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Invisible workforce: the experiences of female cleaning service employees within the Department of Public Works in Pretoria region

Ntsie, Alletah

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Invisible workforce: The experiences of female cleaning service employees within the Department of Public Works in Pretoria region



UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

A report on a research study presented to

The Department of Social Work

School of Human and Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

University of Witwatersrand

In partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree Master of Occupational Social Work

Alletah Ntsie

August, 2020

Supervisor: Dr Motlalepule Nathane

DECLARATION

I declare that a research report presented is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this research report was not previously submitted anywhere else.



31/08/2020

Signature **Date**

Ms. A. Ntsie

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank God the Almighty for giving me strength and wisdom in compiling this research report.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my research supervisor, Dr Motlalepule Nathane for her continued support and guidance throughout the process. May the Almighty bless you.

To my mother and my grandmother thank you for all the encouragement and support you provided during my studies. There were times when I wanted to give up, but you were always there for me.

My son Larona, thank you a million times for being patient with mommy, while I was not always present to assist you with homework, due to my studies. I am humbled by your understanding, especially at times when I had to attend weekend classes and coming back home late as a result of travelling between Pretoria and Johannesburg.

Many thanks to the Department of Public Works for affording me an opportunity to conduct the study among its employees.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor at work, for her continued support, guidance and encouragement during my academic journey. In times of despair she always provided me with warm and positive words of advice.

Lastly, I would like to thank all my classmates, colleagues and friends who have contributed positively in my studies and on my personal growth.

To the participants of the study, thank you for sharing your valued time to do the interviews. I was not going to achieve the objectives of this study without you. I really appreciate your commitment.

DEDICATION

This work is also dedicated to my late Grandfather, James Gabokgiwe Ntsie (1940 – 2005), who raised me to be the woman I am today, who also taught me the value of education.

ABSTRACT

Globally, the cleaning industry is one example of the labour sector where the conditions of work have been particularly affected by forces of globalization and what may be defined as the effects of neoliberal policies. Cleaning is also considered a typical low-skilled occupation and in South Africa it is dominated by Black Africans, especially women with low formal education levels. This is attributed to apartheid's racial division of labour which ensured that Black people mostly occupied low-skilled manual jobs. The low status of the cleaning work can be linked to its female-dominated workforce, and the fact that cleaning work is traditionally categorized as women's work and therefore ranks less important than male-dominated work. This qualitative study aimed at understanding the experiences of female cleaning service employees in the workplace. The study used a case study design and participants were sixteen female cleaning service employees from the Department of Public Works in Pretoria region. The sampling procedure used in this study was non-probability, purposive sampling. The data collection method used was semi-structured interviews. The interviews were based on a questionnaire with a sequence of questions. The raw data was analysed through a six-phase guide of thematic analysis. The study found that the female cleaning employees feel alienated and undervalued. The study recommends that, female cleaning service employees' voices should be heard in their workplaces, as to promote their visibility and gender equality.

Key words: Cleaners, cleaning work, Department of Public Works, female employees, government, outsourcing, Pretoria, workplace experiences.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUTION

1.1. Introduction

Cleaning job is regarded as a low category of employment and it requires no specific skill, in most cases cleaners are having basic training like how to use the tools like vacuum cleaners (Ntlokwana, 2016). Cleaning work is the physical removal of visible organic material or soil from objects and environmental surfaces (Rhinehart, 2001). A cleaner is referred to an individual employed to perform any cleaning work within an organization (Magala, 2009). In the context of this study cleaners are female employees employed by the Department of Public Works. Majority of the cleaners in South Africa are women who form part of the working poor and are often not taken into consideration or acknowledged. This is due to the fact that often cleaning is not seen as the core function of most institutions such as hospitals, universities and retail outlets (Bezuidenhout & Fakier, 2016). Alienating conditions are evident as they are constantly reminded of their status at the bottom of most organizational hierarchy and made to feel insignificant (Petro, 2014). The health and safety of the cleaners is often exposed to make them vulnerable, this vulnerability is compounded by insecurity and the struggle to make ends meet (Petro, 2014).

Consequently, cleaners blend into the workforce landscapes but often overlooked (Petro, 2014). As an occupational group, cleaners are particularly invisible and the times in which they become visible are when they are somehow at fault (Winant, 2018). The Equality and Human Rights Commission's inquiry into employment conditions in the cleaning sector has called its half million workers invisible workforce, meaning that they are unappreciated and unnoticed (Rubery,2014). In addition, one reason for this invisibility is that the cleaning workforce is generally poorly paid and is often unrewarded for additional training, skills, or for working during unsocial hours in the evenings, early morning and weekends (Rubery,2014).While cleaning is an important job, it is generally performed by an isolated workforce (Hodgins, Fleming & Griffiths, 2016). In addition, cleaning industry is comprised by one cleaner being allocated a block of offices to clean, cleaning also falls under facility management unit of many companies. Cleaners remain one of the groups that are often not protected and underpaid in the South African workforce. While the government of South Africa has made strides in the

legislative framework protecting the rights of workers in general (Ntlokwana, 2016). Also, in many institutions and companies one of the contributing factors to the undervaluing of cleaning work is because it is seen as a domestic work, which is more perceived as work performed by women, which is also unpaid (Ntlokwana,2016). The issue of gender relations which seems to be attracting more women than men, in the cleaning sector was identified by most researchers and will be later explored in literature review. Nixon (2009 as cited by Petro, 2014 p. 44) indicates that "historically, women have dominated the occupations in cleaning sector". Cleaning work is much gendered and often reinforces gender stereotypes (Hanser, 2012).

There is a link between the jobs that are occupied by women and job insecurity. Cleaning sector is one of the good examples since the majority of the people employed are women, who in most cases are contract workers willing to take up any job for a sense of security and the ability to provide for the family (Allen &.Henry, 1997). In most instances men who are employed as cleaners and executing the same duties as women cleaners are normally called general labourers not cleaners. The different job titles given to the male and female cleaners, determines take home salaries, with males getting higher salaries than female cleaners (Ntlokwana, 2016). Furthermore, in most cases women cleaners have felt to be an 'invisible workforce' (Ntlokwana, 2016, p.6). Most women categorised as cleaners were Black Africans, and further classified as from the low class groups. In addition, majority of these women have limited skills, with lower educational levels and these prohibit them for career development at work (Ntlokwana, 2016). In case of the South African cleaning industry many cleaners are Black African women, this was created by the past oppressive laws, which ensured that majority of Black people occupy lower manual jobs (Etim, 2016).

1.2. Problem statement and rationale of the study

Cleaners are classified under the category of elementary occupations by The South African Standard Classification of Occupations (StatsSA, 2001).This group of workers are seen as people who require information and understanding of simple and routine tasks which require the use of hand-held tools and in some cases physical effort (StatsSA, 2001). The cleaning sector in South Africa is dominated by private companies whereby employees are employed on contract basis. As a result, lack of benefits from these cleaning private companies, have resulted in a major battle between employees and employers that provide contract cleaning services to clients such as universities, government departments and large corporates. In the

South African context, the experiences of female cleaning service employees, especially in the government sector remain inadequately explored.

There are movements that arose to challenge the practices around the employment of cleaners. For example, in the higher education sector, the student protested and established a campaign called #FeesMustFall, and their demands, extended to include the absorption of cleaners employed by private companies which were contracted to universities. The universities started to implement the demands of the campaign, whereby all the outsourced cleaners were insourced (The Contract Cleaning Industry report in South Africa, 2017). (Langa, Ndelu, Edwin & Vilakazi (2017) view the #FeesMustFall as the student uprising against lack of access to financial exclusion from higher education in South Africa which occurred in October 2015.

This study was imperative in understanding the reality of women who carry out this important but often unrecognised form of work. The study also helped the researcher in unpacking the gender stereotypes associated with the cleaning job. Therefore, the significance of the study conducted stemmed from the fact that it aimed at focusing on the overall experience of women who are cleaners and have come the invisible workforce within a government department.

Cleaning work is an occupation associated with high risks, which may contribute negatively into the cleaners' physical health Öhrling (2014). In addition, the physical ill-health contributes to the psychosocial problems experienced by the cleaners which, include stress that may be caused by the people that the cleaners are servicing. The cleaners often have a sense of feeling invisible and as an alienated workforce since they often work during unsocial working hours and sometimes they are told not to get in the way of other activities that are ranked more important within the organization (Öhrling, 2014). In another study by Petro (2014), conducted in Cape Town on the experiences of private company cleaners working in the public hospital sector, the author concluded that the cleaners form an invisible and silent mass. The research conducted thus far has not been sufficient from the occupational social work perspective which focuses specifically on the workplace experiences of female cleaners relating to the empowerment programmes. Therefore, the information available is not enough to help in developing empowerment programmes and policies that will improve for the experiences of female cleaning service employees in South Africa.

The significance of this study was an attempt to address research gaps identified in other previous studies and explored other themes such as 'feeling invisible and alienated workforce'

which were touched on by other/some researchers. The study has both empirical and practical implications. From an empirical point of view, the study has a potential to influence programme development at an organizational level that may guide managers to ensure the well-being and empowerment of female cleaners. The topic chosen was both relevant and timely since most of the female cleaning service employees felt undervalued.

1.3. Primary aim and objectives

The primary aim of the research was to explore the workplace experiences of female cleaning service employees, as an invisible workforce within the department of Public Works in Pretoria region. To achieve the aim, the following objectives were set:

- To understand the setting in which participants work as female cleaning service employees.
- To establish how the workplace experiences are impacting on the cleaners' emotional and physical wellbeing.
- To understand how participants feel about being invisible and undervalued as cleaning service employees.
- To investigate how they cope with all the workplace negative experiences as cleaning staff.
- To explore workplace intervention programmes in place to address their needs.

1.4. Research question

The main research question for this study was:

What are the workplace experiences of female cleaning service employees within the Department of Public Works in Pretoria region?

1.5. Outline of the research report

The research report will be outlined into five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction which contextualises the topic and explains the nature of the problem, rationale, and the overall aim and research questions. Chapter two of this report is a review of literature and the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Chapter three outlines the methods used in this study and discuss how the research was conducted and how the used methods were the most appropriate. It will do this by outlining the research strategy and design, data collection method,

the rationale behind the sampling population, method used to analyse data and lastly ethics. Chapter four presents and discusses the data that was collected from sixteen participants of the study. In analysing the data, the themes that will be discussed are responding to the objectives of the study. Furthermore, the chapter commences with demographic information of the participants, and later on the results of the data collected. Chapter five discusses the findings in relation to the aim and objectives of the study. The same chapter offers conclusion and the recommendations for future research.

1.6. Definition of Key Concepts

1.6.1. Cleaner

Cleaner is referred to an individual employed to perform any cleaning work within an organization (Magala, 2009).

1.6.2. Cleaning work

Cleaning work is the physical removal of visible organic material or soil from objects and environmental surfaces (Rhinehart, 2001). It is also the removal of dirt, grime or other accretions in the conservation field (Stulik, Miller, Khanjian, Carlson, Khandekar, & Wolbers 2004).

1.6.3. Department of Public Works

The Department of Public Works is the government department responsible for the management and maintenance of all government buildings (DPW intranet, n.d).

1.6.4. Employee

Employee is defined as a person who works for another in return for financial or other compensation (Stevenson, 2010).

1.6.5. Outsourcing

Outsourcing is the provision of services from an outside specialist service provider (Winkler, Dibbern & Heinzl, 2009).

1.6.6. Workplace experiences

Workplace experiences are the total sum of all experiences an employee goes through in an organization (Lederman & Beer, 2008).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter unpacks literature relating to the experiences of female cleaners. In line with the context outlined above, the focus will be on the concepts of the history and background of the cleaning work, the gender element, and outsourcing of cleaners, physical and psychosocial well-being, the issue of feeling alienated and the pay gap of cleaners in relation to gender. In various studies, cleaning is considered to be a devalued work that falls into the category of what is considered 'dirty work' and generally defined as a task, occupation and a role that is perceived as disgusting or degrading (Simpsons, 2012 as cited in Amnith & Sahraoul, 2018). The dichotomy of pairing of cleanliness and dirtiness shapes both the condition of cleaning work and relationships between people. Furthermore, it is closely linked to social markers of difference and power relations that differentiate along the lines of gender, race, class and sexuality.

2.2. Cleaning work and the labour market

Cleaning work in most cases is done manually by hands using tools like mops, brooms and vacuum cleaners. The truth within the cleaning industry is that, supervisors are the ones giving instructions on what duties should be performed by the cleaners, while they watch over these cleaners when performing their duties (Seifert & Messing, 2006). This means that the cleaners do not have control over their work schedules, and they are powerless as they are being monitored by the supervisors who tell them what to do and what not to do. This is a very limiting exercise which also creates a sense of ignorance on the ability of these workers. The supervisors have the powers to plan how the cleaners should perform their duties on daily basis, which sometimes put a lot of pressure into these group of workers. This is very clear that the employers are more concerned about the production which should be achieved within a specific period of time. The cleaning work is dictated by the employer and the supervisor, yet the cleaner is expected to meet employers' needs without their voice being considered. In case of the government sector, the organizational structures are designed in a way that the cleaners execute duties, while the supervisors oversee the work being done.

Post 1994 there was a huge transformation in South Africa's labour market, because there was an introduction of strategies and laws to address unfair labour practices and job inequalities. For example, Employment Equity Act was introduced, and it requires the employers to eliminate unfair treatment and discrimination in the workplace.In the year 2013, 2 967 000 employees were classified as cleaners in South African context (StatsSA, 2013). It is further indicated that majority of cleaners are employed on contract basis by 1500 certain contract cleaning companies such as; Bidvest services, Prestige, Supercare services, Tsebo solutions and others, these companies are members of the National Contract Cleaners Association (Servest report, 2017). This is indeed advantageous for employers because it gives them an opportunity to employ and terminate the contracts of these cleaners based on the prevalent market burdens without having to worry about the benefits that need to be paid to these workers, it is very clear that this practice disadvantages the workers through low salary rates, with no benefits and job security (Bosch, 2005). To break the pay gap the South African government introduced a national minimum wage of R20, 76 per hour, which was effective in 1st March 2020, this was done to address the imbalances in the labour market.

2.3. Gender and social identity of cleaners

Cleaning is considered to be a woman's physical work at home, and is associated with non-productive unpaid labour (Etim, 2016). **"**Domestic work is especially undervalued because it had traditionally been treated as women's unpaid duty in marriage which extended outside of marriage when many unskilled non-white women entered the workforce and were obliged to take on cleaning work in private homes and organizational institutions, schools, universities, factories and indeed the nooks and crannies of many economic institutions" (Grant, 1997 cited in Etim, 2016, p.47). Cleaners, despite the importance of their work, are a hidden workforce, doing their work before or after others come to or leave the workplace for the day (Hodgins, Fleming & Griffiths, 2016). Brown (2012) adds that many of the African women cleaners travelled to work, often taking more than one mode of transport to get to work (i.e. public bus and then public taxi or two different taxis). Furthermore, in many instances, the women had to get their school-going children or grandchildren ready and off to schools before setting off for work themselves (Etim, 2016). The complex relationship between gender and class is one that will need to be addressed in order to improve the position of women everywhere (Brown, 2012).

In a workplace cleaning women are recruited from different areas, not knowing each other, in most cases they are appointed in the absence of others, nevertheless, irrespective of their different demographics, is clear that once they are on the system they share some commonalities (Bernstein, 2011).Gender and social identity of these workers can be seen as being interconnected to the nature of social categorization. In this context, cleaning work provides a fascinating perspective on women's hopes; women employed in cleaning depend on a job in which no self–fulfilment, development or promotion exist (Ehrlich & Yuval-Davis, 2013). In cleaning work, there is a need to introduce an intersectionality perspective, one that will provide an analysis of women's experiences within the interlocking relationship of gender, class and ethno-national dimensions (Ehrlich & Yuval-Davis, 2013). The hard work and often exploitative condition in institutional cleaning suggest that women are rarely able to use their cleaning employment as leverage for political action. In addition, there is a stereotypical assumption about word 'dirty work' which is clearly linked to women's cleaning work. Furthermore, cleaning is socially constructed as a degradation work performed by women, therefore there is a need to explore more on cleaning employees' experiences as providers in their families.

2.4. Alienation of cleaners in the workplace

Alienation is a historically created phenomenon, born out of specific historical conditions. Alienation should be seen as unavoidable and an endemic condition of capitalism caused by the very nature of class society (Nelson & O'Donohue, 2006). All work under capitalism is alienated, be it clean or dirty, safe or dangerous, professional or non-professional (Sayers, 2011). Furthermore, understandings of alienation differ. According to Marx, the concept of alienation has been used as a means to discuss a general state of psychosocial malaise (Braverman, 1974). In terms of psychological approaches to alienation, the concept is associated variably with the ideas of not having power, meaningless, normlessness, social isolation, cultural estrangement and self-estrangement (Yuill, 2011 as cited in Skovlund, 2019). The concepts mentioned above have been used in attempts to define and measure alienation.

In a work environment, when an organization or institution sends signals about the value of work through wages, benefits and work conditions people, begin to shift their performance to match these expectations (Zuberi, 2013). This, in combination with the desire of contractors to maximise profits, results in further marginalization of cleaners and other outsourced support workers and negatively affect outcomes. Additionally, women cleaners who are migrant

workers have registered their dissatisfaction about being mistreated by their employers who normally overlook their right to annual leave and to continuing receive their salaries while on sick leave (Elsbach & Bechky, 2009). Furthermore, in a hospital environment, the cleaners are treated with disrespect, and medical staff devalues their work (Hurst, 2016). Ashford and Blatt (2007 as cited in Hurst, 2016) wanted to find out how these professionals (cleaners) find purpose in their work, and how they find themselves involved in the culture of caring for the hospital. The study found out that the cleaners were treated with disrespect and medical staff devalued their work. They state that "the cleaners reported feeling invisible to nurses and doctors" (Hurst, 2016, p.131). Even if they were in the same room, medical staff would rather call the cleaners' supervisor than speak with them directly. Hurst (2016, p.131) adds that during the interviews one cleaning staff member shared that the doctors have a tendency to look at them like they are not even there, they will be working in the hallways and no recognition of what they are doing or whatsoever. In addition, doctors and nurses would also do things to try to push their responsibility to the cleaners or make their jobs harder. It is stated that "Other participants complained of the nurses avoiding cleaning up bodily fluids and just dumping them on the floor so they become the responsibility of the cleaning team" (Hurst, 2016, p.131). The research also found that despite being undermined in every direction and being treated as sub-human, many of these cleaning professionals find purpose in their work.

2.5. Physical and Psychosocial well-being of cleaning staff

The physical wellness of the cleaners needs to be taken into consideration since they perform repetitive or monotonous work. Cleaners represent a group of workers that experience significantly high levels of musculoskeletal disorders, much of which can be linked directly to physical factors (Hodgins, Fleming & Griffiths, 2016). Although the physical significance of physical factors has been questioned in some quarters, the association between specific ergonomics factors, such as repetitive hand movements, excessive force, mechanical overload and awkward posture, and musculoskeletal disorder is by now well established. Vibration can lead to a misjudgement about the force needed to control tools (Hodgins et al., 2016).

In a study of Taiwanese cleaners, nearly 93% reported musculoskeletal discomfort in at least one part of the body due to work, while a Danish study found 63% of cleaners reported having neck discomfort, and or shoulder problems, 36 percent had lower back pain and 46 percent reported some type of wrist problem (Hodgins et al., 2016). Furthermore, all the groups studied shared the fact that they are not always considered primary targets for intervention because

their job is not taken seriously in terms of occupational health, and because cleaners are low status, invisible, and use low-tech manual instruments such as mops and brushes. There are in fact few workers who can escape some form of musculoskeletal complaint in their work career, it being the singular most common cause of workplace ill health, rendering musculoskeletal disorder and particularly important target for workplace health interventions. In addition, Hodgins et al., (2016, p.81) state that work-related musculoskeletal disorders are defined by the European Agency for Health and Safety at work as "impairments of body structures such as muscle, joints, tendons, ligaments, nerves, bones or localized blood circulation system caused or aggravated primarily by the performance of work and by other effects of the immediate environment where the work is carried out." They are generally the most common cause of long-term pain and disability. Awkward posture, such as twisting or bending of the trunk can lead to disorders of the back. Cleaners' health concerns stem from a number of working conditions. These vary across context, but can include lack of training, ineffective communication, poor protective clothing and lack of necessary equipment (Zock, 2005). It is evident that if the physical well-being is not taken care of, may also compromise the psychosocial well-being, in short there should be a balance.

Work organization and individual factors may have an impact on the well-being of cleaning employees. Work organization factors include control over pace, time, the facility to take regular work breaks, and the possibility of alternating between tasks, especially if they include repetitive or monotonous work (Hodgins et al., 2016). Work intensity can be measured subjectively, or by self-reported indicators such as tight deadlines, working at high speed or not having enough time to do the job. Work related-stressful situations may also contribute to the physical well-being of cleaners. It is likely that the changes in the body brought about by stress, for example muscle tension, decreases in muscle repair and changes in the pain perception, can contribute to musculoskeletal disorder (Hodgins, et al., 2016). It is believed that unpleasant work environment is directly impacting on the physical well-being of employees.

2.6. The pay gap in cleaning sector

Cleaning is a low paid job and it is being dominated by women. It is also considered to be a job which requires no skill with the workers being underpaid. In most cases, many of these workers are migrants, whose possibilities of getting other job opportunities are limited due to their lack of language skills and contacts, and their immigrant status, and in some cases their

lack of education (Abbasian & Hellgren, 2012). A study conducted in Finland by Ollus (2016) found that the migrant workers have experienced poor working conditions and exploitation from their employers. It was also reported that when these group of workers report about these conditions, their jobs might be on the line or they might be placed in a disadvantageous position as compared to their colleagues who are not complaining. In addition, Peuch (2007), conducted a study on subcontracted cleaners in France, it was found that cleaners are of foreign origin, unskilled and paid extremely low salaries which does not compensate for a job that is not only difficult but often uninteresting. In a South African context, cleaners employed by the government are receiving an equal pay as outlined by the Department of Public Service and Administration remuneration guideline (DPSA intranet, n.d).

2.7. Outsourcing

The most common functions that are outsourced are services such as cleaning and catering, and are often regarded as the non-core function of a certain organization, and are most predominated by women. As a result, inclusion becomes an end in itself and the need to transform institution, organizations and structures is overlooked (Hassim & Gouws, 2000 as cited in Barchiesi, 2019).A practical method to gender concerns centres around the need to recognise and include women in decision making and how outsourcing is affecting them. In effect, the goal becomes the inclusion of women within the patriarchal structures and institutions that have previously excluded them. Post 1994 South Africa has been marked by economic and policy changes that have facilitated non- standard forms of employment and the casualization of labour through part-time work, sub-contracting, temporary or casual employment, home-working, short-term contracts and self-employment (Barchiesi, 2019). Outsourcing has a particularly negative effect on women workers because benefits such as health, training, lower levels of unionisation and maternity leaves are lost, and thus employers' responsibilities towards the social wage and reproduction of labour is dissolved. Typical employment tends to be more insecure; workers are often marginalised and have lower levels of unionisation and protection. Barchiesi (2019) further adds that one of the biggest threats to women's overall position in the labour market is represented by public sector downsizing which means that relatively secure, comparatively better paid jobs are lost by women, thereby worsening their already disadvantaged position.

In most cases the contractors compete for a cleaning tender, and the one who wins becomes an employer to contract cleaners. This has led to downward pressure on wages, pensions and other

benefits, work intensification and casualization, as well as greater job insecurity in the context of reduced trade union power. The recent case that is very relevant to the outsourcing of cleaners is of the City of Johannesburg in South Africa. In what can be described as a watershed moment, the City of Johannesburg has finalized the insourcing of more than 1 500 cleaners who were absorbed in the municipality by September 2019 (City newspaper, 2019). Most of these cleaners who benefitted are women, who used to work for private service providers. They are now fulltime employees of the City of Joburg. The good part about this exercise is that the insourced cleaners will take home at least 50% more in pay, a marked increase from what they used to earn.

It was reported that this has brought joy to hundreds of cleaners who benefitted. Other benefits amongst others included the City's funeral policy and pension. They would also receive their salaries on the 27th of each month like all City employees. The dignity of the contract workers was restored, because the insourcing process is legit and transparent (City newspaper, 2019). It was reported that initially, the outsourced cleaners were earning R3, 000 per month, whereas the City of Johannesburg was paying around R6, 500 per cleaner to the outsourced companies they worked for. It was also reported that the insourced cleaners at the City of Joburg will have a take home salary of more than R4000, which will be more than what they have been earning from the private company. Furthermore, the insourcing estimated to cover 90% of women, this exercise will address the issues of gender equality in the workplace (City newspaper, 2019). Based on the reported information, it is evident that outsourcing has a negative impact on employment practices, and people are longing for job security with benefits.

2.8. Theoretical framework of the study

Social work is fundamentally concerned with both people and interactions with their environments. It involves bringing together theories of the inner worlds and outer worlds in which people live (Connoly & Harms, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the Occupational Social Work Practice Model and Social exclusion theory were used.

2.8.1. The Occupational Social Work Practice Model (OSWPM)

Occupational Social Work Practice model was used to explore the experiences of female cleaning service employees within the department of Public Works in the Pretoria region. This model is relevant since the study is based in the workplace. Four positions were implemented to explore the experiences of female cleaning service employees. The first position is a

restorative intervention and it involves providing a problem-solving service to clients aimed at restoring their problem solving and coping capabilities (Kruger & Du Plessis, 2009). For example, the researcher provided counselling service to one of the participants who was so emotional during the interview and some were referred to the in-house wellness services. The second position is promotive interventions, which is focused on the prevention, education and development (Van Breda & Du Plessis, 2009). The term promotive is used to emphasise the obligation to uplift the best functioning of clients. In case of the female cleaning service employees, the social worker may establish a support group to address or prevent problems. In addition, the social worker may also run pro-active programmes like stress management education.

The third position is work-person interventions which involve a fundamental shift from employee – as – person, to person – as – employee, in which work roles become the focus of social work concern (Van Breda & Du Plessis, 2009). For example, if a female cleaning service employee is experiencing gender discrimination regarding a promotion, the social worker may intervene and play a mediator role. Workplace should be seen as one of the systems where a person function. The fourth position is workplace interventions and it gives preference to see the problem in a bigger picture or the telescopic view (Van Breda & Du Plessis, 2009). This means that the problem will be dealt with in a broader view, with the inclusion of the organization itself. With reference to this position, the social worker should form part of management committee in terms of decision making and policy development process. For example, the researcher is intending to submit the research recommendation to the management, so that it can assist with policy and programme development for the cleaning service employees, as a way of addressing their challenges and workplace experiences.

2.8.2. Social exclusion theory

The concept of social exclusion arose in a specific context in France in the 1970s. It was used to describe the condition of certain groups on the margins of society who were cut off both from regular sources of employment and the income safety nets on the welfare state (Pierson, 2009). In addition, social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four main dimensions; economic, political, social and cultural, and at a different level including individual, household group, community, country and global levels (Taket, 2009). The theory was relevant for the study because literature review has revealed that cleaning services employees are marginalised in the area of

employment, especially women. Cleaners feel excluded in decision making activities; hence they feel invisible. The employees may feel disconnected from other colleagues, or from the organization or from the society at large. Taket (2009, p. 23) indicates that "connected to this is the importance of a shift in view about identity, as constituted rather than determined". In case of female cleaning service employees, they should identify themselves as employees within the organization not as cleaners. Based on the studies conducted it was found that cleaners felt invisible and undervalued. Therefore, the researcher explored more about the workplace experiences of female cleaners.

2.9. Conclusion

In conclusion, it was identified that in most cases the cleaning work is being regarded as a women's job whereas men who are employed in this sector are holding different tittles like being called general workers. In addition it was identified that contract cleaning companies override opportunities for cleaners to be permanently employed, thus killing their career development as a result of cost containment of many companies. The women's leadership is important, firstly because women are under-represented, which goes against the principle of worker control and a representation that actually reflects the composition of membership. The fact that women are under-represented express unequal gender power relations in society and the stereotypes that reinforce women's subordination and male domination. Therefore, promoting women's leadership can contribute in part to challenge such relations and stereotypes. Women leaders can act as advocates for gender equality who can ensure that problems affecting women in the workplace are taken up. Although this should not only be the responsibility of women leaders, they are often important driving forces in the process, and may act as role models. Furthermore, if there are women leaders that come from more marginalised sectors of the economy, they are likely to bring more awareness and focus on their particular organizational challenges.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The research is aimed at understanding the experiences of female cleaning service employees. This research also explored the cleaner's demographics and socio-economic realities and it relied on the use of a qualitative research method. This section discusses how the research was conducted and how the methods used were the most appropriate. It will do this by outlining the research strategy and design, data collection method, the rationale behind the sampling population, method used to analyse data, and lastly ethical considerations.

3.2. Research strategy

Research strategy is a generalised plan for a problem which includes structure, desired solution in terms of objectives of the research and an outline of planned devices necessary to implement the strategy (Singh, 2006). In a research study the strategy is seen as a larger part for development of the research approach. A qualitative research approach was utilised to conduct the study. Runcan (2014), states that qualitative research is an approach based on distinct methodological traditions that explore social and human issues. The researcher used a qualitative research to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and experiences of the female cleaning employees. Furthermore, the researcher regarded qualitative research to be more appropriate to gather more information which addressed the aim of the study. Runcan (2014) further adds that qualitative research involves the use and collection of wide variety of empirical material. In addition, Petro (2014) adds that qualitative research provides the opportunity to explore issues or events and how those experiencing them understand them.

3.3. Research Design

The researcher used case study research strategy design. Yuin (2009) indicates that case study methods allow investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour, organizational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, school performances, international relations and maturation of industries. The study analysis of the report is the female cleaning service employees of the department of Public Works in Pretoria region. Case study research strategy design was

appropriate to the study since the researcher implemented qualitative research. Runcan (2014) further indicate that qualitative research involves the use and collection of wide variety of empirical material-case studies, personal and introspective experience, life story, interviews, observation, historical texts, visual material covering the subject-object interaction, so that common and special moments of an individual's life can be described, as well as their meaning for the individual. A research technique that was used to conduct the study was semi-structured interviews.

3.4. Population, sample and sampling procedures

The population of the study was female cleaning service employees from the department of Public Works in Pretoria region, Pretoria was chosen because it is accessible to the researcher. Daniel (2011) adds that populations are different, and it depends on how easily are they accessible. The accessibility of the population will affect the ability of a researcher to successfully implement a sample design, and should be considered in making sample choices. In this case the population was already identified. The researcher recruited sixteen female cleaning service employees from the department of Public Works, eight of them were between 27-37 years and eight from 38-50 years. A non-probability sampling was employed, with more focus on the purposive sampling. "In non-probability sample, units are deliberately selected to reflect particular features of a group within the sampled population" (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013, p.113). Sampling may be defined as the selection of subset of a population for inclusion in a study (Daniel, 2011). The researcher requested permission from the participants' supervisor to talk to them during their break time, and permission was granted. The sample was chosen based on the participants who were previously employed by a contract cleaning company and the sample size was also determined by accessibility. In selecting participants it is important that they are willing to provide credible information and openly share their stories (Turner, 2010). The researcher met with the cleaners based at one of the buildings, different from where the researcher is based. This was done as a way of introducing the study and recruiting participants. The researcher briefly gave the prospective participants a background of the study and the purpose of the study, during the meeting seven participants volunteered to participate, whereas some were given an opportunity to think about it. The researcher indicated to the prospective participants that she will need at least a maximum of sixteen participants who are between the ages of 27-37 and 38-50. These age categories were chosen to get views and opinions from different people like the youth

employees and the older employees who have been in the cleaning service for some time. Since the researcher did not reach the expected number of the participants, the researcher left her contact details so that those who might be interested can contact her. Furthermore, the researcher indicated to the participants that their participation is voluntarily and if they do not feel like participating, there will be no penalties, and their lack of interest to participate will not be used against them in any way.

3.5. Research Tool

The research tool that was utilised to collect data was the semi-structured interview schedule, designed by the researcher. The main aim and objectives of the study was used as a guide to design interview questions. The tool was used to gather information on past or present experiences of the participants. This was based on a set of questions which were used to guide the conversation between the researcher and the participants. Semi-structured interview is based on a questionnaire with a sequence of questions, asked in the same order and the same way of all subjects of the research, with little flexibility available to the researcher (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The data collection tool was structured in a way that assisted the researcher to gather information regarding the participants' demographic information like, age, and race, number of children, number of dependents, marital status and educational level. Open ended questions were asked as to get the participants' experiences and opinions, this allowed the researcher to probe and gather more information. The first question was used to put the participants at ease by telling the researcher about their cleaning work experience, previous and presently and also when did they join the department.

3.6. Pilot of the research tool

In order to identify problems and to reduce the possibility of errors, the researcher piloted the interview schedule on two female cleaning service employees who were not part of the final study, this was done a month before the final study. The data was analysed as to check the usefulness of the tool. This was also done to check if the tool is clear and not ambiguous. Pilot testing is an invaluable component of the survey, affording researcher a valuable opportunity for reflection and revision of their project before the costs of errors begin to multiply later on (Ruel, Wagner & Gillespie, 2015). During the piloting of the tool no challenges were faced, everything went smoothly, it appeared that the questionnaire is straight forward and it does not need any changes. In addition, the pilot interviews for the two participants who were not part

of the study, took between forty five minutes to an hour. The researcher was able to make follow up questions and to probe more as to gather sufficient information.

3.7. Methods of data collection

The method that was used to collect data was face to face interviews, and the participants consented in writing to the use of a tape recorder during the interviews. Each interview with the participants took between thirty minutes to an hour depending on the level of participants' openness. Face to face interview method has several advantages (Ang, 2014). Firstly, the researcher has ample control over the process of data collection. Secondly, the process is usually comprehensive and response immediate. There is a less chance of issues related to missing data and low response rate. Thirdly, the method also allows the exploration of motives and feelings, which are difficult to capture using other data collection methods. In particular, characteristics of participants can often be assessed, for example, tone of voice and facial expression may provide additional cues to the verbal response. During the interview the researcher was able to observe and read the non-verbal signs and emotions of the participants.

To prepare for the interviews the researcher followed McNamara's eight principles (2009) as outlined by Turner (2010). The researcher compiled a list of prospective participants with their contact numbers. The researcher had individually contacted them to set up an appointment for the interview.

- *Choose a setting with little distraction*

In planning for the interviews some participants preferred to be interviewed in their change rooms, some at the researcher's office. Out of sixteen participants, nine were interviewed in their change rooms and the other seven preferred to be interviewed at the researcher's office because they were sharing change rooms with other cleaners. All the rooms utilised for the interviews offered privacy. There were no outside noise or disturbances, these allowed the recordings to be audio-able and it also gave the participants an opportunity to share their experiences without the fear of being overheard by others.

- *Explain the purpose of the interview*

The researcher introduced herself and the name of the qualification she is pursuing. She further explained the purpose of the study by reading out the researcher's information sheet (Annexure

A) which was handed out to the participants for them to keep, and also a copy of a permission letter acquired from the department to conduct the study was given to the participants.

- *Address terms of confidentiality*

The researcher indicated to the participants that their information will be kept confidential and the only person who will have access to it, will be her research supervisor from the university. The participants were assured that their names and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report.

- *Explain the format of the interview*

To starts with the interview process the researcher indicated to the participants that their participation is voluntary and refusal to participate will not be held against them in any way, and if they agree to participate they will have to sign a consent form (Annexure B). Furthermore the researcher explained to the participants that their interview will be tape-recorded and if they agree to be recorded they will also have to sign a consent form for audio taping (Annexure C). The researcher further indicated to the participants that the tapes and interview schedules will be kept in a locked cabinet for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. The interview was structured in a way that allowed the researcher to know the participants, by asking them about their demographics, like age, marital status, educational level, province of origin, number of dependents and race

- *Indicate how long the interview usually takes*

The researcher indicated to the participants that the interview sessions might take between thirty minutes to an hour, and they may withdraw from the study at any time if they feel uncomfortable with answering.

- *Tell them how to get in touch with you later if they want to*

The researcher provided the participants with an information sheet which contained her contact details as well as of her research supervisor. In addition, it was indicated to the participants that should they feel distressed because of any of the questions asked, a counselling or debriefing session will be made available to them for free through the Department of Public Works Employee Health and Wellness unit.

- *Ask them if they have any questions before you both get started with the interview*

The participants were given an opportunity to ask questions before the interview process began. Majority of the participants did not have many questions to ask as the information sheet covered many issues regarding the purpose of the study.

- *Don't count on your memory to recall their answers*

The researcher took short hand-written notes during the interviews as a way of helping her to identify key words used by the participants. The voice recorder was also used to capture the interviews, this method was useful as it allowed the researcher to flow with the interview without any fear of losing important information, and it also assisted during data analysis.

3.8. Methods of data analysis

Thematic analysis approach was implemented. In qualitative research data analysis is perceived as the central step. Qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explain dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is presented in it (Flick, 2013). Babbie (2011, p.378) further adds that "qualitative data analysis is a non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering the underlying meanings and patterns of relationship." Guest, MacQueen & Namey, (2011) further indicate that thematic analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within data. A six step thematic data analysis was implemented. Firstly, the researcher familiarised herself with the data. In this step the researcher transcribed and translated data.

Furthermore, in the process of data analysis the researcher familiarised herself with the depth of the data content. During this stage the researcher transferred the recorded data into written form. Secondly, after the researcher familiarised herself with the data, primary codes were generated. Interesting features of the data were coded in a systematic fashion across the entire data, each data relevant to the code was collated. Thirdly, after all the data have been coded, the researcher collated codes into potential themes, and gathered all the data relevant to each potential theme. Fourthly, the researcher checked if the themes work in relation to the coded extract, and checked against the entire data set. After all these were done the researcher gradually distilled and displayed a thematic map of analysis.

The researcher continued with the analysis to refine the specifics of each theme. This was done until each theme was clear, coherent and convincing. This enabled the researcher to generate an overall story that the analysis tells. During this step the researcher identified and described each theme, giving each one an appropriate name. The final step was to produce the report, which was the final opportunity for analysis. During the interviews the researched realised that she is a very active part of the analysis process, data interpretations and to generate the meaning of the themes that popped up during the process. The participants interpreted their experiences in line with the questions posed to them, then the researcher had to reflect back to them as a way of generating a mutual interpretation of their experiences.

3.9. Trustworthiness

It is important to note that for the study to be meaningful and significant in the generation of knowledge, it has to be trustworthy (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). This simply means that the study should be carried in a fair and ethical manner. Trustworthiness in qualitative studies refers to the validity and reliability of the study (Shenton, 2004). The researcher has introduced herself upfront to the participants as a way of building trust with them. The researcher can indicate that the participants perceived her as trustworthy because they were able to open up during interviews. The researcher has to demonstrate, through data analysis and interpretation, that the findings reflect the thoughts, feelings and the opinions of the research participants (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). The researcher have to consider the quality of information gathered as a way of ensuring trustworthiness of the study Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Tappen, 2015). Quality is as essential to qualitative research as it is to quantitative research. Validity and reliability of the study will be discussed below.

3.9.1. Validity

Validity is the true value of a research study, and therefore a central concern for all researchers (Benz, Ridenour & Newman, 2008). Validity has traditionally meant an estimate of the extent to which the data measure what is intended to be measured. Validity of the study will be achieved when the researcher requests one of her fellow researchers to do peer debriefing in order to ensure validity. Peer briefing involves locating a person who reviews (peer reviewer) and asks questions about the qualitative study so that the account will resonate with other people other than the researcher (Creswell, 2014). The researcher requested one of her colleagues who has an experience in social science research and completed her postgraduate

studies to peer review the study, views and interpretations of the data. Before the process can begin, the reviewer was firstly familiarised with the study and its procedures to ensure that the review would be objective. The peer reviewer was provided with the relevant research report material. The process assisted with accuracy of the views of the participants. The researcher also performed member checking after each and every interview conducted as a way of establishing credibility and also to allow participants to make some corrections if needed. Polit and Beck (2009) state that member checking is particularly an important technique for establishing the credibility of qualitative data. In the current study, the researchers provided feedback to the participants about emerging interpretations and obtained participants' reactions at the end of each interview, thus summarising the data gathered and also allowed the participants to correct errors or challenge interpretations. In order to check whether researcher's interpretations are good representation of what participants have said, it is important to give the participants a chance to validate them (Tappen, 2015). The audio recorder was also useful in this regard, as the research was able to play the recorded interviews several times to ensure accurate capturing of inputs. The researcher requested participants to read the findings on the final report in order for them to validate that the findings are correct or accurate. This made the job of the researcher easier as all the participants have formal education, as indicated in the demographics section in Chapter 4.

3.9.2. Reliability

Reliability refers to the dependability of a measurement instrument that is the extent to which the instrument yield the same results on repeated trails (Blanche, Durrheim, Desmond & Painter, 2008).The researcher needed to determine reliability by doing cross-checks by requesting the peer reviewer to cross check the codes used in the study by reverting back to the data that was transcribed to see if there are no errors. Transcripts need to be checked to make sure that they do not contain obvious mistakes made during transcriptions (Gibbs, 2007 as cited by Creswell, 2014).

3.10. Ethical considerations

The philosophical basis of research ethics is ultimately premised on the fact that the research requires that researchers locate participants, who to service the research objectives and are willing to share information about themselves, information that is often of a highly personal and intimate nature (Haverkamp, 2005). Since the research involved employees, the researcher

deemed it necessary to take professional ethical issues into consideration. Furthermore, the rights of the participants were taken into consideration as prescribed by the Departmental Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-medical) which governs social research at the University of Witwatersrand. The researcher applied for ethical clearance, which was granted by the University of Witwatersrand. Ethical considerations were included from conception of the study, and will also be carried out until the publication of the research findings. The researcher had to protect the rights of the research participants' as well as to adhere to research standards of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Wiles (2012) concurs that ethics is the branch of philosophy which addresses questions about morality. The researcher allowed the participants to participate voluntarily with an informed consent. The below aspects were considered when conducting the study.

3.10.1. Informed consent

Informed consent rests on the principle of respect for autonomy; that is the ability to make self-governed choices regarding research participation that reflect one's beliefs and values (Lomelino, 2015). Informed consent means that participants need to be made aware of reasonably foreseeable factors that may be expected to influence their willingness to participate such as potential risks, discomfort or adverse effects (Haverkamp, 2005). The researcher ensured that each participant got all the information about the research study prior the collection of data. The information shared with the participants, included; the researcher's information sheet and a permission letter from the department to conduct the study, the hard copies were handed to the participants. Subsequently the researcher asked the participants' consent to participate, to be tape-recorded and to sign the participant's information sheet, the participants were also requested to sign the consent forms as well. The issue of confidentiality was addressed by the researcher. The researcher was always willing to clarify any concerns participants may have before signing the consent form. The researcher further indicated to the participants that the consent forms will be stored in a locked cupboard and the only person who will have access to them was the research supervisor at the university. It was also made clear to the participants that the information collected by the researcher will not be used against them in any way. In addition, the researcher indicated to the participants that their participation in the research project was voluntary. Informed consent is rooted on an individual's personal rights to agree (or not) to participate in a research study and fully understand the research process and consequences (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012). Before the researcher could

start with the interviews, she indicated to the participants that since their participation was voluntary, they had a right to withdraw at any time during the process if they wished to do so. The researcher also indicated to the participants that they could choose not to have their responses included in the study even after they completed their interviews. Informed consent was important due to the fact that participants were willing to take part in the study

3.10.2. Confidentiality and anonymity

Respondents were advised not to disclose their names or identity. Wood, Kerr and Ross – Kerr (2010) state that a researcher may find him/herself in the position to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity to his/her subjects before they sign a consent form. Confidentiality implies that one will keep all the records closed and that only persons involved in the research will have access to them, and anonymity means that the researcher not publish the names and addresses of his/her data sources, and that he/she will make every attempt to group data so that personal characteristics will not become known (Wood, Kerr & Ross - Kerr, 2010). In light of the participants 'vulnerability trustworthiness is important (Haverkamp, 2005). During the beginning of each interview the researcher always emphasised to the participants that since she is a registered social worker she is bound by the professional ethics to maintain the issue of confidentiality, and also the contact details of the ethics committee member from the university were also shared on the researcher's information sheet which was retained by the participants. The researcher assured participants that their names and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report. Since their participation was voluntary they were advised that if they feel uncomfortable, they can withdraw from the study without being disadvantaged in any way, and there were no foreseeable benefits or particular risks associated with their participation in the study. The researcher also emphasised to the participants that any information that may identify them, will be removed from the interview transcript. The copies of their interview transcripts will be stored permanently in a locked cupboard. Furthermore, they were told that the researcher will use pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Replacing real names with pseudonyms is a standard practice in qualitative research (Paulus, Lester & Dempster, 2013). To ensure the participants' anonymity, they were not asked for their names or staff numbers. The respondents were also asked to sign consent forms and informed of their right to refuse to answer if they felt that certain questions are too personal. They were further informed that they have the option of

receiving a copy of the final findings of the research to ensure their statements were not misused.

3.10.3. Nonmaleficence and justice

The principle of non-maleficence states that we ought to act in ways that do not cause harm or injury to others (Carter & Lubinsky, 2015). In addition, the principle implies that we should not expose others to unnecessary risk. This includes not inflicting intentional harm and avoiding the risk of harming others. This philosophical principle supplements the autonomy principle and requires the researcher to ensure that no harm befalls research participants as a direct or indirect consequence of the research (Heppner, Wampold & Kivlighan, 2007). The researcher created a conducive environment, whereby participants were free to open up during the interviews. Since the study was about the workplace experiences, the researcher envisaged that there might be a need for counselling as some participants might be emotional when sharing their experiences; therefore the information sheet provided to the participants indicated two names with contact details of the internal Employee Health and Wellness practitioners whom they can contact if they might need counselling or debriefing as a result of the research interviews conducted. The researcher indicated that the wellness practitioners are professionals who are registered with South African Council for Social Services Profession, and their services are free to all departmental employees. Furthermore since the researcher is a registered social worker, she provided counselling to one of the participants who indicated to be needing it after an interview session. In addition, the principle of justice is linked to fairness, equality and avoiding the exploitation of participants (Orb, Elsenhauer & Wynaden, 2000). The researcher treated all the participants equally. It is important to recognise the vulnerability of the participants as well as their contributions to the study (Orb et al., 2000).

3.11. Limitations of the research strategy, design and methodology

The researcher interviewed the female cleaning service employees within the department of Public Works in Pretoria region. The researcher did not encounter challenges or problems during the interviews as the participants were cooperative. All participants obtained high school education and some have tertiary qualifications; therefore, it was easy to conduct interviews in English, even though some participants were replying to the asked questions by mixing English with, their home languages, like Setswana. In addition, there were few incidents where the researcher had to simplify some English words, which was not seen as a limitation.

3.12. Conclusion

This chapter gave a framework used to conduct the research. The research design and strategy were described as well as the methodology used. Sampling features, research instrumentation and methods of data collection and analysis were highlighted. Ethical considerations were emphasised. The research ethics and professional ethics were adhered to when conducting the study. There were no major difficulties encountered during the process; only two participants could not be reached on their mobile phones as a result of network issues, and this was later resolved. The following chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the data that was collected through the semi-structured interviews in relation to the research questions and literature review.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the data that was collected from sixteen participants who were part of the study. In analysing the data, the themes that will be discussed are responding to the objectives of the study. The chapter commences with demographic information of the participants, and later on the results from the data collected. The researcher used thematic analysis method to analyse data gathered from the interviews. The themes captured from data analysis are; job security; health, safety and physical well-being; feeling invisible, alienation and undervalued; and lack of resources. Below is the demographic information of the participants, and after that the results of the study will be presented.

4.2. Demographic data of the participants

The participants were sixteen African Black females employed as cleaners at the Department of Public Works. The participants' number was very small in comparison to the female cleaners employed by the Department of Public Workers in Pretoria, however the finding was consistent with the gender classification of the department's cleaners. The Pretoria region has employed 189 cleaning staff which comprises of 46 males and 143 females (DPWI establishment report, 2019). It is evident that cleaning work is also dominated by employees from other small neighbouring provinces as per the study findings. These workers flock from their provinces of origin and move to the cities to seek better work opportunities and to provide for their families. Seven participants were from Limpopo, three are from North West and six are from Gauteng.

Six of the participants are married, nine are single and one is divorced. It is evident that women bear the brunt of taking care of the children including the extended family members, this was revealed on the data analysed whereby seven of the participants have 7-8 dependents, four participants have 1-2 dependents and five participants have 3-4 four dependents.

All the participants have a formal education, twelve of the participants have high school level of education and four of them have tertiary education. The study found out that the rate of unemployment in South Africa has resulted in the four participants with tertiary qualifications taking any available permanent job that is the reason they ended up taking cleaning job, which

is not in line with their qualifications. By the official count, 6.7 million people are unemployed in South Africa, which is 29% of people who could be working (Smit, 2019).

Table 1: Profile of participants

Demographic factor	**Sub – category**	**No.**
Age of Participants	25-37 38-50	8 8
Race	Black	16
Marital status	Married Single Divorced	6 9 1
Highest level of education	High school Tertiary (2 Degrees, 1 Certificate and 1 diploma)	12 4
Province of origin	Limpopo North West Gauteng	7 3 6
Number of dependents	1-2 3-4 7-8	4 5 7

4.3. Job security

Employment is said to satisfy certain needs like, earning an income, developing social contracts, being able to structure one's time, personal and social growth (De Witte, 2005). Unemployment led to some participants with tertiary education to end up taking any available permanent job as security. Based on the information gathered from the participants, it is clear that job security is the main driver of people relocating from rural areas to urban areas, as to enable them to overcome the family circumstances back at home. In most contemporary societies, a job holds the key to social integration, social participation and recognition (De Witte, 2005). Participants shared how they were so desperate to get a permanent jobs irrespective of the tittle[1].

> *I started cleaning work in 2016 as a first employment in government. Initially I worked for a private cleaning company and the contract ended with the department that they were contracted to. Fortunately I was studying part-time. After I finished my studies I was employed by a certain travelling company, the contract ended as well and I was so frustrated. I was so desperate for a permanent employment. I am struggling to get a permanent job related to my qualification (Degree). I had to look for job security that's the reason I took the cleaning job*[1].

From a social work point of view, family as a system is compromised in terms of preservation as a result of mothers who left their partners and children back in the rural areas, in most cases married women working in different cities apart from their husbands in the name of job security and also to take care of the family financially. In Black African culture if one is employed, and one's siblings and kids are not working, the working part automatically becomes the provider[2].

> *I do not have kids of my own, but I am responsible of taking care of my younger sister who is unemployed and having two kids. My younger brother is still in high school. I am providing for him as well, as my parents are not working. I have to send money home every month, so that they could be able to buy groceries and electricity back home and I also have to pay rent for myself this side. This was difficult when I was on contract, I was happy when I got a permanent post here, I know that in government my job is secure*[2].

It is evident that even though some participants got the permanent job as a security it does not cater for all their needs[2]. The nature of the employment situation by these workers means that employment does not sufficiently meet most of their needs (De Witte, 2005). It is further evident that participants perceive being employed by the government as secure.

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[1]*Participant 1,*[2]*Participant 2*

> *It was only in 2016 when I got permanent employment in the department. When you are working for a private company there are no benefits, you can't even make financial plans, I was happy to be employed permanently as I wanted security. Sometimes there is no time-off during public holidays in private, unlike here in government*[10].

All of the participants reported to previously not having a secure job, and it was difficult for them to plan for future. This is as a result of the changing labour market which is characterised by outsourcing and precarious employment. Precarious employment refers to work that is uncertain and unpredictable; work that increases perceived job insecurity (Lambert & Webster, 2010). In addition, the South African labour market is oversaturated with unemployed job seekers. This is directly related to the labour market, the high level of unemployment in South Africa increases job insecurity (Lambert & Webster, 2010). Workers desperate for employment are less powerful to affect their working conditions and are likely to tolerate poorer working conditions. Indeed unemployment to people who have obtained tertiary education has led people to be in search of secure jobs, as long they can be on the payroll system[4.]

> *"I am having a tertiary qualification and since there is no employment related to my diploma. I was working as a cleaner on contract basis for a certain company. The contract ended, I was so frustrated, because I have to provide for my kids. The only thing that I wanted was a permanent job. When I heard that there is an opening at the government department I was so happy, even though it was a cleaning job, which is not related to my qualification*[4]*".*

> *"If I can tell you the salary and benefits here are better as compared to working for private. If you are working on a contract you can't make any plans for the family, I used to wake up very early and work for long hours, at least here the working hours are better*[5]*."*

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[10]*Participant 3,* [5]*Participant 7,* [4]*Participant 11*

Job insecurity and increased occupational stress are also related to privatisation (Prizzia, 2005). Privatised workers do the same job as public sector workers, but for lower wages and under worse conditions (Zuberi & Ptashnick, 2011). Job insecurity is a form of stress that involves the experience of a threat and causes a great deal for uncertainty regarding whether individuals get to keep their jobs in future (Dachapalli & Parumasur, 2012).

4.4. Health, safety and physical/psychosocial well-being

When asked about health and safety training, all participants identified not having attended a formal training. Through probing, it was clear that only five out of sixteen cleaners had only attended a workshop on deep cleaning which does not cover the issue of health and safety. All the participants in this study described health and safety as their main concern when performing their duties. The participants further reported that organisational factors such as time pressures and lack of control over the participants' work as well as high work overload increases the cleaners' musculoskeletal problems[6] .

> *I can't wait to take early retirement because of the situation I find myself in. The supervisors here can't accommodate my health conditions caused by the nature of the job I do, and I had to move to another section without their permission because of the work load I find myself in. Since 2015 my conditioned worsened, the doctor wrote a medical report so that I can get a light duty, but I didn't get any help. The health condition worsened. I just feel like I do not have control over this situation at work[6].*

These participants were powerless in terms of deciding about their daily activities as they do routine work. Since these participants reported that they did not have the ability to influence their work schedules, this contributed to the decrease in their physical well-being and increase the risks of psychological illnesses. It is undeniable that the mental health of these workers was clearly compromised by the nature of their job[7].

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[6]*Participant 6,* [8] *Participant 16,* [7] *Participant 3*

> *Doing the same thing every day is boring, I wish there were some trainings or workshops that I can attend, or something to keep myself busy. I sometimes finish my tasks even before 12h00, I will just sit here in my change room, and there is nothing that I can do. This gives me stress sometimes, I will go for window shopping around town, sometimes spending money that I do not have*[7].

There are also repetitive activities being done, almost every day. It is reported that cleaners perform repetitive work, which is damaging as it involves the same joints and muscles being used over and over again (Hodgins et al., 2016). During the interviews with the participants, it was evident that psychosocial perils associated with the cleaning occupation also curtail from the fact that they earn low salaries yet they are expected to provide for their large families back at home and provide for themselves in the cities. Cleaning occupation is important, physically demanding, labour intensive work, conducted by millions world-wide (Goonetilleke & Karwowski, 2016).

The physical and psychosocial hazards that form part of everyday working life for these cleaners were very clear. Education on health and safety is therefore important. It seemed that the personal well-being of cleaners was not taken care of by the employer. These cleaners were not informed about how to prevent or deal with the physical concerns like back pain or musculoskeletal disorder as a result of their job. Nine of the interviews took place in cleaners' change rooms and it was through this arrangement that the researcher recognized conditions of living space at work as an important aspect of health and safety. In these rooms, cleaners; eat, rest and change. Some of the spaces served as kitchens and some appeared to be having only basins and some did not even have a window. Some were store rooms that have been turned into change rooms by the cleaners themselves. They varied in size and the availability of utilities like chairs, tables, heaters and lockers. From the outside, some of the rooms can look like normal office, but inside they have been transformed into cleaners' change rooms. The findings of this study are in line with (EHRC, 2014) which found out that cleaners had nowhere to take a break. Furthermore, while conducting the interviews it was evident that these workers' health was not being taken into consideration because some were putting their lives at risk by sharing their change rooms with some of the chemicals they use for cleaning bathrooms[8].

> *You can also see for yourself, we are sharing our change rooms with the tools, buckets, chemicals and detergents that we are using. We do not have a storeroom; we sit, eat and take our breaks where we store our equipment. The smell of the chemicals is not good for our health. I have now developed some sinus, because of using a mop and a broom to clean the carpets*[8].

> *Last time I received a chemical that has expired, I couldn't use it, and I threw it away. This is a health risk to us as cleaners*[13].

In terms of cleaning chemicals, others once received expired chemicals from the supervisor[13]. Some did not have storage to put their cleaning tools, trolleys and chemicals; they put them in their change rooms which were also used as their 'offices'. In addition, this pose as a health hazards to the cleaners. Furthermore, majority of these cleaners reported not having appropriate protective clothing. In addition, they were also expected to put warning signs when the floors are wet yet they did not have the warning signs. The cleaners had to go as far as taking their hard-earned salary to buy some cleaning materials for themselves so that they could be able to execute their duties[9].

> *I buy protective gloves for myself, the ones provided is not good quality, because if my hands come in contact with water, my health condition becomes worse. I even bought dusting cloths for myself because we do not get material on regular basis as expected. The last time we received material was when we received new mops early this year*[9].

It was evident during the interaction with the participants that their health and safety is not taken into consideration. Some have even developed back pains as a result of the equipment they are using. One of the participants mentioned that there is a limited number of vacuum machines; therefore they are improvising by using a wet mop and a broom to clean the office carpets, even though it is not good for her health[8].

It was also reported that most of the people that they are cleaning for are always complaining about the dust in their offices. Three of the participants have reported that they have developed arthritis and back pains. Musculoskeletal disorder creates considerable pain and discomfort and may escalate into serious conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis or osteoporosis (Hodgins, Fleming & Griffiths, 2016). Furthermore, Hodgins et al., (2016) add that cleaners

experience high levels of back, shoulder, elbow and hand problems. Cleaning is one of the most injury prone occupations (Herod &Aguiar, 2006). Stepladders and wet floors increase the risk of accidents; therefore, it is always important for the cleaning staff to put some signage as a warning to other people, yet in this case the cleaners reported to not have the necessary equipment.

Since the participants have reported not receiving any training in terms of health and safety measures, some were using the knowledge they have gained from their previous employers. Some were just relying on common or general knowledge. In every organization, for employees to perform effectively training or education should be provided. Furthermore, all of the participants have never attended any formal training provided by the department. Out of sixteen participants, only five indicated that they only attended a workshop on deep cleaning which happened many years ago[8].

> *I have grade 12 and I have not yet received any training here in the department. Since I joined the department, nothing has happened. I once registered my name to attend computer training and it never happened, at least with some of our male colleagues it better. After they have performed their job, they can assist other units by performing the duties of a driver or a messenger. I think with us ladies it should also happen, cleaning men and women should be treated equally[8].*

There is a need of gender equality among male and female cleaners and equal distribution of duties[8]. In addition, based on the above information, it is evident that these group of cleaners are in need of training or development. The government has introduced funding for skills development to address the issue of training as per the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 (SDA). The aim of the Act is to develop both national sector-specific strategies for advancing the skills of the South African workforce and improving productivity within workplaces (Hammond, 2011).

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[8]Participant 18, [9]Participant 9, [15] Participant 14

4.5. Feeling invisible, alienated and undervalued

Cleaning work is dominated by employees with earning low wages. In this case, cleaners work harder than any other person in the organization. During the interviews the majority of participants in this study described the feeling of being undervalued and alienated. Some also expressed how some of the people that they are clean for do not value their efforts. Unfair treatment from some of the supervisors was registered by participants during data collection, and this makes the cleaners feel alienated. The reality is that alienation does not rise from the fact that these cleaners do not utilise their skills, rather it is because they do not have the powers to confront their situations. Furthermore, they are treated as not being the core function of the organization which makes them to be voiceless. While probing, it appeared that there is a belief from other employees that these workers have limited ability in carrying out other duties other than cleaning. There is a lack of recognition of skills and capacity that these workers might have. How these cleaners are treated and what they are given in return for their labour is alienating. It is evident that majority of the cleaners felt that they do not feel like they are part of the organization and they feel that they are invisible employees and their job is being undervalued[15].

> *Sometimes you will go extra mile, the next thing the supervisor will tell you that you did not do anything, that's very demoralising. I once felt that my efforts are being undervalued. Again, I was once mistreated by one lady that I was cleaning for, while I was pregnant, she would want me to bend and dust beneath her table. Sometimes I just tell myself that I am a cleaner and it ends there, because it is like we do not exist, no one cares about what is happening to us, we are on our own as cleaners*[15].

It was evident that the cleaners were overwhelmed by the feeling of being powerless and being separated from one's group or society, hence they work or perform their duties in isolation. Alienation is a more specific concept than just general discontent. It is the boredom and meaningless of routine and repetitive work that is controlled, overspecialized and under skilled. The concept of alienation was first developed by Karl Marx, who believed that in a capitalist society, workers would always feel alienated because they do not control their labour. Moreover, the value of the goods the workers produce is always greater than the amount workers are paid, so the workers are estranged from the profits of their labour (Andersen & Taylor, 2007). The descriptions made by the majority of the participants are in

line with Chapter two (literature review), which indicates that cleaners are isolated individuals who not only go unrecognized by other staff but also by their fellow cleaners who ignores the fact that cleaning staff in the neoliberal workplace are obsessively monitored (Peeren, 2014). Winant (2018) concurs that cleaners are particularly invisible, and the time in which they become visible is when they are somehow at fault. With the rise of atomization, feelings of alienation and dissatisfaction have increased, but any kind of work can be alienated if workers view their tasks as meaningless and out of their control. Alienation is also exacerbated by worker having little control over the work environment when they are isolated from other workers, experience little group cooperation or interaction at work, are dissatisfied with low pay and low status, and find stagnancy in the job market (Andersen & Taylor, 2007).

Feeling valued at work is critical to employee well-being and performance. The findings of this study are in line with the previous survey of the US workforce, where half of all employees indicated they did not feel valued and that they intended to look for another job (Burke & Page, 2017). Additionally, the survey results revealed that employees who felt valued were more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction and motivation compared to those who did not feel valued by their employers. A variety of factors were linked to feeling undervalued at work including the perception of opportunities for involvement in decision making and satisfaction with opportunities for growth and development (Burke & Page, 2017).

Furthermore, this study found out that the way the working times that have been designed for these workers contributes to the fact that they feel isolated. They start work before anyone arrives in the building. All the participants indicated that they started work at 06h00 and knock off at 14h00, Monday to Friday. Zock (2005) states that cleaners also usually had working hours that differ from standard working hours which increase their risk of harassment and excludes them from social activities It was evident that some of these workers kept themselves busy after they have performed their cleaning duties; some had to do extra job such as preparing for meetings and washing the dishes, filing or typing which is not part of their job descriptions. These extra duties were used as a way of getting rid of the feeling of alienation while we are still at the issue of feeling alienated and invisible, some participants felt that they are being discriminated as a results of their age[12].

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[12]*Participant 13,* [6]*Participant 6,* [7]*Participant 3,* [15] *Participant 14*

My problem is with these newly appointed cleaners who are still young. Hey! They are very lazy, the only thing that they know is to talk too much. I have been here for some time but, you can't tell them anything. One day I tried to confront some of them and they just told me that I am old, I just need to go on pension[12].

The only challenge that I am having is these young ones, I mean the new comers! (Pulling face). They are not cooperative to us the older ones who have been in this cleaning field. I prefer doing things alone and staying in my change room alone. These kids they think they know better than us who have been here for many years[6].

In the work environment, intergenerational mix of employees is important because younger employees need older employees or vice versa. This can be done as a way of sharing skills and knowledge and also to uphold the issue of generational diversity in the workplace. Kaplan, Sanchez and Hoffman (2016, p.150) argue that "typically, we live in a multi-generational communities and workplaces; we routinely come into people belonging to different generations." The older workers should be regarded as an institutional memory based on the mentioned statements by the participants, it looked like the young employees do not want to inherit the workplace knowledge from the older workers.

It is evident that the cleaners wanted to be recognised and treated like other employees within the organization. Broken channels of communication was identified and this was as a result of limited access to work emails and landlines like other employees of the department. They further indicated that sometimes they are not informed about what is happening within the organization, therefore they feel isolated and undervalued. All this information confirms literature; that cleaners are the hidden workforce. They sometimes get information from the corridors. They sometimes get shocked that there is an event happening in the building organised for all employees, without being informed by anyone[7].

"Since we do not have access to emails it is so difficult to be on the loop with the things happening within the organization, I think it will be better if they can create a space for a computer lab for people who do not have offices, like us the cleaners. Sometimes you will be surprised

to see a crowd at the main hall, only to find that it is an event for all the employees, whereas information was not communicated to us[7]".

Communication is no longer the simple transmission of message, it is a force for change, and it is a powerful impactful force that resonates throughout our working lives (Turner, 2003). Effective communication should be seen as a precursor to effective performance. The necessity to get communication right should be considered a critical success factor for the organization. It has become harder, though, because of changes in the world of work over the past few years. This means that employees are no longer locked-in lifer subject to command and control management. They are mobile, they are informed and they are less likely to put up with superficial communications claptrap. They will demand to know what's going on, where the organization is heading and what role they have in it (Turner, 2003)

4.6. Lack of resources

Majority of the participants reported not having proper uniform to perform their duties. While conducting the interviews with these participants, few appeared to be wearing worn out uniform which they said it was given to them some few years back, some were wearing their own clothes. It was also reported that protective masks to cover their nose were only available for people who work overtime on weekends some indicated that they brought their old clothes from home so that they could use them while cleaning. Majority raised the concern of not having proper equipment to clean the carpet like vacuum machines. It was reported that they had to book a vacuum cleaner in advance if they needed to use it. This arrangement posed a problem towards the people that they are cleaning for, as they want their offices to be vacuumed. These employees ended up resorting to cleaning the carpets using a wet mop or a broom, and some reported that this exercise was affecting their health[13]. In addition, lack of proper resources has led to some participants buying materials for themselves[2.]

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[7]Participant 3, [13]Participant 4, [2]Participant 2,

[13]Participant 4, [9]Participant 9, [11]Participant 12

"The vacuum cleaners are not enough here. Imagine cleaning a carpet using a wet mop and people are complaining, they want their offices to be vacuumed. I have developed a very terrible backache as a result of the mop[13]".

"We are not provided with safety boots as we are supposed to have them. I have never received work uniform since I started working here. I bought these boots myself, because the passages are sometimes slippery and I do not want to fall when I'm cleaning them[2]".

There are no equipment to carry out the job. Imagine cleaning a carpet using a mop because there is no vacuum cleaner provided. When I normally get home my back is so painful, as a result of bending. This is not good at all and when you report to the supervisors they will tell you that there is nothing they can do, because they have few vacuum cleaners[9].

These change rooms were also used for their lunch breaks. They reported sharing the change rooms with other colleagues and the space was not enough, as some rooms are designed to be occupied by one or two people, and sometimes it's difficult to rest or eat[11].

"In the morning when I arrive I start cleaning the toilets, that's before employees can arrive. I then, wait for the office based employees to arrive so that I can clean their offices, since I do not have a change room, there is a chair that I sit on by the passage, unless some of the cleaners are willing to accommodate me in their change rooms, which is not happening every day. After completion of my tasks is ether I am loitering around the building or go out for window shopping. One lady that I am cleaning for once asked me to use their printing room, but I felt like I will be disturbing them when they want to use the printer[11]".

The equipment supplied to the workers has to be both appropriate for the task and adapted to the workers. It must make the work easy and safe to perform although it can happen that there is a trade-off between comfort and safety. Equipment includes personal protective equipment,

tools, devices and screens (Hodgins et al., 2016). It is quite interesting that the issue of lack of resources was linked to lack of communication between the supervisors and the cleaners. Interpersonal communication sustains work relationships, whether in an entry level position or function as CEO, work related activities depend on how well people negotiate the roles and rules of the environment (Gamble & Gamble, 2019). How well we communicate with others at work can make the difference between career success and failure. In fact, it is hard to imagine any work-related activity or function that does not depend on some form of interpersonal communication (Gamble & Gamble, 2019). Whether we are concerned with management-employee relations, conflict resolution, decision making, problem solving, or leadership, good interpersonal skills are necessary (Gamble & Gamble, 2019).

4.7. Conclusion

The cleaning sector is one of the fastest growing industries in the world, although there is a considerable amount of job dissatisfaction within the sector. It is one of the physically demanding job, with working hours structured to meet the needs of the organization. Cleaners' work experiences are likely to be shaped by the treatment they receive within the organizations they are employed in. It is evident that poverty contributed to cleaners in this study to relocate from one place to the other as a way of providing for their families. Also, the cleaners were able to endure whatever treatment coming their way because they needed job security and benefits. The data analysis revealed that cleaning service employees need to be valued, need support and effective communication from their managers/supervisors. It was also found out that cleaning service has evolved and it is no longer a domestic activity performed by illiterate women; most of the cleaners were informed and some had formal tertiary education. It also became clear that cleaners face various forms of control and exploitation because they lack power and control. Therefore, emotional well-being of the cleaners need to be taken into consideration. The following and final chapter provides a summary of the findings, conclusion and research recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of findings. Conclusion and recommendations for the future study will also be addressed. The data and the themes presented in this study confirmed the literature.

5.2. Summary of the findings

The women in this study felt that they were being alienated. This feeling led them to do their work out of necessity and in order to provide for their families. It was also found out that cleaning is characterised as a low- skill occupation, it has become obvious that this is not the case, cleaners actually perform their duties under unconducive environment. It was clear that alienation may not arise from the fact that these workers do not utilise their skills, but rather from the belief that their work requires limited ability without any reward. The findings indicated that there is lack of recognition of the skills possessed by the cleaners. The manner in which these cleaners were being treated and what they received in return of their labour, in relation to their low salaries is alienating. Since they did not have control over the end results of their labour, cleaners took pride in the clean spaces they produce, but they are unable to control what happens to them. This is in line with another experience faced by these cleaners that while they lack control of their product, they are the ones to be reprimanded if something goes wrong. This finding is in line with literature review that as an occupational group, cleaners are particularly invisible and the times in which they become visible are when they are somehow at fault (Winant, 2018).Furthermore, the situation that these workers found themselves in did not allow them self- actualization. This is because majority reported to be not having a choice but to do the cleaning job even though they wished to study further. The issue of being undervalued was also captured during data analysis whereby majority of cleaners liked to be afforded respect like any other employees within the organization. A need to be valued extends to the people whom these workers are cleaning for; hence they feel that their job efforts are not being noticed.

The findings highlighted how pertinent job security is to the lives of these workers. The category of work these women occupy is characterised by fewer career development and job promotions. The findings suggest that most of these women took cleaning job because the permanent job opportunities related to their acquired qualifications are not available. This was articulated by the four participants who had tertiary qualifications. Because of the family demands and needs, these workers made it clear that even if they got a permanent job, their salaries do not cater for all of their needs. The reality is that their low incomes are barely enough to survive. Most of them mentioned that cleaning work was not their employment of choice. The reasons for doing cleaning work were because they wanted job security as there were no other jobs available and some were limited as a result of their education. Despite all the mentioned facts, these cleaners take pride in their work. In addition, these cleaners seek to perform their work to the best of their abilities and often beyond their actual job descriptions. In terms of work arrangements, these workers have developed some weekly roster as a way of dealing with workload; this was also used as a coping strategy. One participant reported that she used to get sick emotionally as a result of the situation at work, but so far, she has learnt to be patient and take things as they come, she further indicated that she needed the job so that she can provide for her family.

There is an urgent need for awareness since the cleaners are not aware of empowerment programmes offered to them as female cleaning service employees. They expressed their heartfelt wishes that there should be fairness and equality between them and their male counterparts. Few participants made an example that some male cleaners are being afforded an opportunity to work as messengers or drivers after they have finished with their cleaning tasks for the day, and this serves as a work exposure to them. The participants further felt that they need to have a representative who can serve as a link between them and the management as to make communication more effective. There is also a need for the employer to recognise them as people who would like to pursue their careers, who are also ambitious, and there should be availability of internal bursaries.

The findings of the study correlate with literature that job insecurity negatively affects the well-being of workers, causes significant psychological distress and decrease life satisfaction (De Witte, 2005). In most contemporary societies a job holds the key to social integration, social participation and recognition (Breevart, Bohle Pletzer and Medina, 2020). Job security

contributes to individual identity, links people to another and locates an individual in society (Kallerberg, 2009).

5.3. Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for future research

This study touched a number of issues that can be considered for future research and are as follows:

- Researching the security staff within the organization. It is likely to be a rich area of study. Like most cleaners, security officials are also increasingly outsourced, and they are also located at the lower end of the organizational hierarchy.
- As per the findings, the group of cleaners who took part in this study did not receive any formal training in terms of health and safety; therefore is a need to conduct a study on Occupational health and safety for cleaners.
- Since the majority of the participants moved from rural areas to the cities for better job opportunities, there is a need to explore the challenges faced by women who have to relocate to the cities leaving their families behind, and also to explore their coping mechanisms.

5.3.2. Recommendations to the organization studied

5.3.2.1. Enabling communications channel

It is highly recommended that managers should improve their communication channels as a way of accommodating the cleaning service employees; this is in relation to the majority of the participants who registered their dissatisfaction in relation to provision of information. This will also allow the cleaners to feel empowered, valued and that they are part of the organization. Management and administrative style, is a major factor in creating job satisfaction. Highly authoritarian styles – that is, those where power is highly concentrated and blind authority to power is expected - breed worker discontent (Andersen & Taylor, 2007). Under such systems, workers may try to sabotage the operations through subversive such as work slowdowns.

5.3.2.2. Promotion of gender equality in the workplace

It is also highly recommended that female cleaning service employees' voices should be heard in their workplaces. This should be in line with the promotion of gender equality and human rights. The present democratic dispensation seeks to provide women with equal employment opportunities. However, women are still disadvantaged in the workplace because of historical imbalances, lack of commitment in redressing power imbalances and giving women autonomy to occupy managerial positions. The fact that women are under-represented express unequal gender power relations in society and the stereotypes that reinforce women's subordination and male domination. Therefore, promoting women's leadership can contribute in part to challenge such relations and stereotypes. In essence, women leaders can act as advocates for gender equality who can ensure that problems affecting women cleaners in the workplace are taken up. Although this should not only be the responsibility of women leaders, they are often important driving forces in the process and may act as role models. Furthermore, if there are women leaders that come from more marginalised sectors of the economy, they are likely to bring more awareness and focus on their particular organising challenges. Women activism and sexual labour should be taken into consideration. To participate effectively in trade unions, women must overcome the hurdles of domestic responsibility. As Elizabeth Thabethe, an office bearer in the Chemical Workers' industrial Union in the 1990s said: "to increase women's participation in unions means changing the relationship between men and women, it needs men to share domestic duties with women, and we have a long way to go before this happens" (Baskin, 1991, p.375 as cited in Barchiesi, 2019).

5.3.2.3. Training and skills development

An accredited training should be provided to all cleaning employees and there should also be career development as majority of cleaners have completed their matric. When an organization invest in training its employees, it stands a good chance of reaping great rewards and is proven to retain the skilled employees, instead of losing them. It is also recommended that training should be an ongoing activity as the cleaning sector is evolving. The use of chemicals and safety measures must be taken into consideration as well.

5.3.2.4. Reasonable accommodation

Reasonable accommodation can be seen as referring to adapting the workplace to make it more accessible and inclusive for workers (Banks, 2016). Based in the findings, it was identified that

reasonable accommodation needs to be emphasised at work, as a result of two participants who were diagnosed with arthritis, and the supervisors could not assist in meeting their needs. Positive working relationships should also be encouraged in the workplace, whereby the department can introduce initiatives such as cleaners' day. This will be like an encouraging or motivating activity to cleaners; all other employees can be encouraged to acknowledge the hard and important work that cleaners do for them. For example, if there is a cleaner who had performed outstandingly, she can receive a congratulatory letter or maybe a reward. This will make the cleaners not to feel invisible or undervalued, and will create a sense of belonging. In short, valuing cleaners is more than just a requirement as it improves their well-being.

5.4 Conclusion

All set objectives of the study were achieved through the participants' responses to the research questions. In conclusion, alienation, lack of resources and a feeling of being undervalued seem to make cleaners increasingly vulnerable in their working lives. It is therefore hoped that this study will bring about change in the perceptions of people regarding the cleaning job. It is also hoped that awareness will improve in affording the cleaners the respect they deserve as they are the people who are always making most offices and buildings to be neat and conducive so that other employees can carry out their duties. Furthermore, these cleaners are seen as employees who are playing an enabler role. The work of these women extends beyond their cleaning duties. Above all, these cleaners are also mothers and wives who are performing domestic duties at their homes as well. In summary, each participant had unique and subjective experiences, yet they find themselves in a similar work environment, embedded in a particular location that lead to some commonality of experiences. Key issues of alienation and being undervalued were evident in their experiences, and manifested in different ways. Despite them performing an essential function within the department, they felt isolated in a way that they do not have access to information and the necessary tools of trade.

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Appendix A: Participant information sheet

Invisible workforce: The experiences of female cleaning service employees within the Department of Public Works in Pretoria region.

Good day,

My name is Alletah Ntsie and I am registered for the degree, Master of Arts in Occupational Social work at the University of Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting a research on the experiences of female cleaning service employees within the Department of Public Works in Pretoria region. I therefore wish to invite you to participate in my study. Your participation is voluntary and refusal to participate will not be held against you in any way. If you agree to take part, I shall arrange an interview with you at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last approximately one hour. You may withdraw from the study at any time and you may also refuse to answer any questions that you may feel uncomfortable with answering. Should you feel distressed because of any of the questions asked, a free counselling or debriefing will be made available to you free-of-charge through our departmental employee health and wellness unit. You are welcome to contact Mr Foster Vusizi on 0124923286 or Ms Mmaletogo Ditsebe on 0124061295 for further wellness intervention.

With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded. No one other than my supervisor will have access to the tapes. The tapes and interview schedules will be kept in a locked cabinet for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. Please be assured that your name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report. Please contact me on alletah.ntsie@dpw.gov.za /0768106767 or my supervisor on 0117174471/ Motlalepule.Nathane@wits.ac.za, if you have any questions regarding my study. We shall answer them to the best of our ability. If you have any concerns and complaints about the study, please contact Human Research Ethics Committee (Non – Medical) contact details: Chairperson: Jasper.Knight@wits.ac.za or the administrator: Ms Shaun Schoeman on Tel 0117171408 or Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in the study

Yours sincerely

_____

Alletah Ntsie

Appendix B: Consent form for participation in the study

Invisible workforce: The experiences of female cleaning service employees within the Department of Public Works in Pretoria region.

I hereby consent to participate in the research study on the experiences of female cleaning service employees within the Department of Public Works in Pretoria region. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me.

I understand that:

- My participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I may choose not to answer any specific questions asked if I do not wish to do so.
- There are no foreseeable benefits or particular risks associated with participation in this study.
- My identity will be kept strictly confidential, and any information that may identify me, will be removed from the interview transcript.
- A copy of my interview transcript and any identifying information will be stored permanently in a locked cupboard and may be used for future research.
- I understand that my responses will be used in the write up of an honours project and may also be presented in conferences, book chapters, journals articles or books.

Name of Participant_____

Date_____

Signature_____

Appendix C: Consent form for audio-taping of the interview

Invisible workforce: The experiences of female cleaning service employees within the Department of Public Works in Pretoria region.

I hereby consent to tape-recording of the interview.

I understand that:

- The recording will be stored in a secure location (a locked cupboard or password protected computer) with restricted access to the researcher and the research supervisor.
- The recording will be transcribed and any information that could identify me will be removed.
- When the data analysis and the write – up of research study is complete, the audio – recording of the interview will be kept for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanates from the study.
- The transcript with all identifying information directly linked to me removed, will be stored permanently and may be used for future research.
- Direct quotes from my interview, without any information that could identify me may be cited in the research report or other write – ups of the research.

Name_____

Date_____

Signature_____

Appendix D: Interview schedule for participation

Invisible workforce: The experiences of female cleaning service employees within the Department of Public Works in Pretoria region.

Section A

Demographic information

1 How old are you?

25 – 37 year	38 – 50 years

2. What is your race?

Black	Coloured	Indian	White	Other

3. What is your marital status?

Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed

4. What is your highest level of education?

No Formal Education	Primary School	High School	Tertiary

5. In which province do you originate?

North West	Gauteng	Northern Cape	Eastern Cape	Kwa Zulu Natal	Western Cape	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	Free State

7. How many children do you have?

0	1 - 2	3 - 4	5 – 6	7 - 8	9 – 10

8. How many dependents do you have?

0	1 - 2	3 – 4	5 - 6	7 - 8	9 – 10

Section B

1. Please tell me briefly about your cleaning work experience.
2. Can you tell me about your daily activities at work?
3. What time do you start your work on daily basis and at what time do you knock – off?
4. Please share with me any trainings or workshops that you have received regarding your job.
5. Please tell me about any safety rules that you need to take when you perform your job.
6. How is your working relationship with the colleagues that you are cleaning for?
7. Have you ever felt invisible or felt like they are not treating you equally as other colleagues from other units? (Please elaborate).
8. Do you see yourself as being part of the organization or as a cleaner? (Please specify)
9. Are there any workplace experiences affecting your personal life negatively? (Please elaborate)
10. Have you ever experienced any workplace challenges when doing your job?
11. How do you cope with all these challenges that you mentioned?
12. Are you aware of any programmes offered by the department to female cleaning service employees? (Please elaborate)
13. What programme do you think the department can implement to address all the issues or challenges that you have mentioned?

Thank you for your participation