their own taxis. "*I know one guy, ushaya'sbhamu (Hitman) who has two taxis already from this kind of business, but I love how he is still down to earth and does not see himself as better than all of us. We can see that they are sometimes favoured because they are the most important people in the business*". Being *ushaya'sbhamu* (hitman) is common in South Africa, and especially in the minibus taxi industry, as various newspapers have been speaking about this.

The Daily News (2018) paper once covered a story which was aimed at addressing the violence and assassinations that were happening in the industry. The story shared how KwaZulu Natal, especially Mbongwa, is a haven for hitmen, putting KwaZulu Natal at the top of contract killings. *Izinkabi*, another term used for hitmen, are usually hired by taxi bosses and associations to carry out assassinations should there be conflict. They are commonly said to carry out the hit and then go hide the rural areas where it becomes harder for the police to locate them. Mbongwa is a perfect place for this because it is a poverty-stricken area, with little economic activity and economic resources. The Rule of The Gun: Hits and Assassinations in South Africa 2000-2017 report [commissioned by a collaboration between the Centre for Criminology at the University of Cape Town and the GITOC, revealed that the main motivations around assassinations were economic, political, and social (Kim Thomas 2018).

The impact of assassinations is far-reaching because it undermines the country's judiciary, democracy and threatens fair economic competition. This suggests that these minibus taxi owners and associations enforce a mafia-type control over societies[4] and routes. According to Daily News (2018), KwaZulu Natal topped the assassinations log at 40 percent, Gauteng at 24 percent, and the Western Cape at 14 percent in 2018 and the minibus taxi industry accounted for the bulk of these hits, at 43 percentage. There is less to no media coverage when it comes to these assassinations, as some are masked as robberies, hijackings, and accidents. In the minibus taxi industry, some *Izinkabi* play a more powerful and conspicuous role, while others

[4] They have a hold over society because they dictate where passengers should get their taxis or where not to get their taxis.

go into hiding after carrying out a hit. “If you are a hitman, you have a constant source of income” (Mkhonza 2021), and this idea was further cemented in the Daily News (2018) newspaper article which said some *Izinkabi* extort money from the taxi bosses whom they carried out hits for, which explains why some of them become taxi owners in their own right. Mkhonza saw this as a win for both *Oshaya’sbhamu* (hitmen) and the association because there comes a time when they must defend their routes from competing associations, which means that they will not have to hire other hitmen as they already have them as their ‘internal security[5]’, which is easier as those hitmen will also be working to secure their own businesses.

The incidents of taxi violence and assassinations have escalated over the years as the competition for routes increases, and the perpetrators are mother boards (Ngubane, Mkhize & Olofinbiyi 2020, 87). The reasoning behind this is the unresolved economic and socio-economic conditions in South Africa, and this was expressed by Mkhonza when he said, “*We are all hungry, and this (COVID-19 pandemic) has made things even worse*”. Associations have resorted to violence to try and enforce their arrangements, which is always related to controlling lucrative routes. They then see the need to protect all these routes by any means necessary, even if it means people must die (Moloto 2017). Mafia-like tactics such as hiring *Izinkabi* then become a normal way of life, even for those carrying out the hits. This way of attaining and maintaining control over routes could be seen as the reasoning behind the importance of men in the industry. Violence becomes a tool that is crucial in the establishment of rapport and in the maintenance of these relationships (Moloto 2017, 66). According to Moloto (2017), the men who were hired to kill could be drivers or any hitmen, but it was rare to find a taxi owner being *Inkabi* as they choose self-preservation. This has changed in some associations because at the RTA, *inkabi* could be anyone from the taxi driver to the taxi owner.

Dugard (2001) argues that the violent nature of the minibus taxi industry was influenced by political conflicts. Political related killings are also a common phenomenon in South Africa that contributes to the country’s high violent crime statistics (Onwuegbuchulam 2021, 2). Onwuegbuchulam (2021) posits that this is due to political socialization through which people

[5] If an association has Izinkabi as part of it, then they do not see the need to hire other hitmen should need arise during turf wars or route wars. Those izinkabi will carry the join, in protection if their route as taxi drivers, although they still need to be compensated at times by other taxi owners.

are introduced and fully oriented into 'acceptable' behaviours, values, and customs in a political system. Onwuegbuchulam (2021) explores how the notable concepts from what is understood to be 'the Zulu nation's belief system' help in the understanding of violence. He notes that 'the Zulu tribe' is understood to have a way of preparing a warrior to engage in fighting to assert violence. He cites the example that the concept of *Ukuqhathwa* links violence to the learnt behaviour of young Zulu men who are set up to fight against each other to show who is stronger and braver than the other, which is called *ukuqhathwa kwensizwa*. My understanding, is that this ritual is commonly used to instil discipline and respect, not to promote violence. The author also explores the concept of *intelezi yempi*, which is *muthi* that is sprinkled on soldiers, used in preparing them for any engagement with violence. *Iqunga* refers to what is seen as 'the bloodlust a person gets' after they have killed a person. People who have *iqunga* need to undergo a process of *ukugezwa/inhlambuluko* (cleansing ceremony) to get rid of *ithunzi* (the shadow) that hangs around them. These concepts might shed light on the general understanding of violence among men who are seen and who see themselves as part of 'the Zulu tribe'. However, it is important to caution against essentialist uses of such understanding which suggest that violence is an inherent 'trait' among people considered 'Zulu', or that 'the Zulu' are a homogeneous group of people, or a 'tribe' in colonial parlance.

Mkhonza asserts that, "*Ushaya'sbhamu could never be a woman, never! That would mean we (men) have failed in doing our jobs. How can you sit back and let a woman do your job?*" This question was particularly interesting, because it shows how he sees this as his job, and not a woman's job because women are 'emotional' beings and cannot have *Iqunga*. *Iqunga* is deemed a foreign concept when it comes to women, and this goes back to the belief that women are caring and nurturing beings, while the act of killing someone requires one to be ruthless. This reasoning demonstrates that although women join the industry, both willingly and unwillingly, men will always have the upper hand and favour when it comes to fighting for routes. This is interesting because for my Honour's thesis, one of the female participants was at the forefront of the violence when they were fighting with another association. Mkhonza reasoned that this was because MaDlamini is generally a strong woman who can stand her ground. If other women could demonstrate her level of strength, they too might qualify as *Oshaya'sbhamu*. If being a *Inkabi* is an easier way of getting into the executive committee of the association, it makes it seem as though it is a part of the organization's culture. It is also not popular to find female assassins in South Africa, and if Mbongwa is a haven for *izinkabi*,

then women are immediately disqualified. Given my experience of life in Mbongwa, women are still groomed to be domestic and care for homes.

Conclusion

The change in roles for women from being domesticated to being breadwinners or financial partners has put them in the firing line as they encounter countless dilemmas. These dilemmas have pushed them to make complex personal choices as their family responsibilities continue with the pressure they face in trying to move up organizational hierarchies. The experiences on how women joined the minibus taxi industry has demonstrated how the industry's organizational culture hinders women from trying to move up the ranks and acquire positions that put them in places where they can make decisions that consider other women in the industry. The belief that to survive or be granted the opportunity to be part of the industry is laced with violence further cements the argument that the historical background of violence in the industry has continued to infiltrate the 'employment' requirements, which end up favouring men. The discrimination women face in this industry is deeply embedded in its organisational culture and structure.

4

‘If I could wake someone from the dead…’:

Women’s voices, women’s silence, women’s pain

‘*Imbokodo*’… you strike a woman; you strike a rock…

The *Imbokodo* slogan is a slogan that we hold close to our hearts, symbolises the strength and courage that black women expressed as they refused to give into the increasing oppression without some form of protest. It is a representation of the history of women, helping one recognize the power of the metaphor of a rock, *Imbokodo*, as one of resilience, strength, and endurance (Clark, Mafokane & Nyathi 2019, 69). It is an expression that says we are solid in what we see as injustice and solid to standing up for justice, however, the discourse of resilience sometimes becomes slippery. The idea that women are rocks has sort of given the impression that women can take many blows up until something or someone outside her own agency and choice decides to stop the blows. These could be institutional, physical, emotional blows- various blows of patriarchy.

Women are currently being undermined, disrespected, and abused, all under the guise that they are rocks who can take any blows. A rock does not die, it merely takes another form, however, women die, be it emotional death or physical death as they hit rock bottom of patriarchal forces. The slogan initially sounded like a representation of invincibility- *you strike a woman, you strike a rock*, you will be crushed. The question then becomes, whether individually or as a gendered collective, do women feel invincible in these (gendered) positions/organisations? This excerpt from MaMkhize*, a taxi owner under the Zinga Cluster, illustrates the extent to which women in the minibus taxi industry are bullied:

> “Ey, my child. I have just come out of our weekly executive meeting, *ngikhathele* [I am drained]. Every week we come… out [of these meetings] feeling much more tired [drained] than before. Today was one of those days that make us [women] question whether we really belong here. Each week I am convinced that these men do not recognize us as people who form part of this committee, *siyiMbokodo ethule nje*. I was

> heartbroken today… uMama Shongwe* collapsed in the toilets during our meeting. We all know that she suffers from diabetes and that usually triggers her to collapse but she still collapsed today because she could not speak out. I am very annoyed by this, and I am glad that I can share this here because no one listens to us, but we also don't tell them properly.

MaMkhize then goes on to share why Mama Shongwe was bullied, which was not mentioned during the time she was bullied.

> uMama Shongwe takes the daily checkings from all Dladla's* drivers to write everything down and make sure that they [drivers] get paid every Tuesday. Dladla stays at home in Natal…After paying the drivers, [she] sends the money to him… Today she was accused of stealing money because Dladla did not receive it *ngeskhathi* [in time]. Dladla is not grateful. uMama Shongwe is helping out of the goodness of her heart, but today she was treated like a criminal. He [Dladla] cannot say '*sisebenza ngeskhathi*' [we work according to time] when he is comfortably sitting at home. She [Mama Shongwe] was sick and couldn't deposit the money, and she cannot send the drivers because they have their own stories. The aim was to ridicule uMama Shongwe. He did not confront her about this. [Instead], he decided to tell his friends so they can announce it for all of us here. They made her a thief and spoke to her like a little girl in front of everyone, forgetting that she is a taxi owner like them, and that she has this position. (sigh) My heart really broke because this is what they usually do. -MaMkhize, August 2021

It is for this reason that the slogan now feels a bit performative in a sense that it does not represent the lived realities of women (Clark, Mafokane & Nyathi 2019, 69). It appears we have become weary to the plight of an African woman, who is always willing to subsume her wellbeing in service of others and sacrifice herself while carrying her increasing burden with humility. Such discursive representations obscure the lived realities of the systemic oppressions such as gendered oppression, while setting up women to blame themselves when they feel helpless, powerless overwhelmed or overburdened. Here MaMkhize expresses her ambivalence towards their treatment in the association.

> We are sometimes ridiculed, until it is a major gathering or a funeral where they require our presence as *Omama abathandazayo* [Women of prayer]. Sometimes I regret taking up this position, I should have allowed someone from *baba*'s [husband's] family to take over. Then I go back home and look at my children, they are proud of me, that I have a position, and that I can take care of them. *Angiyona Imbokodo, kubuhlungu kuyezwela, kodwa siyabekezela kubuhlungu kunjalo [I am not strong, it is very painful, but I hold on]*. I want my children to see my strength and perseverance. I only have girls, who will have to take up my position should my ancestors remember me. What is painful is that we are living with diseases, we take medication every day. I have *i-high high* [high blood pressure], and I always have to calm myself after these meetings, otherwise I will die. My children cannot take over now, they are still young, but sometimes I think that we need young blood to change this. Yah, today is one of the days where I want to end all this, but I am stronger than this. We are stronger than this." – MaMkhize, August 2021.

Imbokodo has become symbolic of a battle weapon that is used to affirm the status of women, reclaiming their space, their position of control, however, the above excerpts have illustrated how women are still disrespected and disregarded. This encounter shows the extent to which women must suffer in silence in the two clusters, while having to maintain a strong front in front of their children. This strong front is not only for their children, but they also do it in front of their male counterparts because they cannot afford to be seen as weaker than their male counterparts.

The Powerful Are Voiceless: '*Umfelokazi uyathula*' (A widow never speaks)

Women in the RTA are the majority, with over twenty-one women from the two clusters being part of the executive committee, alongside fifteen men. Most of these women joined through widowhood, however, being the majority does not mean that they have any say in how the association should be run. Female taxi owners once met with the then transportation MEC,

Jacob Mamabolo, in a conference that was held in Braamfontein in 2019 (Dlamini 2019). Their demands were simple: respect in executive positions, and this was echoed by female taxi owners across Gauteng. They wanted equal representation in executive positions across taxi associations, and for them to be able to transform the sector for it to be welcoming for women. They requested that the industry change through embracing the role that women play, because women are put in executive positions just to be puppets and have no say in how things are managed (Dlamini 2019). This lack of power is one of the things that affect women in the RTA, where they are bullied, ridiculed, and belittled, regardless of them being the majority of the executive members, just because they are women. It is worse for widows because they encounter this ill-treatment, topped up by the 'regulations' of how a widow must carry herself. Patriarchy, therefore, intersects with power structures of the minibus taxi industry in the ill-treatment of its women members.

Women, like MaMkhize, in the minibus taxi industry are faced with the 'respectable' and 'unrespectable' binary, depending on how they choose to defend themselves from the bullying they encounter. A respectable woman, in this instance, is someone perceived as a dignified and honourable woman; while an unrespectable woman lacks dignity and is dishonourable (Hungwe 2006, 33). Women, especially widows, have found it a bit harder to stand up for themselves against their male counterparts in the industry, because they have to 'respect' their status as widows. "*A widow is not expected to raise her voice, especially to a man. That is disgraceful*", KaMasondo* narrates as she shares her experience of being a female taxi owner in the RTA. KaMasondo is a 47-year-old woman, who owns four mini-bus taxis in the Donda Cluster. Her journey in the industry has also been tough.

> "*Yini ongayikhuluma nomfelokazi? Ibhadi nje lelo* [What can you discuss with a widow? That is pure bad luck], that is what they always say when we want to speak or raise a concern. You would swear that I killed my husband for this position. *Ukube umuntu uyavuswa bakithi* [If I could wake someone from the dead] I would, because this really is not a way of living. I am glad that my taxi drivers treat me with respect, which is something I would appreciate coming from these men, and my husband's family. As a widow in the minibus taxi industry, there are many battles that we fight for a chair in the executive [committee]. We just do not show our pain and struggle.

KaMasondo then went on the explain the ‘entitlement’ men have when it comes to the minibus taxi industry.

> I remember how I was fighting my husband’s brother who wanted to take over. It was even more painful when the men here were fighting for him to take over. He was a [queue] marshal at that time, and he really wanted to take over. This became a big issue, but I am grateful that the association forces [its members] to have a Will and Testament that they use. If it was not there, my children would have lost *ifa labo* [their inheritance]. They are brave, these men, disrespecting someone *osafake inzilo impela ongafanele akhulume nabantu* [someone who is still wearing a widow’s attire, who is not supposed to talk to anyone]. If you speak up to these men, as a widow, know that everyone in the [taxi] rank will know about it, and that affects how people look at you.

While women in the RTA are faced with struggles for power, they have to be reminded of their widowhood and the societal ridicule that comes with it.

> “Being a widow is an unusual thing because people respect you but no longer value your being in society. *Washonelwa indoda phela uKaMasondo, yini ezomlungela* [KaMasondo’s husband died, so what could go right for her?]. Hearing this is painful. I am glad that I am not the only widow here, but it also means that I have to behave like other widows because no one wants to put her family name *emanyaleni* [in shame]” – KaMadonsela, August 2021

The above excerpt demonstrates the ways that social norms and expectations around marriage and widowhood shape women’s position in the minibus taxi industry. Women’s adherence to these norms in their attempts to create normalcy after the death their spouse has complex consequences (Gunga 2009, 165). Death is generally emotive, but the situation is often worsened when the readjusting process is determined by pre-defined cultural forces that are at times difficult to understand (Gunga 2009, 165). A widow mourns the loss of her husband. However, she is still considered married. She becomes an embodiment of loss and pain. Her body becomes the focus of attention, as an object and subject of mourning rituals (Ramphele 1996, 99). The individual suffering of a widow is made social, where her body becomes a metaphor for suffering. Her social interactions and movements are monitored to ensure that she

does not belong to the public arena because widowhood is associated with dirt and darkness. It is seen to be important to ensure that a widow does not 'contaminate' those she engages with. She is automatically singled out as the ultimate reservoir of extreme danger to herself, the community she lives in, and any partner she may get, '*Wenzeni ukuze afelwe indoda*' [what did she do for her husband to die?] (KaMasondo 2021). If society treats widows like that, why would the minibus taxi industry be any different? In most social contexts, a widow is expected to grieve openly and demonstrate the intensity of her feelings. This is sometimes expressed through the way she dresses and by shaving her hair. Widowhood precipitates a radical change in a woman's lifestyle and social status (Sossou 2001, 202). A widow often suffers from social isolation and marginalization because of gendered power relations prevalent in African and other societies. Mourning customs diminish a widow's attractiveness through placing taboos on her participation in social activities because the association of a widow is by extension an association with death. No one wants that 'bad luck'.

Widows are subject to multiple forms of neglect, discrimination, abuse, cultural and psychological oppression (Sossou 2001, 201). Psychological oppression here refers to the idea of being weighed down in the mind, with harsh domination exercised over one's self esteem. It leads to the internalization of intimations of inferiority, a concept illustrated by KaMasondo. This form of oppression is systemic and institutionalized, aimed at making the work of domination much easier through breaking the spirit of the dominated and rendering them incapable of understanding the nature of the agencies responsible for their subjugation. People will respect your loss, however, as a woman, you lose value because you are now not linked to any man in marriage. Given the intimate connection between custom and power relations, women's efforts to try and claim their rights are bound up in issues culture (Shope 2006, 64). This is due to the idea of marriage being an achievement for a woman which makes her more dignified, worthy, and respected. These 'values' are integral to debates around the issue of *lobola*. Lobola is an enduring custom that lets us into the world of the past and present gender and power relations (Shope 2006). It affirms a woman's value, and a symbol of respect, showing how worthy you are as a woman. If then, a woman who was paid Lobola for, becomes a widow, the cultural implications run far deep. No social group has suffered a greater violation of its human rights in the name of culture than women.

'Izwi Lendoda Liyabheka'- A Man's word is noted

In patriarchal societies, men are given more power when it comes to perpetuating institutions and systems that are oppressive to women (Makama 2020). In this instance, African-centred feminism becomes an important concept to explore the experiences of women in the minibus taxi industry. It acts as a response to the need of recognising varying African customs as it does not only focus on issues that affect the lives of women. African-centred feminism offers an approach to understanding the ways in which women and men at times become complicit in perpetuating patriarchy through the guise of culture (Makama 2020, 61). Using this approach shows that various forms of feminism are mostly concerned with issues affecting women, with the mindset that these issues are solely perpetuated by men. This mindset then positions women as being on the wrong side of power, with little to no room for exploring how they are implicated in the patriarchal behaviour that may be oppressive to other women. This enables us to consider how men and women are at times differentially positioned within multiple axes of power that in turn influences how they embody gender. It also enables us to explore how gender intersects with other social categories that in turn shape women and men's experiences, especially in the minibus taxi industry.

According to SANTACO (2015), anyone who wishes to become an entrepreneur in the minibus taxi industry has a certain procedure that they are obliged to follow (Matiwane 2019, 6). Taxi owners are required to register with the DoT and the DoEL, and then get a license that allows them to operate or to be hired for business. Unfortunately, women who have had to join the minibus taxi industry as taxi owners did not follow these procedures. This was however not their choice. Instead, they were made beneficiaries by their husbands. "*Imagine having to cope with the loss of your husband, then coming here to be disrespected and humiliated because you do not know the job*", KaMasondo as she looks back at her journey, as she was faced with the burden of having to quickly learn how the business and the association operates, with no one to offer that kind of knowledge. According to Matiwane (2019, 6), women are faced with the challenge of learning the operation and activities of the minibus taxi industry, while also attempting to meet all other expectations that form part of being an entrepreneur.

Women in male dominated industries are faced with different challenges, compared to women who work in environments that have equal gender recognition, which in turn affects their professionalism and determination to succeed in their occupations. These women are also influenced by cultural and social norms which shape their mindset on what they can and should do, and their sense of themselves. In what are considered 'traditional' African homes, a woman is made the second-in-command in the household hierarchy (Matiwane 2019, 18). This could also be the reasons why men place their spouses as their beneficiaries in the associations. SANTACO has an organisation called *Imboni YoMama* (Women's Industry). It is said to cater to the needs of women taxi owners and drivers and the challenges that they face in the industry. *Imboni YoMama* has not been of great help, because women are still facing the same challenges, topped up with the fear of speaking up against their male counterparts. "*Reporting their behaviour towards us is a risk, you have to think about what will happen to the business if these men are kicked out. Think about your children, always*", KaMadonsela shared sentiments similar to those expressed by MaLinda and MaMkhize. Calling the men out for their behaviour runs a risk of opening the business to rival associations. Silence works best for women in this industry even if it is detrimental to their health. In other words, a woman who speaks out about her oppression in this industry makes herself vulnerable to the violence endemic to it.

Due to South Africa being a country that is still dealing with the effects of colonialism and apartheid, issues concerning racialised gendered hierarchies are paramount to understanding the minibus taxi industry (Makama 2020, 63). Gender stereotypes and the subordination of women continues to pose a major challenge for women in male dominated industries, which leads to women facing unequal conditions in their workspaces (Khumalo 2017). The danger of these stereotypes is that they encourage attitudes that place women in unfavourable positions, where men perceive themselves as having the upper hand on women. The lack of acceptance of black women, more so than their white counterparts, in leadership positions relates to the issue of male privilege, a privilege that both men and women have been socialised to accept that men are leaders. Women end up being limited to positions of male dependency because they are said to be emotionally weak, while men have the ability to suppress their emotions. The minibus taxi industry 'requires' men not to show any emotion, because that is a sign of weakness, which is dangerous for any taxi association. The downside to this is that this 'lack

of emotion' from men does not only affect their rivals, but also affects the women with whom they work in the industry.

Women taxi drivers offer an insight in examining the relationship between women, the workplace, alongside masculinity (Kimberly 1997). Women have been present in the minibus taxi industry internationally since the 1900s, however, the industry has remained a "bastion of male work culture" (Kimberly 1997, 3). The popular perception here is that drivers should be male, which is why women are perceived as either absent from the business or are only existent on the margins of the minibus taxi industry. The number of women in the minibus taxi industry is larger than we may think, or according to the statistics offered. This is because their presence is at times overshadowed by male dominance and its requirement that women 'shrink' themselves as noted by MaNdulini. She is not the only woman who has put her son forward as a 'member' in the association to escape the ill-treatment she encountered. Furthermore, because the industry is informal, not all matters are dealt with in accordance with the rules set by the DoT or SANTACO. Women's adaptation to and participation in the industry is more significant than popular image may suggest (Kimberly 1997, 3). The juxtaposition between women and men is linked to sets of dichotomies such as passive/aggressive, weak/strong, nature/culture, home/work, which led to the acceptance that driving a taxi is a man's job. Because this business was started during the apartheid era where women were not strongly recommended in the workforce, the effects of this gendered workplace culture are seldom considered as it benefits men.

As mentioned above, women who join the minibus taxi industry find themselves having to operate within an occupation that is associated to masculinity, both culturally and historically. The most fundamental element of the minibus taxi industry has historically been considered as a manly pursuit, as discussed in Chapter three. This calls for the importance of noting what was/is considered appropriate masculine behaviour among a group of people, which may not necessarily be considered appropriate for others (Kimberly 1997, 42). Although there has been a slight change to the dominant discourse around masculinity, the workspace has remained one of the central arenas for the initiation and expression into masculinity, which affects the power relations of that workspace. Masculine identities are reliant on the construction of the other as a way of self-identification, which is also heavily reliant on power; power allows and

perpetuate the idea of masculinity as better, compared to femininity in the workplace. Power is exercised when only one person is a participant in the decision-making process that affects another person/people (Lukes 2005, 20). It is also visible when that person devotes his energy to reinforcing or creating institutional and social practices and values that limit the scope of practice for others. If this person succeeds in doing this, other people are then unable to bring to the front issues that might be detrimental to person A's set of preferences.

These show that the normalisation of the sociocultural view of women as loving and responsible for handling domestic affairs on the one hand, and men as possessing roles of leadership and decision-making on the other, reaches beyond the home into the working environment (Matiwane 2019, 24). Thus, it is important to note that customary law does not account for the penalties of regarding women as inferior to men. Patriarchy has been identified and observed within the daily functioning of the minibus taxi industry, particularly by Zulu speaking men from the two clusters of the RTA. Patriarchy is a historical creation, by both men and women, which expresses itself via families as values and rules (Masuku 2016, 18). Gender inequality is a form of social inequality resulting from patriarchal relations that are entrenched within capitalist relations that form one system of capitalist patriarchy. This therefore makes patriarchy a system that is aimed at oppressing women in social structures, while advancing male dominance over them (Masuku 2016, 19).

Patriarchy can then be seen as a system of order and control, which automatically makes it a dominator of the social order (Komane 2013, 8). The idea that men should be the sole breadwinners could account for the hostility women encounter in the minibus taxi industry, and this relates to women who are taxi owners and taxi drivers. When there was a limited number of women in the minibus taxi industry, they did not pose that much of a threat, MaMsibi and MaDlamini's acceptance would account for this (Dlamini 2020). As more women join the industry, willingly and unwillingly, they pose a threat to men's conception of their masculinity. MaNdulini* had to put her elder son in charge of her taxi business and have him attend most of the executive meetings that the cluster holds weekly, all because of the way she was treated in the association. Her husband passed on in 2015. She had to make a quick transition from mourning her husband to taking over the business. She had to fight both her in-laws and the men in the Donda cluster just because her husband had made her – not his brothers, 'as he

should have' - the beneficiary of the business, "*I suffered a lot in the hands of these men, I do not wish this upon anyone. They are very brutal to women. Being shamed because you are a widow is not nice*". MaNdulini's action reinforces the idea that women are active participants in the patriarchal process because putting her son in charge implies that she sees him as more fit to run the business.

Findings from the RTA demonstrate that not all men have the same power in how the association should be run. There are a few determining factors, as mentioned in chapter three, that are used to distribute power among men, gender and masculinity being some of them. Masculinity and gender are processes which are constituted by both human actions and organisational cultures both socially and historically (Pasura & Christou 2017). Hegemonic masculinity therefore sustains its position through active subordination of other masculinities to create a hierarchical relationship within and across the gender binary (Pasura & Christou 2017, 524). The notion of doing gender demonstrates how women and men methodically and routinely perform, contest, and enact gendered roles and identities. Masculinity is never fixed. It acquires a specific meaning in a specific social context. This requires us to pay attention to the various social scripts that men at times fall into, for them to negotiate their identities. MaNdulini's son may be part of the operations of the business, but he does not have the power that allows him to be part of the decision-making process, which MaNdulini also does not have.

> "His experience is definitely different from mine because they do not talk down on him, however, he is still made aware that he does not have any power to make decisions regarding the association. I also do not have that power, although my membership dictates that I do, but focusing on that will only make you sick. At the end of the day, they know what is best for business, they know the ins and outs. Sizwe* only focuses on how my taxis are working and he also attends the Donda cluster meetings. I only attend the Rando Association meetings. They are still dreadful, but I do not work with them daily, *ngingafa* [I would die]". -MaNdulini, August 2021

Respectability shapes interpersonal relations and demarcates social status, therefore, it goes beyond what an individual wants, as expectations are pre-determined by the community (Pasura & Christou 2017, 532). In this instance, the community is the minibus taxi industry at large, where respect ensures that you do not fall prey to rival associations. Men in the industry

then find themselves resisting anything that threatens their masculinity; an approach that embodies men who choose to engage in the discourses and reality about the crisis of masculinity but resist competing values and premises that preserve ideal African cultural practices. This means that, having women in the executive goes against cultural norms because a man is expected to lead and the woman follows, however, because this is business, they find themselves working with women although not recognizing them. Recognizing them demonstrates weakness, a term foreign in masculinity. They resist the change in gendered relations and roles within households and the response to their loss of authority and power is to reemphasize patriarchy and aggressiveness (Pasura & Christou 2017, 536).

Men invoke notions of 'African culture' as legitimate and perpetuate oppressive gender relations via patriarchy (Pasura & Christou 2017, 536). Patriarchy has provided material advantages to men while placing severe constraints on the roles of women (Masuku 2016, 20). The lack of research on women breaking in the informal sector is dangerous because this sector is highly segregated and mostly favours men. In the minibus taxi industry, the general idea around women in the industry is when they are o*Mkhozi* (an informal term used for women who cook at taxi ranks), and not as women who can drive taxis and manage the taxi business (Davis-Sramek 2021, 2). Occupational gender segregation exists and is persistent. Women taxi drivers feel the wrath of patriarchy in the workspace, and there are no structures in place that have come to their defence. Ntombi* is a thirty-six-year-old female who is employed in the Zinga cluster. This is her experience of working in this cluster.

> "Sink or swim, that is the motto here, for women. Yes, we are employed, but it is not nice. We know that all jobs have their difficulties, but here, it has to be worse. When I first arrived, I thought I had gained some connections from when I used to 'camp' in the rank, but it wasn't that easy. I think it is better when you work temporary and not permanently hired because I think that is when they see that you are here to be competition. I always ask them why they have a problem with me because I took over a taxi that was driven by someone. I would understand if it was a new taxi that was introduced in the cluster, but no. I then realized that it is not that 'I am taking their jobs', it is just that I am a woman. Even if we do not want to believe this, but their actions are a reminder. It starts with the '*Awukahle siyakudlalisa* [no we are just playing with you]' when they have made silly comments about me being a woman here. We used to fight

> with '*omphathi*' [queue marshals] in the morning because they would put me last even when I came early. It is these things that force you to open your eyes and see that we are forcing things, but we have nowhere to go. There are no jobs. We know that there are other women who work here, *Abelungu bethu* [our employers], but you can see that they are struggling just like us because of these men. If they are also suffering, who are we going to report our problems to? There is no one who cares enough to do something." -Ntombi, August 2021

Ntobe* echoes Ntombi's story. Ntobe works in the Donda Cluster as a taxi driver. She reports having been bullied by her male counterparts. Alerting her employer Mzobe* did not help because he would just tell her to be strong, "*as if that is possible when you are being insulted with your private parts*" (Ntobe, August 2021). Women in male-dominated industries suffer patriarchal oppression that excludes them from some parts of their jobs, which is what happened when taxi drivers held a *toyi toyi* (protest) against the government's carrying capacity regulations during the first stage of Covid-19 regulations (Hiramatsu 2021, 2). If women drivers and taxi owners were allowed to voice their concerns of the gendered distribution of labour alongside the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would pose a threat to the association. In earlier studies conducted on female taxi drivers in the Global South, the concept of patriarchy served as a relevant analytical framework to examine their working conditions because it all boils down to patriarchy and how it is continually perpetuated in the minibus taxi industry. It reveals itself in how women are constantly reminded of their roles, being insulted because of how feminine they are, and how they are at times allocated the worst routes just to push them out of the business. Women find themselves having to try and find ways of navigating the contested terrain of their gendered work-culture (Kimberly 1997, 2).

Organisations tend to be biased in favour of the exploitation of some conflicts and the suppression of others, which is referred to as mobilization bias (Lukes 2005). These are a set of predominant beliefs, values, institutional procedures, and rituals, *the rules of the game*, which operate consistently and systematically towards the benefit of certain groups of people at the expense of others. Those who benefit are usually placed in positions that allow them to promote and defend their vested interests. These 'status quo defenders' are usually the minority, which proved to be true in the RTA. This type of power usually embraces coercion,

authority, influence, which are characteristics usually associated with men (Lukes 2005, 21). Authority, in this instance, involves person B's compliance because s/he recognizes that person A's command is reasonable within his/her own values. It calls for the need to evaluate the decision-making and non-decision-making process. Non-decision-making refers to means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of privileges and benefits can be suffocated before they are even voiced out, which is where women in the RTA find themselves. It is also important to remember that power is never the property of an individual, but belongs to a group, and remains in existence as long as the group keeps together. Men in the RTA have power over their female counterparts, perpetuated through patriarchal hierarchies, which they have issues with because as it ensures them staying in power.

Working conditions in the RTA have proven to be unfavourable for women, whether they are taxi drivers or taxi owners due to cultural barriers. The men who are part of the two clusters are from KwaZulu Natal, who strongly believe in upholding their traditions. Keeping up with these traditions is mandatory for them because that is how they ensure power over their female counterparts (goes back to *Ukuqhathwa*); that is how patriarchy is further perpetuated in the industry. If women were to have decision-making power, it would pose a further threat, a woman cannot spearhead a business. The stereotype that women are emotional and cannot run businesses remains one of the reasons men give for why women should never lead in an industry like this one. This is another result of patriarchal norms that are held in society, where men and women are divided into dichotomies that put men and women into categories. The unfair treatment of women in the two cluster does not only affect the decision-making process and power relations, but it also shows in the gendered distribution of labour, which intensified with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

The patriarchal notions and societal norms on what is more suitable for men and women leads in the RTA. Women in the RTA executive committee are disrespected, bullied and side-lined when it comes to how the business should be run. They get ridiculed because they are widows, and in African cultures, there are specific ways a widow should act. Widowhood is now being

used as a tool to override women's decision-making capability. Being seen as *Imbokodo* means that these women are strong enough to bare the cross of being bullied and ridiculed by their male counterparts. This has made the working environment harmful to women's health and mental health. The cultural connotations that follow how a woman should and should not behave are prevalent in this RTA because the men strongly believe in upholding their traditional beliefs, a man leads, a woman follows.

5

'Emashumini':

The Gendered Distribution of Labour

Women are often perceived as incapable and/or unsuitable of holding jobs that are thought to require traditional male characteristics, which has many implications to a gendered organisational culture (Tennant 2020, 33). Women find themselves struggling to get employment in industries that are characterised by masculine organisational culture because such workplace cultures are often characterised by a gendered division of labour. The gendered division of labour is attributed to the capitalist mode of production which has left women confined to subordinate, binary and strict gender- defined roles (Hiramatsu 2021, 4). This is because gender is often treated as irrelevant, knowing very well that it is imbued within power relations (Rama 2018, 114). Labour markers are still heavily gendered, although women's participation in the market is greater (Lata, Walters & Roitman 2020, 318). Gendered relations in the minibus taxi industry are understood here in relation to patriarchy as a heteronormative system of power. The maintenance of its cis-gendered culture enables men to have power over women and over men who are either younger, poorer, differently racialised, differently positioned socially, or of different sexual orientations.

Men often make stereotypical remarks about women who join male dominated industries, all under the guise of gender, culture, and tradition. Gender is, therefore, constantly re-created, re-established, and re-defined by societies over the years. These changes are expressed through social roles, laws, values, and customs (Masuku 2016, 20). Men are aware of the effects of patriarchy in the minibus taxi industry. However, its notoriety for endemic violence suggests that any sign of caring, especially towards women, would put the industry at great risk. In this context, organisations like *Imboni YoMama* are formally acknowledged but not substantively supported by the industry. Because of the unfavourable and brutal conditions, some women limit their participation to smaller cluster meetings and choose to delegate participation in larger association meetings to their sons or vice versa. While this practice may serve as a form of self-protection for women, it runs the risk of perpetuating the patriarchal hierarchy already prevalent in the industry.

The gendered division of labour found in most industries is due to accepted norms when it comes to differentiating with job is most suitable for women or men. The division of labour in the RTA goes along two ways: Women given more income-generating routes but have the burden of paying for the squad cars every week or working in less income-generating routes and both still have to worry about petrol and meeting the required daily income. Women in the RTA are also not granted the opportunity to form part of the squad members because this is a 'tough' job that requires masculine strength. To explore the idea of men being more suitable for squad membership than women, I will use the security sector and gender to understand this.

Routes and Taxes: Squad Cars

Historically, security provision has been associated with men, rather than it has been with women, which could be the reason behind the securing of routes by men. Men have dominated security industries such as the military and police force, hence such institutions have a hypermasculine culture that is associated with qualities such as aggression, violence, and the denigration of women.

Zinga and Donda clusters have squad cars with the same association branding as its taxis. When duty calls, squad members are compensated by taxi associations (Khosa 1992). Payments to strong-arm men who patrol taxi routes are generally R300 per day. In the RTA these payments are made weekly and can be as much as R500 daily. Although these two clusters are part of the same association, they are very strict when it comes to protecting their routes. There are intersections along the routes, however, there is a system used to ensure that each cluster takes passengers that are along their route. There are squad cars placed on the left-hand side of the traffic light and another placed on the right-hand side, each squad car ensuring that their commuters stay on the 'correct' side of the traffic light.

> "This business has become very dangerous. Covid-19 [pandemic] has made it worse. Everyone is hungry and they try to put their hands everywhere. So it is important to protect what is ours because we have families to care of. Working as a squad member has helped because I see myself as protecting this route, *phela bayeyisa abantu*

langaphandle [people are disrespectful]. We are all hungry, but we should respect each other. If you do not respect us, we will teach you. We are a team that have cars [provided by the association]. Each car is allocated a driver and two or three people who will work with that driver. We wake up very early in the morning. There is no time to sleep. We guard our routes, especially *emafemini* [industrial 'firms' or taxis with more lucrative routes] because that is where the business is. Eish! Now business has not been going well because many firms were closed. Even when they opened people did not come back. If we get a taxi operating on our route, it has to be fined three hundred rands or two hundred rands, depending on where it was coming from. We charge according to what we would have received if our driver was operating there". – Majozi, August 2021.

Working through Covid-19

This section will mainly focus on the working conditions from the clusters and will be based on the experiences of two women taxi drivers, Nomusa* and Nokwethemba*. Nomusa works for the Zinga cluster, and has been an employee for six years, working alongside two male drivers. When she started working for her employer, she was working alongside three male drivers, but the number was reduced to two when the other taxi was repossessed. Her journey into the industry was not easy, however, her biggest challenge came while working during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Working through this [COVID-19] pandemic is very tough, maybe if I was working somewhere else it would be a bit better. This is hell, *kunzima nokubekezela* [it is even hard to be resilient/ hold on]. When I first heard about this disease [COVID-19 pandemic], I was not too worried because it was still in China. I was not expecting it to reach this side [South Africa]. When it did, I would say that everything went wrong from thereon. I am usually a strong person, *ngiyabekezela*, that is why I have been able to keep this job for so long. But now even *I* feel the pressure.

It would be better if we are all [as taxi drivers] suffering equally. I would understand. I have been working on a route that generates more money. But that does not mean that I was making more money for myself. I am the only one who pays the squad [cars]

> every week because I make more money with this route. But I am suffering. Paying the squad [cars] weekly, setting money aside for petrol daily, and meeting the daily goal set by *umlungu* [employer] is a challenge. I end up being paid less than the people I am working with.
>
> I used to complain when I started [working] because I realized that this was not working out well for me, but as someone employed the longest in my 'firm' [slang term for people working for the same taxi owner, who is regarded as an 'industrial firm'], I had to accept this route. This was like a promotion, but not one that makes more money for me". – Nomusa, August 2021

Nomusa shows that she is aware of the inequality that occurs in their cluster, however, it is not easy for her to counteract because there are various factors at play:

> "You must be aware that getting a job here is very difficult, and once you are in, it does not get any easier. You cannot let go just because you are not treated right. There are no jobs. That is why when I got this promotion, I was happy. A promotion means getting a new car [minibus taxi] and I needed that because *iskwele sami* [slang for the Siyaya minibus taxi] was very cold and old. We all started there [old minibus taxi]. I complained about being the only one to pay for the squad [cars] but I just had to accept it and move on because I knew that *ngizosefa imali yesokisi* [hiding money from the employer for yourself, so that you have extra income]. But this [COVID-19] pandemic has made my life worse. Those people [squad car operators] are very disrespectful. They know that *akunamsebenzi* [there are fewer passengers], and petrol is high… But they still expect us to pay the same amount weekly. *Phela* no one was working when this [COVID-19] pandemic started, and those who were working mostly did not travel via our routes. *Ngapha* [on the other hand] we must rotate coming to work during the week. The rotations were better during the weekend because we know that there are fewer commuters. Now it is very hard. It is even harder *ukusefa* because I am left with no money for petrol if I do, and *abelungu* [employers] do not care that you have no money for petrol. They want their taxi operating in the morning". -Nomusa, August 2021.

Nokwethemba* is a female employee from the Donda cluster. Unlike Nomusa, she has been an employee for only two years. She works alongside one male taxi driver in her 'firm'. Her experience of working during the COVID-19 pandemic is almost like Nomusa's. When she started working, her employer had three taxis, one driven by a female taxi driver (Busi*) who was helpful in teaching Nokwethemba the ropes of the business, until she [Busi] passed on. The second one was driven by Musa*, and the third one was given to Nokwethemba. When Busi passed on, her taxi was given to Musa*, Nokwethemba's current co-worker, and she moved on to Musa's taxi. The third taxi was repossessed before the COVID-19 pandemic started, leaving their employer with only two taxis. Unlike Nomusa's employer, Nokwethemba's employer lets his employees alternate paying the squad cars on a weekly basis, which helps reduce the strain on her part. The start of the 2020 year was the beginning of her third year as a taxi driver. Changes in her working environment in the past two years have been drastic compared to the year 2020.

> "I was lucky that I was given a chance to work here, although I was given an older taxi. I work *emashumini* [short trips that earn less revenue], where most of our commuters stay locally, especially in the informal settlements because they are the closest surrounding areas. When I was placed here, I did not worry that much because I was hoping that I would get promoted and get to work on the longer routes, now I do not see that happening, especially since one of the taxis was repossessed. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I would wake up at 3 am and ensure that by 4 am, I am already at the rank to try and steal maybe one load to the industrial area. It is important to make the queue marshal your friend. I would then start working on my designated route until seven pm if I am lucky, but usually, after rush hour [five pm], you can knock-off. I then go and park my car at the garage then go home, and in the morning, I refuel before starting my day. I cannot risk leaving my car [minibus taxi] with a full tank after work because I will find all of it drained [stolen] in the morning". -Nokwethemba, August 2021.

Nokwethemba alerts us to drivers 'stealing' petrol from others. Nothing been done by the taxi owners to stop such theft.

> "When the lockdown started, I started feeling the heat of working on this route even more. There were no commuters on my route, at all! I could not even reach the fifty

> percent required [capacity]. My employer did not want to understand that, but I see where he was coming from. His taxi was repossessed which reduced his income, and now I was also not making much here. This was frustrating because other routes were now heavily guarded to ensure that there was no pirate [minibus] taxis. So where was I supposed to get passengers from? People are poor, especially those in informal settlements. When we were finally allowed to carry passengers to full capacity, nothing much changed for me because I still struggled to find passengers, industries fired people. Remember that I am not the only one working on this route. There are many others. I would find myself making two trips if I am lucky. That amounts to three hundred rands, and I still need to take money for petrol. I knew that if I do not try to fix this, I would lose my job. So, waking up much earlier to try steal trips from other routes became my only solution". -Nokwethemba, August 2021.

This was not safe for Nokwethemba, especially as a woman, because she ran the risk of coming across the 'squad members' who are not lenient when it comes to 'pirate' minibus taxis operating on their routes. The COVID-19 pandemic means that each squad is even more vigilant on who operates in their territory, and taxing pirate cars means extra income for them. The operators of squad cars are known to be very violent. A job 'fit for a man'.

The idea that male taxi squad members offer protection and security for routes has wider implications for women who are part of the association. As covered in chapter three, there is not much opportunity for women in the association to move up the hierarchy, considering the 'requirements' of the industry. Historically, security provision has been a traditionally male occupation because the concept of protection, itself, is associated with masculine qualities such as bravery, aggression, and strength (Tennant 2020, 2). The security sphere is characterised by a masculine organisational culture where men continue to dominate as a result of hegemonic masculinity playing a role in the structuring of institutions, workplaces and bureaucracies. This sector is generally highly gendered because it was 'created' for men, alongside organisational systems that reflect masculine experiences and values (Tennant 2020, 4). These occupational cultures are often rooted in biologically deterministic arguments which assert women and men as binary opposites. This is in terms of their behaviour, capabilities and characteristics, and such perceptions manifest in the social constructions of gender roles that in turn determine

what is accepted and valued in men and women, with regards to their masculinity and femininity. This leads to the classification of men and women as being more suited to certain roles than others, at home and in the workplace. Since most of the women in the executive are widows, the pressure is doubled because they '*cannot be driving around ngenzilo [in mourning clothes], it is disrespectful*', as Baba *Majozi* narrates.

The implications of the gendered division of labour, especially when it comes to security provision, sustains the essentialist notion that women are incapable of serving in certain positions, mainly because they are women (Tennant 2020, 4). This acts as a limitation to women's opportunities for advancement in positions with better remuneration and limiting their access to employment opportunities. When women are confined to subordinate roles, they are unable to influence the decision-making process, as gathered in chapter four, which affects their job security, especially in the minibus taxi industry. The consequences of this gendered division of labour are two-fold, women are forced to assimilate into the masculine culture for them to be regarded as capable or they get confined to low-risk positions. This has a huge impact on their ability to change this organisational culture, which in turn marginalises women while encouraging aggression from men (Tennant 2020, 4).

> "This needs strong people, who know how to defend themselves because these drivers are very disrespectful and like taking advantage. Now we are fighting because there are fewer passengers, so we have to know our story otherwise our drivers will starve. It is not a thing of who can do it, but we are more used to this, *saqhathwa thina".*. -Majozi, August 2021

This quote demonstrates that Majozi feels more entitled to be the protector of the routes because aggressiveness is part of him, because *waqhathwa* […]and this does not happen for women or young girls [in KwaZulu Natal]. While the inclusion of women is more important to try and shift gender binaries, it is not enough to transform gendered institutions. Women are expected to 'dilute' their femininity and conform to hegemonic masculinity to succeed. This pattern is captured in MaDlamini's experience as a female taxi driver, through her use of violence in order to be respected by her fellow male counterparts (Dlamini 2020). Challenging this hegemonic culture is often met with resistance from their male counterparts, and this goes back

to the patriarchal system which continues to shape expectations from roles of men and women according to their capabilities (Tennant 2020, 5).

To meet gender transformation in the minibus taxi industry, patriarchal norms that characterize society as a whole need to change (Tennant 2020, 5). This is because it is not only taxi operators who perpetuate these gendered roles, but passengers too because of the belief that men are more capable of providing protection compared to women, which is visible in the security provision sector. According to Tennant (2020, 5), consumer demands have a huge impact in determining who gets employed in the security sector, which hinders the possibility of implementing gender-mainstream goals. It is important to therefore note that the division of labour in the industry is not only based on gender but an intersectionality of various social norms and social identities, like widowhood.

> "Imagine an old woman like me telling these drivers not to work [operate] on this route or that, *ngenzilo* [in black widowhood clothes]. They would laugh at me, *umfelokazi"*. -KaMasondo, August 2021.

KaMasondo's quote reinforces the idea that societal identities like widowhood end up being internalized and made an identity for most women, which hinders them from moving up the minibus taxi industry hierarchy. Strength, aggression, bravery is already associated to manhood, therefore it gets hard for a widow to even attempt conforming to those masculine attributes because the term 'widow' on its own is a limitation to how women should behave (Mtetwa 2021). This also goes along Tennant's (2020) idea of women casting doubt on their capabilities in male-dominated industries. The social inequality that exists between women and men is then naturalized and proposes that the adherence to these differences need to be accepted as a matter of necessity for social functioning where any variation from expected norms is considered unnatural (Tennant 2020, 18). Such stereotypes automatically influence an individual's perception of other people, often unconsciously. Therefore, men and women are advantaged or disadvantaged according to how they are viewed or in accordance with their associated stereotypes. Socially constructed hierarchical gender norms are particularly prevalent in the security context legitimizing unequal gendered power relations (Tennant 2020, 21).

A woman's capacity is doubted when it comes to contributing meaningfully to providing some form of security, although some women manage to infiltrate the system (Tennant 2020, 21). This relates to the role that hegemonic masculinity has played in the structuring of workplaces and institutions. The construction of gendered protection roles in society has actively forbidden women to act as protectors or defenders, demonstrating how masculinity is deeply embedded in such organisations through norms, values, uniform, and behaviour. They mimic the masculine nature of the military or police force to try and reflect 'masculine' qualities such as force and toughness because they are associated to security and protection. This has an even larger implication for the gendered division of labour in security institutions, which is concerning because it perpetuates the male-female dichotomy between protectors/protected where men are the protectors and women are protected.

> "We are not only doing this for ourselves, but for *omama ngoba angeke bazilwele* [women because they cannot fend for themselves]. We are doing this for the safety of our association and our routes, so that no one takes advantage of us, that is very important here. *Kufanele sihlale sihlomile (We have to be armed, always)"*. – Baba Majozi August 2021.

The role of the protector is often associated with gun use, as demonstrated by Baba Majozi, because carrying a gun is often associated with manhood and masculinity, which goes back to the idea that women cannot be hitwomen. Privileging men as gun-carriers and protectors places them in a position of power on behalf of women who are viewed an incapable of self-protection (Tennant 2020, 22). This male domination is not usually challenged or contested because society continues to accept the notion of men as protectors which groups women in the same category as children, the protected. This categorisation impacts women's agency in society through the classification of women as dependents of men's protection, while constructing men as solely being suitable for providing security. Since the minibus taxi industry is deemed a dangerous occupation, the reasoning is that it makes sense to have *men* on the frontline protecting 'helpless' widows.

Conclusion

Society has become too content to watching men losing their lives fighting wars and providing protection or being at the frontline leading (Tennant 2020, 22). If structures and symbols of patriarchy are not understood and acknowledged, the patriarchal system will remain unchallenged because these structures have a powerful impact on the structures of social life. Structures of social life in instance, refer to the ways in which privilege and oppression are organised in social relationships through the unequal distribution of opportunities, resources, and power. When it comes to paid work, women have been historically excluded from positions in the labour market that have been considered as dangerous, strenuous, inappropriate, and unsuitable (Tennant 2020). Perceiving women as compassionate, cheerful sympathetic, understanding, and sensitive and men as decisive, assertive, aggressive, and ambitious have affected the types of jobs considered suitable for men and women.

Final Conclusion

The taxi industry has been widely celebrated as a beacon of black excellence because it came during a time where black people were oppressed by the apartheid government. Black people were placed in outlying townships where they had inadequate bus and rail transportation from work to their homelands. Township residents turned this disadvantage into an opportunity by creating their own mode of transportation, which the apartheid government tried to reprimand. This was because this new way of transporting migrants was competing with the bus and train system, a shortcoming for the then government. The apartheid government then put policies in place to try and stop black people from succeeding in their business, which was retaliated with violence.

Violence then became a mode of 'communication' as the minibus taxi industry continued booming, a legacy that still haunts the minibus taxi industry today. In the RTA, men have the upper hand when it comes to moving up the minibus taxi hierarchy because of this 'mode of communication'. Violence has now been turned into an 'informal' requirement for the minibus taxi industry, an organizational rule. The reasoning behind this is that there are too many rival taxi associations who pride themselves in stealing routes, especially lucrative income generating routes. This has been a thorn for women in the minibus taxi industry because they cannot move up the ladder due to this. Men in the RTA still uphold the belief that women cannot be hitwomen, that they cannot fight, nor kill, nor stand up for themselves, especially to other men. They then take it upon themselves to be responsible for guarding routes from pirate taxis and rival associations.

This belief has made female taxi drivers struggle in getting promotions, because to be promoted you have to show the association what you bring to the table. Women taxi owners cannot make an extra income like their fellow male counterparts who are squad members, because they are not aggressive enough. It is even worse because the majority of the women in the executive committee are widows, and widows cannot be seen getting violent with minibus taxi drivers. Widowhood requires women to be down to earth, don't engage in meaningless arguments or acts of violence. They should not raise their voices, not mingle with 'pure' individuals in public, as they might rub their 'impurity' on them. This has led to women in the RTA not being able to defend themselves against the bullying they undergo, because a 'woman should know her place' and not argue with men, *Izwi lendoda liyabhekwa*.

Because women in the executive committee are not able to make any decisions, female taxi drivers continue struggling on the ground. The female minibus taxi drivers in this study revealed how they had to work unequal hours compared to their male counterparts, some had to work in routes that were not generating enough money for them, but their employers still expected them to bring their required daily checking. They could not raise their concerns because they are aware of how scarce jobs are and leaving the industry would be risky as they would run the risk of not being hired again in the association while going into another association would be futile without connections. This is because women are required to be loyal in the RTA, and their definition of loyalty means taking in blows until their male counterparts decide that it is enough. *Imbokodo* is strong after all.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the level of precarity in the minibus taxi industry, and also revealed the bullying and power struggles laced with patriarchy that women in the RTA face. It then becomes important that there should be further research conducted on the exact regulations of the minibus taxi industry, as per association because associations have their own way of doing things, which favours men most of the time.

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Appendices

Appendix 1A: Interview Questions on Personal Experiences of the pandemic affecting the industry

1. How has this pandemic affected your movements at the taxi rank?
2. I would like you to take me back to when the pandemic began in March 2020. Could you please share the first memory you have of that time?
3. What were the main changes that happened in your line of work as a taxi driver?
4. Were there any other changes that you would like to share with me?
5. How was your adjustment to these changes?
6. Can you take me through your days during the week?
7. Which days are mostly busy during the week?
8. How are your weekdays and weekends different? How are they similar?
9. Which days are the slowest for business?
10. How many hours do you work on daily basis?
11. How were these hours agreed upon?
12. Could you please share how you usually work during the holidays, especially Good Friday and the Festive season?
13. How was your experience different or similar to your usual December working experience and your December of 2020? Would you think that the new variant?
14. How has your daily work experience changed since the year 2021 began?

Appendix 1B: Interview Questions on Implemented Regulations

1. What do you remember about the government's response to the taxi industry when the pandemic started, in March 2020?
2. Do you know how the government came up with these restrictions?
3. Do you know who was involved in the decision-making process about these restrictions?
4. Could you please tell me more about the way these restrictions were implemented on the ground in your cluster?
5. Who do you think made decisions about this implementation?
6. How would decisions about implementations be made?
7. How did the association address these implementations?
8. Are there any other ways in which you generate extra income through the month?

Appendix 2A: Consent form for voice recording [participant observation] (minibus taxi drivers and owners: Men and Women)

Research Topic: "*Emashumini*: The Gendered Restrictions in an Ekurhuleni Taxi Association"

Name of researcher: Nunu Dlamini

I…… agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following: (Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my name may be used in the research.	YES	NO
I agree to using a voice recorder to document my everyday experiences in the taxi industry.	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may paraphrase or quote, in this research report, any information from the recording.	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

Name of Participant……

Signature……

Name of Interviewer……..

Signature……

Date……...

Appendix 2B: Consent form for interview (minibus taxi drivers and minibus taxi owners: Men and Women)

Research Topic: "*Emashumini*: The Gendered Restrictions in an Ekurhuleni Taxi Association"

Name of researcher: Nunu Dlamini

I…… agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following: (Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my name may be used in the research data collection.	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may paraphrase or quote, in this research report, any information from this interview.	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded.	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended.	YES	NO

Name of Participant……

Signature……

Name of Interviewer……..

Signature……

Date……...

Appendix 2C: Consent form for Voice recording keeping [participant observation] All participants: Men and Women)

Research Topic: "*Emashumini*: The Gendered Restrictions in an Ekurhuleni Taxi Association"

Name of researcher: Nunu Dlamini

I…… agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following: (Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my name may be used in research report	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use any information from the diary or journal.	YES	NO
I agree that the use of my identity as a taxi driver/taxi owner will add validity to the presented data in this research.		
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended.	YES	NO

Name of Participant……

Signature……

Name of Interviewer……..

Signature……

Date……...

Appendix 3A

Participant Information Sheet for Interviews (men and women)

Participant Information Sheet

Name of Researcher: Nunu Dlamini

Research Topic: "*Emashumini*: The Gendered Restrictions in an Ekurhuleni Taxi Association"

My name is Nunu Dlamini, I am currently a Masters student in the department of Social Anthropology, at the University of Witwatersrand. I intend to carry out a research project that is interested in exploring the experiences of taxi drivers and taxi owners with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic regulations and restrictions. It will focus on the gendered politics of these regulations at an association level in the Ekurhuleni taxi industry. It is aimed at exploring power negotiations and the decision-making process in the taxi industry and its inclusion/exclusion of women. This will help shed light on the current working conditions of women in the industry during the pandemic. My research is supervised by Professor Zimitri Erasmus. Should you have further questions with regards to my research and why I am doing it, Prof. Zimitri Erasmus' contact details are as follows: Zimitri.Erasmus@wits.ac.za or Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za telephone: 011 717 1408.

I would be grateful for your participation in an interview regarding your role as a taxi driver and taxi owner. If at any time you no longer wish to participate, please feel free to withdraw. Some information emerging out of the interview will be used for research purposes, if you would like any of the information already stated, left out of the research, you are free to say so. I will ensure your anonymity by not using your real name- rather a pseudonym will be assigned to maintain this I will not be able to maintain confidentiality because I will be working with other people from your association, however, I will not include any identifying information on the final report. I will also not be able to compensate you for your participation. The interviews will be separated into two parts and each part will be 45 minutes long, and if need arise, I will conduct a follow-up interview. These interviews will be conducted during June and August 2021. If you have further questions regarding this, you are welcome to contact me on my mobile number: 071 013 3919 or via email at Delisiledlamini198@gmail.com.

Appendix 3B

Participant Information Sheet for Voice recording (All participants: men and women)

Participant Information Sheet

Name of Researcher: Nunu Dlamini

Research Topic: "*Emashumini*: The Gendered Restrictions in an Ekurhuleni Taxi Association"

My name is Nunu Dlamini, I am currently a Masters student in the department of Social Anthropology, at the University of Witwatersrand. I intend to carry out a research project that is interested in exploring the experiences of taxi drivers and taxi owners with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic regulations and restrictions. It will focus on the gendered politics of these regulations at an association level in the Ekurhuleni taxi industry. It is aimed at exploring power negotiations and the decision-making process in the taxi industry and its inclusion/exclusion of women. This will help shed light on the current working conditions of women in the industry during the pandemic. My research is supervised by Professor Zimitri Erasmus. Should you have further questions with regards to my research and why I am doing it, Prof. Zimitri Erasmus' contact details are as follows: Zimitri.Erasmus@wits.ac.za or Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za telephone: 011 717 1408.

I would be grateful for your participation in recording videos enacting your role as a taxi driver. If at any time you no longer wish to participate, please feel free to withdraw. Some information emerging out of the voice recording will be used in the research, if you would like any of the information already stated, left out of the research, you are free to say so. I will ensure your anonymity by not using your real name- rather a pseudonym will be assigned to maintain this. I will not be able to maintain confidentiality because I will be working with other people from your association, however, I will not include any identifying information on the final report. I will also not be able to compensate you for your participation. The voice notes will differ on how long they are, depending on your ability to record at that given time and will depend on times suitable for you. They will be recorded during June and August 2021. If you have further questions regarding this, you are welcome to contact me on my mobile number: 071 013 3919 or via email at Delisiledlamini198@gmail.com.