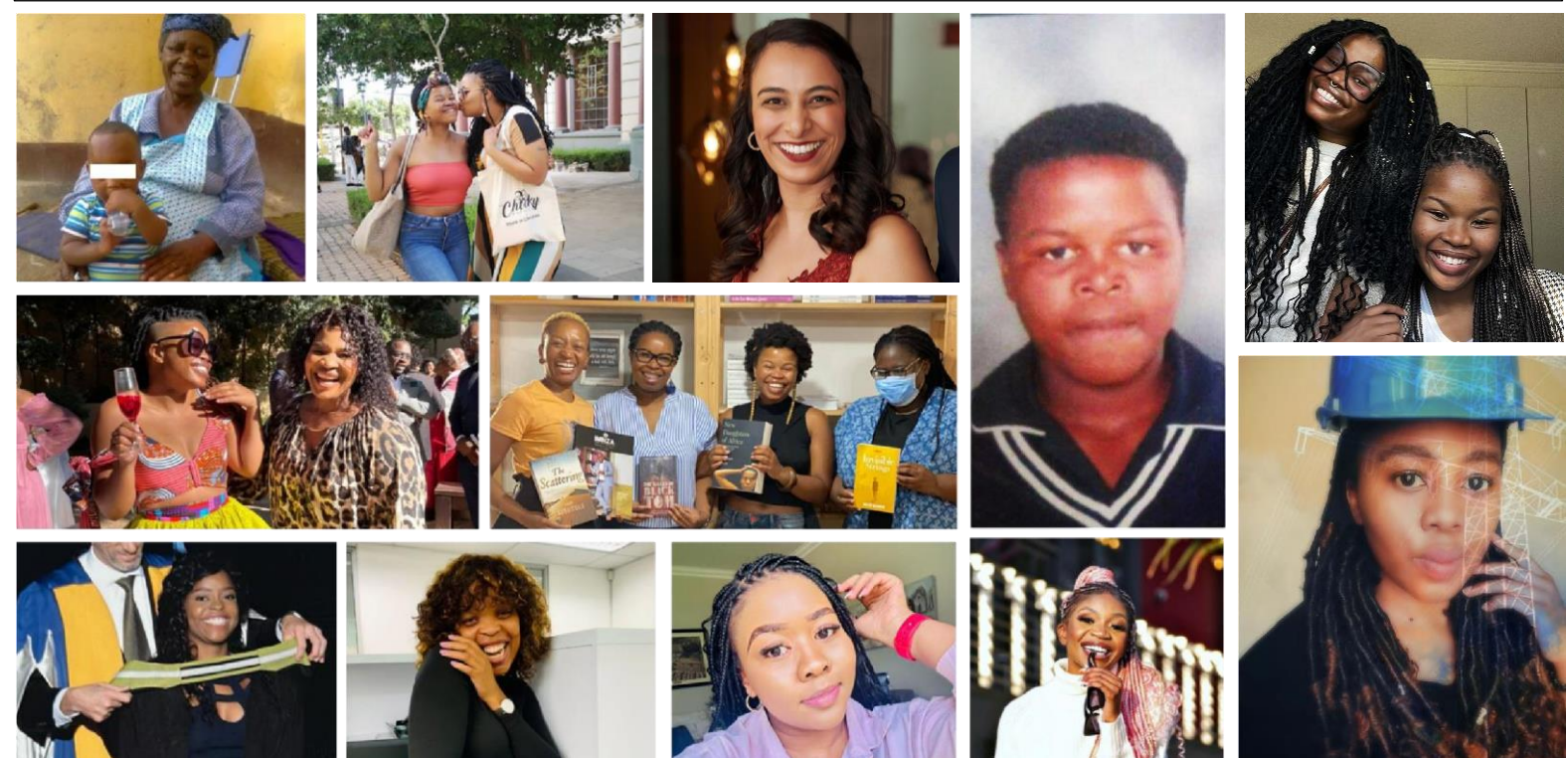




Investigating Ways in Which the Profile and Identity of Women Affects their Capacity to Work Effectively in the Urban Management Field.

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Affects their Capacity to Work Effectively in the Urban  
Management Field.

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## **DEDICATION**

To the Divine, God, whose unwavering presence breathed life into my lungs even in the bleakest moments, when the radiance of the sun dulled, the taste of food faded, and the air lost its freshness. In the face of the ominous abyss, threatening to engulf me entirely, you remained my anchor.

To myself – my own spirit, resilient and unyielding, for waging a relentless battle to endure, for daring to dream grandiosely and shattering generational shackles, and for nurturing faith in the face of formidable challenges. May our journey continue, labouring for a life so vast that it reverberates within the depths of our being.

To my baby Bruno, life makes no sense without you. I will always love and miss you.

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## **1. CHAPTER ONE: UNMASKING URBAN FRONTIERS**

“When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else’s oppression, we’ll find our opportunities to make real change.”

-Ijeomo Oluo

Image by Don Makatile (2020)

Available at: <https://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/life/sa-literary-awards-recognition-for-first-time-author-06d99ee0-a16c-4601-bf6d-deobco7d8d29>

## **1.1. Setting the Scene**

Historically, the participation of women in the workplace underwent significant transformations due to shifts in societal norms and economic conditions. Women were relegated to household work, often without compensation, on the basis of their gender, coupled with other intersecting identities as wives, mothers, and primary care givers. For black women, their struggle extended beyond the confines of domestic work and caregiving; it involved the exploitation of their work and bodies outside of the home. Their contribution to systems of production was rendered invisible (Kimberly Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins). Meanwhile, men ‘the bread winners’ or ‘providers’ worked outside the home for income (Heinz, 2002; Kohli, 2007). However, transformations in the economy from a welfare to a capitalist system have reshaped societal norms, and enabled women access to the workplace (Gerson, 1985; Ruspini, 2002; Giele and Holst, 2004). Since the second half of the 20th century, the participation of women in the workplace increased rapidly, and has somewhat become an expectation (Ruspini, 2002; Giele and Holst, 2004; Gauthier et al., 2016; Lin and Burgard, 2018) although some sectors still lag behind, one of them being urban management.

During apartheid South Africa, women faced systemic exclusion from various professions. This exclusion was severe for blacks, and more specifically black women who were only permitted to work in low-level jobs as domestic and farm workers under the employ of white men and women (Cock, 1987). The Bantu Education perpetuated this trend by providing poor quality education which ensured that blacks, including women, remained in unskilled jobs (Klaveren, Hughie-Williams and Martin, 2009). In the 1970s, however, the country faced a serious shortage in skilled labour, which slowed economic growth. As a result, the apartheid government eased the job reservation system by educating the black labour force, albeit with massive wage discrimination against blacks, Coloureds, and Indians (Brookes and Hinks 2004; Ryan 2007). However, education enrolments reflected a stark gender divide. Fields like home economics mainly consisted of women, accounting for approximately 99% of students’ enrolments, while in disciplines like engineering, women constituted a mere 7% of total enrolments, with white women being in the majority (Bonnin, 1996). With the abolishment of apartheid in the early 1990s, the South African economy absorbed some new entrants to the labour market (Meredith 2005). Through the constitutional mandate that afforded equal rights to all citizens, more women gained access to education and subsequently, the formal labour market. Although there were slight improvements in accessing the formal workplace as paid labour, women mostly occupied service jobs as teachers, nurses, and administrators (Bonnin, 1996).

Following educational reform and affirmative policies that enabled access to education and training irrespective of gender, race, class, or age (Daniels, 1995), women’s employment in

traditionally men-centred professions increased gradually (Turnbull, 2013; Ng and Acker, 2020; Wright et al., 2022) despite some resistance (Foley et al., 2022). According to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), there were approximately 3,790 urban planning professionals in 2004 (Berrisford, 2006). Many more have graduated in the profession since 2004, while some may have been lost to retirement, emigration, or death (Todes, 2009). Of the known total, men constituted the largest share of urban planning professionals at 66% compared to women who only accounted for 34% (Berrisford, 2006). Although the number of women planning professionals lagged behind men, research has shown that the gap has narrowed quite significantly from 28% in 1994 and continues to do so. However, despite improvements in the number of women within the urban planning and management field, the representation of women in key positions remains low. In South Africa, only 33% of municipal management roles are held by women (StatsSA, 2016), and this number could be lower among planning professionals given the nascent status of the profession. Additionally, over 20% of women in urban planning and related fields still face gender barriers to their professional advancement despite sixty years of feminism and discourse around equality, inclusion, and diversity (Bicquelet-Lock et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, the need for women in industries that were historically dominated by men, including engineering, urban planning and management, as well as construction cannot be overstated. According to an Urban and Rural Planning Manager at Gibb, van Der Merwe (2016), the last decade has seen irrefutable evidence of women bringing their soft skills into these ruthless industries. Their imaginative contributions have helped to bring dignity and a sense of pride in underprivileged communities (Engineering News, 2016). Although there are signs that the field has become a more inclusive workplace, and acknowledges women as a valuable resource, women are still underrepresented in the workplace. This can affect their effectiveness, and subsequently, their chances for upward mobility. In this research, the concept of effectiveness draws on various scholarly interpretations, which will be thoroughly examined later in the report. Thus, effectiveness within the content of this research, is defined as the achievement of predetermined goals and objectives (Alkaf et al., 2021) within specified timeframes and through the efficient use of available resources (Husman, 2011). Wu (2017) asserts that to effectively address challenges and achieve predetermined objectives within specified timeframes and resources, required a particular set of skills and competencies. In this report, these competencies are referred to as capacity.

Multiple research studies have demonstrated that the women's disproportional representation affects their effectiveness through increased pressures to perform, isolation from social and professional networks, and the stereotypes that often pigeonhole women's roles (Martin, 1985; Konrad and Gutek, 1987; Zimmer, 1988; Yoder, 1991; and Wharton, 1992). Balancing the

scales by increasing the participation of women in the workplace, and more specifically in urban management is the first step to achieving women's desired outcomes for inclusive workplaces. However, these measures alone can turn out to be insufficient and should be accompanied by substantive transformation and reconstructions of women's identities in regard to work effectiveness. Thus, a deep understanding of how women identities affect their capacity to work effectively is paramount to improving their experiences in the workplace and promoting their meaningful participation in urban management.

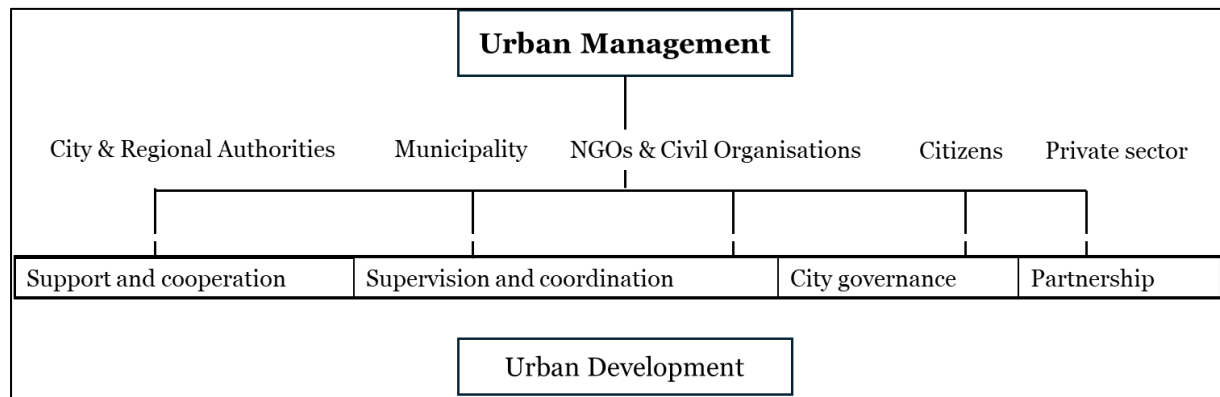
### **Defining Urban Management for the Study**

The domain of Urban Management has emerged as a relatively recent field, progressively gaining prominence due to rapid urbanisation and decentralisation observed in recent decades (Van Dijk, 2007). However, despite concerted efforts to solidify its conceptual underpinnings, Urban Management remains a concept marred with multiple interpretations and contentious classifications (Bačlija, 2011). Its elusive nature and ambiguity have sparked debates, with scholars questioning whether it fits the definition of a theory, a framework of study, or a procedural methodology (Williams, 1978; McGill, 1998). This ongoing discourse reflects the complexity inherent in this field, a complexity that transcends easy categorisation or definition.

An overarching agreement within this debate is that urban management is intricately entwined with the dynamics of resource allocation, where a myriad of stakeholders—ranging from administrative bodies to influential decision-makers—hold sway over the socioeconomic and spatial trajectories of cities (McGill, 1998). This consensus paints a picture of Urban Management as a multifaceted discipline that orchestrates the direction of urban development through resource allocation strategies such as infrastructure development and service delivery (Pahl, 1975; Sharma, 1989; Rakodi, 1991). In this intricate web of decision making, those vested with the authority to distribute resources wield substantial power in steering the course of urban progress. These decision-makers encompass an array of figures including city administrators, politicians, property developers, landowners, and business proprietors.

Bačlija (2011) positions urban management as a restructured form of city administration, aiming primarily to foster equilibrium and steadiness between the social demands and economic progress of urban areas. She underscores the emergence of urban management in response to the evolving role of local government during the era of neoliberal decentralisation, replacing centralised administrative models. In laymen terms, “this new responsibility is to determine what needs to be done, to arrange that it be done, and then make certain that it is done for the city's development” Mattingly, 1994: 202.

This research thus acknowledges the multifaceted nature of urban management which involves diverse stakeholders who contribute to decision-making processes about the development and maintenance of city infrastructure and service delivery (Mattingly, 1994). The figure below demonstrates a high-level overview of the various stakeholders involved in management.



**Figure 1.1:** *Elements of urban management* - The diagram shows the multiple stakeholders involved in urban management and highlights the respective roles in promoting urban development.

**Source:** Adullah, 2008 from [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Elements-of-a-new-urbanmanagement-sarafi-Abdullah-2008\\_fig1\\_283715396](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Elements-of-a-new-urbanmanagement-sarafi-Abdullah-2008_fig1_283715396)

Urban management is characterised by the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders, each contributing to the decision-making processes that shape urban development and management. According to Sager (2009) and Adullah (2008), this diverse stakeholder engagement includes government entities, private sector organisations, and community groups, all of which influence urban planning outcomes. While the original diagram did not show the role private sector in urban management, the sector’s influence in decisions about urban management cannot be overstated. This also applies to foreign entities through donor funding and other investments or finance options. For instance, multinational corporations often invest in large-scale urban projects, such as transportation networks, housing developments, and utilities, bringing in capital, expertise, and technology that may not be locally available (Davis, 2006). However, this can have complex implications. The conditions attached to such funding often reflect the strategic interests of the donors rather than the local needs, leading to projects that might not align with the socio-economic realities of the host cities (Miraftab, 2004). The influence of foreign donors can perpetuate existing inequalities, and advance colonial interests, where decision-making power is concentrated in the hands of external entities rather than local stakeholders (Parnell & Robinson, 2012). This can marginalise local voices and expertise, reducing the capacity for sustainable, context-specific urban solutions.

African perspectives on urban management emphasise the importance of contextually relevant, inclusive, and participatory approaches that reflect the continent's unique socio-cultural, economic, and political landscapes. It highlights the role of community participation and empowerment, which is sometimes lacking in formal management processes. An inclusive and participatory approach involves not only providing basic services and infrastructure, but also tackling systemic inequalities that disproportionately affect marginalised groups, including women among others (Simone, 2004).

Given the diverse players within the field, the landscape of professionals involved in urban management is equally diverse. Bain (2007) highlights that these professionals range from urban planners and civil engineers to policy analysts, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the field. However, urban management as a discipline lacks formal recognition and comprehensive educational frameworks specifically tailored to its practitioners. Benevolo (2017) argues that the urban management field's emerging status is compounded by the absence of structured educational programs designed to equip professionals with the specialised skills that are required for urban management. This absence implies that there is no dedicated group that is fully prepared to handle all essential urban managerial functions efficiently. Furthermore, Barton (2017) and Van der Meer (2018) emphasise that the evolving challenges in urban management reveal significant gaps in formal education and training. As such, while other established professions align with and form part of core urban managerial functions—such as planning, organisation, staffing, leadership, and control (Chakrabarty, 2001)—the lack of a specialised educational and professional framework limits the ability to address these functions comprehensively.

In urban management, **planning** stands as a pivotal function that entails the strategic selection of objectives and the subsequent actions required to achieve them, necessitating rational decision-making. Urban planners craft plans with the overarching goal of transforming a city into a liveable, thriving space, ensuring both equity and efficiency. This critical aspect of urban management, encompassing activities like land-use planning, is inherently part of the broader "planning function" within urban management field.

The significance of the **leadership** in urban management cannot be overstated, as it profoundly shapes the present and future trajectory of urban areas. Various studies have delved into the importance of entrepreneurial political leadership, often occupying a dominant role in the field. Political and entrepreneurial leaders in urban management are influential figures who wield their sway and persuasive abilities to articulate a compelling vision and steer decision-making processes. Mayors or their local political counterparts are examples of

leaders who play a key role in the field by actively engaging in agenda-setting, forging interconnections, and forming autonomous coalitions to harness their influence within formal settings (Borraz and John, 2004). Wang (1994) highlights that urban management typically operates within sectoral boundaries, constrained by limited fiscal resources and lacking autonomy. He suggests that local governments often prioritise public service delivery, leading to a narrow focus on municipal services like water supply and sanitation, limiting the broader understanding of urban management. A strong leadership can mobilise other stakeholders and resources to not only operate and maintain the existing urban infrastructure and services, but to promote growth and development.

The **control function** within the realm of urban management encompasses regulatory evaluations and enforcement, particularly in the sphere of environmental management and protection, as highlighted in the works of Davey (1993). This facet of urban management serves as a pivotal link between various managerial functions, including planning and organisation. Its primary aim is to oversee the execution of plans, assess performance, and institute appropriate measures to drive enhancements. However, integrating all five managerial functions to achieve specific urban objectives is a more complex task than managing a business where these functions are typically applied. Nonetheless, these core functions are pivotal in converting various inputs – skills, time, and money, into outputs such as urban services, citizen satisfaction, and goal integration across sectors.

## **1.2. The Significance of Women in Urban Management**

In a 2019 TedTalk titled “It’s Not You, It’s Your Workplace” King talks about the invisible barriers that are holding women back at work, including gender denialism which blinds people to the realities of stark disparities. In the TedTalk, King underscores how women are often labelled as the issue when questions about their lack of representation in the workplace arise, especially in management positions or male-dominated industry. She purports that workplaces were never designed with diversity in mind. “...They were designed to support an ideal worker to succeed, and this tends to be white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied men” (TedTalk 2019<sup>1</sup>). More importantly, the ideal worker is willing to centre their work as their number one priority and engage in dominant, assertive, competitive, aggressive, and exclusionary behaviour to achieve work objectives. Consequently, those whose identity differs from the ideal work (i.e. black, working class, homosexual, disabled, women), face more barriers when trying to advance within the workplace despite their capacity and effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: It's Not You, It's Your Workplace | Michelle Penelope King | TEDxChelseaPark (watch from 3:00 – 3:58) available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMBrR5YgfCo>

The views shared by Kin in the TedTalk echo those of an urban governance scholar, Beall (1996) who asserts that the prevailing social norms and expectations about gender shape the ways in which men and women participate in and benefit from urban management and or governance. She recognises that women’s access to socioeconomic resources and political capital in urban environments is constrained not only by societal norms but institutional expressions about their identities. Furthermore, the design, implementation but also the impact of projects often embodies the values and priorities of decision makers. In the absence of equitable representation and diversity in urban management—where decisions regarding service provision, infrastructure development, budget allocation, and crisis response are made—there exists a tangible risk that initiatives may fall short in addressing the challenges and unique requirements of women and other marginalised groups. This inadvertent neglect, which might sideline women's issues, could potentially exacerbate prevailing inequalities (Oxfam, 2017).

In urban planning, for instance, transportation systems that were designed with limited input from women and other marginalised groups may neglect safety concerns and accessibility issues. This can lead to inadequate public transportation options and poorly lit or unsafe public spaces, affecting women's mobility and overall urban development. Greed (1978) has

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written extensively about how the profession lacked gender awareness and continued the exclusion of women in zoning and land use policies that ignored issues of childcare, placed great distances between home and work, making it extra challenging for women to tend to their household duties after work, effective and affordable public transportation, and public space safety. Therefore, a gender sensitive approach to urban management will not only increase the participation of women in key functions of the city but will “foster gender awareness and competence among both men and women” (Beall, 1996: 1) in urban management practice.

### **1.3. Problem Statement**

The urban management field is characterised by a complex interplay of factors that significantly influence women’s ability to perform their work objectives. However, due to the historical exclusion of women in industries that were dominated by men, women who underperform or are unable to meet their work objectives are often confronted with severe repercussions. A noteworthy phenomenon termed the ‘punishment gap’ highlights how women’s incapacity to work effectively, not only impacts the women in question but echoes punitive effects for other women within the profession (Blading, 2018; WEF, 2019). This emerging trend ignores the complex systemic factors that interfere with women’s effectiveness in the workplace, which are predominately attributed to their identities and profiles.

The burden of reduced effectiveness often falls on women as opposed to the systemic barriers that disables their competencies. Studies from the 1980s exploring obstacles for women in urban management pointed out that men are blind to the barriers that impeded women's progress in the field (Buns, 1980). Where awareness exists among men regarding the insufficient representation of women in urban management, attributions tend to pinpoint women's purported lack of training, and qualifications, or individual personality traits. In contrast, women cite institutional discrimination and stereotypes as key barriers to their advancement in the sector.

Despite the passage of four decades since these initial studies was conducted, women continue to confront persistent challenges within the urban management profession. Stats SA demonstrate a mere 33% representation of women in municipal management roles (Stats SA, 2016), and this number is potentially lower within the urban management given the nascent status of the profession. Furthermore, over 20% of women in urban planning and management fields still grapple with gender-based barriers that impede their professional progression, despite six decades of fervent discourse on equality, inclusion, and diversity (Bicquelet-Lock *et al.*, 2020). The barriers include but not limited to gender stereotyping about capabilities and skills, limited networking opportunities due to their familial roles, limited opportunities for career advancement, tokenism and marginalisation, unequal pay (Blau and Kahn, 2017; Catalyst, 2013; Glass, 2004; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Ibarra, 1993; Kanter, 1977). Consequently, qualified professional women are increasingly exiting the urban management sector in pursuit of careers where their identities and profiles do not dictate professional outcomes (Olufemi, 2008), inevitably impacting their job satisfaction.

While there has been incremental acknowledgment of women's contributions in shaping urban development (Beall, 2003), not enough recognition has been afforded to the role of women within urban management. Specifically, the systemic challenges that women face on the basis of their gender and other intersecting identities has been lacking in literature, despite prejudicial associations that affect women's capacity to work effectively. Prevailing norms and expectations about women's identities in the workplace constrain their access to vital social, economic, and political resources intrinsic to urban management.

#### **1.4. Research Objectives**

The primary objective of this research is to delve into the intricate relationship between women's multifaceted identities, encompassing gender, race, marital status, and age, and their impact on effective performance within the urban management field. Central to this exploration is the assumption that women's profiles and identities intricately shape their

professional capacities, influencing their ability to navigate challenges and capitalise on opportunities within their roles. This study aims to comprehensively understand the nuanced ways in which women's identities serve as catalysts or impediments in their pursuit of professional efficacy. It seeks to unravel the mechanisms through which women leverage their identities to not only comprehend complex challenges but also to strategise, innovate, and mobilise resources effectively. By investigating how these identities inform problem-solving approaches, solution design, and resource mobilisation strategies, the research aims to delineate the intricate interplay between identity, capability, and outcome attainment in the context of urban management professions.

### **1.5. Personal Motivation**

This research was motivated by a confluence of personal experiences and stories shared by female friends, colleagues, academics, and acquaintances. The narratives underscored how gender, race, age, and sexual identities were unfairly wielded as grounds for biased judgments, limiting our capacity to fulfil our professional responsibilities.

These conversations often commenced with expressions of frustration, anger, and, at times, a sense of defeat. The women shared the myriad ways in which they were overlooked for growth opportunities and promotions. Additionally, these dialogues unveiled their encounters with micro-aggressions, gaslighting, and, regrettably, instances of sexual harassment. The women expressed disillusionment at the sluggish efforts, and at times, the outright reluctance of organisations to institute meaningful transformation for the establishment of diverse and inclusive environments. Engaging in these discussions deepened my conviction that further research into the lack of female representation—arguably a significant factor perpetuating gender inequalities and discrimination in the workplace—could contribute to addressing critical gaps in this area of study. My decision to undertake this inquiry was also propelled by my own unfavourable experiences as a woman in corporate South Africa and in the urban management field.

My fatigue with merely complaining about these issues spurred a desire to delve deeper into the extent of this problem, not only in young black women but among diverse groups of women. I harboured a curiosity to understand how our gender identity, in conjunction with other intersectional identities, was not only used to our disadvantage but, more crucially, how it could be harnessed to advance and excel our careers in our respective roles within the urban management field.

### **1.6. Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research question:

***“In What Ways does the Profile and Identity of Women Affect their Capacity to Work Effectively within the Urban Management Field?”***

In an attempt to break down the research question as well as provide more depth to the investigation, the following sub-questions were devised:

- a. What is the profile and identities of women in the urban management field?** This sub-question delves into the multifaceted aspects that compose the identities and profiles of women engaged in urban management. It explores various dimensions of women’s profiles and intersectional identities such as age, race, religion, nationality, and marital status. Other key aspects that were investigated to help understand women’s identities included their city of residence and or employment, educational background, and profession to ensure that the surveyed women fall within the urban management field. Understanding these diverse facets formed a foundation to assess how these affect women’s competencies in the workplace.
- b. How do women’s identities and profiles influence their capacities in the workplace?** This sub-question seeks to unpack the relationship between the outlined profiles and identities of women and their capabilities within the urban management field. It investigates how these diverse identities and profiles shape their interactions, opportunities, challenges, and perceptions in the workplace. This involved examining the ways in which women’s biological profiles, their backgrounds, experiences, and individual attributes impact their communication styles, analytical skills, problem-solving abilities, leadership approaches within their professional roles. This investigation was conducted with the awareness that women’s profiles and identities could either have a positive or a negative influence on their professional capacities.
- c. How do women capacitate themselves to work effectively in the urban management field?** This sub-question focused on understanding the proactive measures and strategies employed by women to enhance their effectiveness in the urban management sphere. It explored the actions that women undertake to navigate the challenges posed by their profiles and identities to work effectively. On the other hand, it highlighted opportunities that the same profiles and identities provided to aid their work effectiveness.

These sub-questions collectively provide a comprehensive framework for examining the primary research question, which seeks to understand the complex interplay between

women's identities, capacities, and effectiveness within the purview of urban management. To illustrate the relationship between the subjects of this research, namely women, the workplace and the urban area, the research diagram below has been developed.

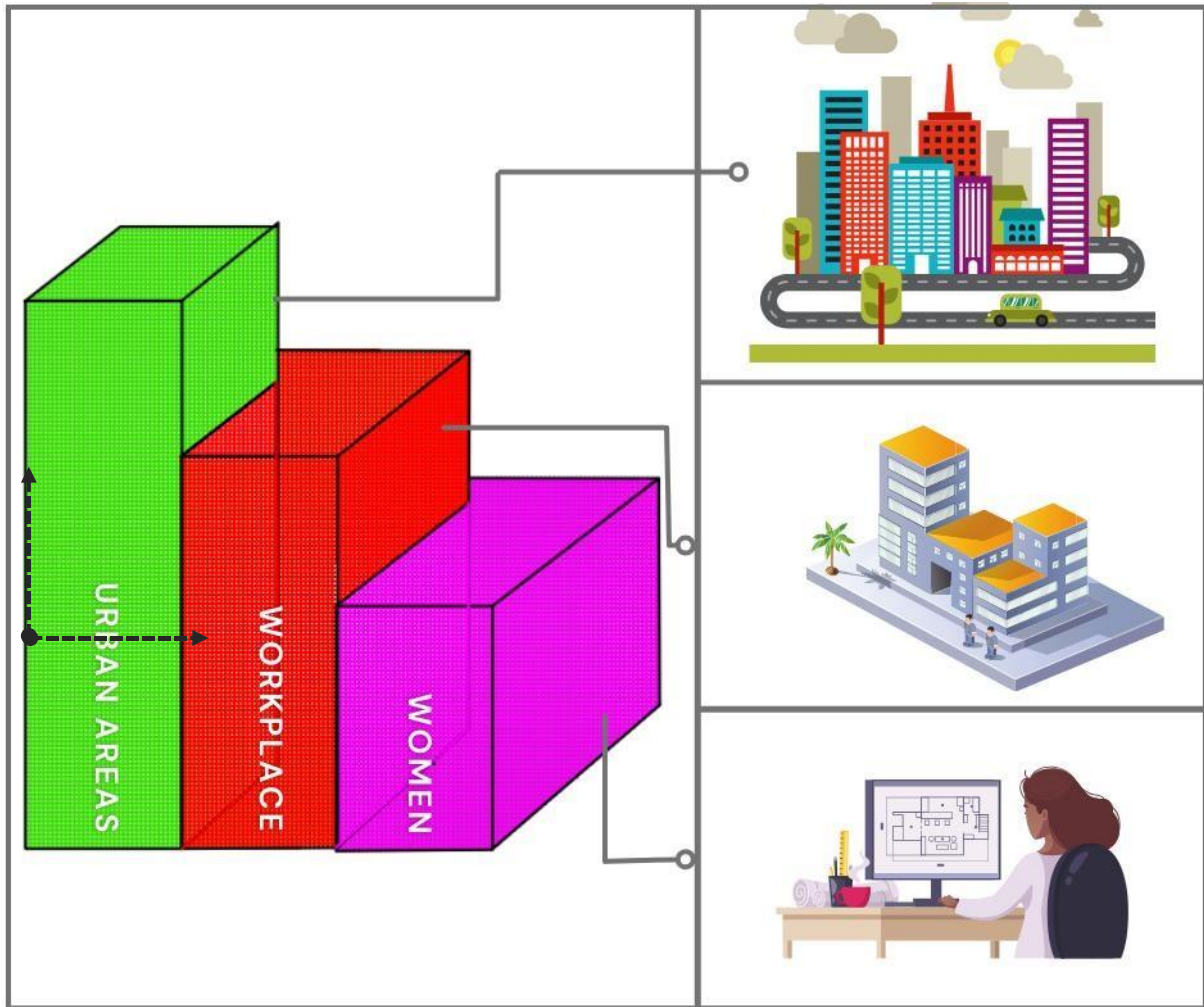
### **1.7. Defining the parameters of the research**

This research primarily centred the experiences of women who are engaged in the urban management field. For the purposes of this research, the urban management field was defined according to the five managerial functions, namely, planning, organisation, staffing, leadership, and control. Women whose professions aligned with these managerial functions were targeted as participants. Consequently, women with backgrounds in urban planning or who are actively practicing as urban planners were targeted as participants for this research due to their integral involvement in executing the planning function. The research consciously included women who work in the oversight of bulk infrastructure development or maintenance, including those with backgrounds in civil engineering. This deliberate focus sought to counter the prevailing trend within urban management, which predominantly emphasises the management and upkeep of soft infrastructure while neglecting the establishment and maintenance of critical bulk infrastructure. Urban management literature identifies soft infrastructure as encompassing public health, educational initiatives, social and community services, and recreational facilities (Miller & Rainey, 2020; Gordon & Burton, 2017; Morrow-Jones & Heller, 2015; Hochschild & Machung, 2012). In contrast, bulk infrastructure includes essential systems such as transportation networks, water and sewer systems, energy infrastructure, and waste management facilities (Rodrigue et al., 2020; Hossain & Rehman, 2017; Metcalf & Eddy, 2013; Tchobanoglous & Kreith, 2002).

Women with expertise in project management, particularly within the built environment, were considered valuable participants owing to their proficiency in organisational and, occasionally, staffing functions. Other targeted professions included women who work as policy analysts due to their ability to clearly define urban challenges and devise strategies to solve challenges and monitor progress. Operations managers, development finance consultants and environmental practitioners also formed part of the targeted groups within urban environments. Women who are actively engaged in the control function within urban settings became a vital segment of potential participants targeted for this research, specifically those possessing qualifications in development planning and environment law, women with qualifications and or experience in monitoring and evaluation. Their expertise and involvement in this sphere contribute significantly to the comprehensive understanding of how the control function intertwines with broader urban management dynamics.

The study did not aim to investigate toxic work environments that prompt women to exit the profession, although it acknowledges the challenges women encounter in this profession, such as their underrepresentation and systemic exclusion. Rather, it was intended to explore the narratives of women who have persevered within the urban management field, aiming to amplify their voices in the administration and governance of urban environments. It is crucial to note that while the study occasionally mentions men, the research solely focused primarily on women. However, due to the often-dichotomous nature of gender, it was inevitable that there would be a reference to men on certain occasions. The study was not oblivious to transgender women and gender non-binary groups who neither identify as male nor female. Nevertheless, the definition of women in this research did not centre transgender women and other sexual minorities due to the ethical implications that the researcher was not equipped to navigate with the required sensitivity given the time constraints.

The research articulates the stories of women who have sustained their roles within the field, highlighting the capacities that enable their effectiveness despite the array of challenges earlier mentioned. It delves into examining how women's identities—be it hindrances or facilitators— influence their ability to achieve work objectives. The study is not merely documenting the unique challenges faced by women, but it aims to spark much needed dialogue and paradigm shift to facilitating urban management approaches that transcend gender norms. It seeks to foster inclusiveness development approaches that will serve as models for uplifting other minority groups in the profession. Additionally, the study aims to understand the prerequisite resources and skills that these women need to achieve their job objectives, whether these resources are provided or self-mobilised. Throughout this report, the terms profession and field are used interchangeably to mean "urban management" – a process that encompasses the decision-making concerning resource allocation, service delivery and infrastructure development. A process that also shapes the socioeconomic and spatial trajectory of cities within the South African context. Urban management, when executed efficiently, ensures equitable resource distribution, balancing the social responsibility of cities with their economic aspirations to foster inclusive urban growth.



**Figure 1.2:** *Interconnected Realms: Women, Workplaces, and Urban Landscapes* – the research diagram shows the hierarchical and or layered relationship between the three objects of the study; women, the workplace, and the urban area.

The three-dimensional staircase diagram visually depicts the intricate relationship between women, the workplace, and the urban environment, specifically within the domain of urban management. Women are situated at the initial phase of the staircase, symbolising the challenging ascent they typically face while striving to establish themselves professionally, notably within the urban management field. Placing women on the outer layer of the diagram emphasises the systemic exclusion they encounter due to their gender identity combined with intersecting identities. This outer layer encapsulates the focused group of women whose identities, experiences, and capabilities are under scrutiny. The deliberate selection of the colour pink aims to reclaim its symbolism, attaching empowering associations instead.

The subsequent step of the diagram denotes the workplace, marginally elevated above the women's representation. This highlights the hurdles women have confronted in asserting their right to work in a non-discriminatory environment. Despite constitutional guarantees and

employment equity imperatives, workplaces persist as environments that are rife with inequalities and institutionalised biases. Specifically, within urban management settings, this stage embodies workplace dynamics encompassing organisational structures, culture, policies, professional networks, and gender dynamics. The use of the colour red symbolises traits like aggression, power, and passion—qualities often associated with success and leadership in the workplace, but traits that are often associated with men and criticised in women.

The highest tier represents the expansive urban environment where urban management is practiced. This peak signifies urban development facets such as projects, infrastructure, governance structures, and decision-making bodies shaping urban landscapes. Here, women in urban management exhibit their capabilities, influencing socioeconomic growth and the spatial trajectory of cities. The elevated tier that represents urban environments surpasses the tiers that represent both the workplace, and women because it represents the aspiration for women's upward mobility and their potential to drive progress within urban spheres. The vertical line symbolises women's pursuit of upward mobility, while the horizontal denotes their endeavour to actively participate in urban decision-making processes. The use of the colour green connotes principles such as prosperity, health, and productivity envisioned for cities and other urban environments. This visual representation effectively demonstrates the interconnectedness of women's roles, their workplace dynamics, and the broader urban context, emphasising their mutual influence within the domain of urban management.

## 1.7. Structure of the Report

This sub-section outlines the structural framework of this research report, which is organised into five chapters.

**Chapter 1** sets the stage by providing a contextual backdrop to the research study, articulating the problem statement, and unveiling the motivation behind the study. This chapter delves into how women's profiles and identities can significantly disable their capacity to achieve their work objectives within the urban management sphere. It highlights the harsher punitive



measures often faced by women when they underperform, without recognising the structural barriers that prevalent in predominantly male-driven workplace environments or providing the necessary support.

The cover image for this chapter spotlights an author whose book and podcast served as my sole lifeline during a critical period. When I faced the daunting task of

confronting my previous manager regarding sexual harassment, her resources provided invaluable guidance—marking the first time I found supportive knowledge. Despite exhaustive online searches for legal remedies or any documentation that could bolster my case and advocate for a safer workplace environment, her words became my sanctuary. Her influence ignited a passion within me to create meaningful tools for women to navigate similar isolating challenges, fostering a sense of empowerment and support within a landscape that is rife with adversity.

**Chapter 2** undertakes an extensive examination of theoretical concepts that underpin this research study, namely, identity and profile, capacity as well as effectiveness. It provides that capacity is the prerequisite competency required to work and successfully complete work objectives. In the purview of urban management, capacity or competence can be delineated into three categories, namely, analytical ability, managerial expertise, and political acumen. In chapter, the literature demonstrates that women’s profiles and identities can either disable or enable their capacity to work effectively. In this context, effectiveness relates to one’s ability to identify a problem, analyse it and devise solutions to address the problem and achieve successful outcomes.



The cover image for this chapter is a tribute to an industry colleague—an inspirational figure and acquaintance—who consistently challenges the boundaries of what a young black woman can achieve within this field. Her journey has been marked

by a relentless pursuit of success despite facing formidable barriers. Her impact extends beyond South Africa, reaching across Europe and now into North America. She actively advocates for women in architecture and urban planning, urging them not to retreat when finding themselves as the sole representatives in professional settings. Instead, she encourages leveraging that unique access to create opportunities for others who share similar backgrounds. Her message resonates with the objective of this research, underlining the importance of using one's presence in influential spaces to pave the way for more diverse voices and perspectives.

**Chapter 3** elucidates the research methodologies employed, primarily focusing on data collection. This study engaged qualitative research methods, utilising both online survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews to dissect the impact of women's identities on their capacity and effectiveness at work. While the sample sizes of the instruments did not meet the

targeted numbers and encompass all intended demographics (coloured women and women over 60 years old) and numbers due to time constraints, the findings from 29 online survey participants and 12 in-depth interviewees provided valuable insights into the study's objectives.



This cover image for this chapter draws inspiration from an exceptional, trailblazing woman who epitomises excellence, scaling remarkable heights despite encountering systemic barriers that hindered

her progress. media, reveal her academic prowess and active engagement in leadership roles. She has charted an unconventional path marked by innovation and grassroots initiatives, which are testament to her academic prowess, and yet encountered financial exclusion that impeded her quest for a qualification in higher education. Her resilience and determination have enabled her to make a significant impact within the education system, positively influencing the lives of numerous learners. She stands as a beacon of hope, uplifting and nurturing individuals who have been historically excluded, contributing to a more inclusive and empowered community.

**Chapter 4** encapsulates the findings gathered from the survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews. It synthesises these insights with the findings unearthed during the literature review process. These findings spotlight how women's identities and profiles distinctly affect their work capacity to achieve work objectives. While feminine traits like emotional intelligence and attention to detail empower conflict resolution and problem-solving, these same identities can demoralise women, subjecting them to doubts and undermining by peers and clients based solely on their gender and intersecting identities.



The cover image for this chapter highlights an industry colleague and acquaintance who embodies hope for the future of women within this field. She stands as a testament to the potential of a system functioning as intended. This acknowledgment does not diminish the challenges she may have encountered due to her intersecting identities as a young black woman. Rather, it underscores the rarity of positive instances where an exceptionally capable and diligent professional woman receives the recognition she rightfully deserves, despite prevailing biases.

**Chapter 5** reflects on the entire research study and proposes recommendations to navigate systemic workplace challenges faced by women on the basis of their identities and profiles. Strategies for women to empower themselves in these environments include leveraging



collective action, delegation, setting boundaries, assimilating, and seeking assistance when overwhelmed. These strategies could foster more effective and sustainable work practices despite prevailing obstacles.

The cover image for this chapter features an author who has embraced her identity without reservation and calls for every woman who is marginalised to do the same.

Her words resonated deeply within me, reaching the hidden parts I had shielded from the world. They were a poignant reminder that in advocating for diversity and inclusion, we must never forget to seek happiness, even in the mundane. She emphasised the need to cease to apologise for our existence and instead learn to coexist without remorse. Her book underlined the importance of challenging established structures that discriminate against us and to refrain from apologising when they experience discomfort in our presence.



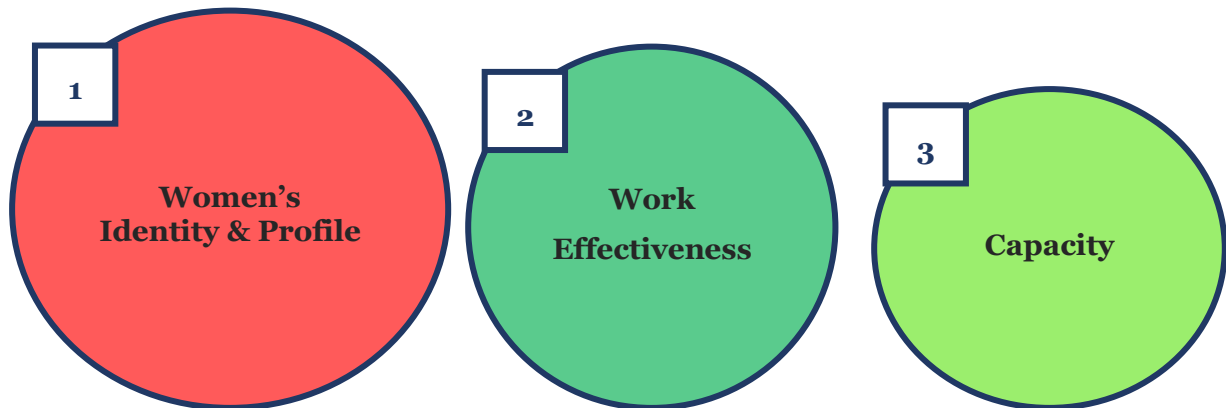
## **2. CHAPTER TWO: THREADS OF IDENTITY – WEAVING A NARRATIVE**

“I raise up my voice—not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard... We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back”.

*- Malala Yousafzai*

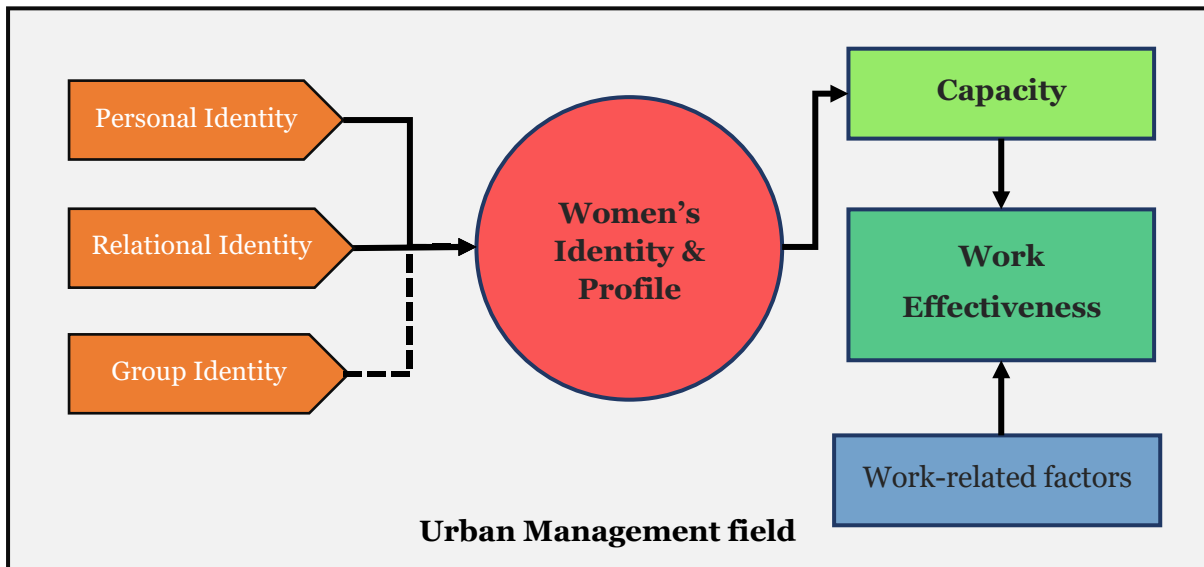
## 2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a literary analysis of the key concepts that underly the research question. Concepts such as identity, work effectiveness and urban management will be explored and theorised to contextualise the research question. The figure below demonstrates the three concepts that have been identified as the most relevant for this research, as well as their relative prominence to the research study.



**Figure 2.1:** *Theoretical concepts that guided the literary analysis* – The depicted diagram outlines the core concepts central to the research study: identity profile, work effectiveness, and capacity, forming the foundational basis of this investigation.

As illustrated by the sizes of the annotations, the concept of identity is presumed to have a greater impact on the research, followed by work effectiveness and then capacity. This research explores the complex interaction between women's identity, capacity and work effectiveness within the purview of the urban management discipline. Due to the limited exploration of such concepts within the urban management field, the chapter draws literary works from other disciplines such as sociology, psychosocial studies, business management. To demonstrate the envisioned relationship and intersectionality between these three variables, a conceptual framework diagram shown below was developed.



**Figure 2.2:** *Conceptual framework diagram* – The diagram shows the correlation between the theoretical underpinnings of this study. It highlights women's identities, which is classified into three categories, alongside capacity which is a prerequisite for work effectiveness.

The concept of identity, and more specifically, women's identity is the focal point of this research, thus its positionality and bold colour in the above conceptual framework diagram. There are many interpretations of identity, such as those that distinguish between self-identity which is influenced by personal or internal factors, and perceived identity which is influenced by external factors. Personal identity consists of factor such as self-esteem, self-confidence, motivation, ambition, and personal goals. On the other hand, perceived identity encompasses assumptions, stereotypes and biases made on the basis of one's appearance, behaviour, beliefs, and preferences. These perceptions, whether positive or negative influence how coworkers, managers, clients, and other stakeholders interact with women, which in turn determines the effectiveness of women based on opportunities or challenges with which they are confronted.

Some interpretations of identity categorise the concept into the three groups: individual identity, relational or interdependent identity, and collective identity. This is the most preferred theorisation of the concept of identity, and one that will underly the literary analysis of this research. For instance, the combination of one's individual identity, their roles within interdependent relations in the workplace, as well as their collective identities will influence how coworkers, managers, clients, and other stakeholders interact with women. In turn, these relationships determine the effectiveness of women based on opportunities or challenges with which they are confronted. This research unpacks these categories of women's identities in two ways; it asks women to comment on the effect of identity in their capacity to work effective by observing their individual behaviours and personal experiences. Secondly, it requires women to share experiences of their identities as perceived by external parties. These are

actors whose roles directly affect women's capacity to meet their professional objectives such as coworkers, superiors, clients, and beneficiaries.

The diagrammatical illustration of the relationship between capacity and effectiveness shows that capacity is a prerequisite to achieve work effectiveness. As alluded to earlier, capacity in the context of effectiveness relates to the competencies or skills sets required to perform a task. The three prerequisite skills to work effectively are analytical skills, managerial abilities and political acumen. Expert application of these competencies enables work effectiveness. However, the research hypothesises that women's identities – individual, relation and group identities either enable or disable these competencies that are required to achieve work effectiveness.

The diagram recognises that while women's identity influences their capacity to achieve effectiveness, there are other external and interrelated factors that also play a significant role, such as work-life balance, opportunities for growth and development, workplace culture and job satisfaction. However, the focus of the research was premised on examining women's identities and the external factors added a secondary layer to the already complex web of understanding women's identities in relation to workplace effectiveness.

## **2.2. Tracing the Historical Footprints of Women in Management**

Historically, management positions, and other technical professions carried the notion of masculinity and were only reserved for men (Ramohai, 2019). When a few women managed to enter into such roles, they struggled to gain respect as leaders and managers (Markovic, *et al.*, 2013). Cited in Romohai, Hujgaard (2002) argues that societal conventions regarding leadership and management traditionally exclude women because leadership and management positions were perceived as roles to be occupied strictly by men. Men were believed to have innate qualities that make them better leaders than women. Unfortunately, this view remains persistent in modern-day societies. This is indicative of serious gender inequalities that remain prevalent globally, and more acutely in developing countries (PSA, 2019).

In his book chapter titled 'Analysing the Persistence of Gender Inequality: How to Think about the Origins', Jakson (2017) claims that anthropologists largely agree that women seldom occupy positions of higher statuses or great political power, in history and modern society. He provides that, while there have been some women in leadership positions, women with elevated statuses such as monarchies, or women who controlled wealth, these women are exceptions. In most societies, men largely occupy leadership roles, management positions, and technical professions, resulting in severe gender disparities. Literature on the origins of gender inequalities shows that this challenge is a consequence of various historical conditions that

could not be avoided at the time and have now influenced societal norms and expectations. Historical labour practices, which can be traced back to the agricultural society, have persisted over generations and shape cultural norms and values to this day (Alesina, *et al.*, 2013; Giuliano, 2017). For instance, the agricultural technology at the time, which largely entailed ploughs, required upper-body strength and grip. This led to more men specialising in agricultural work outside their homes while women remained in their household to specialise in domestic work.

However, this view largely depicts western experiences that are not entirely representative of some African societies. Black feminist scholars such as Jaiyeola and Adeyeye (2021) challenge notions that women were historically relegated to domestic roles while their counterparts participated in economically productive labour practices outside the homes. They argue that many African countries from pre-colonial times did not segregate tasks related to economic activity, domestic work or community service according to gender. Instead, these tasks were classified based on age, and intended for the collective benefit of the community (Ako-Nai, 2023). Thus, women could participate in economically productive activities along men, and their status was not inferior. Colonisation reconfigured socio-cultural and economic structures, leaving a legacy of class and gender inequalities in various areas, including governance, employment, and access to resources. Women and girls became marginalised and were subjected to the social construct of inferiority to men and boys (Nealon and Giroux, 2011; Leon-Guerrero, 2009). When the British colonised Nigeria in 1884, women's roles, particularly their economic participation, became confined to domestic duties and unpaid work, whereas men were given the most privilege and positioned as the new working class that women depended on for their livelihood (Adu, 2013). This disruption to pre-colonial socioeconomic systems, which led to the withdrawal of women's economic roles and power, occurred in all the British and French colonies within the African continent (Jaiyeola and Aladegbola, 2020; Okoronkwo, 2013).

The post-colonial system where women's labour contributions were rendered invisible as free or cheap labour, persisted long after the colonial rule ended. Men who took over relinquished their lowly paid jobs to women, and these have since become stereotyped as belonging to women despite institutional and cultural barriers that maintain women's economic participation (Jaiyeola and Adeyeye, 2021). For instance, women's inability to inherit land or property that can serve as collateral to access financial resources further perpetuates gender inequalities in economic settings (Raghuvanshi *et al.*, 2017; Tende, 2016; Kitching and Woldie, 2004).

Globally, the western civilisation around the 1920s saw an increase in women's participation in business. This period marked a turning point in history where more women engaged in paid work outside of their homes, although they largely occupied subordinate roles as clerks and

helpers. Since this era, major strides were made with regards to promoting women's rights and freedoms, the most notable examples being the historic waves of women's uprising from the 1960s. Despite these major strides, however, inequalities between men and women in leadership and management positions continue to persist, and the gender gap remains widened. The United Nations reported that although women constitute over 50% of the world's population, they occupy only 27% of management positions globally (ECOSOC, 2019). While this marks a slight increase from 26% in the year 2000 to 27% in 2018, the increase is negligible. Besides, this increase excludes the least developed countries which either stagnated or experienced a decline in the proportion of women in leadership and management positions (Moodley, et al., 2019; ECOSOC, 2019; Klasen, and Pieters, 2015).

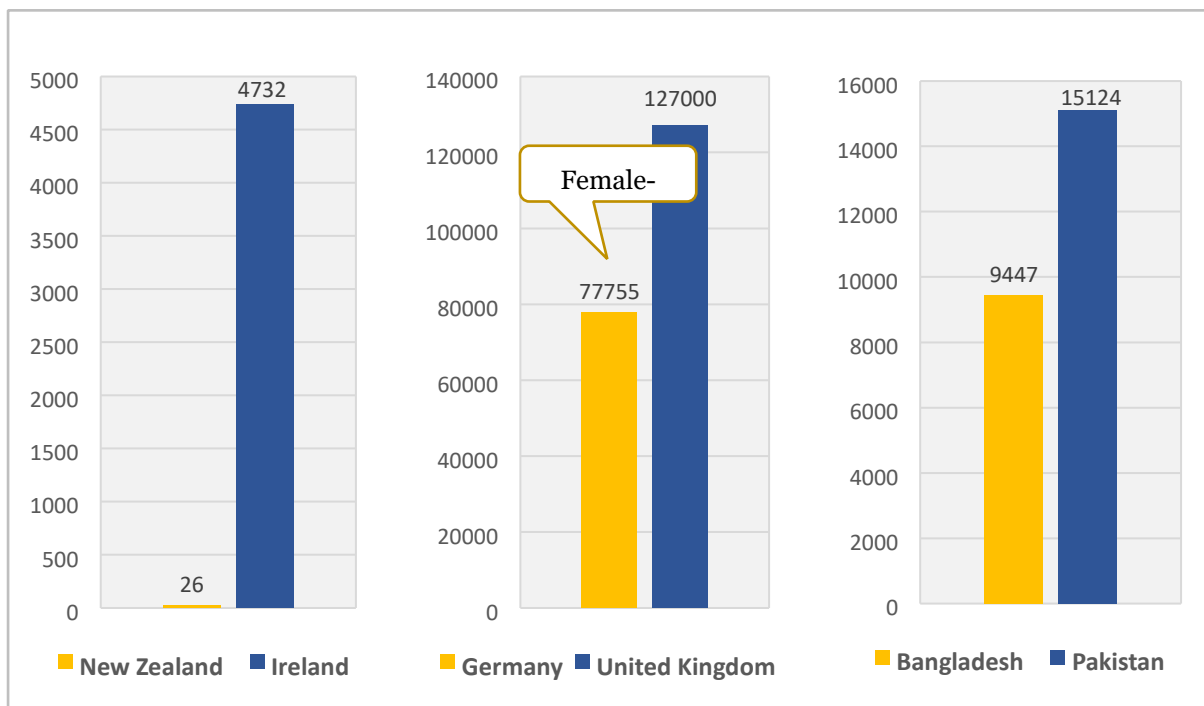
Romohai (2019) challenges that gender narratives often present women in senior management as less effective compared to men and lacking in leadership skills. She provides that these assertions seek to maintain the status quo of gender inequalities, which legitimise masculine experiences, and simultaneously, discourage women from occupying senior positions of influence and decision making. Historical labour practices during the preindustrial period prejudiced the evolution of gender norms and expectations, as well as the participation of women in formal work (Alesina, *et al.*, 2013; Giuliano, 2017). The physical advantages that men had over women in plough agricultural practices, which required upper body strength, strong grip and the burst of power to either control livestock or pull the plough led to a division of labour along gender lines. Men specialised in work outside of the homes while women focused on activities within their homes. This gendered division of labour led to the belief that "the natural place for women is within the home" (Alesina, *et al.*, 2013: 471). This belief continued well after the agriculture period had past, limiting the participation of women in the economy by reserving entrepreneurship, market employment and political roles – activities outside of home for men only. Although this view has shifted since the preindustrial period, societal institutions still maintain systems, procedures and cultures that perpetuate stereotypes against women, particularly in leadership and management positions. This is reflected in the institutional culture of these organisations, which perceives men as more deserving of and qualified to occupy leadership and management positions, while women, despite their qualifications and experience, are treated as incapable and less suitable for similar positions.

"Women's career aspirations, intellectual abilities, coping, and adaptability is often questioned, and discourses around them [are] used to discredit and keep them at the periphery of leadership positions (Romohai, 2019: 220). These are examples of institutional factors that drive women to resign from management positions. Hooks (2009) contends that women are burdened by the need to disprove stereotypical ideals that present them as imposters in particular spaces such as leadership and management positions. Unfortunately, these spaces

often create systemic processes and structures that seek to validate the stereotypes, thereby confirming the falsehood that women are indeed unable to cope with the demands of managerial positions and in so doing, disempowering them. Both Romohai (2019) and Hooks (2009) believe that the systematic processes sometimes include the deliberate appointment of unqualified women in management and leadership positions to reinforce the stereotypes that women are poor leaders and therefore undeserving of management positions and leadership roles.

In contrast to prevailing societal norms and assumptions, women have proven themselves to be capable leaders and managers. The recent Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) presented yet another opportunity for women to prove themselves as excellent leaders. News outlets reported that countries led by female heads of states showed strong leadership by containing the spread of COVID-19 and maintaining low levels of COVID-19 related deaths (Henley, 2020). While these claims were initially contested due to the lack of academic research, recent studies have proved that indeed, female-led countries exhibited better outcomes in managing the spread of COVID-19 and the consequential harm thereof, by acting decisively and swiftly (Henley, 2020). Although the swift decisions to shut down borders and implement a national lockdown sooner and longer is projected to have serious implications to the economies of female-led countries, especially in the long run. The leaders prioritised human life by working to prevent and or minimise potential fatalities as opposed to placing their economies at the forefront. This is evident from the average infection and death statistics between male- and female-led countries. According to an article published on USA Today, male-led countries have an average death rate of approximately 444.75 people per million, whereas in female-led countries, the death rate is significantly lower, averaging only 50.75 per million (Lee, 2020).

In a study that was conducted by the Centre for Economic Policy Research in collaboration with the World Economic Forum, where 194 countries were analysed, researchers found that the proactive and coordinated policy responses from female-led countries contributed significantly to the management of the novice virus. The researchers compared the COVID-19 statistics from female-led countries against those of male-led neighbouring countries, who share a similar demographic composition. This was intended to counterpoise the small sample size, remove outliers and pair countries that share similar characteristics (Henley, 2020). The figure below compares COVID-19 related deaths between male- and female-led countries that share similar demographic profiles.



**Figure 2.3: Comparative Analysis of COVID-19 Deaths** – the diagram compares the number of deaths related to COVID-19 in countries led by women versus those countries led by men between January and July 2020.

Source: Adapted from JHU CSSE COVID-19 Data, 2020 from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/women-leaders-policymakers-covid19coronavirus/>

The figure shows three countries that are led women and compares them to similar neighbouring countries that are led by men. New Zealand, Germany and Bangladesh are the three countries led by women, while Ireland, the United Kingdom and Pakistan are the countries led by men. As shown in the figure above, the number of COVID-19 related deaths are significantly lower in countries led by women compared to the high death rates in similar countries that are led by men. Some reports warn that the low rates of COVID-19 related deaths and infections in female-led countries cannot simply be attributed to gender. The reports argue that countries led by women are generally more progressive and equal (in terms of their socio-economic status), making it easier for their citizens to accept shared sacrifices (Tett, 2020). Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the leadership demonstrated by female-led countries saved millions of people from infections and the consequential death. Female leaders represent diversity, and they are likely to encourage diverse views in devising plans and strategies to divert crises (Taub, 2020). In Germany for instance, a female-led government considered information from various sources and consulted experts to eliminate possible blind spots and gaps in the decision-making processed that preceded the COVID-19 policy response. In contrast, male-led countries such as Britain and Sweden relied largely on medical research and modelling conducted by their internal advisers, with limited solicitation of external expertise (Taub, 2020).

Lazear (1999) and Baer *et al.*, (2013) postulate that gender diversity nurtures creativity and creates a conducive environment for more effective problem-solving. The absence of adequate representation of women in management and leadership roles may deprive organisations and teams of innovative solutions that are essential in achieving their goals and objectives. The lack of diversity in management teams that envisioned, planned, and implemented COVID-19 strategies, particularly in male-led countries, might have contributed to their poor response and mitigation measures. To forge a way forward, Schein (2010) and others (Trice & Beyer, 1993) suggest that, although management practices can be influenced by prevailing societal norms, they can also adapt to envision and instill a new, more inclusive culture. Thus, having more women in decision-making roles can shape institutions in ways that break cycles that discrimination and marginalisation.

### **2.3. Navigating Gender Dynamics and its Significance in the Urban Planning and Management Field**

As with many technical and skilled professions, urban planning has a history of exclusion, particularly to women. For the longest time, the profession was known to be a white male dominated industry that was only practiced by Western nations. Jacqueline Leavitt (1980) and Clara Greed (1978) attest to the profession's inability to integrate women into the previously male dominated practice. While the lack of women planners is blamed on the absence of role models to inspire others to enter the profession between the 1950s and early 1980s, various factors, including economic, political and societal norms limited women's entry into the profession. For instance, many political contexts prevented women from meaningfully participating in the labour market, particularly technical positions, and other decision-making roles. In cases where women attempted to join the profession, organisations showed very little effort to create conducive environments for women, and to promote planning approaches that were gender-sensitive planning approaches. This resulted in some women exiting the profession because their participation made no difference.

The rise in feminist movements between the 1970s and 1980s had a profound impact on the profession in regard to women/s entry. However, the increase in the number of women created expectations that women would automatically find themselves in decision-making roles where they could address structural challenges that affected women, such as raising awareness about the organisational structures and operations that were gender-blind, including the practices and culture. Greed (1978) denotes how the planning practice lacked gender awareness and perpetuated the exclusion of women in its zoning and land use policies. She argued that a planning profession without women was a land use and zoning practices that ignored issues of childcare; distance between home and work; effective and affordable public transportation and public space safety. She noted however, that to make a valuable contribution to the

profession, women required workplaces whose cultures are inclusive and provided reasonable accommodation to their needs as the nature of the environment affects their planning work.

In addition to gender, entry into these professions was further determined according to one's racial category and class. In this instance, black women and or black women of a lower class would be least likely to enter into the profession compared to white men or white middle-class men. In a study that deliberately uses anecdotal evidence from various countries in Africa, Olufemi a Nigeria woman who was training to be qualified as an urban planner, draws from her personal experiences to highlight how her identity as a woman limited her career pursuits within her cultural context. Also drawing from the experiences of 25 female town planners, she found that women planners in Africa – specifically in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe, constitute a negligible proportion of planning professionals (Olufemi, 2008). She purports that their contributions to the professional remain unrecognised, while mentors and role models within the professional still largely encompass men (Ovens, 2007; Berrisford, 2006).. Deviating from the monotonous research approach that removes the emotional experiences of participants, Olufemi anchors her study on these emotive encounters by marrying the participant's accounts with her personal, confessional, and reflective experiences. She submits that in traditional households, especially in some African cultures, women's identities as mothers, wives and caregivers often takes precedence while other identities such those professional settings tend to be secondary. She lamented that,

“Training to become a planner in Nigeria was very challenging in a culture where women are seen to belong to the domestic/private sphere and aspiring to do a master's degree is perceived to be pushing your luck. In my postgraduate programme there were four females and 14 males in a class of 18. Two of the females in the class were already working in Town Planning Offices. The two-year master's programme seems too long on the part of the students, considering the financial implications and the pressure on the women to start a family (the ultimate expectation of any woman born into the traditional African society)” (2008: 413).

This reflects the systemic challenges that women face on the basis of their identities, long before they enter the profession. Although South Africa tends to be slightly improved regarding the enrolments of women into the professional compared to other African countries, men still constitute the largest share of registered planning professionals. In practice, female planners remain at the peripheries with a tendency to work as town planning officers, administrators, and development control, whereas very few women become presidents of planning associations, or chief government planners. This is indicative of deeply rooted inequalities within the planning professions, and more generally, professions within the urban management environment.

In the South African context, the apartheid government, and its institutionalised discrimination in favour of non-whites limited black women's potential entry into the urban profession. The Group Areas Act, which legislated segregation based on racial and ethnic identities, set the foundation for women's exclusion in the planning profession in various ways. The Bantu Education system which offered poor quality education, further constrained career opportunities for black women and prevented them from the prescribed list of nonwhite career opportunities, which entailed teaching, nursing, social work and becoming a midwife. This left little room for women, specifically, black women to pursue careers in urban planning.

Economic factors were also instrumental in the lack of black women within the profession. Most families lacked the financial resources required to fund higher education. As a result, the education of the male child often took precedence over that of the female due to traditional and societal norms that male children grow to be providers and breadwinners, while women often become stay-at-home mothers and wives who tend to domestic work. The combination of these socio-economic and cultural factors shares the responsibility for the lack of women in some professions, including urban planning.

Echoing sentiments shared by Greed (1978), Olufemi (2008) highlights that in addition to lack of meaningful integration of women in the urban planning field, the environments in which the few women exist are not gender-friendly or sensitive to the needs of women. As a result, women's inputs and or outputs are often perceived as invaluable thus leading them to leave the professions in which they are qualified for other fields in which they will feel valued, supported and less isolated. Feminist scholars deem the phenomenon in which women exit their professional careers as a 'leaky pipeline' (Schweitzer *et al.*, 2011). Maicom (1992) points to the erasure of gender and women's studies in favour of other political issues such as race integration as one of the reasons for the lack of meaningful gender transformation in the field, particularly in South Africa. She emphasises that planning education must centre gender theories and feminist lenses to improve awareness and upskill urban practitioners on gendersensitive planning and implementation.

#### **2.4. Exploring the Impact of Gender Identity on Practices in Urban Management**

The integration of women into planning practice has profoundly influenced organisational dynamics and introduced a discernible shift in planning methodologies. This section explores initiatives, programs, and policies crafted to rectify historical gender biases, the exclusion of women, and inequalities within the profession, and highlights the significance of applying analysing challenges through the gendered lens. The emergence of feminist movements in the 1970s underscored the emphasis on granting access to and increasing the representation of

women in the workplace. This was a deliberate effort to challenge traditional norms relegating women to homemaking roles, while men were predominantly perceived as breadwinners (Schweitzer *et al.*, 2011).

The symbolic value of challenging these norms becomes more persuasive when more female planners hold authoritative roles. Their representation in management and decision-making positions introduces a gendered perspective, promoting the inclusion of historically disadvantaged groups in the planning profession. These challenges stereotypical views of inferiority and incapacity based on identity (Adichie, 2009). However, simply increasing the number of women in the urban planning profession, although symbolic, is insufficient. More work is required to address systemic issues that prohibited women's entry into the profession and gender equality, and this can be achieved through an adoption of a gender-sensitive planning approach. Watson (1999) defines a gender-sensitive approach as one that ensures that planning policies, programmes and procedures affect men and women equally; they are sensitive to the unique needs of women and enable the redress of past imbalances. Gender sensitive planning approaches may involve the formulation of methodological tools to address elements of gender representation and analysis in policy formulation and review, as well as the allocation of resources to support the implementation of gender-sensitive programmes (Moser, 1993). Watson's work is useful in providing a practical framework to guide the integration of gender-sensitivity in the urban planning. She recommends gender role identification, gender needs assessment, the use of disaggregated data according to gender, intersection planning and gender mainstreaming as some of the practical tools to guide a gender-sensitive planning process.

Todes, Sithole and Williamson (2007) provide a practical example of a gender-sensitive planning approach through the concept of gender championing. In their research, Todes *et al.*, explore the place of gender in relation to the Integrated Development Planning process in various communities within the KwaZulu-Natal province. In this regard, gender championing as a political and leadership position contributed to the visibility of women in staff appointment and in their advocacy for gender sensitive planning. The involvement of women in projects led to compliance with national policy guidelines on gender. However, the research also noted the limitations that the integration of gender-sensitivity in the IDP process remains limited due to the conservative nature of politics in the study area, the lack of resources and capacity. Additionally, the lack of technical support and representation is a serious disadvantage and causes gaps once champions divest from projects.

To expand on gender-sensitive planning approaches within a broader community level, the UN-Habitat's Her City Toolbox offers a comprehensive approach that could provide a valuable perspective. The Her City Toolbox is a digital platform that sought to promote gender-inclusive

urban planning by providing practical tools and methodologies for involving women and girls in the urban planning process, ensuring that their voices and needs are adequately represented (UN-Habitat, 2021). The Her City Toolbox emphasises participatory planning processes that engage women and girls at all stages of urban development, from initial design to implementation and monitoring. This approach aligns with the need for gender-sensitive urban management by fostering a more inclusive and equitable planning environment. By integrating the methodologies from the Her City Toolbox, urban management practices can move beyond merely appointing gender champions to actively engaging women and girls in the planning process. This can lead to more sustainable and effective outcomes, as it addresses the root causes of gender inequality in urban environments. Moreover, the toolbox provides a framework for building the capacity of local communities and stakeholders, which can help overcome some of the limitations identified by Todes et al. (2007), such as lack of resources and technical support.

Gender focal points, akin to gender championing, play a pivotal role in gender mainstreaming, sharing information and raising awareness about policy implications for gender, particularly for women (Daly, 2005). A practical example of gender mainstreaming is the UN-Habitat's programme titled "Empowering Urban Women Entrepreneurs through Housing Development and Land Rights in Mozambique – Manica City" which identified that cultural practices that often favour men over women with regards to landownership have left women with no access to adequate housing or formal finance options despite the fact that some women's entrepreneurship activities provide the main source of income within their households (UNHabitat, 2012). The gender mainstreaming interventions targeted about 450 women entrepreneurs who were members of a Credit and Savings Association to help formalise the women's business activities and help them gain access to finance options. The project also offered affordable finance options through lease-to-own scheme, through which women could access homeownership. However, a key concern that required careful consideration was intrafamily power relations; placing the burden of housing payments on women whereas men controlled the income, including that which is generated from women's entrepreneurial activities. This also highlighted the significance of involving both men and women in gender mainstreaming, and not only focusing on women, although they may be the most marginalised.

## **2.5. An Exploration of Identity and Identity Formation**

Identity is widely accepted to mean a person's understanding of self as a distinct and unique entity (Tsang, Hui, and Law, 2011). Other scholars, however, purport that identity is not a singular experience as people may hold multiple facets of self. One may define themselves as an independent agent within a society, an interdependent part of a particular relationship, and a member of a larger group. The phenomenon where a person places significance on multiple

aspects of their identity when constructing their sense of self is known as identity orientation (Cheek *et al.*, 2002). Kashima and Hardie (2000) classify group identity orientation into three categories, namely, individual identity, which highlights one's unique characteristics that differentiate from others; relational identity which signifies interpersonal connections and one's emphasised role within the relation; and collective identity which places emphasises on unifying characteristics that are shared with other members of a particular group.

Brewer (2001) adds another dimension, introducing personal, relational, group-based, and collective identities. In relational identity, individuals construct aspects of their self-concept through interpersonal relationships and the roles they play in those interactions. This extends to various contexts, such as parent and child relationships, interactions between service providers and clients, and dynamics between managers and subordinates. On the other hand, group identity emerges through membership in a specific group and the common ties shared within that collective. Brewer draws parallels between group identity and collective identity, highlighting their shared focus on commonalities among members. However, she introduces a nuanced element to group identity, emphasising the additional value derived from shared meaning within the group, distinguishing it from a self-concept solely shaped by socialisation. The concept of identity formation proves instrumental in comprehending the nuanced identity of women within the context of the research question. Here, identity transcends individual unique characteristics and self-perception, encompassing a shared sense of identity and meaning formation within diverse groups. This concept is intricately linked to the roles undertaken within various relational associations. As a result, this research explores the three categories of identity – individual, relational, and collective – to dissect their impact on women's capacity to work effectively.

The individual identity orientation serves as a valuable lens for discerning the distinct contributions and efforts invested by individual women in their professional pursuits. These contributions, rooted in personal and internal factors such as intelligence, motivation, ambition, and diligence, are inherently unique to each individual. Insights derived from this perspective shed light on why certain women may demonstrate effectiveness in their work compared to others, particularly when external factors remain constant. On the other hand, the relational identity perspective proves invaluable in unravelling the intricate dynamics characterising the interactions between women and their superiors, colleagues, or clients. It delves into the specific roles that women play within these relational identities, clarifying how these roles contribute to the effective fulfilment of their job objectives.

Presumably, from parties with whom women share interdependent relationships contributes significantly to their effectiveness, emphasizing the paramount importance of satisfying the other interdependent unit. The collective identity orientation provides valuable insights into understanding women as a cohesive unit, where perceptions and assumptions about the group

may shape perceptions about the individual. Gurin and Markus (1989) content that a collective gender identity allows women a perspective from which to understand their position in society, and in this particular instance, in the workplace. Additionally, the collective identity aids in understanding assumptions and stereotypes imposed on women due to their association or membership with a specific group, irrespective of the accuracy of these assumptions.

However, despite the acknowledged importance of identity orientation in fostering a coherent and unified sense of self, the three categories of identity orientation may not hold equal significance for every individual (Gaertner, *et al.*, 2012). This implies that while individual identity orientation, for instance, may be of value to a specific person, collective identity orientation may not carry similar weight. Consequently, assumptions about women's identity as a collective, whether positive or negative, may not resonate with or be applicable to a woman who views collective identity formation as unimportant. Bergeron (2006) argues that if women do not perceive themselves as connected and thus create distance, they risk fostering divisiveness, creating conditions conducive to their continued marginalisation. This premise operates on the assumption that women's societal position is generally more disadvantaged than men's, making collective identity a prerequisite for collective action—where women collaborate to achieve a unified objective.

## **2.6. Exploring Intersectionality: Gender and its Interplay with Various Identities**

Feminist scholars believe that examining women and gender should encompass an understanding of women's intersectional identities. This perspective acknowledges the diverse nature of women, considering factors such as race, sexual orientation, class, nationality, religion, age, marital status, language, location, and culture (Roos, 2020). Misra (2018) articulates that an intersectional approach does not strive for objectivity but rather recognises the varied and unique experiences women encounter based on their intersecting identities. In the workplace and broader society, women's experiences are intricately linked with these intersectional factors, as delineated by social identity theory (Brewer, 2001; Ely, 1995; Wharton, 1992). These categories can either be advantageous to some women or prejudicial to others, depending on the specific intersections under consideration. Liu (2019) argues that intersectionality establishes subcategories within social identities based on an individual's combination of demographic and physiological characteristics. For instance, social identity theory posits that individuals sharing more social identity subcategories, such as gender, race, or class, are more likely to identify with each other compared to those with fewer shared characteristics (Ely, 1995). Conversely, individuals with less favourably perceived combinations of characteristics may encounter more adverse experiences than those perceived

more favourably. In this regard, educated black women from middle and high-income households are more advantaged compared to uneducated black women from low-income households. Their favourable education status and class insulate them from other forms of discrimination to which uneducated women from low-income households are subjected.

Race, gender, and other identity categories often act as sources of disadvantage and discrimination, particularly for individuals with combinations of identity categories deemed less favourable, such as black, poor, disabled, or queer people. However, when individuals with less favourable identity combinations unite as a collective voice to mobilise action, they can become a force for social empowerment and reconstruction (Crenshaw, 1993). Critics of collective identity politics argue that it sometimes conflates or overlooks intra-group differences. In instances of workplace discrimination, the subjugation of women is frequently influenced by additional identity categories such as race, class, sexuality, or religion. For example, black women who belong to the working class, identify as homosexual, and are foreign nationals from the African diaspora may face more significant disadvantages than South African-born black women who are middle-class and heterosexual. Despite shared gender and race, differences in class, sexuality, and nationality can be accentuated, leading to divisions, especially when the privileges of one group whose identity categories are more favourable, are threatened. These divisions may result in women competing against each other in the workplace, aligning with men whose intersecting identities support with their current objectives and goals.

### **Understanding the Nuances of Intersectionality from African Perspectives**

African feminist scholars provide critical insights to deepen the understanding of intersection from black women's point of view, particularly, how intersectionality may affect black women's lives in unique ways, especially within the workplace. Oyěwùmí (1997) challenges western gender constructs and highlights their divergence in African contexts. She argues that gender, as understood in the western context, does not always apply seamlessly in African societies where other factors such as seniority and kinship play more significant roles. This understanding is crucial in workplaces where western gender norms might clash with African cultural practices, potentially affecting black women's upward mobility and effectiveness. In certain spaces such as during community facilitation or stakeholder engagements, young black women in particular may be expected to behave differently and address older men and women with respect, or to not speak at all because of cultural norms and traditions that prohibit them from doing so, whereas this behaviour is often discouraged and even punished to some extent in the workplace. Their seniority in the workplace and their education levels almost bare no effect in such cultural settings where seniority and or manhood takes precedence. This example segues succinctly into Mama's (1995) submission that colonialism and other historical events

that interrupted African countries have shaped contemporary gender norms and relations. Her work reveals that colonial legacies continue to influence workplace dynamics, often disadvantaging black women by perpetuating stereotypes and systemic biases. Understanding these historical contexts is vital for addressing the nuanced challenges black women face in achieving workplace equality. Pereira (2014) supports this view by emphasising the importance of considering local contexts in intersectional analyses, lest those who do not conform to workplace norms and expectations face additional barriers.

Nkiru Nzegwu (2006) examines how family structures and cultural practices shape the intersectional identities of black women. She argues that the roles black women occupy within their families and communities profoundly influence their professional trajectories. For instance, the dual expectation to maintain employment while managing substantial familial responsibilities can curtail their career advancement. In South Africa, like other African countries, approximately 38% of households are headed by black women who serve as primary breadwinners while simultaneously undertaking the majority of domestic tasks (Khosa-Nkatini, 2020). This phenomenon, known as the dual burden, is driven by economic necessity and evolving labour markets. It compels women to contribute significantly to household income despite entrenched gender norms. A consideration of local context and intersectionality, thus, enables a better understanding of women's realities, and can facilitate the establishment of sufficient institutional support to achieve effectiveness and upward mobility.

## **2.7. Gender Sensitivity vs Gender Awareness**

In exploring the interplay between women's identities and their workplace effectiveness, it is crucial to distinguish between gender sensitivity and gender awareness, as these concepts underpin various dimensions of gender dynamics in professional environments. While these terms are often used interchangeably, they encompass distinct aspects of gender relations and have different implications for organizational practices and individual experiences.

Gender Sensitivity is fundamentally about recognising and addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by individuals of different genders. According to Moser (1993), gender sensitivity involves a nuanced understanding of how gender-based inequalities manifest and the ability to respond with tailored practices that promote inclusivity and equity. This involves practical adjustments in the workplace, such as implementing policies that address barriers faced by women. For instance, flexible working hours and targeted mentorship programs are examples of gender-sensitive practices that help mitigate obstacles to women's careers.

Gender Sensitivity involves the ability to recognise and respond to the specific needs, experiences, and challenges that different genders face. This concept is rooted in the work of

scholars such as Molyneux (1985), who discussed how gender-sensitive policies can address the unique barriers faced by women in various contexts. This concept aligns with Rutgers (2018), who emphasizes the importance of adopting a gender-sensitive approach that acknowledges and responds to the diverse needs of individuals based on their gender. According to Rutgers, gender sensitivity involves practical adjustments and supportive mechanisms aimed at creating a more inclusive environment. For example, gender-sensitive policies may include flexible working hours and parental leave, which address barriers faced by women in balancing work and family responsibilities (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998). These policies are designed to create an environment that supports women's professional development and effectiveness.

Support structures within gender-sensitive workplaces are also critical. Initiatives such as women's networks and resource groups, as highlighted by Hing & McLaughlin (1998), provide targeted support and resources that help women navigate workplace challenges. Additionally, leadership that is responsive to gender issues—demonstrated by leaders who actively seek to understand and address gender disparities—plays a significant role in fostering a supportive environment for women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Gender-sensitive approaches thus contribute to enhancing women's workplace effectiveness by creating supportive structures and practices.

On the other hand, Gender Awareness encompasses a broader understanding of gender as a social construct and its implications for power relations and identity. Scholars like Connell (2005) emphasize that gender awareness involves recognizing how gender norms and stereotypes shape professional experiences and interactions. This awareness extends to understanding how societal norms impact gender roles and expectations, influencing organizational culture and individual behaviours (Ridgeway, 2011). Gender awareness also involves adopting an intersectional perspective, as discussed by Crenshaw (1989), acknowledging how different aspects of identity—such as race, class, and ethnicity—intersect with gender to create unique experiences and challenges. This perspective helps identify and address compounded disadvantages that women of diverse backgrounds face in the workplace (Cho et al., 2013). By challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes, gender awareness fosters systemic and cultural changes necessary for achieving gender equity (Brah & Phoenix, 2004).

In comparative terms, gender sensitivity and gender awareness both aim to promote gender equity but from different angles. Gender sensitivity focuses on practical adjustments and support mechanisms to address immediate needs and barriers faced by women. This approach is evident in specific policies and practices designed to enhance women's participation and effectiveness in the workplace (O'Connor & Netting, 2004). In contrast, gender awareness involves a theoretical and comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics and norms,

driving long-term cultural and systemic changes (Walby, 2005). Integrating both gender sensitivity and gender awareness offers a holistic approach to understanding how women's identities affect their workplace effectiveness. Gender sensitivity ensures that practical needs and barriers are addressed, while gender awareness fosters a deeper understanding of the systemic and cultural factors influencing women's experiences and opportunities. This combined approach allows for the development of more nuanced and effective strategies for promoting gender equity and enhancing women's effectiveness in the workplace.

## **2.8. Gender Mainstreaming: A Feminist Approach to Understanding Women's Identities and Workplace Effectiveness**

Gender mainstreaming is a comprehensive strategy that aims to integrate gender perspectives into all levels of policy and decision-making, ensuring that gender equality becomes a fundamental aspect of organisational and societal frameworks. This feminist approach is pivotal in examining how women's identities and profiles influence their effectiveness in various domains, particularly in the workplace. To unpack the complex relationship between gender mainstreaming and women's effectiveness, it is essential to explore the epistemic dimensions of gender, including power relations and intersectionality.

### **Epistemic Understanding of Gender and Power Relations**

At its core, gender mainstreaming challenges traditional power dynamics by questioning and restructuring existing gender hierarchies. This approach aligns with Scott's (1986) assertion that gender is a fundamental axis of power that shapes social relations and organisational structures. By embedding gender perspectives into policy and practice, gender mainstreaming seeks to address and rectify these power imbalances. Power relations are central to understanding the impact of gender mainstreaming on women's effectiveness. Gender mainstreaming exposes how institutional practices and policies often perpetuate gender inequalities by reinforcing traditional gender roles and biases. As Fraser (2009) argues, to achieve substantive gender equality, it is not enough to merely include women in existing structures; rather, there must be a transformation of the power dynamics that govern these structures. Gender mainstreaming thus aims to dismantle these power structures and create more equitable opportunities for women.

### **Intersectionality and Gender Mainstreaming**

Intersectionality, a concept introduced by **Crenshaw (1989)**, is crucial in analysing gender mainstreaming. This framework acknowledges that individuals experience multiple, overlapping forms of identity, such as race, class, and sexuality, which intersect with gender, to produce unique experiences of discrimination and privilege. Gender mainstreaming must therefore consider these intersecting identities to effectively address the diverse needs and challenges faced by women. Collins (2000) expands on this by highlighting that a feminist

approach to gender mainstreaming must move beyond a one-size-fits-all perspective and address the specific realities of women at the intersection of various social categories. For instance, black women, working-class women, and LGBTQ+ women may face distinct barriers that are not adequately addressed by generic gender policies. Effective gender mainstreaming requires policies that are sensitive to these intersecting identities and that provide tailored support to address the compounded disadvantages faced by these groups.

### **Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Identities in the Workplace**

In the context of workplace effectiveness, gender mainstreaming offers a lens through which to understand how women's identities impact their professional experiences and opportunities. Gender mainstreaming seeks to ensure that policies and practices are not only inclusive but also transformative, addressing both the visible and invisible barriers that women face (Miller, 2009). This approach involves a critical examination of how organisational cultures, structures, and policies affect women differently based on their identities. Acker (2006) argues that organisations are gendered institutions where gender relations are embedded in the daily routines and practices. Gender mainstreaming challenges these embedded norms by promoting practices that support women's participation and advancement. For example, gender-sensitive recruitment practices and performance evaluations can help mitigate biases that might otherwise disadvantage women (Kanter, 1977). Furthermore, gender mainstreaming involves a continuous process of assessment and adjustment to ensure that policies remain responsive to the evolving needs of women (Krook & Mackay, 2011). This dynamic approach is essential for addressing the complex and changing nature of women's identities and their impact on workplace effectiveness.

### **Challenges and Critiques of Gender Mainstreaming**

While gender mainstreaming holds promise for promoting gender equality, it is not without its challenges and critiques. Some scholars argue that gender mainstreaming can sometimes lead to superficial changes that do not address the root causes of gender inequality (Meyer, 2008). For instance, policies may be implemented without genuine commitment or may fail to address the deeper structural issues that perpetuate gender inequalities. Additionally, the application of gender mainstreaming can be hindered by a lack of intersectional analysis, leading to policies that are inadequate for addressing the diverse experiences of women (Lombardo & Meier, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial for gender mainstreaming efforts to be accompanied by a robust intersectional approach that ensures that all women's identities and experiences are considered and addressed.

Ultimately, gender mainstreaming represents a significant feminist approach to understanding and addressing the impact of women's identities on their workplace effectiveness. By challenging existing power dynamics and incorporating an intersectional perspective, gender

mainstreaming aims to create more equitable and inclusive environments. However, to be truly effective, gender mainstreaming must go beyond surface-level changes and address the underlying structural and cultural factors that perpetuate gender inequalities. Through a nuanced understanding of gender, power relations, and intersectionality, gender mainstreaming can contribute to a more comprehensive and transformative approach to gender equality in the workplace.

## 2.7. Understanding Capacity and Effectiveness: Two Sides of the Same Coin.

According to Alkaf et al., (2021), effectiveness is marked by the realisation of predetermined goals and objectives. It entails executing the correct tasks within stipulated timeframes and utilising available resources—financial, human, equipment, or information (Husman, 2011). In this context, work effectiveness emphasises the outcomes achieved in pursuing specific objectives, often without accounting for the sacrifices made in attaining these goals. Gbadamosi (1999) quantifies work effectiveness mathematically, equating it to the ratio of actual output to expected output, thereby assessing whether an entity performs as anticipated. This measurement encompasses aspects of quality, quantity, time, and cost.

The concept of effectiveness in contemporary discourse goes beyond the attainment of specific objectives and goals. It signifies a holistic logical framework in which a deliberate policy action is used to articulate the problem statement, while providing effective solutions to address the identified problem. Thus, effectiveness signals both the effectual process and the successful policy outcomes. However, developing effective solutions to development problems requires a prerequisite set of skills and competencies, which Wu (2017) defines them as capacities. These capacities, understood as skills and competencies, required to achieve effective problem solving include analytical proficiencies, managerial abilities, and political endowments (Wu *et al.*, 2017; Howlett and Ramesh, 2016). The table below provides a concise summary of the prerequisite capacities that enable effectiveness.

	<b>Individual level</b>	<b>Organizational level</b>
<b>Analytical skills</b>	Policy Analytical Capacity: <i>Knowledge of policy substance and analytical techniques and communication skills</i>	Organizational Capacities: Information and e-services architecture; <i>budgeting and human resource</i> management systems

	<b>Individual level</b>	<b>Organizational level</b>
<b>Managerial skills</b>	Managerial Expertise Capacity: Leadership; strategic <i>management; negotiation</i> and <i>conflict resolution</i>	Administrative Resource Capacity: <i>Funding; staffing;</i> levels of intraagency and inter-agency coordination
<b>Political skills</b>	Political Acumen Capacity: <i>Understanding of the needs and positions of different stakeholders;</i> Judgment of political feasibility	Organizational Political Capacity: <i>Politicians' support</i> for the agency; levels of <i>inter-organizational trust</i> and communication

**Figure 2.4:** Prerequisite capacities to enable effectiveness – The table shows three categories of skills-sets required by individuals and organisations to achieve effectiveness in problem solving. Source: Howlett and Ramesh, 2016

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At the *individual* level, analytical capacity entails various technical skills; managerial capacities involve leadership strategies; and political competences are embodied by the individual acumen of policymaking actors to assess the needs and interests of stakeholders. For *organizations*, analytical skills include information dissemination and the creation of an information-sharing architecture within and across administrative agencies; managerial competences encompass coordination of resources and personnel among agencies; and political aptitude concerns support and trust within and for public organizations. The original table also analyses the capacity requirements at a system level; however, this section has been omitted because it is irrelevant to the research question.

Analytical, managerial, and political capacities on the part of officials and urban practitioners can determine how well decision are made to address the identified and often complex challenges, and to successfully meet objectives. Their capacities can shape success in how opportunities are maximized, and conflicts reduced, how synergies are explored, and how contradictions are avoided. This is especially the case in circumstances where decisions must align with extraneous uncertainties that undermine the success of programmes or projects.

The required capacities to aid effectiveness among individuals can thus rest heavily on analytical aptitude that is supported by relevant institutions and enabling managerial resources. Urban practitioners and other key stakeholders who make decisions about the governance and management of urban area need to possess analytical skills, issue expertise, and knowledge gathered through practice or formal training (Meltsner 1975; Howlett and Lindquist, 2004; Wellstead and Stedman, 2010; and Howlett, 2011). These analytical traits are reinforced and facilitated by higher level organizational capabilities that allow plans to be

robust yet flexible, in order to most effectively anticipate and respond to contextual uncertainties (Considine, Alexander, and Lewis 2014; Dunlop and Radaelli, 2017; Howlett and Mukherjee, 2014; May, Koski, and Stramp, 2016; Capano and Woo, 2017).

Some studies offer a slightly different view of effectiveness. For instance, Chindarkar, Howlett, and Ramesh (2017) argue that effectiveness relates to the extent to which a policy achieves both technical goals (i.e. addresses the substantive problem at hand) and advances the political goals of the government (e.g. retain political office or strengthening legitimacy). The overarching lesson for practice from their analysis is that both political and technical feasibility are necessary conditions for effectiveness. In similar vein, Compton and Hart (2019), building on Bovens and Hart (1996) and McConnell (2010), examine policy effectiveness (success) in four dimensions. These are programmatic (the degree to which a policy achieves its stated goal), process (the extent to which the design process is socially appropriate and perceived as being just), political (the extent to which there is widespread political support), and *temporal* (the extent to which a policy sustains its performance in the face of changing circumstances). However, for the purposes of the research, Howlett and Ramesh's conceptualisation of effectiveness as it related to capacity was used as a benchmark against which the topic is explored. Their understanding of capacity as being analytical, managerial and political competencies that are prerequisite to achieve effectiveness perfectly encapsulates this research. It is useful in providing a framework against which women's identities enable or disable their capacity to achieve effectiveness within the urban management field.

Differentiating between effectiveness and efficiency is important as the two concepts are often conflated. Whereas effectiveness centres on achieving set objectives, efficiency emphasises achievements with the minimal utilisation of resources. However, despite significant resource requirements by urban practitioners in pursuing specific aims, and these could include materials, equipment, financial, and human resources; there often remains a scarcity, which presents challenges in ensuring efficiency and effectiveness. Urban professionals are expected to apply these resources or inputs and convert them into outputs efficiently, by adhering to the 'principle of productivity.' This principle, applicable across various urban operations such as urban development projects, underscores the need to maximise outputs while maintaining or reducing inputs. In essence, it involves increasing outputs with the same number of inputs, decreasing inputs while maintaining outputs, or improving the output-input ratio.

Many scholars have established that women bring invaluable strengths in the workplace, which enable them to successfully complete their work objectives (Sunganthi and Senthilkumar, 2016). The adeptness to applying a 'feminine touch' through emotional intelligence encompassing skills like empathy, intuition, and optimism offers a unique

advantage that not only enhances their effectiveness but inspires teamwork and camaraderie within their managed teams (Datta Gupta and Eriksson, 2012 and Bacolod and Blum, 2010). Excelling in communication, women tend to respond adeptly to visual, verbal, and emotional cues. While men might lean towards directive instructions and competitive approaches, women are often more inclined to listen, share ideas, and provide supportive guidance, fostering collaborative efforts and nurturing competent teams.

In urban work environments marked by unpredictability, women's ability to remain composed amid complexity is highly valuable. This composure allows women to analyse problems meticulously, devise efficient solutions without resorting to aggression (Sunganthi & Senthilkumar, 2016). Their attention to detail not only aids in effective problem-solving but also minimises errors, saving organisations valuable time and financial resources. Additionally, women often demonstrate a stronger ethical compass, motivating them to pursue work objectives with fairness and transparency (Sunganthi & Senthilkumar, 2016).

However, despite women's proven competencies, they often encounter biases in the workplace on the basis of their gender and other intersectional identities like race, sexual orientation, or disability (LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, 2022). In a longitudinal study titled *Women in the Workplace* where over 400,000 people were surveyed between 2015 and 2022, McKinsey & Company, findings revealed that women faced significant barriers, and these were more pronounced among black women. The study revealed significant disparities in the distribution of workloads and promotions, with women undertaking significantly more. Their competence is often questioned, leading to demeaning behaviours and a lack of support to perform their work objectives, including for career development. Recognition for their positive contributions remains scarce while mistakes are disproportionately penalised.

Assessing the effectiveness of women within the urban management discipline presents a multifaceted challenge that could potentially impede their career progress. The functions of urban management which encompass planning, organisation, leadership, and control – except for staffing – rarely demand its practitioners to produce quantifiable products or services (Jirjahn and Stephan, 2004; Datta Gupta and Eriksson, 2012). Instead, these roles predominantly entail collaborative problem solving within teams, thus, evaluating performance or the effectiveness thereof within team-oriented, non-quantitative contexts tends to be subjective. In these scenarios, the determination of women's effectiveness would rely heavily on the discretion of their supervisors or managers. This susceptibility amplified the potential for biases to influence managerial judgements consequently exposing women to potential gender-based and compounded intersectional discrimination (Jirjahn and Stephan, 2004; Datta Gupta and Eriksson, 2012). This view aligns with findings from a review of the municipal performance management system in five South African cities conducted by the

South African Cities Network (SACN). The review revealed that many city officials perceive the performance management system primarily as a punitive tool for addressing 'poor' performance, which has been weaponized to terminate senior officials. It is rare for performance management to be used for gathering information to improve planning and outcomes (Brown, 2021). Conversely, when assessing municipal performance reports, it appears that most officials, especially those in the built environment departments such as urban planning, urban design, transport engineering, and housing, meet their annual targets. However, there is no evidence of spatial transformation despite this purported impeccable performance (Brown, 2021).

## **2.8. Synthesis: So What?**

The historical exclusion of women from urban planning has been a complex interplay of sociopolitical norms, economic factors, and discriminatory policies. Despite strides made by feminist movements, gender inequalities persist within the profession. The experiences shared by women planners, particularly in African contexts, highlight the need for a paradigm shift in societal attitudes, professional environments, and educational approaches. Legacies of discriminatory legislation continue to cast shadows on the representation of black women in planning professions. The 'leaky pipeline' phenomenon, where women exit the profession due to undervaluation and lack of support, underscores the urgency for inclusive and supportive work environments.

Efforts to address these challenges must extend beyond mere numerical representation and delve into creating gender-sensitive planning approaches. The integration of gender theories and feminist perspectives in planning education is crucial for cultivating awareness and equipping practitioners to champion meaningful gender transformation. In striving for gender equity in urban planning, it is imperative to dismantle systemic barriers, challenge stereotypical views, and foster environments that recognise the diverse identities and contributions of women in the field. This calls for collaborative efforts from policymakers, educational institutions, and professional organizations to pave the way for a more inclusive and gender-sensitive urban planning landscape.

By delving into the impact of women's identity on their effectiveness within the urban management profession, the study seeks to bring to the forefront gendered aspects and other intersectional identities that have long been overlooked. The findings of this research are not merely a documentation of past disparities but a pivotal step toward fostering inclusivity. By shedding light on the unique challenges faced by women, the study aims to spark a much-needed dialogue and paradigm shift, that will catalyse the development of urban planning and management approaches that transcend traditional norms; to foster the creation of environments that are not only supportive and inclusive for women but serve as a blueprint for uplifting other minority groups. By understanding the nuances of women's experiences,

the researcher hopes that future practices and policies will be informed by a more comprehensive and equitable perspective, shaping a profession that truly reflects the diversity and richness of its practitioners.



### **3. CHAPTER THREE: NAVIGATING THE IDENTITY MAZE**

“If I can make it possible for another woman to be somewhere else in their life, to even be greater than me, that’s what I’m going to do.”

*- Nomathemba Mkhwanazi (pseudonym)*

Image by Getty (2019)

Available at: <https://www.power987.co.za/news/listen-what-about-the-mental-health-of-theblack-student/>

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter encompasses the methodological trajectory that was followed when conducting the research on the subject matter. It begins with contextualising the research within a specific geographical framework, considering the positioning of the urban management discipline within the School of Architecture and Planning. A deliberate choice was made to situate the study across South Africa's metropolitan areas, which represent the essence of the urban settings. The exploration of the country's metropolitan areas was conducted under the purview of women's identities – it serves as an additional dimension to understanding women's identities, given the stark contrasts between urban and rural women and the distinct challenges encountered by each group. The chapter outlines crucial decisions that guided the research process, which were meticulously tailored to provide comprehensive responses to the key research question as well as the sub-questions. Also integral to this chapter is the transparent unveiling of limitations and challenges that were encountered throughout the research process, and particularly during the data collection and analysis phase. These too are highlighted in the chapter.

The methodology inherently acknowledged the researcher's conscientious awareness of personal biases that could have been cultivated from her own unpleasant encounters as a young, single, black woman within the urban management profession. Such awareness was pivotal in shaping the research approach, ensuring an astute acknowledgment and contemplation of potential biases throughout the investigative process. The deliberate self-introspection by the researcher was undertaken to avoid skewing the research findings in a manner that favoured her preferred narrative and lived experiences. Additionally, by navigating the intricate details of the research methodology, the researcher's intent is to not only unveil the pathway that was traversed. She also aims to critically reflect on the decisions made, ensuring transparency, rigor, and an unwavering commitment to unearthing insights into the complexities of women's identities within the urban environment.

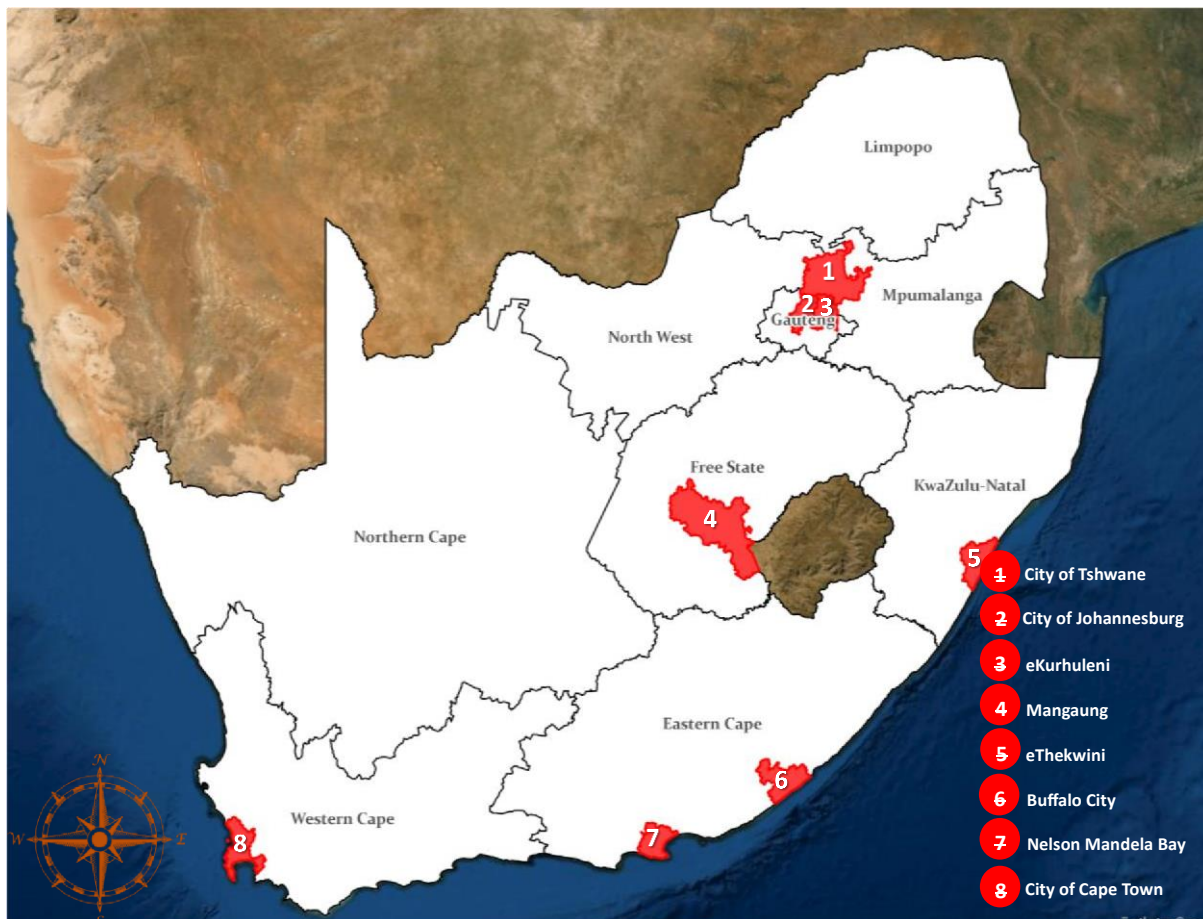
### **3.2. Situating the Study in South Africa's Eight (8) Metropolitan Municipalities**

Emerging from the bustling tapestry of urban areas, the researcher's trajectory, from academic pursuits to professional initiation, has been intricately woven within the urban fabric of Johannesburg and Pretoria. These are two sprawling metropolitan areas that stand as some of the significant pillars of economic growth and cultural dynamism in South Africa. These urban environments not only moulded the researcher's worldview but also became the crucible for shaping her identity, particularly as a young woman whose primitive years were spent in rural areas.

For the researcher, gender in rural settings often delineated roles within the household, where her intrinsic value was assessed not only by her identity as a woman or a young girl, but also by the prevailing gender dynamics that obligated both men and women to contribute to domestic chores. Contrarily, in the urban areas, her gender seemed to denote unseen boundaries that dictated permissible spaces that a woman could or could not frequent due to safety concerns. Her gender identity prescribed societal expectations regarding her intelligence and subsequent career choices. Being a woman in the city signified a threshold of professional acceptability, and prompted inquiries about marital prospects that are tethered to her qualifications. Often, when talks of her professional ambitions seemed greater than her township surrounding, warnings that her professional success would impact her marital prospects were given.

Yet, the confines of perception in urban areas extended beyond gender. They weaved a complex web that is intertwined with other intersectional identities such as race, age, class, and marital status to mention a few. These intricacies, compounded with the researcher's gender identity, shaped perceptions regarding her professional competence, often impeding her career trajectory unjustly. While acknowledging the individuality and diversity of women's experiences within urban professional realms, the researcher drew insights from her peers and other professionals within the field, who happened to share similar experiences. Their stories underscored the undeniable impact of women's identities and profiles on their capacity to interact meaningfully and productively with their peers, subordinates, managers, and clients, without bias.

To contextualise this study within the discipline, the researcher was propelled to choose South Africa's most urbanised environments as geographical context in which the research would be situated. As such, the eight (8) Metropolitan Municipalities in South Africa were selected as the study area, and these are **City of Johannesburg**, **City of Tshwane** (Pretoria), **Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality** (East Rand), **Mangaung Municipality** (Bloemfontein), **City of eThekweni** (Durban), **Buffalo City** (East London), **Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality** (Gqeberha), and **City of Cape Town**.

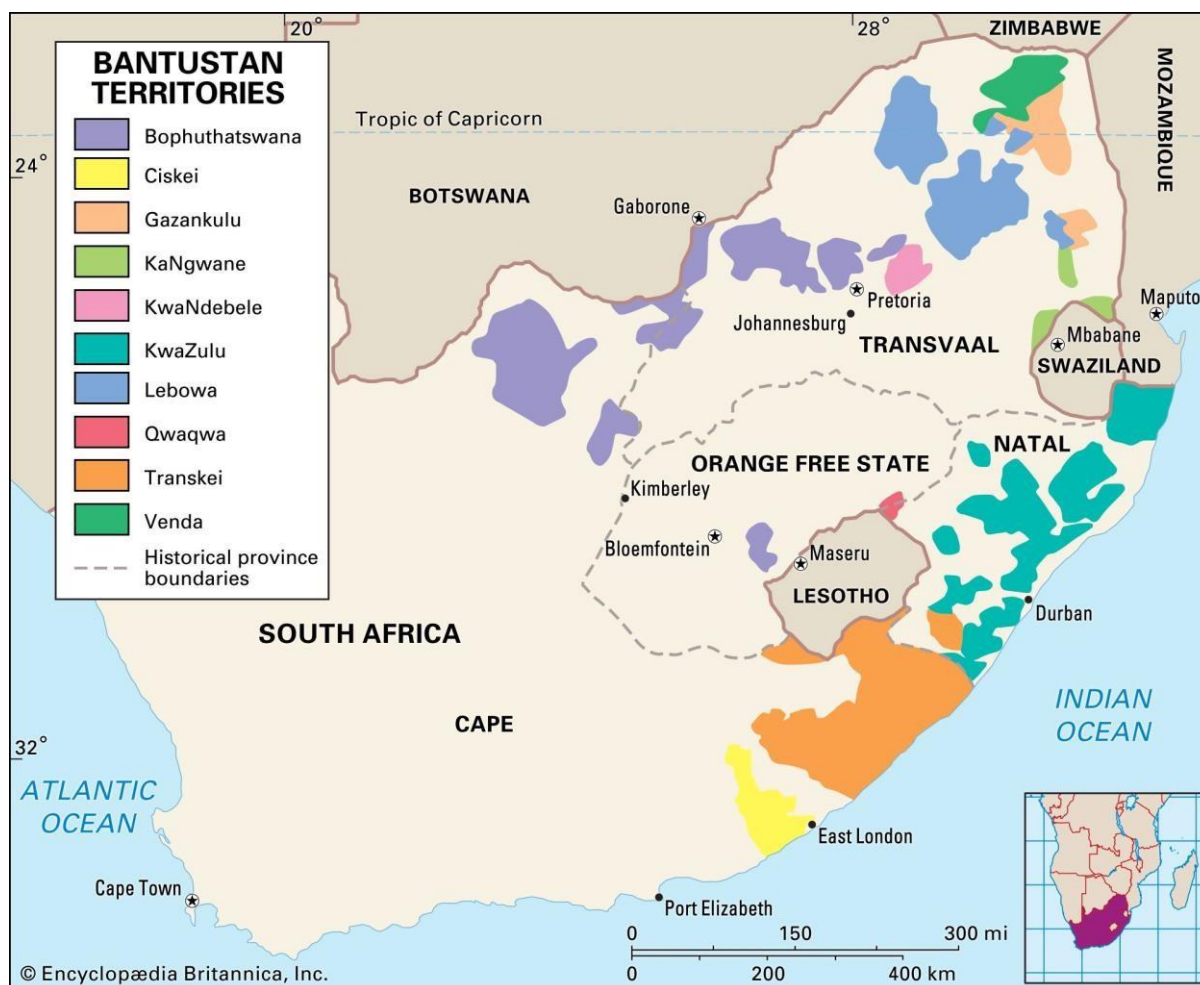


**Figure 3.1:** Geographical illustration of the metros in South Africa – the map shows the locations of the eight (8) metropolitan areas in South Africa alongside their respective provinces. Source: Adapted from Google Earth, 2021

The decision to centre this research study within South Africa’s metropolitan cities stemmed from two primary considerations. Firstly, the decision was influenced by the recognition of these cities as the embodiment of urbanisation in the country – a characterisation that is widely supported by scholars such as Roy (2009) and Fox (2013). These cities epitomise urbanisation due to factors like high population densities, rapid infrastructure development and concentrated economic activities (Potts, 2012; Linard *et al.*, 2012).

This research study took cognisance of the country’s historical context and the conditions under which urbanisation occurred as illuminated by a range of scholars (Landman, 2012; Marais and Ntema, 2013; Nhlapo *et al.*, 2011; Napier, 2009; Oranje and Merrified, 2012). Prior to the democratic reforms of 1994, South Africa’s urbanisation was defined by spatial segregation policies that restricted the movement of predominantly black populations into developed urban areas that were reserved exclusively for white populations (Pillay *et al.*, 2006). The spatial segregation policies designated residential areas for the black labour force in townships on the outskirts of cities. The residual black populations remained segregated in the Bantustans or the homelands, also demarcated along ethnic lines (Oranje and Merrified,

2012). These regions had minimal economic activity and functioned as reservoirs of cheap labour for the adjacent urban regions (Nhlapo *et al.*, 2011).



**Figure 3.2:** Geographical illustration of the Bantustan territories – the map shows former territories that were designated as a major administrative device for exclusion according to racial and ethnic identity.

Source: McKenna, 2009 from Encyclopedialike Britannica, Inc <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bantustan/images-videos>

The recognition of the unsustainable and impractical nature of spatial segregation and the independent administration of the Bantustans spurred significant shifts in urbanisation post1994 (Turok, 20120; Napier, 200; Pillay, 2008). The other motivation for transformation away from spatial segregation stemmed from the urgent need to rectify spatial injustices and subsequent inequalities. Integral to this shift was the facilitation of freedom of movement, leading to a rapid influx of people—former Bantustan residents and migrants from neighbouring countries—into urban areas (Ruhiiga, 2014). As such, the eight (8) metropolitan cities as argued by Ruhiiga (2014), bear witness to the changes and urbanisation patterns that emerged following the abolition of influx control and segregation laws. These developments

reflect the concerted efforts to create more inclusive and equitable urban environments, where freedom of movement became a vital element in fostering social and spatial integration.

The second and most important reason behind the decision to focus on the metropolitan areas is because they add another layer to understanding women's identities. Urban women often experience greater independence compared to rural counterparts. They have increased opportunities for employment, access to socioeconomic services, lower fertility rates, and relaxed social norms dictating women's subjugation (Tacoli and Satterwaite, 2013; Pozarny, 2016). Urban women also have improved chances to access quality education, although significant barriers still persist for urban women and girls with low-income status (Chant and McIlwain 2013). Although the 8 metropolitan areas selected as the location of this research represent the most urbanised areas in the country, the degree of urbanisation differs. Perhaps the extent to which women's identities can find self-expression and enable or disable their access to various services might differ, wherein the urbanised environments provide less barrier while the least urbanised areas are more stringent. The opposite could be true. Nonetheless, observations will pay close attention to the experiences of women across different metropolitan areas.

Furthermore, while urban women have improved prospects compared to rural women, they still encounter profound disadvantages, including limited financial and physical assets, constrained mobility, safety concerns and underrepresentation in formal governance structures. For instance, urban women predominantly rely on public transport or walking to attend to various activities such as work, shopping, and school visits, unlike men whose mobility is work-oriented. However, the country's spatial segregated nature of cities, the rising fuel costs, and safety concerns pose restrictions on women's mobility. These cities, primarily designed by and for men, often fail to account adequately for women's needs and daily movements (Chant and McIlwain, 2013). Understanding the intricacies of urban women's identities and their mobility within cities may significantly affect their capacity to work effectively.

# CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

## SOCIOECONOMIC INFOGRAPHIC

**6,129,859**

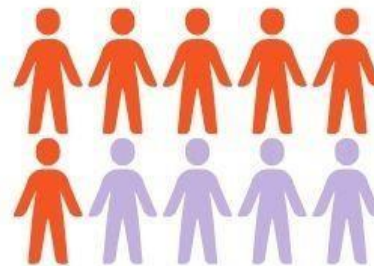
Population size (2022) of the metropolitan area which is the largest share of the eight (8).



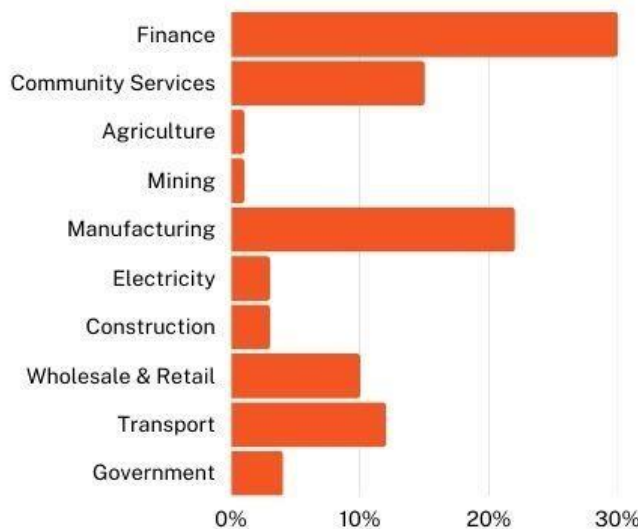
### POPULATION GROWTH RATE:

**3%**

Per annum for the past decade - twice the national average.



Women make up the majority of the population at 51%.



### ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN

The City of Johannesburg accounts for approximately 16% of the national GDP, making it the largest metropolitan area to contribute to the overall economic output of the South Africa

(Quantec, 2022).

**Figure 3.3:** Socioeconomic overview of the City of Johannesburg – the infographic illustrates a summarised statistical overview of the metropolitan city to provide geographical context and the socio-economic dynamics.

**Source:** Adapted from data published by Quantec Regional Standardised Database, 2022

# CITY OF CAPE TOWN

## SOCIOECONOMIC INFOGRAPHIC

**4,729,868**

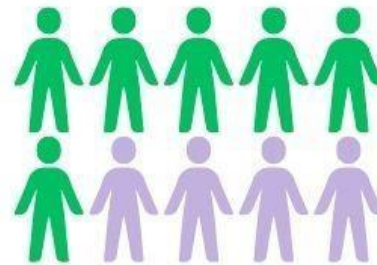
Population size (2022) of the metropolitan area making COT the 2nd largest metro.



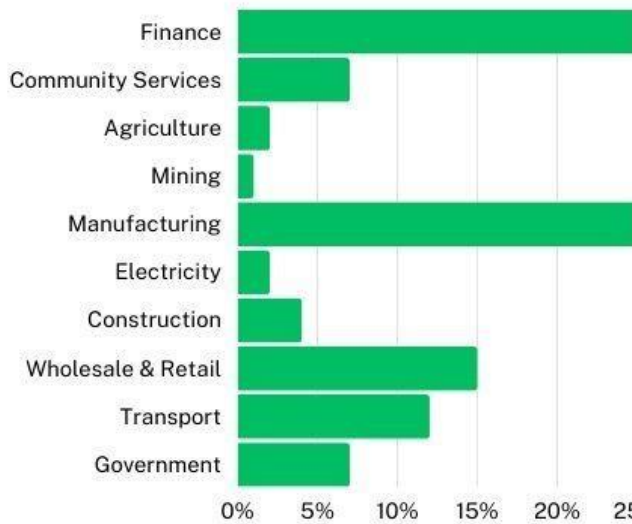
### POPULATION GROWTH RATE:

**1,6%**

Per annum, which slightly above the national average.



Women make up the majority of the population at 51%.



### ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN

The City of Cape Town accounts for approximately 12% of the national GDP, making it the 2nd largest metropolitan area to contribute to the overall economic output of the South Africa

(Quantec, 2022).

**Figure: 3.4** Socioeconomic overview of the City of Cape Town – the infographic illustrates a summarised statistical overview of the metropolitan city to provide geographical context and the socio-economic dynamics.

**Source:** Adapted from data published by Quantec Regional Standardised Database, 2022

# CITY OF ETHEKWINI

## SOCIOECONOMIC INFOGRAPHIC

**4,033,290**

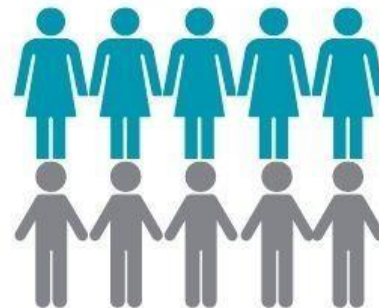
Population size (2022) of the metropolitan area which is the 4th largest of the 8 metros.



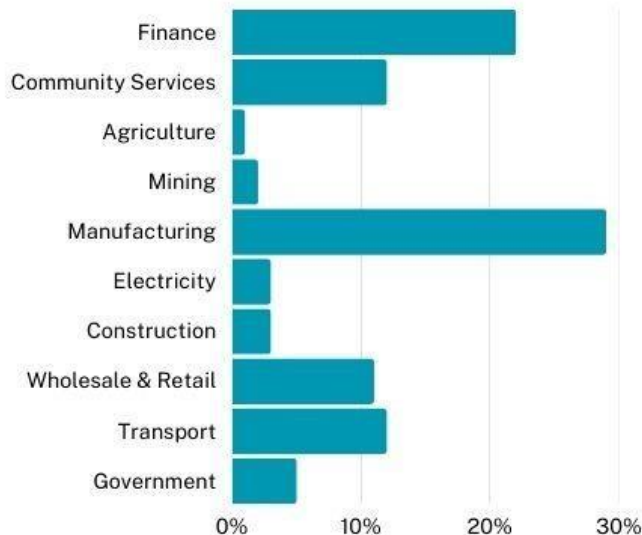
### POPULATION GROWTH RATE:

**1,9%**

on average annum, far exceeding the national average.



The City has an equal proportion of both women and men at 50%



### ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN

The City of eThekweni accounts for approximately 11% of the national GDP, making it the 3rd largest metropolitan area in terms of its contribution to the overall economic output of the South Africa

(Quantec, 2022).

**Figure 3.5:** Socioeconomic overview of the City of eThekweni – the infographic illustrates a summarised statistical overview of the metropolitan city to provide geographical context and the socio-economic dynamics.

**Source:** Adapted from data published by Quantec Regional Standardised Database, 2022

# CITY OF TSHWANE

## SOCIOECONOMIC INFOGRAPHIC

**3,894,987**

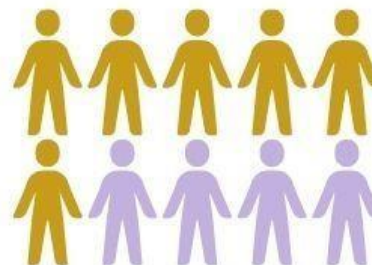
Population size (2022) of the metropolitan area which is the 5th largest of the 8 metros.



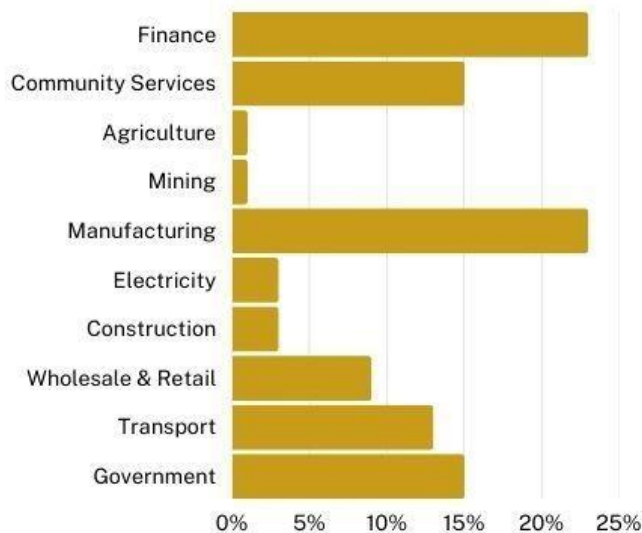
### POPULATION GROWTH RATE:

**2,6%**

Per annum - far exceeding the national average.



Women make up the majority of the population at 51%.



### ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN

The City of Tshwane accounts for approximately 10% of the national GDP, making it the 4th largest metropolitan area in terms of its contribution to the overall economic output of the South Africa

(Quantec, 2022).

**Figure 3.6:** Socioeconomic overview of the City of Tshwane – the infographic illustrates a summarised statistical overview of the metropolitan city to provide geographical context and the socio-economic dynamics.

**Source:** Adapted from data published by Quantec Regional Standardised Database, 2022

# CITY OF EKURHULENI

## SOCIOECONOMIC INFOGRAPHIC

**4,100,701**

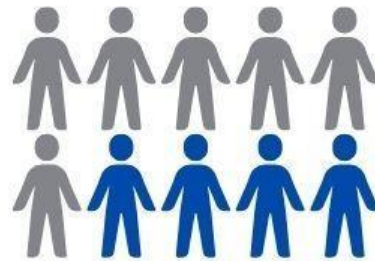
Population size (2022) of the metropolitan area which is the 3rd largest of the 8 metros.



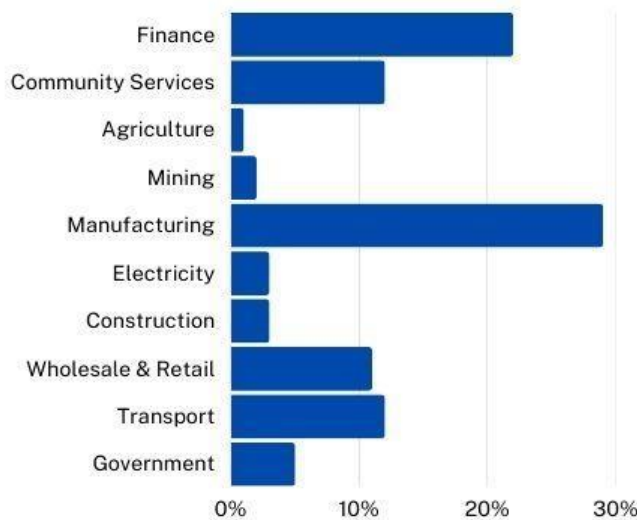
### POPULATION GROWTH RATE:

**1,9%**

on average annum, far exceeding the national average.



Women make up the least of the population at 49%



### ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN

The City of eKurhuleni accounts for approximately 9,8% of the national GDP, making it the 5th largest metropolitan area in terms of its contribution to the overall economic output of the South Africa

(Quantec, 2022).

**Figure 3.7:** Socioeconomic overview of the City of Ekurhuleni – the infographic illustrates a summarised statistical overview of the metropolitan city to provide geographical context and the socio-economic dynamics.

**Source:** Adapted from data published by Quantec Regional Standardised Database, 2022

# NELSON MANDELA BAY

## SOCIOECONOMIC INFOGRAPHIC

**1,210,193**

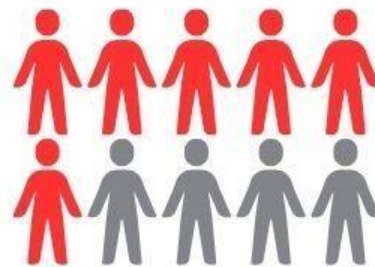
Population size (2022) of the metropolitan area which is the 3rd smallest of the 8 metros.



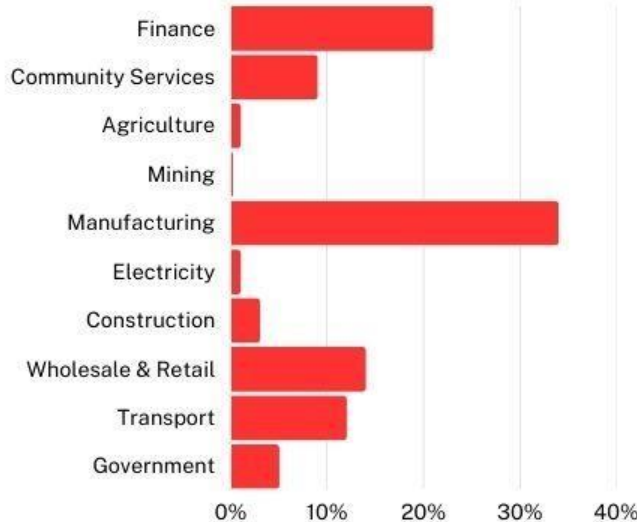
### POPULATION GROWTH RATE:

**1,17%**

on average annum, which approximately equal to national average.



Women make up the majority of the population at 52%



### ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN

The Nelson Mandela Bay accounts for approximately 4% of the national GDP, making it the 3rd least contributing metropolitan area to the overall economic output of the South Africa.

(Quantec, 2022).

**Figure 3.8:** Socioeconomic overview of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan – the infographic illustrates a summarised statistical overview of the metropolitan city to provide geographical context and the socio-economic dynamics.

**Source:** Standardised Database, 2022 Adapted from data published by Quantec Regional

# MANGAUNG METROPOLITAN

SOCIOECONOMIC INFOGRAPHIC



## 871,549

Population size (2022) of the metropolitan area which is the 2nd smallest of the 8 metros.

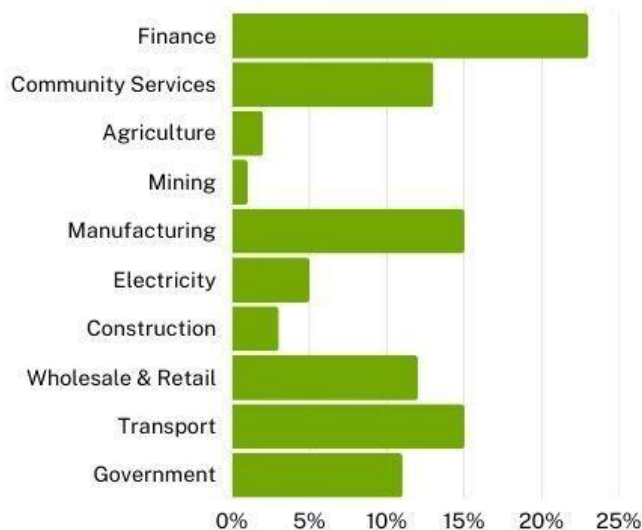
### POPULATION GROWTH RATE:

## 1,6%

per annum, which is slightly higher than the national average.



Women make up the majority of the population at 51%



### ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN

The Mangaung Metropolitan accounts for approximately 2% of the national GDP, making it the 2nd least contributing metropolitan area to the overall economic output of the South Africa.

(Quantec, 2022).

**Figure 3.9:** Socioeconomic overview of Mangaung Metropolitan – the infographic illustrates a summarised statistical overview of the metropolitan city to provide geographical context and the socio-economic dynamics.

**Source:** Standardised Database, 2022 Adapted from data published by Quantec Regional

# BUFFALO CITY

## SOCIOECONOMIC INFOGRAPHIC



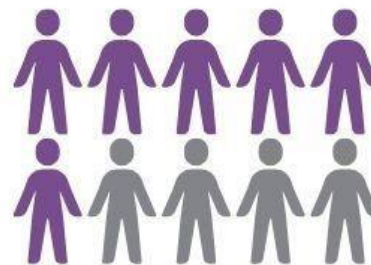
**790,380**

Population size (2022) of the metropolitan area which is the smallest of the 8 metros.

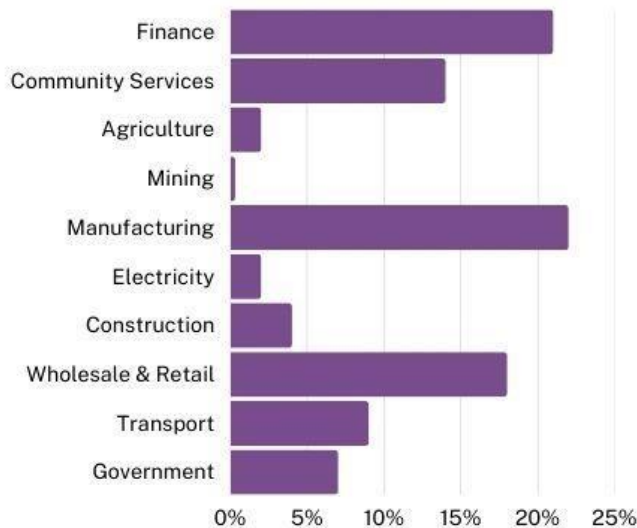
### POPULATION GROWTH RATE:

**1,2%**

per annum, which is slightly higher than the national average.



Women make up the majority of the population at 51%



### ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN

The Buffalo City Metropolitan accounts for approximately 1,7% of the national GDP, making it the least contributing metropolitan area to the overall economic output of the South Africa.

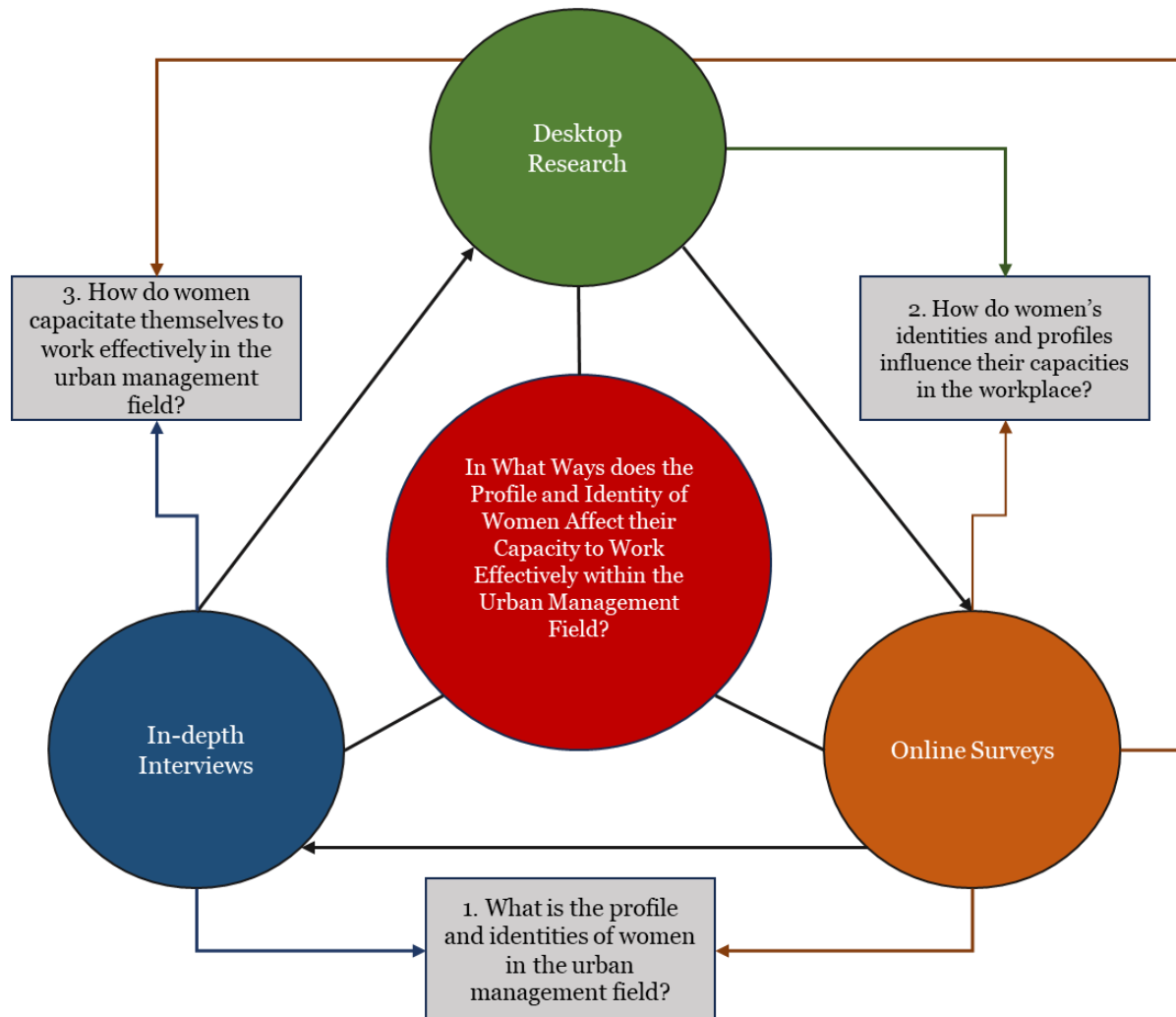
(Quantec, 2022).

**Figure 3.10:** Socioeconomic overview of Mangaung Metropolitan – the infographic illustrates a summarised statistical overview of the metropolitan city to provide geographical context and the socio-economic dynamics.

**Source:** Standardised Database, 2022 Adapted from data published by Quantec Regional

### 3.3. Methodological Approach of the Study

The research methodology was thoughtfully structured to address the primary research questions and the four associated sub-questions with a clear and systematic approach. Below is a visual diagram to provide a graphical representation of the strategic approach to address each question.



**Figure 3.11:** A high-level graphical representation of the research methodologies and approach - the diagram visualises the research methodological approach undertaken in this study.

This research study demanded the utilisation of three different methodological approaches to comprehensively explore the central research question and provide a comprehensive answer. The methodological strategies applied encompassed desktop research, the distribution of an online survey questionnaire, and the application of semi-structured interviews. Each of the three sub-questions were answered by a combination of methodological approaches.

### **3.4. Research Method: Designing and Executing a Comprehensive Inquiry**

At the inception of this study, as the author presented her research design and methods, a thought-provoking question emerged from one of the panel members. This question inquired about the significance of focusing on women in this particular field. Although it was posed as a somewhat devil's advocate query, it underscored the importance of explicitly addressing why it was necessary to investigate the role of women in urban management, as it may not be immediately apparent to everyone. This question left a lasting impression on the researcher and ultimately influenced her decision in the method of enquiry.

The research method employed in this study places an emphasis on the lived experiences of women as a valid and significant form of knowledge. To address any concerns about the academic foundation of this approach, the research refers to prominent feminist scholars such as Sylvia Tamale, Patricia Hill Collins, and Bell Hooks who emphasise the significance of diverse perspectives and lived experiences in academic research to challenge Eurocentric ideals about knowledge production. In her masterful work on decolonising education, Tamale (2020) calls for justice in the methods and processes of acquiring knowledge, the distribution thereof, as well as the recognition of Afro-centric knowledge systems as legitimate and of merit. She submits that the stories and experiences of African women, often overlooked or marginalised in mainstream academia, are important for understanding the complexities of social issues, including urban management. This approach aligns with the principles of intersectionality, which seek to explore how various forms of identity and oppression intersect and interact (Crenshaw, 1989). Tamale's view underscores Collins' (2000) seminal work on Black Feminist Thought, which also highlights the importance of black women's lived experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge. Collins argues that black women's unique perspectives, shaped by intersecting oppressions, provide critical insights that challenge traditional academic narratives and contribute to more inclusive and equitable knowledge production. This too, is echoed by Hooks (1981), who advocates for the recognition of the voices of marginalised groups.

The researcher decided to create a survey questionnaire as one of the instruments to gather data. The purpose of this questionnaire was to engage between 30 and 50 female urban practitioners and explore whether their identities as women had an impact on how they performed their professional duties. It aimed to investigate whether their identities beyond gender affected their career opportunities and progression. Furthermore, the survey sought to determine whether the participants felt that their identities, contributed to their problem-

solving and analytical skills, managerial competencies, and political acumen in ways distinct from their male counterparts. This initial quantitative phase was meant to provide a foundation for a qualitative exploration of the subject matter through in-depth interviews. The survey questionnaire was designed using Google Forms<sup>2</sup> and was administered online.

The link to the questionnaire was shared across various professional platforms, including LinkedIn and social media groups comprising professionals in the built environment sector. This approach marked a significant departure from the researcher's previous data collection experience during her honours research, where data was gathered in person through physical administration of instruments. One key concern during the online survey design revolved around providing adequate information to help participants understand the purpose of the study and their role in it. The researcher also aimed to secure informed consent from participants to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. To address these concerns, the online survey incorporated an introductory section covering topics such as the voluntary nature of participation, emphasising that there would be no incentives provided, confidentiality, the option to withdraw consent, and potential risks associated with participation. Furthermore, the survey introduced a checklist with conditions that participants were required to acknowledge before proceeding to the next section. Participants who chose not to provide consent on any of the outlined matters would be unable to proceed to the subsequent survey questions. This situation raised concerns about the potential implications for the overall response rate and whether the targeted number of participants could be met. Balancing the need to collect essential data with the risk of discouraging participants presented a delicate challenge for the researcher.

The researcher also harboured concerns regarding the potential impact of certain aspects of the survey design on participant engagement and overall response rates, particularly the length and comprehensiveness of the information sheet provided at the beginning of the survey. Given the well-documented decrease in attention spans within the digital age, the researcher worried that this extensive information might overwhelm or disengage participants. This apprehension was compounded by the potential for participants to lose interest or discontinue their participation prematurely. If participants lost interest or disengaged from the onset, this too would undermine the objective of attaining the targeted number of responses. However, a good number of participants completed the survey despite the concerns. Of the targeted 30 to 50 participants, 29 completed the survey.

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<sup>2</sup> Link to the survey questionnaire:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSft1jzY2iPitiUkfoaTqVXcIbBrbLSdZD4fRiB995pIPgyYfA/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSft1jzY2iPitiUkfoaTqVXcIbBrbLSdZD4fRiB995pIPgyYfA/viewform?usp=sf_link)

In hindsight, the researcher realised that the decision to conduct a survey was largely driven by the desire to gather a substantial number of responses that would legitimise the need for this research, specifically focusing on women in the urban management field when its necessity was not apparent to all. Upon reflecting on Tamale's work, which contrasts western methods of academic research with African experiences, the researcher uncovered unconscious biases within herself that favour larger numbers and objective evidence as more legitimate. However, these methods of detachment and standardisation can strip away the personal and contextual richness of human experiences. In contrast, African storytelling—a deeply rooted cultural practice that serves as a powerful method for documenting and sharing knowledge—embraces subjectivity and the interconnectedness of the storyteller and the audience, creating shared understanding and empathy. This approach aligns with feminist methodologies that value personal narratives and lived experiences as essential sources of knowledge (Hooks, 1981; Tamale, 2020).

The in-depth interviews allowed for this exploration of women's experiences based on their intersecting identities, within the urban management context. The researcher initially planned to select between 15 to 20 participants from the pool of survey respondents to engage in one-on-one, in-depth interviews to delve deeper into the subject matter. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen time constraints resulting from the delayed approval of the researcher's ethics clearance application, there was not enough time available to conduct in-depth interviews with 15 to 20 key informants, transcribe the interview data, carry out the necessary thematic analysis, and critically engage with the findings to comprehensively address the research question. This situation necessitated a revision of the study's scope, ultimately leading to in-depth interviews with only 12 key informants.

The selection of key informants for in-depth interviews was carried out through a purposive sampling approach. Specific criteria were established by the researcher for the selection, including characteristics such as being female, within the age range of 25 to 65 years, and occupying a middle- or senior management position in a field related to urban management. From the initial pool of 39 survey participants, those who met these predefined criteria were identified and invited to partake in the study by undergoing an in-depth interview process with the researcher. Of the 29 survey participants, only two consented to participate in the in-depth interviews. Some of those who showed were either engaged in prior commitments such as meeting end of the year work deadlines, fulfilling family responsibilities, or school assignments and thus could avail themselves for an interview. To reach the desired number of key informants, the researcher also employed a snowball sampling approach. This method involved recruiting additional interviewees through referrals and recommendations from

those who had already participated, allowing for an expanded and more diverse set of perspectives to be included in the study.

In contrast to the online survey, the researcher had intended for the one-on-one, in-depth interviews to involve in-person interactions. Through this approach, the researcher aimed to foster deeper personal connections, enabling her to observe unspoken cues, body language, and nuances in responses of key informants. These face-to-face interviews were anticipated to offer a unique opportunity to discern subtleties that might otherwise go unnoticed, particularly since it would be inappropriate to observe the key informants in their professional environments or during interactions with others. The ability to pick up on subtle shifts in mood, nonverbal communication, and other intangible cues was considered essential for capturing the intricacies of the research topic. However, persistent time constraints compelled the researcher to adapt to the circumstances. To ensure the study's completion despite these challenges, in-depth interviews were conducted using an online video conferencing platform, specifically Microsoft Teams. This transition introduced a new set of challenges, such as network interruptions, bandwidth issues, time lags that hindered fluid conversation and probing, as well as instances where load shedding coincided with the either the researcher or the key informants' scheduled interviews. Additionally, technical problems with microphones at times rendered one party inaudible to the other, further complicating the interview process. Overcoming these hurdles demanded patience, flexibility, and a willingness to repeat and clarify information when necessary. In certain cases, interviews were rescheduled for later dates and times that fell outside of scheduled load shedding periods. To navigate this, the ESP app, which tracks load shedding schedules according to the selected residential area, proved to be a valuable resource. In rare instances, with the key informants' consent, interviews were scheduled outside of standard working hours to ensure that data collection proceeded despite imminent challenges.

### **3.5. Data Analysis: Balancing Passion and Maintaining Academic Integrity**

Due to the researcher's personal experiences of how her gender, race and other intersectional identities affected her productivity and effectiveness in the workplace, she worked cautiously to avoid imposing her biases onto the data collection and data analysis process. The risk of imposing her views onto the research process and thus taint the findings and analysis thereof, demanded the researcher to identify any conscious and unconscious biases, and at times, forced her to undertake a dispassionate approach in scrutinising the data. For instance, as a black woman who is often marginalised in predominately white male environments, the very motivation for this study, the researcher was blind to the reality that other groups may be more disadvantaged than her. This unconscious bias was made evident when administering

the online survey, where participants indicated that the least represented racial group in senior management positions was the coloured population. This had not occurred to the researcher because she assumed that the black population – an identity category in which she belongs, would be the least represented and not the second least as the findings revealed.

By removing herself at times, the researcher aimed to tell women's experiences as they are, carefully avoiding any hints of manipulation into versions that supported her underlying assumptions and or experiences. In so doing, the researcher sought to honour the words of a feminist writer, Sephodi, who states that "The voice of a black woman should always be herself. No edits - no erasure - no pressure - no expectations - additions - no intruders". This was a delicate and often challenging exercise that required constant self-introspection, but one that was necessary. To maintain academic integrity, the researcher relied on existing literary analysis to support and strengthen the findings instead of relying on personal experiences to form an opinion. References to existing literature were incorporated to identify trends, compare differences and similarities, and underscore key contributions made by the participants. This also required the researcher to set aside preconceived notions about women's identities and the perceived systemic challenges they face with within the profession. Although the researcher, for instance, found her intersectional identities to influence her effectiveness, these experiences are not universal among women, including those in the study. Thus, the researcher refrained from imposing judgements and selective perception when participants provided responses that were misaligned with her own assumptions.

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations: Safeguarding Women's Experiences from Academic Exploitation**

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, which delved into the personal experiences of women, the research prioritized ethical considerations. Participants were duly informed about the confidentiality of the research, assuring them that their personal or sensitive information would not be disclosed to anyone, including on social media. Prior to data collection, their consent to participate in the study was sought. Additionally, participants were apprised of their right to revoke their consent and withdraw from the study at any point if they felt uncomfortable or expressed concerns.

At certain points, the researcher faced the temptation to initiate data collection through the online survey even before securing ethics approval due to the pressing time constraints. The approval was granted less than two months before the final research report deadline, leaving her with inadequate time for comprehensive data collection, transcription, analysis, report writing, and quality control. Despite the significant time pressure, the researcher resisted the

urge to administer the questionnaire without university authorisation. This decision, rooted in her commitment to ethical principles, prevented any violation, albeit with limited time. Instead, her focus shifted to addressing some research sub-questions using available secondary data from literature and other existing sources.

### **3.7. Study Limitations: Balancing Act in a Time-Constrained Environment**

The researcher encountered several limitations during the data collection process that warrant acknowledgment. Firstly, the researcher faced a significant constraint with the delayed approval of ethics. This delay compressed the timeframe available for comprehensive data collection, leaving the researcher with a limited window for executing the entire research process. Secondly, the recruitment process for one-on-one, in-depth interviews encountered several hurdles. The end-of-year rush created difficulties in finding suitable candidates, as potential participants were occupied with their own year-end commitments. Additionally, the short notice required for interviews, given the time constraints, contributed to challenges in securing willing participants. Some potential candidates, despite being suitable for the study, did not respond promptly, resulting in missed opportunities due to the passage of time. Finally, the researcher, functioning as a self-funding student and concurrently holding a fulltime position as the managing director of a boutique consulting firm, faced the dual challenge of managing the end-of-year rush and contractual commitments. The original plan to take time off for focused research efforts became unfeasible due to financial obligations and client commitments. These external factors significantly detracted from the researcher's available time for data collection, analysis, and writing. As a result, the researcher could not devote the meticulous attention to the study that was initially envisioned. These limitations underscore the contextual challenges that impacted the research process, often requiring the researcher to constantly adapt and make compromises in the pursuit of meaningful insights and to fulfil the requirements of this research.



#### **4. CHAPTER FOUR: VOICES FROM THE FIELD – A TAPESTRY OF EXPERIENCES**

“I want to be in spaces where I can just be: be myself, be all I am, be all I can be, be in my fullness and be in all my strengths, my weaknesses and my being.”

*- Malebo Sephodi*

Image by Mngoma (2023)

Available at: [https://www.instagram.com/p/Cyc59gnIeZA/?hl=en&img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/Cyc59gnIeZA/?hl=en&img_index=1)

#### **4.1. Introduction**

In the evocative narrative shared through 'The Workplace Revolution' podcast by Sihle Bolani, her guest Carice Anderson's shares candidly the intricate challenges she faced as the only black female consultant in an organisation where black staff members predominantly occupied administrative and support roles. Her poignant accounts of being consistently misconstrued as a secretary or an administrator due to societal perceptions that deny, or question black women's technical expertise encapsulate the profound pressures she endured. Anderson vividly recalls the burden she carried to embody a standard of excellence for black women. A pressure that her colleagues who did not share her gender and/or skin colour did not bear due to prevailing institutional assumptions about their identities i.e., that white men have innate authoritative abilities. This narrative epitomises the inescapable lens through which women in key decision-making roles, technical professions, and management are primarily perceived—through the prism of their identities and the assumptions associated therewith. Their professional acumen often takes a backseat to these external markers. Whether a woman is black, coloured, young, old, Muslim, homosexual, disabled, or embodies any marginalised identity, the suspicion cast upon her abilities profoundly impacts the effectiveness and proficiency with which she performs her professional obligations.

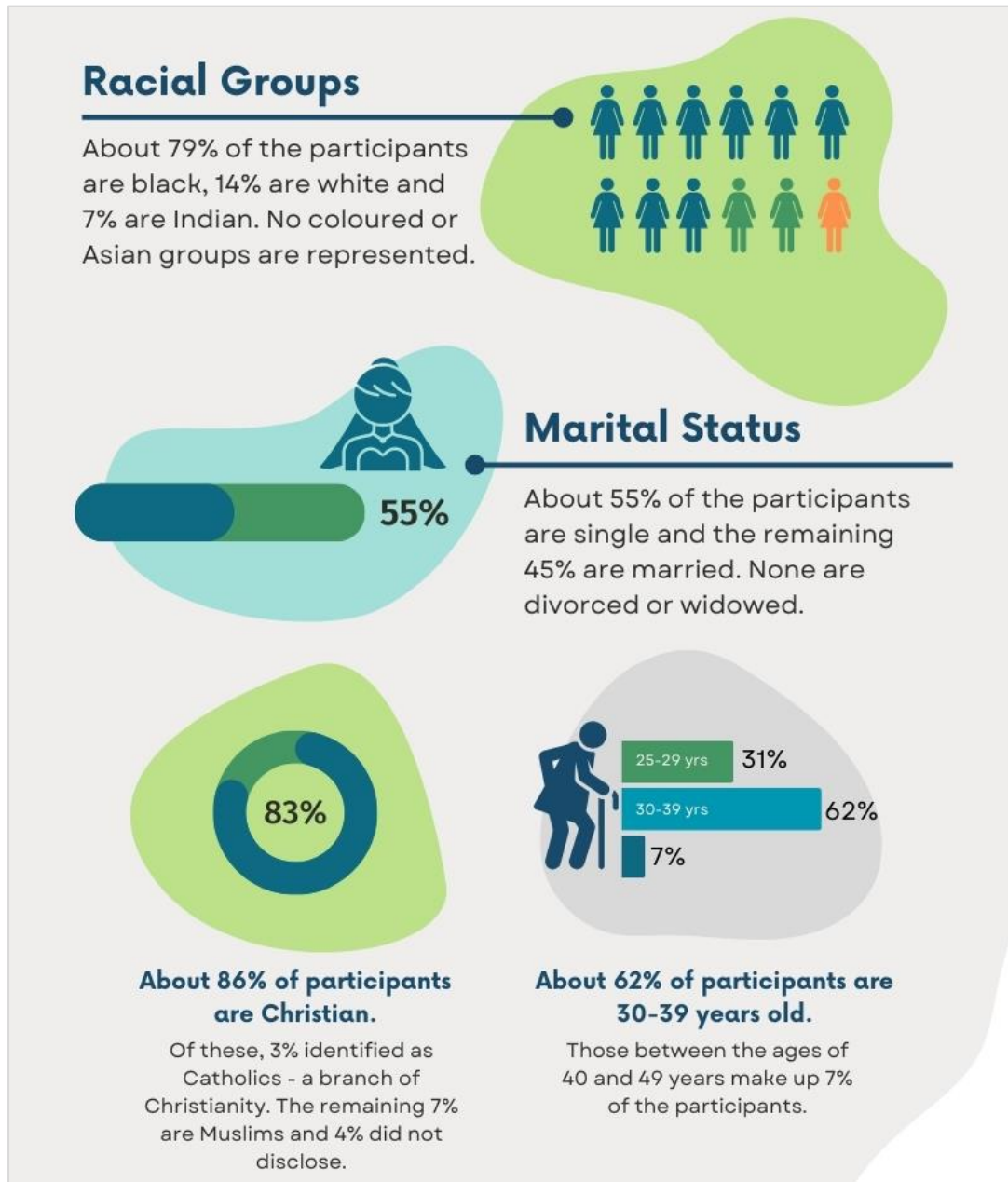
This chapter delves into an analytical triangulation, meticulously examining key concepts derived from the data collection process. Its core objective is to substantiate and or challenge the hypothesis that women's profiles and identities subject them to multifaceted forms of institutional biases, hindering their capacity to realise their professional objectives effectively. Through this exploration, the chapter aims to elucidate the interplay between capacity, and effectiveness as it relates to women's identities within the urban management field, assumptions about group identity, and its role in perpetuating the underrepresentation of women, if at all. Most importantly, it seeks to document the subtle strategies employed by these women in their daily activities to not only fulfil their professional responsibilities but to surpass expected outcomes. Drawing insights from both the online survey responses and key informant interviews, this chapter juxtaposes these findings against the backdrop of the literary analysis conducted in the preceding chapter. Guided by the research questions, it navigates the presentation and analysis of these findings, while attempting to respond comprehensively to the overarching research questions raised.

#### **4.2. What is the profile and identities of women in Urban Management?**

This section responds to the first research sub-question by highlighting the profiles and identities of women who were surveyed in the online questionnaire, as well as the key informants who were interviewed during the in-depth discussions. These findings are juxtaposed with statistical data regarding the profiles and identities of women who are engaged in urban management in South Africa.

#### 4.2.1. Highlighting the Profiles and Identities of Survey Participants

The research methodology employed in this study encompassed two primary data collection instruments: an online survey and individual interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams platform. These findings are based on the data collected from these instruments, starting with the online survey.



**Figure 4.1:** Overview of survey participants’ biographical data – The infographic highlights key information about the identities of survey participants, including race, age, religion, and marital status.

The table below provides comprehensive data of survey participants based on various identity markers such as age, race, religion, nationality, and marital status. The quantitative data was

categorised according to different identity markers, and a percentage distribution was shown for each variable within the categories.

ITEM	VARIABLES	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
<b>Age</b>	25 – 29 years	9	31%
	30 – 39 years	18	62%
	40 – 49 years	2	7%
	50 – 59 years	0	0%
	60 – 65 years	0	0%
<b>Race</b>	Black	23	79%
	White	4	14%
	Indian	2	7%
	Coloured	0	0%
<b>Religion</b>	Christian	25	86%
	Muslim	2	7%
	African Spirituality	2	7%
<b>Nationality</b>	South African	29	100%
	Foreign National	0	0%
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	16	55%
	Married	13	45%
	Divorced	0	0%
	Widowed	0	0%

**Figure 4.2:** *Personal Information of Survey Participants* – The table contains information about the interpersonal and collective identities of women who participated in the survey.

**Age:** The surveys found a dominant representation of women aged between the ages of 25 and 39 years, comprising 93% of the participants. Specifically, 31% of the participants fell within the 25-29 age bracket, while 62% were aged between 30 and 39 years constituting a majority. Women aged between 40 and 49 years constituted a minor fraction at 7%, with no participation from older age groups.

**Race:** The surveyed participants predominantly consisted of black women, accounting for 79% of the sample. A smaller proportion included White women, who constituted 14% of the participants and Indian women who accounted for 7%. Other racial categories, such as Coloured women were absent from the sample. While the survey effectively captures the demographic representation of blacks, the white and Indian populations in accordance with their respective proportions within the country, at 80%, 8.4% and 2.5% respectively, it bears no representation of coloured women, a group constituting 8.8% of the national population.

**Religion:** The Christian religion emerged as the predominant religious affiliation, accounting for 86% of survey participants. Additionally, Muslim believers constituted 7%, alongside 7% identifying with African Spirituality.

**Nationality:** The study exclusively encompassed South African nationals, with no participation from foreign nationals. This was completely unintentional because the survey was designed to be inclusive of all nationalities, provided they met the specified criteria for participation. In fact, foreign nationality would have been an additional layer into women’s identities and how it affects their capacity to work, if at all. However, despite this openness, the sample exclusively comprised South African women.

**Marital Status:** Findings on marital status indicate a nearly balanced distribution between single women who accounted for 55% of participants and married women who made up the remaining 45%. No participants identified as either divorced or widowed.

### Revelations from the Professional Journeys of Participants

The table provides a comprehensive overview of key variables derived from an online survey questionnaire, shedding light on diverse aspects related to metropolitan area distribution, educational qualifications, employment sectors, and professional experience among respondents.

ITEM	VARIABLES	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
<b>Metropolitan Area</b>	City of Johannesburg	13	48%
	City of Tshwane	10	37%
	City of Cape Town	1	4%
	eThekweni Municipality	2	7%
	Mangaung	1	4%
<b>Highest Qualification</b>	Masters	12	44%
	Honours	11	41%
	PG Diploma	1	4%
	Bachelor	2	7%
	Diploma	1	4%
<b>Sector</b>	Non-Government Organisation	3	11%
	Private Sector	16	59%
	Parastatal/ Semi-Public	2	7%
ITEM	VARIABLES	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
	Public Sector	6	22%
<b>Years of Experience</b>	Between 3 - 5 years	9	33%
	Between 6 - 9 years	14	52%

	Between 10 - 14 years	2	7%
	Between 15 - 20 years	0	0%
	Between 21 and more	2	7%

**Figure 4.3:** *Professional Background Information of Survey Participants* – The table provides details regarding the professional backgrounds of the survey participants. The information was also intended verify the participant’s eligibility as targeted candidates for the study.

**Metropolitan Area Distribution:** The distribution across metropolitan areas showcases a varied representation, with City of Johannesburg and City of Tshwane being the most prominent, constituting 48% and 37% of respondents, respectively. Conversely, eThekweni Municipality, Mangaung, and City of Cape Town exhibit comparatively lower representations, ranging from 1% to 7%. Unfortunately, there were no respondents from the remaining metropolitan areas in South Africa, namely, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan, Buffalo City, and Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan.

**Educational Attainments:** The educational qualifications of respondents present a varied profile, with the majority holding master’s degrees (44%) and Honours degrees (41%). Bachelor's degrees, PG Diplomas, and Diplomas collectively comprise 15% of the surveyed group.

**Sector of Employment:** Participants are employed across diverse sectors, with a substantial representation in the private sector (59%). The public sector follows at 22%, while Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Parastatal/Semi-Public sectors exhibit lower representations at 11% and 7%, respectively.

**Years of Professional Experience:** The distribution of professional experience among respondents indicates a notable concentration within the 6 to 9 years bracket (52%) and the 2 to 5 years bracket (33%). Conversely, participants with tenure between 10 to 20 years and beyond constitute only 14% of the surveyed cohort.

#### 4.2.2. Highlighting the Profiles and Identities of Key Respondents from Interviews

The table below provides a comprehensive data of key informants based on various identity markers such as age, race, nationality, and marital status. The quantitative data was categorised according to different identities and profiles, and a percentage distribution was shown for each variable within the categories.

ITEM	VARIABLES	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
<b>Age</b>	25 – 29 years	1	8%
	30 – 39 years	4	33%
	40 – 49 years	4	33%
	50 – 59 years	3	25%
	60 – 65 years	0	0%
<b>Race</b>	Black	10	83%
	White	1	8%
	Indian	1	8%
	Coloured	0	0%
	Asian	0	8%
<b>Nationality</b>	South African	10	83%
	Foreign National	2	17%
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	6	50%
	Married	5	42%
	Divorced	1	8%
	Widowed	0	0%

**Figure 4.4:** *Personal Information of Key Informants* – The table contains information about the profiles and collective identities of women who took part in the in-depth interviews.

**Age:** The distribution across age groups indicates a balanced representation, with the majority falling within the 30 to 49 age brackets, who represent 58% of the key informants.

**Race:** Predominantly, black women make up the vast majority of participants, accounting for 83%. White and Indian representation is comparatively lower, each at 8%. No coloured or Asian women were interviewed.

**Nationality:** A significant majority of the key informants are South African nationals (83%), with a smaller portion (17%) comprised of foreign nationals.

**Marital Status:** Participants are fairly evenly distributed across single (50%) and married (42%) statuses, with a smaller representation from divorced individuals (8%).

The table provides a comprehensive overview of key variables derived from in-depth interviews, shedding light on diverse aspects related to metropolitan area distribution, educational qualifications, employment sectors, and professional experience among respondents.

ITEM	VARIABLES	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
<b>Metropolitan Area</b>	City of Johannesburg	2	17%
	City of Tshwane	5	42%
	City of Cape Town	2	17%
	eThekwini Municipality	3	25%
	Mangaung	0	0%
<b>Highest Qualification</b>	PHD	4	33%
	Masters	5	42%
	Honours	0	0%
	PG Diploma	1	8%
	Bachelor	2	17%
<b>Sector</b>	Non-Government Organisation	1	8%
	Private Sector	3	25%
	Parastatal/ Semi-Public	6	50%
	Public Sector	2	17%
<b>Experience</b>	Between 6 - 9 years	0	0%
	Between 10 - 14 years	2	17%
	Between 15 - 20 years	3	25%
	Between 21 and more	7	58%

**Figure 4.5:** *Professional Background Information of Key Informants* – The table provides details regarding the professional backgrounds of the key informants who took part in the in-depth interviews. The information was also intended to verify the participant’s eligibility as targeted candidates for the study.

**Metropolitan Area:** The distribution across metropolitan areas varies, with City of Tshwane and eThekwini Municipality accounting for the highest proportion of key informants at 42% and 25% respectively. The City of Johannesburg and City of Cape Town have equal representation at 17%, each.

**Highest Qualification:** The majority of key informants possess advanced degrees, with a significant percentage holding PhDs and master’s at 33% and 42% respectively.

**Sector:** Semi-Public institutions and the Private Sector have notable representation at 50% and 25% respectively. Public sector and Non-Government Organisations have a comparatively lower representation.

#### 4.2.3. Analysis of Profiles and Identities of Women in Urban Management

The study aimed to capture a diverse representation of women across various identity markers, attempting to reflect the national demographic distribution. While the sample largely

represented African women, there was adequate participation from other racial groups such as white and Indian women. Notably absent were women who identified as coloured and Asian, highlighting a significant gap in the study particularly because findings showed that coloured women are the least represented group in management and other decision-making positions within the field.

The survey predominantly engaged women between 30 and 39 years old, followed by the 25 to 29 age brackets. Older age groups, particularly those above 50, were notably absent, possibly due to the platforms used to publish the survey—primarily LinkedIn and a WhatsApp group—favouring tech-savvy younger individuals. These platforms potentially excluded older women who are less inclined to engage with such platforms. This potential limitation in the survey was compensated for during the in-depth interviews. The interviews primarily featured older women, with over 50% falling between 40 and 59 years of age. This demographic balancing was facilitated by employing purposive sampling and snowball methods, enhancing the study's inclusivity across different age groups. Marital status between single and married participants was fairly even in both the surveys and in-depth interviews, with a proportion of single women slightly exceeding those who are married. In the sample of interviewed women, a marginal number of divorced women was also noted. These findings aligned with the age groups of the participants and key informants.

All participants in the survey identified as South African nationals, with no representation from foreign nationals. This once again highlighted a potential bias in the recruitment process which favoured South African nationals. Thus, the recruitment of key informants to be interviewed ensured that women from unspecified African countries – as per their requests – must be included. Moreover, the inclusion of persons with disabilities, constituting approximately 17% of key informants, provided unexpected but welcomed insights into the experiences of women within urban management roles.

Regarding religious affiliations, Christianity dominated, with some representation from Islamic, and unexpectedly, African spirituality. As someone who identifies with Christianity, these findings revealed the researcher's unconscious bias or oblivion towards African spirituality and its practice as a religion. Nonetheless, the distribution of participants' religious affiliations mirrored the national religious landscape, aligning closely with the prevalent Christian majority in the country. Moreover, the presence of Muslim and African spiritual affiliations exceeded national proportions, indicating a more diverse religious participation among the survey respondents.

Geographically, the study saw a significant representation from Johannesburg in the surveys, and Tshwane (Pretoria) in the in-depth interviews, followed by eThekweni Municipality

(Durban). The significant representation from Johannesburg and Durban aligns with expectations, considering they rank among the top three largest cities in South Africa by population size. The absence of participants from smaller metropolitan areas like Nelson Mandela Bay and Buffalo City limited the study's geographical diversity, inhibiting a comprehensive comparison of women's experiences across various regions.

### 4.3. How do women’s identities and profiles influence their capacities in the workplace?

The delineation of women's identities in the workplace encapsulates multifaceted social perceptions, echoing the complexity of their experiences and roles within urban management contexts. Understanding and dissecting these identity constructs are pivotal in comprehending their impact on women's effectiveness and contributions within urban management spheres. The table below summarises the key findings from the survey regarding women’s identities in the workplace.

Findings	Subcategory
<b>Finding #1:</b> Women’s profiles and intersectional identities are perceived with incompetence and disregard in the workplace.	1a. Over-scrutiny/ second-guessing 1b. Over-looked, undermined or ignored. 1c. Under-compensated.
<b>Finding #2:</b> Women profiles and identities both enable and disable their competencies in the urban management profession.	2a. Attention to detail (fewer mistakes and efficient problem solder). 2b. Feminine approach (effective in getting thing done, conflict resolution and building lasting relationships). 2c. Ethical approach to work (no bribes, etc.)
<b>Finding #3:</b> Some women do not consider their identities to have an influence on their capacity to be work, nor do they think it is an essential factor in performing their jobs.	3a. Gender identity has no correlation to capacity and work effectiveness. 3b. Other aspects of identity – background and religion have some influence.

**Figure 4.6:** *Thematic summary of key findings* – The table provides a summary of key findings derived from the survey and has organised them according to themes and research questions.

**a. Finding #1: Women’s profiles and intersectional identities are perceived with incompetence and disregard in the workplace.**

Survey findings revealed biases against women across diverse identity markers such as age, race, religion and disability, leading to perceptions of incompetence and dismissal of their technical expertise. These biases manifest in undue scrutiny of their work, constant second guessing of their professionally sound opinions, and an overall disregard of their inputs within the urban management field.

“Because of my age, gender, and race there was a perception that I was in the institution to provide an administrative or secretarial role. I was not perceived as someone to provide a professional service or technical expertise.”

– Black Town Planner with Masters, married, 32 years old, Pretoria

“For me it's a mixture of gender and age as well people don't really take young women as seriously as they should, and so that's something as well that makes women to be voiceless and invisible”.

– White Governance Divisional Executive with Masters, married, 52 years old, Pretoria

Even when women possess requisite qualifications and technical skills, they often face redirection toward administrative roles rather than being allowed to showcase and develop their technical prowess. Instances were cited where women were intentionally placed in administrative teams, with men dominating technical design teams under the pretext that design work required physical strength. This bias against women's technical capabilities persists in hiring practices and project assignments. One of the key participants who had applied for a project management role shared that an interview panel openly expressed a preference for male candidates over equally qualified women in construction-related roles, citing an inability to comprehend women's involvement in the field.

“... Although I hold a Bachelor’s Degree in Town Planning as well as a Master’s Degree in Urban and Regional Planning, I have been told by male employers ...that I am stupid and should rather be barefoot and pregnant standing behind a stove because that is where a female belongs, I have been told by...older generation white male, clients that they perceive me as incapable to do the work and would rather prefer working with a male as they can’t comprehend how a female understands the development and construction industry...”

– White Project Manager with Masters, Single, 27 years old, Pretoria

Furthermore, black women in the field predominantly face an uphill battle to prove their competence, often requiring exceptional performance to garner recognition for their abilities.

“Being a young, black woman in an organisation that typically has an older, male workforce means that you are often infantilised and have to prove yourself even more. You have to be really good at your job to get any kind of recognition for your abilities and skills.”

- Black Research Analyst with Masters, single, 29 years old, Johannesburg

Several participants detailed how age became a significant factor influencing perceptions of their competence, creating barriers despite their capabilities. One participant noted that younger professionals, particularly women, encountered scepticism regarding their job capabilities, unjustly assumed to correlate age with decreased competence.

“...my age is what I have noticed has had an effect on perceptions that colleagues/superiors have regarding me and my ability to do my job. The perception seems to be that the younger you are the less likely you should be able to perform your job functions adequately”.

- Black Town Planner with Honours, single, 28 years old, Johannesburg

One key informant, who identified as white and persons with a disability, expressed concerns about limitations on her career progression within the field. While acknowledging the importance of prioritising the advancement of black women who have historically been neglected, she also highlighted the neglect of disabilities in this discourse. She felt a sense of insecurity about her own prospects, recognising the urgent focus on neglected groups but acknowledging the potential disadvantage her race might pose, considering the historical advantages associated with white women.

"I've realised that there might be fewer opportunities for me, despite my partial disability. It feels like the urgency isn't there for addressing disability-related challenges. I understand the need to prioritize neglected groups, especially black women in management positions."

- White Governance Divisional Executive with Masters, married, 52 years old, Pretoria

Another key informant shared how her disability and age have been a source of bias, leading to questions regarding her professional competence despite her decades of experience in the field. As her mobility regressed from using a walking stick to an electronic wheelchair, she noticed sympathetic gestures but a lack of genuine respect for her professional capabilities in the workplace.

“In my engagements with clients I've had a lot of...I've experienced that [discrimination] as factor. In fact, I think both with my age and my abilities, uhm my disabilities and the other thing is I'm not just fat I'm obese. That attracts a lot of humour and people don't believe you can actually think”.

- Indian Chief Economic Development Manager with Masters, Single, 57 years, Durban

Regarding age, the key informant expressed frustration with internal policies imposing a 60-year-old age restriction. Although the policy restriction is intended to phase out older white men who have monopolised executive positions within the institution, the policy also impacts individuals like her, who have significant expertise and could contribute effectively for another decade.

The research uncovered a stark discrepancy in remuneration, underscoring the gender pay gap despite equivalent qualifications and job roles and technical ability. Women consistently reported being paid less than men in similar positions, and this gap was further pronounced along racial lines, with black women facing the greatest disadvantage.

“I have been working for the institution for five years, but I have always been unhappy with my salary because it has never been adjusted even though I have moved from being an intern to a senior, I queried this with management this year and I did not win. a colleague of mine with less experience from the industry who is a man and coloured did the same thing and his was adjusted. (N.B, I deliver so I know that I am good at my job.)

- Black Development Finance Manager with BTech, Single, 28 years old, Cape Town

Moreover, participants shared instances where salary adjustments were denied based on marital status, reflecting biases against married women, assuming financial stability due to dual household incomes.

“When negotiating salary increases, there is an assumption that because I'm married, my need for an increase in income is limited”.

- Black Researcher with Honours, married, 33 years old, Pretoria

**b. Finding #2: Women profiles and identities both enable and disable their competencies in the urban management profession.**

**How do Women's Identities Enable or Disable their Analytical Skills?**

The findings unveiled that although women's identities often create an assumption that they lack technical knowledge and skills, the survey participants and key informants demonstrated that this is in fact a fallacy. Women are competent, and at times, these identities serve to enhance their competence although not in the way men tend to suggest. For instance, when women perform their roles with expertise, their capabilities are often doubted, leading to unfounded suspicions and inquiries into their methods of achievement. Insinuations surface regarding the use of looks and sexuality to advance, fostering a perception of an advantage over men due to alleged tactics inaccessible to their male counterparts.

“I normally manage to get Council approvals quickly and our consultants normally ask, what trick do you use that they can't, “did I use my beauty... or am I dating the head?” Meaning, when working with male counterparts as a female, it's easier to get things. they overlook certain things because they blinded by beauty... Which in turn diminishes the value of work done.

– Black Project Manager with Masters, married, 30 years old, Johannesburg

The findings unearthed women's strategic use of assumptions and stereotypes associated with their identities, particularly in communication and managerial skills such as negotiation and conflict resolution. Some women leverage their feminine traits, such as being soft spoken, listening and showing kindness, which appear to be less threatening and remarkably effective in facilitating agreeable interactions with clients, superiors, and stakeholders.

“The traits that women possess (being emotional, intuitive, soft and nurturing etc), which are often perceived as weaknesses are actually women's strengths. Because we sometimes deal with local stakeholders in the work we do, my intuition and ability to read the room enables me to know when we are not welcome in a certain setting, and I also notice that sometimes stakeholders are friendlier to me. I work in a team that is mostly comprised of men and I've observed that people are more open or willing to engage because of how I approach them in a gentle manner.

– Black Researcher with Masters, single, 31 years old, Pretoria

“Yes, I do play up my feminine side in instances where I think it will get me results. I also implement much more intuitive tactics in many situations, I am much more patient and reflective. I believe these are all typical female traits that can be used in an advantageous manner. I am also acutely aware that in my work environment, I may

have to 'prove' that I am competent or really good at what I do, because that is not an assumption that is afforded to black women”.

– Black Urban Planner with Masters, married, 45 years old, Pretoria

“I think being a woman handling a work conflict situation will sometimes help colleagues be more receptive to working through issues. I think the stereotype of being 'gentle' helps with this”.

– White Spatial Analyst with Honours, married, 32 years old,  
Johannesburg

Participants highlighted traits such as intuition, nurturing, emotional intelligence, patience, and self-awareness—qualities that are often stereotypically associated with women. These very traits are used to discredit women's capabilities, reinforcing biased perceptions that they are unsuitable for certain professions, including urban management. However, women firmly assert that these qualities empower them to communicate effectively and establish meaningful relationships with stakeholders.

“So, I remember starting to work [at the age of 21 years] I was like wearing heels every day because I need to be respected”.

- Black Operations Manager with Bachelors, married, 30 years old, Johannesburg

However, the gentle and more feminine approach does not always yield effective communication. In certain environments, conforming to established norms and expectations necessitates a process of "cloning" oneself. To achieve effectiveness, especially in tasks involving interaction with others, women find themselves compelled to adopt masculine traits and an aggressive approach, leveraging intimidation to accomplish objectives. One participant recounted an instance where she had to adopt an aggressive stance to counteract stakeholders undermining her authority due to her gender and young age.

“I had taken over from an outgoing colleague - like him, [I am] black and I come from a previously model c educational background. The project formed part of a high-level project target area in a very traditional and politically volatile rural tribal authority. I was younger than my predecessor and female, I was often intimidated and ridiculed by some committee members. I had to stand my ground, fight back, be firm and pick my battles. Think Boo-boo Kitty, I had to take on a persona when I came to that project. I had to be that girl”.

– Black Project Engineer with Bachelors, single, 30 years old, Pretoria



**Figure 4.7:** *Boo Boo Kitty on a TV Show called Empire* – The image shows the typical angry black woman who goes to prison to protect her family and adopts a hardened exterior as a survival mechanism. The character was portrayed by Taraji P. Henson, also called Cookie on the TV Show. Source: Hodes, 2015 from <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/09/23/442523806/the-tao-of-cookie-behindthe-empire-characters-many-layered-persona>

The participant highlighted her transition towards adopting a firmer and more aggressive persona to avoid facing ridicule, becoming what she termed as "that girl." These findings align with numerous theoretical and empirical studies that suggest that masculine traits often result in better labour outcomes for women, including higher chances of being hired, earning better salaries, and advancing in their careers (Williams and Best, 1990; Levin, 2001; Schein, 2001; Dennis and Kunkel, 2004; Wong, 2005; Franzway et al., 2009; Koenig et al., 2011;). This is especially true in male-dominated industries such as engineering, construction, business, and law enforcement, among others.

Despite this, women in urban management affirm that employing a feminine approach is often effective in their communication endeavours. Their gentle, soft, and polite manner tends to foster friendliness and openness among individuals, encouraging greater cooperation. Yet, this approach does not consistently yield success, leading women to resort to code-switching, shifting to a more masculine and assertive demeanour when necessary. Thus, in order to be effective and meet their work objectives, women can either employ feminine strategies that

reinforce gender stereotypes or embody more aggressive approaches that are often associated with masculinity.

One key informant recalled advice from an older woman, urging her to assert extreme assertiveness to gain recognition and respect in the industry initially. However, she recognized the inherent risk in this approach, acknowledging that it could sometimes be perceived as arrogance, potentially leading to alienation from the very individuals she seeks to engage and connect with.

### **How do Women's Identities Enable or Disable their Managerial Skills?**

Many participants highlighted how their diverse identities—being black, Indian, disabled, foreign nationals, or women—often serve as limiting factors in their pursuit of meaningful managerial and leadership roles. However, some key informants shared unique experiences wherein their identities as young, black women facilitated the exercise of their managerial and leadership competencies. One informant specifically mentioned the advantageous role of Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) policies, acknowledging their contribution to her upward mobility within her organization. She emphasized her role as a significant contributor to the organization's scorecard, allowing her to attain a board position.

The key informant's perspective underscores the importance of recognizing opportunities within policies like BBBEE, not allowing the perception of being hired to fill a quota to dissuade capable individuals from pursuing leadership roles they are qualified for. Moreover, she stressed the mutual benefit—how companies gain from employing diverse talents. Additionally, she advocated for leveraging positions of decision-making to advocate for underrepresented interests, highlighting the impact of utilizing one's voice and positionality to create inclusivity and empowerment for others.

“...companies just by employing you [as a black woman] already they do much better on their BEE scores. Therefore, you know they might have some advantages when it comes to, you know, government contracts, tax, etc. I think it [BEE] has also played in my favour but I'm not saying it's a takeaway from the hard work that I have done, the experience and expertise. But I also, I think that it's only fair to point out that it has also played in my favour”.

– Black Operations Manager with Bachelors, married, 30 years old, Johannesburg

One participant revealed that her significant involvement in major development projects, while leading in her industry, was facilitated through her connections with white men. She noted that these individuals held substantial influence and control in extensive urban design

and development initiatives, positioning them as vital networking assets due to their access to significant resources. Despite being the youngest, only black, and a woman in a team primarily comprising older white men, the key informant expressed positive experiences. She received respect, her contributions were valued, and importantly, she did not perceive any unfair exclusion from opportunities. This positive atmosphere, despite the demographic differences within the team, underscores the value placed on her capabilities and input within this professional setting.

“For the first African smart city project, it would not have been a good look for them to be designing an African city and only white people were on the team. I’m not naïve. I know that people do use my face and my race as...they use it. On that team, they needed a black person, and I was the black person. I don’t mind being the token because I’m not gonna sit at the board table with my mouth full of my teeth. I’m going to contribute because I’m the expert in my own right”.

– Black Urban Designer & Social Facilitator with Masters, divorced, 34 years old, Durban

The key informant emphasised that her identity as a black person, combined with her technical expertise, significantly enhanced her contributions, particularly regarding the country's public transport system, townships, informality, and homelessness. Her personal experiences, rooted in these environments, granted her a deeper understanding compared to her white counterparts, allowing her to offer invaluable insights into these pressing issues. Her identity not only amplified her capacity but also positioned her as a leader in addressing the socioeconomic aspects of the project. It empowered her to make impactful decisions regarding the placement of vital social facilities like schools and clinics, leveraging her nuanced understanding derived from personal proximity to these communities.

Women’s perceived gentle nature when communicating can be disarming for parties involved in a conflict and this can enable some women to resolve conflicts quicker and without much damage to either party. Some participants mentioned that women’s soft nature is also what helps them maintain good relationships with various stakeholder. However, the findings from in-depth interviews with key informants provided a different view. Several participants mentioned that most conflicts they dealt with in their workplace happened with other women, especially if those women are ahead of them.

“Without a doubt in fact, all the points of conflicts whether potential or actual conflict in the workplace I've had is when I've been reporting to female bosses. I have had horrible experiences with female bosses”.

– Black Urban Planner with Masters, married, 45 years old, Pretoria

The key informant reiterated that women who are accustomed to being the only women in the room or positions of influence tend to create conflict or show discomfort when other women, especially those who are younger are celebrated. Perhaps the discomfort originates from knowing the difficulties that they had to deal with to get to where they are and yet the younger generations have it much easier. The older women who feel threatened tend to be openly hostile towards a younger generation of hard-working women, whose self-expression includes funky hair styles and tattoos. Those women are often labelled as seeing themselves as better and therefore cannot be trusted. Competition within different African ethnicities also played a role in the open hostility that the key informant was subjected to at the hands of older and more senior women. Her identity as a Xhosa woman in a predominantly Sotho speaking metro isolated her and was treated as an outsider although she had risen through the ranks within the government and municipal space.

### **How do Women's Identities Enable or Disable their Political Acumen?**

Most participants indicated that they have developed an acute awareness of their work environments and pay extra attention to detail because their assumed incompetence by their male and or white colleagues and superiors demands that they work harder to prove themselves and that leaves little room for them to make mistakes. Negative perceptions of women in management roles as being ineffective and less capable than men are prevalent in numerous studies (Carroll, 2006; Deal & Stevenson, 1998; Schein & Davidson, 1993; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992), adding pressure on women to outperform their peers in order to prove their competence

As a result, women have learnt to be observant, they pay attention to the needs of various stakeholders and find ways to make sure that those needs are met. This too is intended to prove their usefulness and competence in the workplace.

“Yes, I think I am quite dynamic in my ways of thinking - and getting through challenging problems... My attention to detail and noting things with a critical eye is something I attribute partially to my gender identity. More times than I can count - I have been required to go the extra mile in order to positively show my contribution. It now comes naturally but it's something I'm aware of that I have to do constantly”.

– Black Project Lead with Masters, single, 32 years old, Johannesburg

“Not a particular incident but my team is an all-black team which was previously led by a white lady. We do find ourselves working that much harder to ensure that we maintain the standard of work so that we're not perceived as dropping the ball because we're black. It's those unspoken narratives”.

– Black Sustainability Specialist with Masters, single, 30 years old, Cape Town

Being questioned constantly and second-guessed by their white and or male counterparts, their superiors and to some extent, by their clients, forces women to be more vigilant, to be extra cautious and to constantly be taking notes about areas of improvement. Given that most women are made to feel incompetent for most of their professional careers, their ability to pay attention to detail is so well-exercised and sharpened that it becomes second nature. The women develop an acute awareness of their work environments, as well as the people they interact with, and can use that to establish solid relationships with various stakeholders.

“...as a woman, I am good at building and maintaining relations with internal and external stakeholders. This always come in handy during my BAU [Business as usual] processes and has saved me from a lot of potential delays in terms of meeting market deadlines”.

– Black Development Finance Manager with BTech, Single, 28 years old, Cape Town

“Because we sometimes deal with local stakeholders in the work we do, my intuition and ability to read the room enables me to know when we are not welcome in a certain setting, and I also notice that sometimes stakeholders are friendlier to me. I work in a team that is mostly comprised of men and I’ve observed that people are more open or willing to engage because of how I approach them in a gentle manner. There have also been instances within the team where I’ve sensed a rising tension between male colleagues and have had to gracefully interject to dampen the tension”.

– Black Researcher with Masters, single, 31 years old, Pretoria

Some women have developed a keen awareness of their work environments, carefully observing clients, colleagues or superiors to strategically leverage the insights they gather. In settings where feminine traits like compassion, sensitivity, empathy, and intuition among others are expected, these women intentionally embody these characteristics to facilitate effective conflict resolution. By deliberately utilising these traits, which tend to make the approachable to men and whites, they enhance their ability to achieve work objectives, mediate and resolve conflict. Although this approach may be universal, several participants reported that their identity as women allows them to successfully navigate and mediate in their roles.

“I think being a woman handling a work conflict situation will sometimes help colleagues be more receptive to working through issues. I think the stereotype of being 'gentle' helps with this”.

– White Spatial Analyst with Honours, married, 32 years old, Johannesburg

The participants also revealed that working with other women generally comes with less conflicts to manage as they tend to collaborate and support one another. The participant submitted that working clients who are women tends to be a better experience because they can easily establish and maintain relationships overtime.

“Working with several clients in Africa who are women, they tend to relate better to other women, making it easier to build and maintain the relationship over time”.

– White Sustainability Manager with Masters, married, 30 years old, Pretoria

“In the workplace I was at previously - the team was a majority of women and thus the way it worked seemed effortless”.

– Black Project Lead with Masters, single, 32 years old, Johannesburg

Some key informants revealed that the ability to perform certain jobs is almost immaterial to their appointment in management positions. Instead, personal relationships with those in power are crucial for securing appointments in top positions. However, women often lack the added advantage of a gender-based comradery with those in senior management. This disparity is even more pronounced for black women from lower income backgrounds, who may have little in common with a CEO, director, or other leader whose approval they require. To bridge this gap, women strategically participate in activities that align with the interests of these leaders and stakeholders, thereby fostering connections and comradery that is essential for the career advancement.

“If there's a white old man and there's me, we might feel like we've got absolutely nothing in common, nothing to talk about. And, you know, taking note of the fact that, ok at the end of the day, I do need you [the white old man] to be able to meet me because you hold the power. So how can I then extend my hand also avail myself more for opportunities because you know, incorporates such as [omitted name of organisation] ...I'm sure other big corporates as well, business is done on the golf course”.

– Black Operations Manager with Bachelors, married, 30 years old, Johannesburg

#### **4.4. How do women capacitate themselves to work effectively in the urban management field?**

To address the enquiry on strategies that women employ to enhance their effectiveness within the urban management field, this study draws extensively upon insights that were generated from in-depth interviews with key informants. These primary insights are complemented by data from the online survey. The findings have been thematically organised into three

interlinked categories, highlighting the various approaches employed by women to capacitate themselves in order to work effectively.

Findings	Subcategory
<b>Finding #1:</b> Women learn to assimilate to establish strong interpersonal networks with diverse players and stakeholders.	1a. Joining new activities (i.e., playing sports to form connections). 1b. Embodying masculine traits.
<b>Finding #2:</b> Women unite and use their collective action to capacitate themselves in the workplace.	3a. Strong team building and networking. 3b. Amplify other women’s inputs and give credit where it’s due. 3c. Delegate tasks to empower subordinates and provide supervisory support.
<b>Finding #3:</b> Women establish boundaries for themselves and for those they work with.	4a. Say no often. 4b. Prioritise rest to prevent burnout. 4c. Ask for help when overwhelmed by work.

**Figure 4.8:** *Thematic summary of key findings* – The table provides a summary of key findings derived from the survey and has organised them according to themes and research questions.

**a. Finding #1: Women assimilate to prevailing norms and behavioural expectations to establish interpersonal connections.**

The findings unveil that women adapt their behaviour and appearance to align with prevailing workplace norms and expectations, facilitating the establishment of interpersonal connections that are crucial within urban management. These adjustments, including changes in attire and behaviour, aim to foster relationships with colleagues, stakeholders, and other actors in the urban management sphere. Notably, key informants emphasised the significance of activities such as learning golf, which, despite its apparent recreational nature, can significantly impact professional networking. For instance, mastering golf—a common activity among decisionmakers—enables women to build rapport with influential individuals, creating opportunities for informal bonding and trust-building outside formal work settings. This affords men, particularly white men, an advantage in establishing personal connections that often translate into favourable decisions in professional settings, a privilege women might lack.

“Yeah, so you are disadvantaged if you aren't actually on those platforms to discuss business or to at least create those relationships outside of the work 'cause remember

what you said is, it's great that you can do the work, but people look for others that they can work with. And you only need personal relationships to actually determine whether or not you will be able to work with someone... it's good and fine to have people look good on CV'S but can I connect with these people, can I work with them, can I trust them, you know, and the only way you gonna learn that is, you know, through cultivating your own personal relationship with that person”

– Black Operations Manager with Bachelors, married, 30 years old,  
Johannesburg

The key informants reiterated that fostering and maintaining robust relationships can help women mitigate the negative stereotypes and challenges associated with their gender. Instead of confrontation, cultivating personal ties, such as engaging in golf, serves as an entry point for bonding, even if skill proficiency is lacking in the sport. Merely expressing an interest in golf can lead to invitations and opportunities, enhancing networking prospects. The findings indicate that despite women's education and qualifications that meet job requirements, their work effectiveness and subsequent upward mobility can often be hindered by a lack of professional connections or networks. Thus, participating in activities that strengthen those networks is necessary.

“...you can be as educated as you can be, but if you don't have the ability to connect to people and make relationships that is the problem you know. So yes, I've had a good support, I've had a good reception in terms of the clients that I used to work for... Because any other person can do what I can do, but not every other person has got a relationship within Investec you know”.

– Black Development Manager with Bachelors, single, 39 years old,  
Johannesburg

Some key informants, however, highlighted challenges faced by women, particularly those who are married with children and familial responsibilities. Balancing work and familial duties impede their capacity to cultivate networks, especially beyond office hours. The key informants noted that men create networks through golf, social outings, which women, burdened with caregiving roles, often miss out on. Responsibilities limit their participation in after-hours activities. The consensus among participants and informants underscored the sacrifices that women make to excel in their careers. The pursuit of effectiveness in the workplace often necessitates compromising family time, leading to isolation as they ascend the professional ladder.

**b. Finding #2: Women use their collective power and action to capacitate themselves in the workplace.**

The findings unveiled that women strategically unite, forming cohesive teams to improve their collective capacity and effectiveness in the workplace.

“In the workplace I was at previously - the team was a majority of women and thus the way it worked seemed effortless.”

– Black Project Lead with Masters, single, 32 years old, Johannesburg

In addition to strategic collaboration and forming cohesive, the key informants emphasised the need for women to amplify each other's voices, especially in settings where their representation is lacking. Instances were highlighted where women's contributions or suggestions were initially overlooked but lauded when echoed by men moments later. Additionally, discussions cantered on the relentless expectation for women to consistently perform without displaying signs of exhaustion. Participants noted how this perpetual pressure compels women to continuously prove their capabilities. However, cautionary advice surfaced, suggesting an alternative approach: empowering younger women by delegating responsibilities and offering guidance instead of perpetuating the cycle of exhaustive overwork. It is not feasible for women to sustain this level of exertion indefinitely; thus, delegation is key. Empowering younger generations by delegating tasks allows them to apply their skills, fostering competence without solely relying on continuous training and mentorship. Furthermore, delegating responsibilities not only ensures task completion within stringent timelines but also alleviates the burden on women, enabling them to operate more effectively and efficiently. The challenges of supervising individuals who lack experience were acknowledged, yet the long-term benefits of empowering and mentoring younger colleagues were highlighted as crucial for sustainable capacity building and effectiveness.

**c. Finding #3: Women establish boundaries for themselves and those they work with.**

The insights from key informants underscored the crucial role of establishing boundaries for women, serving as safeguards against two primary groups: their colleagues and themselves. Many women who were interviewed revealed a longstanding conditioning to overwork, a practice historically demanded for them to be taken seriously and valued in teams. Despite attaining positions that allow women more control over their time and access to human resources, these women often find themselves trapped in familiar patterns. These patterns of workaholicism often lead to exhaustion and excessive workloads, frequently for unequal compensation. The findings emphasised the necessity for women to assertively decline excessive workloads or commitments that surpass their capacity.

“I've learned to say no, because I'm very much somebody who wants to do everything all of the time. So, I've learned to say no to things that are just too much for me to

handle. Uhm women don't aren't expected to say no by the way...And I've realized that delegation is empowering for people anyway. So, delegate but also support.

– White Governance Divisional Executive with Masters, married, 52 years old, Pretoria

The findings suggest that women should say no frequently and refuse tasks they do not wish to complete. It is crucial that women recognise their limits and communicate when they do not have capacity. Moreover, a significant finding highlighted the importance of prioritising rest. It suggested that well-rested women exhibit enhanced clarity in problem-solving and are more efficient and effective in achieving their work outcomes. The key informants suggested that resting is not only vital for improved health but also directly influences work performance. They indicated a need for more women to seek assistance when necessary. Despite having available resources, women tend to shoulder all responsibilities themselves, leading to impractical workloads and an increased risk of burnout. Seeking help, particularly from superiors, was advised, especially when they do not have access to support staff or subordinates to whom they can delegate tasks. These findings highlight the well-research impacts of sleep deprivation on cognitive performance, including problem solving, effectiveness and overall positive work outcomes (Fang et al, 2021; Alhola et al, 2020; Killgore, 2010; Walker, 2009; Taheri et al, 2004; Ferrara and De Gennaro, 2001; Pilcher and Huffcutt, 1996).

For women to effectively fulfil their roles and responsibilities, adequate support in terms of skills and financial resources is imperative. Without such provisions, their capacity to perform effectively is hindered. Mere verbal assurances, training, or mentorship often fall short; tangible financial commitments are sometimes essential for the successful execution of projects.

“I identify as a black woman of middle class, which had a bearing on my ability to participate on international trips to work. Because I was not as financially equipped as others, costs of getting a visa (that would be reimbursed later by the company) put me under pressure. It was assumed that I would have the money in the first place that the company could reimburse. But sometimes I didn't. I felt my financial position was taken for granted and the fullness of my identity was not taken into consideration.

– Black Sustainability Professional with Honours, single, 29 years old, Johannesburg

For women to effectively fulfil their roles and responsibilities, adequate support in terms of skills and financial resources is imperative. Without such provisions, their capacity to perform optimally is hindered. Mere verbal assurances, training, or mentorship often fall short;

tangible financial commitments are sometimes essential for the successful execution of projects.

#### **4.5. Examining the interplay between women's identities and work effectiveness: Analysing research findings.**

In the earlier chapters, Howlett and Raimesh (2016) define capacity as a pre-requisite set of skills and competences, which were grouped into three categories. These were analytical skills, which refer to knowledge of substance and communication; managerial skills, which referred to leadership, negotiation and conflict resolution, and political skills, which referred to the ability to understand different, often conflicting needs of various stakeholders, and uniting them to rally behind a common vision. This research adopts this definition of capacity as a benchmark to examine how women's identities affect their capacitation within the urban management field. Therefore, the findings analysed in this section evaluate women's analytical skills, managerial abilities, and political acumen, all of which contribute to capacity or competency.

##### **a. Reshaping Narratives: Exploring the Impact of Women's Identities on Professional Effectiveness**

The research uncovered a pervasive perception of incompetence directed towards women in the urban management field by their male and/ or white counterparts, stemming from gender bias as well as intersecting identities such as race, age, marital status, class, or disability. This questioning of women's competencies was especially pronounced among younger professionals, who were often presumed to lack technical knowledge essential to their roles by older men regardless of race. Intriguingly, the concept of 'age' emerged as a relative factor, where both a 29-year-old and a 50-year-old woman were perceived as 'younger' within environments predominantly populated by older age groups. This is possibly perpetuating an infantilising effect, as articulated by one participant. This dynamic reinforces the enduring perception of women as a disadvantaged minority within professional spaces, including the urban management field.

The findings highlighted a troubling disregard for women's qualifications and extensive experience, which failed to shield them from excessive scrutiny or the undermining of their technical expertise and professional counsel. The persistent underrepresentation of women in technical and managerial positions appears to contribute to sustaining untrue and limiting stereotypes about their identities, exacerbating the challenge. Insufficient female presence in profession hinders the necessary challenge of baseless assumptions and obstructs the reconstruction of women's identities in the workplace. Consequently, instances where women

demonstrate competence and achieve desired outcomes, they are often dismissed as exceptions rather than embraced as the norm.

In many instances, women's professional identities are embedded within contexts where they are viewed as a minority or disadvantaged group, particularly in environments dominated by men (Dutton *et al.*, 1994, cited in Kemp *et al.*, 2015, p. 382). This framing perpetuates misconceptions about their capabilities, further solidifying an inferior image within professional spheres. In contrast, the professional identities of men often align with an idealised and preferred worker archetype, further exacerbating the disparities in perception and treatment between genders within these settings.

#### **b. Independent Empowerment: Women's self-capitalisation in the absence of institutional backing**

An essential revelation regarding women's effectiveness in the workplace pertains to the limited role institutions or organisations play in empowering women urban practitioners. Remarkably, women seldom cited receiving substantial institutional support, such as mentorship, training, or access to financial and human resources aimed at enhancing their effectiveness. Instead, their narratives predominantly revolved around an internalised process of self-capacitation, where they relied on self-driven efforts to bolster their capabilities and ensure their effectiveness at work. This striking reliance on self-empowerment underscores the systemic deficit of institutional support structures tailored to facilitate and enhance the professional capacities of women within these settings. This finding is consistent with existing literature, which indicates that inadequate institutional support hinders individuals' ability to mobilize and achieve sustainable outcomes, thereby undermining the potential for meaningful self-empowerment (Forenza and Mendonca, 2017; Sen and Mukherjee, 2014; Hewlett and Luce, 2005). In the rare instances where institutional support was highlighted, a key informant, who identifies as a 52-year-old white woman, shared her experience of receiving support from senior white men within the institution. She acknowledged the assistance provided by these men, describing their approach as somewhat paternalistic or fatherly, despite recognising the inherent sexism embedded within such dynamics.

However, it's imperative for institutions to take a proactive role in supporting women, particularly in contexts where their technical expertise and knowledge are incessantly challenged. Institutions bear the responsibility of actively fostering environments that prioritise inclusivity and meritocracy, rejecting biases that stem from arbitrary factors like race, gender, age, or marital status and hold no bearing on one's intellectual capacity. It is incumbent upon these organisations to actively engage in educating their workforce, advocating for an equitable culture that values competence and expertise over irrelevant personal characteristics.

The research unveiled a compelling narrative that women's identities not only capacitate them to perform their job objectives effectively, but they empower them to navigate professional challenges and surpass prevailing biases that often impede their effectiveness in the workplace. Their distinctive attributes, characterised by heightened emotional intelligence and a range of soft skills—including empathy, active listening, intuition, and optimism—position women as adept communicators who excel in team building. This proficiency extends to instilling strong work ethics within teams, offering leadership that prioritises attentiveness to team members' concerns instead of fostering competition. It also ensures that team members are adequately supported their roles and can thus contribute to achieve working effectively, not just as individuals but as a team.

Remarkably, women emerged as trustworthy and level-headed professionals, capable with the expertise to mediate and resolve conflicts effectively. Their meticulous attention to detail equips them to analyse problems thoroughly, offering resource-efficient and effective solutions. Furthermore, women exhibit a unique capacity to comprehend the diverse needs of stakeholders, fostering an inclusive environment where diverse interests converge in collaborative efforts. These competencies – analytical thinking, problem solving, conflict resolution, leadership and stakeholder management among others, were identified as prerequisite skills for working effectively within the urban management field (Wu *et al.*, 2017; Howlett and Ramesh, 2016).

The research revealed that women have cultivated these competencies out of necessity, driven by the relentless need to consistently scrutinise their work. They find themselves overburdened, compelled to meticulously ensure that every facet of their professional output meets exceptionally high standards. At times, women's attention to detail for instance, serves as a defensive measure, aimed at pre-empting unwarranted questioning or doubt—a distressingly common occurrence faced by women in the profession. Many women have honed these competencies as a direct response to biases they encounter due to their gender, race, or age. The research findings underscore a poignant reality: women have harnessed these competencies as coping strategies, a resilient response to the adverse and unjust experiences they routinely face.

While this approach of pressuring women into high achievers may initially appear to be successful in pushing women to navigate their professional roles, it carries an inherent risk of long-term repercussions. It ultimately poses a risk of burnout, mental health strains, and a potential departure from their careers within urban management. Olufemi (2008) sheds light on this concerning trend, noting how qualified women in urban planning and management often redirect their career interests to unrelated fields or entirely exit these professions due to

persistent workplace pressures. These pressures stem from entrenched sexism, harassment, and the challenging dynamics of interacting with inflexible male colleagues. The absence of a supportive platform for discussing and addressing these issues exacerbates the problem. The women felt that there was no platform to discuss and report these issues – the “inherent bias by male colleagues” (2008: 417) because nothing would be done about them. This predicament is not isolated; it mirrors the potential challenges faced by women in the country's metropolitan areas in urban management professions. The biased environments, where gender and intersectional identities serve as grounds for discrediting competent women, may push them toward seeking careers in less biased settings where their capabilities are acknowledged and respected, posing a potential exodus from their current profession.

### **c. Comparative Analysis of self-capacitation strategies between black and white women's experiences**

The research findings shed light on distinct strategies for women aiming to enhance their effectiveness in the workplace. One prominent suggestion emphasised the importance of establishing boundaries by confidently declining tasks that are beyond women's scope, or to simply say no to additional tasks when burdened with excessive workloads. Additionally, prioritising rest emerged as a crucial strategy to mitigate burnout and enable clearer problem solving. Interestingly, it was predominantly white women who recommended these strategies, advocating for refusing excessive workloads and emphasising the significance of adequate rest. In stark contrast, black women shared a divergent narrative, highlighting their experiences of being consistently overworked and burdened with excessive tasks. They described workplace expectations that perceive them as inherently hard workers, evoking the term 'black mule' to symbolise constant requests for them to attend to tasks regardless of the time, including weekends and after-hours, and with no regard for their willingness or availability.

What was striking is the absence of references to rest among the narratives of black women, or Indian women. Instead, they highlighted the prevalent expectation for them, particularly those of minority backgrounds, to exhibit unwavering dedication without showing signs of exhaustion or voicing complaints. The fear of being labelled as incompetent or incapable in the workplace restricts their ability to acknowledge fatigue or seek respite, perpetuating a cycle where rest becomes disregarded or marginalised in their pursuit of professional validation. These disparities reveal the preferential treatment afforded to white women, stemming from the privileges associated with their racial identity, unlike black, Indian, or Coloured women. In their journey article, "Social Identity Contingencies: How Diversity Cues Signal Threat or Safety for African Americans in Mainstream Institutions," Purdie-Vaughns et al. (2008) elucidate the constraints black professionals face in expressing vulnerabilities such as fatigue, in contrast to their white counterparts. This phenomenon is further supported by Settles et al. (2019) and Collins (2000), who argue that the intense scrutiny directed towards black

individuals, because of their assumed incompetence, significantly contributes to their reluctance to show signs of fatigue resulting from excessive workloads and inhibits them from asking for help.

White women encounter a distinct advantage where their racial identity is often linked with perceptions of intelligence and competence. Consequently, they face less scrutiny regarding their capabilities within professional settings, experiencing fewer pressures to constantly prove their competence. This reduced pressure allows them the privilege to assert boundaries by refusing excessive workloads or prioritising rest without fear of being labelled as incompetent, a luxury not readily available to women from other racial backgrounds.

#### **d. Marital inequities: Unveiling challenges regarding the capacitation and effectiveness of women in matrimony.**

The research findings illuminated the biases and multifaceted disadvantages faced by married women, which significantly impede their capacity to perform effectively in professional spheres. One participant recounted a disheartening instance where her gender and marital status influenced her salary, leading to remuneration lower than her male counterparts. The rationale provided was that her husband also contributed to household income. This disparity echoes established patterns where married men typically receive higher pay due to perceived family obligations, a sharp contrast to the disadvantages experienced by married women. These biases underscore entrenched traditional gender roles that perpetuating dated notions of men as primary providers and women as caregivers and homemakers. Evidently, this stark division manifests in the workplace, resulting in unequal treatment based on marital status and gender. Research has drawn connections between inadequate remuneration and diminished motivation in the workplace (Milkovich et al, 2013; Gerhart and Rynes, 2003; Deci et al, 1999). The pay disparity faced by married women thus poses a significant risk that could potentially limit their ability to perform effectively and achieve their work objectives. This discrepancy not only affects their financial stability but also contributes to perpetuating harmful stereotypes surrounding their perceived lack of agency, commitment and ambition. These biases, rooted in outdated stereotypes, often lead to married women being overlooked for promotions or advancements within their careers.

The research findings also highlighted a significant constraint faced by married women in enhancing their competencies through social networking opportunities. These networking events, which are crucial for professional development, mainly occur after working hours, conflicting with responsibilities toward their families—especially husbands and children. This clash prevents them from leveraging such networking avenues effectively. Ridgeway and Correl (2021) examine how gendered expectations placed on married women exacerbate the "double burden" of balancing work and family responsibilities, thereby constraining women's

ability to participate in activities crucial for career development. This notion is also supported by Miller and Stiver (2021), as well as Gatrell and Burnett (2020) who extend the discussion to include both married women in dual-career households and single mothers who are primary caregivers. Therefore, recommendations to engage in extracurricular activities like golf, known to foster connections with professionals, stakeholders, and superiors, also present a challenge for these groups of women. The dedication of weekends to family commitments leaves limited room for these additional pursuits, hindering their ability to establish and nurture professional networks.

Consequently, women often find themselves at a crossroads where prioritising their careers isolates them from social and familial connections. This stark choice forces them to compromise either their family life or their professional effectiveness, unable to strike a balance (Kacmar and Whitfield, 2022; Glover and Moen, 2020). Unlike men, who seem to navigate thriving careers, enriched family lives, and active social engagements seamlessly, the landscape for married women presents an unfortunate trade-off, where achieving success in one sphere often leads to isolation in others.



## **5. CHAPTER FIVE: REFLECTIONS AND PROPOSED STEPS FORWARD**

“Diversity is a fact, but inclusion is a choice we make every day. As leaders, we have to put out the message that we embrace and not just tolerate diversity”.

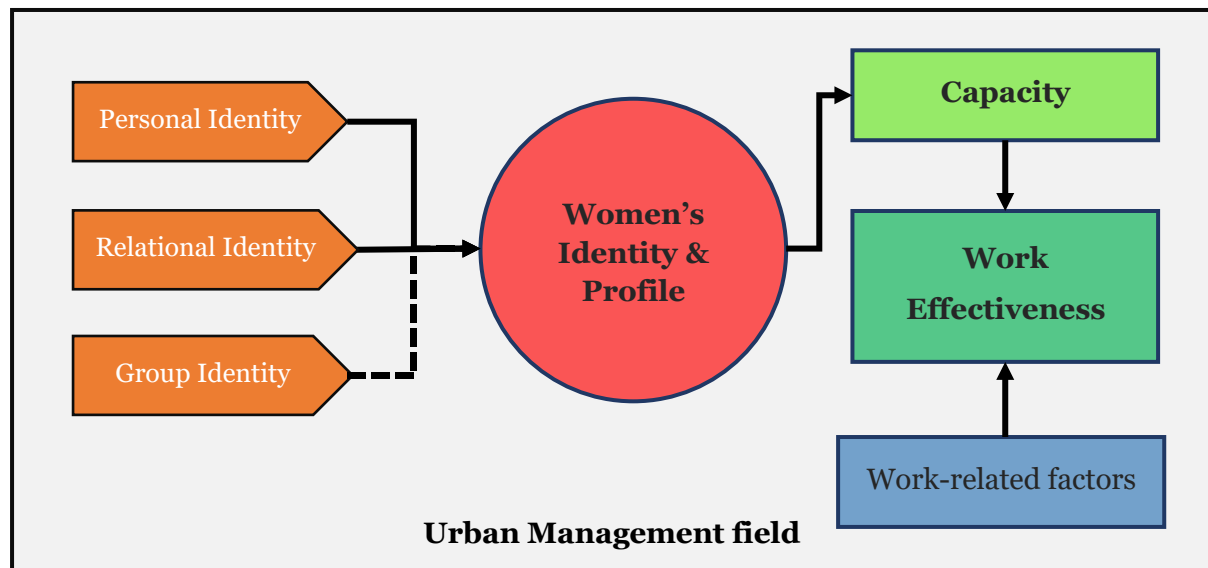
*- Nellie Borrero*

Image by Laurent (2022)

Available at: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/202289-05-10-heres-the-thinghaji-mohamed-dawjees-collection-of-provocative-essays/>

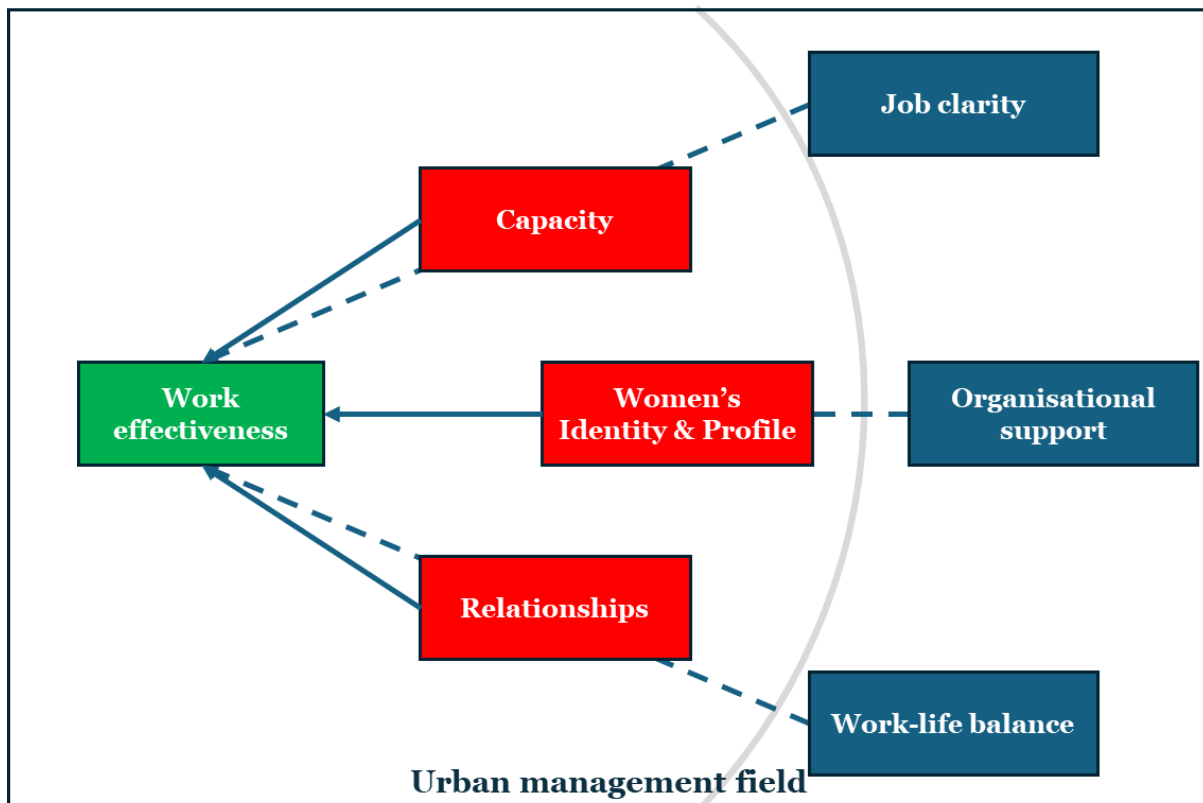
## 5.1. Introduction

This concluding chapter synthesises the insights gathered from the research on how women's profile and identities influence their capacity to work effectively in the urban management field. Initially, the study advanced that women's intersectional identities were central to their capacity to work, and as a result, their work effectiveness. The figure below shows the initial conceptual underpinnings of the research study.



**Figure 5.1:** *Conceptual framework diagram* – The diagram shows the correlation between the theoretical underpinnings of this study. It highlights women's identities, which is classified into three categories, alongside capacity which is a prerequisite for work effectiveness.

Women's individual, group and relational identities influenced how their coworkers, managers, clients and other stakeholders interact with them, which in turn, determines how well or poorly they perform their job responsibilities, and achieve objectives. However, the findings have necessitated a slight revision of this conceptual framework. The updated framework recognises that women's capacities, professional relationships, and intersectional identities collectively and directly influence their work effectiveness. Other external factors such as organisational support, job clarity, and work-life balance also influence work effectiveness but to a lesser extent. The diagram below demonstrates this further.



**Figure 5.2:** *Revised conceptual framework diagram* – The diagram shows the correlation between the theoretical underpinnings of this study. It illustrates that work effectiveness is directly influenced by women’s identities and profile, their capacity and relationships within the urban management, as well as other peripheral factors.

In this revised conceptual framework, work effectiveness is central to the study and the other conceptual factors such as capacity, identity and relationships. This has changed slightly from the initial framework, which placed women’s identities and profiles as fundamental determinants of one capacity, and in turn effectiveness. The research has established that women’s capacity, which encompasses their skills and expertise, remains crucial to achieve their work objectives. However, capacity alone is insufficient to ensure effectiveness. Women’s identities – both individual and group, play a significant role that either facilitates or hinders their effectiveness in professional settings. Furthermore, the previous conceptual framework perceived relationships to be part of women’s profiles and identities, specifically their relational identity, such as being an employee, a supervisor or a colleague. These identities are formed in relation to the people with whom women interact with. However, the research has unveiled that relationships hold greater significance than initially anticipated, thus necessitating their recognition as a standalone factor in the revised conceptual framework. The findings emphasised the critical importance of establishing interpersonal relationships with decision-makers and influential parties whose opinions can directly impact women’s work effectiveness, and in addition, their upward mobility within institutions.

By reflecting on the evolved conceptual underpinnings as well as the literary perspectives presented in earlier chapters, this chapter draws conclusions from the empirical data discussed and analysed throughout the report. It addresses the necessity of acknowledging the multifaceted nature of women's identities and the importance of fostering environments that support these identities through effective capacity building and relationship management. Finally, the chapter prescribes actionable plans aimed at fostering more inclusive and enabling workplace environments for women in the urban management field. By integrating these findings and recommendations, this chapter aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender and identity in professional settings, offering practical solutions for enhancing the work effectiveness of women in urban management.

## **5.2. A reflection of unveiled insights**

The study found that women's identities and profiles within the urban management field, and the effects thereof are complex and multifaceted. Women's identities can sometimes position them favourably as skilled problem solvers, team leaders and mediators. Their attention to detail, and quiet demeanour, which is seen as less threatening to men, and can be strategically employed to aid conflict resolution. These findings were also supported by the reviewed literature suggesting that some women adeptly apply a 'feminine touch' through emotional intelligence to enhance their effectiveness by encouraging teamwork and camaraderie (Datta Gupta and Eriksson, 2012 and Bacolod and Blum, 2010). In urban work environments marked by unpredictability, women's ability to remain composed amid complexity is highly valuable. This composure allows women to analyse problems meticulously and devise efficient solutions without resorting to aggression (Sunganthi & Senthilkumar, 2016).

Other times, however, women are disregarded because of their gender and other intersecting identities, and their contributions are associated with incompetence. This manifests in over-scrutiny of women's work, second guessing or outright ignoring their input. Prior research studies in the profession, following practitioners from South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya among other countries, support these findings, highlighting that women's contributions went unrecognised (Olufemi, 2008). In a longitudinal study involving 400,000 female participants, it was found that women's competence is often questioned, resulting in demeaning behaviours and a lack of support to perform their work objectives, and career development. Women's positive contributions to the profession and the workplace are rarely acknowledged while their mistakes are disproportionately penalised.

This research found that, in addition to their qualifications and experience, women employ various strategies to capacitate themselves to meet their work objectives. These strategies include using collective action to amplify their voices, delegating to share workloads, and

providing support to those in need. Bergeron (2006) postulates that when women do not perceive themselves as a collective, they inadvertently create an environment conducive to their continued marginalization. Thus, a collective identity based on gender becomes a prerequisite for effective collective action, where women collaborate to achieve unified objectives. Other scholars describe this collective action as mobilising femininities, which can be subject to scrutiny and perceived as problematic, unlike mobilising masculinities which are more acceptable (Carr and Kelan, 2016). Consequently, the undue scrutiny and problematisation of women's collective action can instil fear in others, leading to divisions among those who prefer not to be associated with a problematic feminine identity (Brink and Benschop, 2014). Instead, they may choose to align with a more socially acceptable form of femininity, also known as respectable femininity (Mavin, 2014) or form allies with other men.

In other times, capacitation looks different. For instance, women establish boundaries by refusing tasks beyond their scope, and prioritising to prevent burnout – a contributing factor to many women exiting the profession and careers they invested many years building. Women also seek assistance from supervisors or subordinates rather than taking on large workloads by themselves. While these strategies may be novel and seldom practiced, they are likely to gain popularity as women continue to share their experiences and prioritise their wellbeing. The novelty of these ideas is also reflected in the absence of literature or documented experiences where women set boundaries and prioritise rest within the profession. While this approach may seem counterproductive, it ultimately empowers women to improve their productivity, and overall effectiveness in their work. By being getting enough rest, and feeling less-pressured, women can contribute more effectively and sustainably to their professional roles (IOL, 2020; Kossek, Kalliath, & Kalliath, 2012).

### **5.3. Guiding Change: Prescribed actions**

Based on the findings of this research, several actionable recommendations can be made to foster more inclusive and supportive workplace environments for women in the urban management field. These recommendations are based on the findings from this research, draw on existing literature and case studies to provide a robust framework for implementation. The recommendations aim to advocate for structural reforms, redress system biases and cultivate work environments that acknowledge and promote diversity of talents and capabilities of women in the urban management field. To address the marginalisation of women in the urban management, as with other male dominated professions, a multi-faceted approach is required. The recommendations thus reflect this multifaceted approach, by proposing actionable plans across three categories, namely, policy-level, institutional-level, and individual level.

### 5.3.1. Policy-level Recommendations

The research highlighted South Africa's global recognition for producing exemplary policies, including its Constitutions, renowned as one of the most progressive in the world. However, the country's implementation of these policies is sorely lacking, including the implementation of policies and legislations related to women's empowerment and gender equality. The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) is thus, undergoing a major reform by reviewing the Policy on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (WEGE) to ensure its relevance to the current status quo, and to enhance its implementation framework will facilitate the achievement of intended outcomes.

Closely related to the WEGE Policy is the Gender Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing (GRPMEA) Framework. This Framework aims to mainstream gender objectives across government entities to ensure gender transformation and equality are achieved by integrating gender considerations from planning and budgeting, to monitoring and evaluation. A critique of the GRPMEA Framework, however, is its primary focus on government entities, where significant progress been made to advance women's participation, and the labour force enjoys policy and institutional protection. In contrast, private sector, which is less regulated, lags behind and there seems to be no plans to institutionalise the Framework in private sector work environments, despite millions of the country's labour force being deployed in that particular sphere. This research, therefore, recommends that the implementation of Framework should extended to private sector to ensure that women's empowerment and gender equality objectives are not aspirational realised but are integrated into annual plans, allocated budgets, and subjected to rigorous performance monitoring and evaluation processes (Department of Women, 2015).

While the GRPMEA Framework has noble intentions, experience has shown that policies do not automatically become institutionalised. This has been with both the implementation of the Policy on WEGE and the GRPMEA Framework. There is a critical need for a legally binding legislative document that enforces compliance and imposes punitive measures for non-compliance. It is for this reason that the WEGE Bill is crucial. Although it has not yet been enacted into law, the Bill will mandate public and private sector entities to promote the economic empowerment of women through access to economic and education opportunities, access to financing, land rights and entrepreneurial skills. It will enforce the equal treatment of women despite their race, class, age, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, nationality, education, and any other identity traits that have historically been used to marginalise women (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2019).

### 5.3.2. Institution-Level Recommendations

To advance gender equality and support women in the urban management field, institutions must implement comprehensive reforms that foster inclusive and supportive work environments. Organisations should prioritise the creation of inclusive work cultures by adopting policies that address the specific needs of women. Key measures include advocating for equitable remuneration, flexible work hours, and mentorship programs tailored to women's unique challenges and aspirations (Catalyst, 2020). Equitable pay ensures that women receive fair compensation for their contributions, which is crucial for reducing gender pay gaps and promoting economic independence (Blau & Kahn, 2017). Flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options and adjustable schedules, can help women balance professional and personal responsibilities, thereby enhancing job satisfaction and retention (Kossek, Thompson, & Lautsch, 2015). Mentorship programs designed specifically for women can provide critical guidance, support, and networking opportunities, fostering professional growth and career advancement (Kram, 1985).

To better accommodate the diverse schedules of women, particularly those with familial commitments, institutions should redefine networking opportunities. This includes organizing family-friendly gatherings by providing child-minding services for instance and scheduling social activities and functions during standard work hours to ensure broader accessibility (Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010). Encouraging participation in professional development activities that consider women's time constraints can significantly enhance their career prospects and professional competencies (Noe, 2002). By making these opportunities more inclusive, organisations can support women in building valuable professional networks and gaining access to resources that facilitate their career progression.

Raising awareness among stakeholders about unconscious biases and the impact of intersectional identities on women's workplace experiences is essential for creating an inclusive environment (Crenshaw, 1989). Institutions should initiate comprehensive diversity training and awareness programs that educate employees about the subtleties of intersectional discrimination and the importance of fostering a supportive work culture (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009). These campaigns can help to dismantle stereotypes and biases that hinder women's professional growth, promoting a more equitable and respectful workplace for all employees (Ely & Meyerson, 2000).

Encouraging ongoing research is vital for deepening our understanding of the nuanced dynamics of women's identities and their impact on professional capacities. Institutions should invest in generating empirical evidence that can drive policy reforms and foster gender

equity and inclusivity within professional spheres (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010). By supporting continuous research, organizations can remain responsive to emerging issues and ensure that their policies and practices evolve in alignment with the latest insights into gender dynamics in the workplace.

### 5.3.3. Individual-Level Recommendation

To navigate workplace challenges and maintain effectiveness, women can adopt various strategies grounded in literature and real-life examples. These recommendations focus on self-advocacy, skill enhancement, and networking, which collectively empower women to overcome barriers and thrive professionally. Self-advocacy is crucial for women to assert their needs and negotiate better working conditions. According to Bowles and McGinn (2008), women who effectively negotiate for themselves can secure higher salaries, better job roles, and more flexible working conditions. Setting clear boundaries is also essential to prevent burnout and ensure a healthy work-life balance. Consider the case of Ursula Burns, former CEO of Xerox, who navigated a predominantly male-dominated industry through a combination of self-advocacy, skill enhancement, and strategic networking. Burns started as an intern at Xerox and steadily climbed the corporate ladder by continually upgrading her skills and leveraging mentorship relationships. Her ability to advocate for herself and set boundaries allowed her to balance professional responsibilities with personal commitments. Burns' career trajectory underscores the importance of individual strategies in achieving professional success (Burns, 2016).

Building a robust professional network is indispensable for career progression. Networking provides access to resources, information, and opportunities that may not be readily available otherwise. According to Ibarra, Carter, and Silva (2010), women who actively network are more likely to receive promotions and gain visibility within their organizations. Joining professional associations, attending industry events, and participating in online forums can facilitate meaningful connections. Additionally, seeking out mentors can provide guidance, support, and advocacy. The success of mentorship programs like the one at PwC, which pairs junior women with senior leaders, underscores the importance of mentorship in career development (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007). Engaging in collective action can amplify women's voices and drive systemic change. Women should consider joining or forming groups that advocate for gender equality within their organizations. Research by Bergeron (2006) highlights that collective identity based on gender is essential for effective collective action. An example is the "Lean In Circles" initiated by Sheryl Sandberg, which create safe spaces for women to share experiences, support each other, and work collectively towards common goals (Sandberg, 2013).

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23 October 2023

Dear Zintathu Mazamane (677183)

This letter confirms that your clearance/waiver application has been approved. Your protocol/clearance number is: SOAP087/07/2023

Yours sincerely

*Lerato Nkosi*

Lerato Nkosi



**Examining Ways in Which Women's Profile and Identity Affects their Capacity to Work Effectively within the Urban Management Field.**

Dear Sir/ Madam

**Online Survey Participant information sheet**

---

My name is Zintathu Mazamane. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Urban Studies programme, specialising in Urban Management at the Witwatersrand University, within the school of Architecture and Planning. I am conducting research to examine ways in which women's profile and identity affects their capacity to work effectively within the urban management field. The research is based on women in various urban management related professions, including urban planning, project management, engineering, architecture, political leadership, etc.

**The participant's role**

Should you decide to take part in this research, you will be requested to participate in the study by completing the online survey. The research does not seek to test your intelligence, or to dictate whether your answers are wrong or right – all answers are valid. The questions are interested in your opinions and experiences of norms, standards, and procedures that you have been subjected to in your workplace on the basis of your gender and other intersecting identities. The survey will take about 30 minutes of your time.

**Voluntary participation**

Please note that your participation in this research is voluntary. There are no incentives for taking part, and there are no penalties for choosing not to participate. Should you wish to withdraw from this research for any reason, you are free to do so at any point without providing reasons. If you choose to withdraw your participation, you will not be affected in any way. Nonetheless, your participation in this research is valuable and highly appreciated.

**Confidentiality**

All information that will be collected will be used for academic research purposes only. It will not be used in a manner that could have negative implications for you. Your identity will remain anonymous, and any personal information will be kept confidential to protect your identity. You are kindly requested to sign a consent form before you can proceed with the survey. Again, please note that your personal information will be kept confidential, and this research will not be used against you.

Kind regards,

**Zintathu Mazamane (researcher)**

[Zintathu.mazamane@students.wits.ac.za](mailto:Zintathu.mazamane@students.wits.ac.za)

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**Supervisor:** Nqobile Malaza, [nqobile.malaza@wits.za.za](mailto:nqobile.malaza@wits.za.za) 0117177754



**Examining Ways in Which Women's Profile and Identity Affects their Capacity to Work Effectively within the Urban Management Field.**

Dear Sir/ Madam

**Interview Participant information sheet**

---

My name is Zintathu Mazamane. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Urban Studies programme, specialising in Urban Management at the Witwatersrand University, within the school of Architecture and Planning. I am conducting research to examine ways in which women's profile and identity affects their capacity to work effectively within the urban management field. The research is based on women in various urban management related professions, including urban planning, project management, engineering, architecture, political leadership, etc.

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All information that will be collected will be used for academic research purposes only. It will not be used in a manner that could have negative implications for you. Your identity will remain anonymous, and any personal information will be kept confidential to protect your identity. You are free to ask questions on any matter related to this research, and if you wish to participate in this research, you are kindly requested to sign the consent form. Again, please note that your personal information will be kept confidential, and this research will not be used against you.

Kind regards,

**Zintathu Mazamane (researcher)**

[Zintathu.mazamane@students.wits.ac.za](mailto:Zintathu.mazamane@students.wits.ac.za)

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**Examining Ways in Which Women’s Profile and Identity Affects their Capacity to Work Effectively within the Urban Management Field.**

Name of researcher: Zintathu Mazamane

**CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SURVEY**

I hereby confirm that the terms of this research have been explained to me and I understand them clearly.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and information that will be gathered for this research will be kept confidential. The information will not be used for any purposes other than the academic research report. I also understand that there are neither benefits nor risks involved by taking part in this research. All the relevant information has been explained to my satisfaction.

**SIGNATURE:** I confirm that I have read the terms and conditions of this research and I have understood everything I need to know. Therefore, I agree to take part in this research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email address of the participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Please indicate with X in the relevant section***

<b>In addition to participating in this research, the participant agrees to the following:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
The participant agrees that the study was explained to them and understands what it is about.		
The participant understands that their involvement in the study is voluntary, and they are free to withdraw at any point should they wish to do so.		
The participant understands and agrees that their personal information will be kept anonymous.		
The participant understands that the information provided will be stored electronically and used for research purposes now or at a later stage.		

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email address (Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Examining Ways in Which Women’s Profile and Identity Affects their Capacity to Work Effectively within the Urban Management Field.**

Name of researcher: Zintathu Mazamane

**CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERVIEW**

I hereby confirm that the terms of this research have been explained to me and I understand them clearly.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and information that will be gathered for this research will be kept confidential. The information will not be used for any purposes other than the academic research report. I also understand that there are neither benefits nor risks involved by taking part in this research. All the relevant information has been explained to my satisfaction.

**SIGNATURE:** I confirm that I have read the terms and conditions of this research and I have understood everything I need to know. Therefore, I agree to take part in this research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Please indicate with X in the relevant section***

<b>In addition to participating in this research, the participant agrees to the following:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
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The participant understands and agrees that their personal information will be kept anonymous.		
The participant agrees that the interview will be recorded by tape or any recording device.		
The participant understands that the information provided will be stored electronically and used for research purposes now or at a later stage.		

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full name of the participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full name of research (seeking consent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



23 October 2023

Dear Zintathu Mazamane (677183)

This letter confirms that your clearance/waiver application has been approved. Your protocol/clearance number is: SOAP087/07/2023

Yours sincerely

*Lerato Nkosi*

Lerato Nkosi

SOAP087/07/2023

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG



SCHOOL  
of ARCHITECTURE  
PLANNING