

https://dspace.org/

The impact of pregnancy on women in the ferrochrome industry in South Africa

Moropa, Thabiso Sekia

2024
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/43801
Moropa, Thabiso Sekia . (2024). The impact of pregnancy on women in the ferrochrome industry in South Africa [Master's dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg].WireDSpace.

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

WITS BUSINESS SCHOOL

The impact of pregnancy on women in the ferrochrome industry in South Africa

Name: **Thabiso S. Moropa**

Student number: **446752**

Protocol number: **WBS/BA446752/450**

Thesis submitted to partially fulfil the requirements for the Master of Business Administration degree in the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand.

February 2024

Declaration

I, Thabiso S. Moropa, affirm that the research report titled 'The impact of pregnancy on women in the ferrochrome industry in South Africa' is my original and independent work. I have appropriately acknowledged and referenced all external ideas used in this report. This submission fulfils the partial requirements for the Master of Business Administration at the Wits Business School, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I confirm that this report has not been previously submitted for any other degree or examination at any institution.

_____ 29 January 2024

Thabiso S. Moropa Date

Name of student	Thabiso S. Moropa
Student number	446752
Contact number	072 558 9755
Protocol number	WBS/BA446752/450
Email contact	446752@students.wits.ac.za
Initial registration year	January 2022
Proposal submission date	28 May 2023
Report submission date	29 February 2024
Supervisor	Dr Erasmus Kofi Appiah
Contact number	+27 (11) 717-3544
Email contact	erasmus.appiah@wits.ac.za

Abstract

This thesis presents a comprehensive exploration of the ramifications of pregnancy on women employed within South Africa's ferrochrome industry. Drawing on a meticulous review of literature, including studies by notable researchers such as Dr. Nobuhle, Solomons, Dikgwatlhe and Mulenga, the research delves into the multifaceted challenges faced by women in this sector.

The study illuminates the nuanced impact of pregnancy on the career trajectories of women within the ferrochrome industry. Synthesising literature insights with participants' perspectives, the research underscores recurring barriers such as limited access, safety concerns, and entrenched gender-based discrimination, both in academic discourse and on the ground.

Employing a qualitative approach, the thesis critically evaluates company policies governing pregnancy and their alignment with fundamental employment conditions. Through one-on-one interviews and data analysis, the research unearths discrepancies between articulated policies and their actual implementation, highlighting persistent gaps that adversely affect the well-being of pregnant employees within ferrochrome mining companies.

Furthermore, the study explores workplace safety, accommodation, and the financial implications entailed by pregnancy in the ferrochrome industry. By correlating literature insights with participant narratives, the research emphasises the challenges faced by pregnant women and advocates for strategic improvements to create a safer and more supportive work environment.

Findings: The qualitative methodology reveals that pregnant woman in the ferrochrome industry encounter challenges in career advancement, face role constraints, and struggle with work-life balance. Participants emphasise the need for improved policies and support from both companies and colleagues. Issues such as physical strain in hazardous areas, emotional stress, and financial impact of extended maternity leave are prevalent. Suggestions range from flexible work arrangements to awareness programs, advocating for better policies and empathetic workplaces. Ultimately, the participants urge for a culture shift, ensuring fair treatment and empowerment for pregnant women in the mining industry.

In conclusion, this thesis propels discussions on the strategic imperative of nurturing a social license within South Africa's ferrochrome industry. It examines how companies can empower women through policy reforms, fostering an environment conducive to gender equality, inclusivity, and community engagement. The findings contribute to a robust understanding of the impact of pregnancy on various facets of the ferrochrome mining industry, offering meaningful conclusions and recommendations for a more equitable landscape within the sector.

KEYWORDS

Pregnancy in mining, gender equity, workplace policies, career trajectories, safety and accommodation, financial implications

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration 2

Abstract 3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 9

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION 10

1.1 Background 10

1.2 Research problem 10

1.3 Research questions 11

1.4 Research objectives 12

1.5 Delimitations of the study 13

1.6 Definition of terms 13

1.7 Assumptions 14

1.8 Chapters Outline 14

CHAPTER 2. : LITERATURE REVIEW 16

2.1 The Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act of 2002 16

2.2 The impact of pregnancy in mining industry 17

2.2.1 Mining environment 17

2.2.2 Barrier within the mining industry 18

2.2.3 Mining organisational structures, including demographics 19

2.2.4 The employer responsibilities 19

2.2.5 Governance 20

2.3 Pregnancy management in the mining industry 21

2.3.1 Challenges women face in mining 21

2.3.2 Gap between current pregnancy policies and actual 22

2.3.3 Workload distribution 23

2.4 Impact of pregnancy on women in the mining industry 24

2.4.1 Senior leadership roles 24
2.4.2 Employment and labour management 25
2.4.3 Gender equality 26
2.4.4 Labour planning 26
2.4.5 Theoretical framework 27
2.5 Conclusion 29
CHAPTER 3. : THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY 31
3.1 Brief overview of methodology 31
3.2 Justification for the chosen methodology 32
3.3 Methods and procedures 33
3.3.1 Population and sampling strategy 33
3.3.2 Data collection strategy 34
3.3.3 Data analysis 35
3.3.4 Data credibility 36
3.3.5 Ethical issues 37
3.3.6 The research instrument 38
3.4 Strengths of the research 39
3.5 Weaknesses of the research 40
CHAPTER 4. DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND RESULTS DISCUSSION 41
4.1 Introduction 41
4.2 Information consistency and relevance 41
4.3 Participants profiles 42
4.4 Empirical information 44
4.5 Research questions 47
4.6 Summary 67
CHAPTER 5. DATA ANALYSIS 69
5.1 Introduction 69
5.2 Question 1: How does pregnancy influence the career trajectories and opportunities for women employed in the ferrochrome mining industry? 70

5.2.1 Career impact and opportunities 70
5.3 Question 2: To what extent do the pregnancy policies implemented by ferrochrome mining companies align with the basic conditions of employment, and how effective are these policies in practice? 71
5.3.1 Company policies and support 71
5.3.2 Work environment safety and accommodation 71
5.4 Question 3: What is the financial impact of pregnancy-related considerations on ferrochrome mining companies, including costs associated with accommodation, support, and potential productivity changes? 72
5.4.1 Financial concerns 72
5.5 Question 4: In what ways can companies within the ferrochrome industry strategically implement and maintain a social license that supports and empowers women in their operations, particularly concerning pregnancy-related policies and practices? 72
5.5.1 Health and well-being 72
5.5.2 Colleague and management support 73
5.5.3 Policy improvement suggestions 73
5.5.4 Individual advice and experience 74
5.6 Summary 74
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 77
6.1 Summary 77
6.2 Conclusion 78
6.3 limitations 82
6.4 Recommendations 83
REFERENCES 85
APPENDICES 88
6.5 Appendix 1: Instruments 88
6.6 Documentation of ethics 89

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Mining local communities perceptions on the mining activities benefits in their communities 18
Figure 2: The Social-Ecological Model: A Framework for Prevention (adapted from ATSDR, 2015) 28
Figure 3: Model of Feminist Theory (adapted from Arinder, 2020) 29
Figure 4: Word cloud - Most stated words from the participants 42

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participants profiles 42
Table 2: Analysis of transcribed interviews 45

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Lord Almighty for His unending grace and blessings. His guidance has been the cornerstone of my journey, and I am forever humbled and grateful for His mercy.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my beloved partner, Wendy Matsemela. Your unwavering support, encouragement, and prayers have been my source of strength. I am endlessly grateful for your love and understanding. To our son, Lebone, you are my inspiration and purpose.

I am indebted to Samancor Chrome, my sponsor and employer, for granting me the opportunity and unwavering support to pursue my studies.

To my family – my late mother, Mammy, my father, Collen Moropa, and my brothers, Ricardo and Reginald Moropa – your constant prayers, love, and encouragement have been my foundation. Thank you for always believing in me.

My sincere appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr. Erasmus Kofi Appiah. Your insistence on excellence, guidance, and unwavering support have been invaluable throughout this journey. Your mentorship has been a beacon of motivation and encouragement.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Throughout South Africa's mining history, female participation was notably scarce until democratic reforms. Efforts spearheaded by the Chamber of Mines, mandated by the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act of 2002, and underscored by initiatives like the Mining Charter, sought to rectify this imbalance by amplifying the presence of women in mining (Mkhatshwa & Genc, 2022). The Minerals Council South Africa continues these efforts, driving strategies to not only augment the overall number of women in mining but also promote their advancement into senior leadership roles within the industry.

These endeavors, facilitated through the Women in Mining Forum, prioritize multiple facets: combatting gender-based abuse, formulating and implementing robust diversity and inclusion policies, consistent reporting mechanisms for diversity issues, fostering organizational cultures conducive to female inclusion, enhancing inclusive working conditions, and ensuring the provision of suitable personal protective equipment (Minerals Council South Africa, 2021).

Despite strides in inclusivity and safety measures, the mining industry still grapples with substantial hazards and risks, encompassing dust, noise, vibrations, ultraviolet radiation, thermal stress, and chemical exposures. Notably, the intersection of pregnancy and the mining environment raises significant safety concerns for women. Hazards such as navigating staircases that heighten slip and fall risks, vibrations linked to potential miscarriages, noisy environments impacting blood pressure, ultraviolet radiation posing risks to unborn children, and extreme temperature variations leading to dizziness underscore the risks. Consequently, pregnant women are typically restricted from fieldwork during their pregnancies to safeguard their well-being (Solomons, 2016).

1.2 Research problem

In the landscape of the ferrochrome industry in South Africa, the increasing presence and significance of women in pivotal roles underscore the importance of understanding the challenges women face, particularly concerning pregnancy-related issues. Existing literature

acknowledges various challenges encountered by women within this male-dominated industry, including health concerns, workplace biases, and inadequate support structures (Solomon, 2016). However, a notable gap exists in empirical studies focusing on how pregnancy specifically influences the career opportunities of women within the ferrochrome sector. This gap signifies a critical need for a qualitative study dedicated to exploring the nuanced experiences of pregnant women in this industry and comprehending the implications of pregnancy on their career advancement.

The research aims to employ qualitative methodologies, utilising in-depth interviews with a purposive sampling approach to delve into the lived experiences of pregnant women within the ferrochrome industry in South Africa. Thematic analysis will be utilised to discern recurring patterns, challenges, and opportunities pertaining to career progression during pregnancy. Throughout this research, stringent ethical considerations will be upheld, prioritising participant confidentiality and informed consent.

This study envisions making substantial contributions to the body of knowledge in multiple dimensions. Primarily, it seeks to fill the identified gap in the literature by offering industry-specific insights into the intersection of pregnancy and career opportunities for women in the ferrochrome sector. By doing so, it aims to provide actionable recommendations for organisational policies and practices that support professional growth of pregnant women. Furthermore, this research aspires to serve as a foundational study, stimulating further investigations and discussions on gender dynamics, pregnancy management, and career progression within male-dominated industries. Ultimately, the anticipated contributions align with fostering a more inclusive, equitable, and supportive work environment for women in the ferrochrome industry in South Africa.

1.3 Research questions

- How does pregnancy influence the career trajectories and opportunities for women employed in the ferrochrome mining industry in South Africa?
- To what extent do the pregnancy policies implemented by ferrochrome mining companies align with the basic conditions of employment, and how effective are these policies in practice?

- What is the financial impact of pregnancy-related considerations on ferrochrome mining companies, including costs associated with accommodation, support, and potential productivity changes?
- In what ways can companies within the ferrochrome industry strategically implement and maintain a social license that supports and empowers women in their operations, particularly concerning pregnancy-related policies and practices?

These questions look into the multifaceted impacts of pregnancy on women's careers in the ferrochrome mining industry, evaluating existing alignment and effectiveness of policies, understanding financial implications for mining companies, and exploring strategies to create a supportive environment for participation of women within the industry.

1.4 Research objectives

This study aims to explore the impact of pregnancy on women in the ferrochrome industry in South Africa, with a focus on:

- **Career implications**: How pregnancy affects career progression, opportunities, and job stability for women in the ferrochrome industry.
- **Safety considerations**: The specific risks and hazards pregnant women face in this industry and the effectiveness of current safety measures.
- **Financial impact**: The economic consequences of pregnancy on women's employment and earnings in the ferrochrome sector.
- **Work-pregnancy balance**: The experiences of women balancing their work responsibilities and pregnancy, including support systems available within the industry.

Rationale:

Women in the mining industry encounter diverse challenges that significantly influence their career progression and overall well-being, encompassing factors such as ethnicity, age, and feminist perspectives (Jenkins, 2014). Extensive studies are needed to mitigate the impact of these challenges on women while ensuring the continued profitability of mining companies. Staff management, particularly dealing with field employees during pregnancies, presents a significant challenge for mining operations, impacting women's field experiences and, at times, undermining their contributions (Jenkins, 2014). Examining pregnancy management policies,

exploring gender intersections in mining, setting clear targets for female leadership roles, and ongoing analysis and performance monitoring of women in mining programs are crucial areas necessitating comprehensive evaluation and study.

- **Scope of Work**

The scope of this study includes:

- Population: Women working in the ferrochrome industry in South Africa, specifically those who have experienced pregnancy while employed.
- Geographical focus: Ferrochrome mining operations in South Africa.
- Time frame: Current practices and conditions within the last five years.
- Key areas of investigation:
  - Career implications: Examination of job roles, promotions, and career disruptions.
  - Safety and health: Analysis of workplace hazards, safety protocols, and their impact on pregnant women.
  - Financial aspects: Assessment of salary changes, job security, and benefits related to pregnancy.
  - Support systems: Evaluation of organizational policies, cultural attitudes, and the availability of resources for pregnant women.

- **Delimitations of the study**

- Geographical focus: The study will primarily concentrate on the ferrochrome mining industry in South Africa. However, it will draw insights from analogous mining sectors globally to enrich the findings.
- Specific focus: The study's focus will be limited to the pregnancy management aspect concerning women in the mining industry. It will not comprehensively cover all facets of the broader objectives related to women in mining initiatives.

1.5 Definition of terms

- **Mine Health and Safety Act No. 29 of 1996 and Regulations (MHSA)**: It is crucial in the mining industry as it sets the standards that the mining companies need to adhere to, and it ensure compliance. The MHSA is the legislation that comprehensively

protects the health and safety of employees, by ensure safe working conditions (Department of Mineral Resources South Africa, 2022).

- **Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSHA):** Similarly to MHSA, the OSHA projects the health and safety of employees, however, OSHA expands beyond other industries other than mining (Department of Mineral Resources South Africa, 2022).

1.6 Assumptions

- **The support of ferrochrome companies**: The study assumes that ferrochrome companies have committed to endorsing the women in mining initiative. Progress is presumed to have been made in implementing campaigns like "Stop Abuse of Women," which are consistently carried out.
- **Diversity and inclusion policies**: It is assumed that these companies have developed and put into effect policies aimed at enhancing diversity and inclusion of women. Additionally, regular reporting of diversity issues to relevant stakeholders is assumed to occur.
- **Cultural transformation**: The assumption is that there is strong support from senior management in driving and fostering the transformation of cultures within these companies to be more inclusive of women.
- **Working conditions and protective equipment**: It is assumed that continuous efforts are made to improve working conditions to accommodate women. Additionally, the provision of personal protective equipment suitable for women is assumed to be in place, though not limited to this measure.

1.7 Chapters Outline

- **Chapter 1: Introduction**
    - Background and rationale for the study.
    - Clear articulation of research objectives and questions.
    - Emphasis on the significance and relevance of the study.
- **Chapter 2: Literature Review**
    - Exploration of existing literature on pregnancy management in the mining industry.
    - Review of previous studies on pregnancy in mining.

    - Identification of gaps in the current body of knowledge.
- **Chapter 3: Theoretical framework and methodology**
    - Qualitative methodologies using in-depth interviews.
    - Purposive sampling approach.
    - Thematic analysis for pattern identification.
- **Chapter 4: Data presentation**
    - Detailed presentation and analysis of research findings.
- **Chapter 5: Data analysis**
    - Interpretation and discussion of findings.
    - Comparison with existing literature.
    - Implications for policies and practices.
- **Chapter 6: Conclusion, limitations and recommendations**
    - Summary of key findings.
    - Contributions to the body of knowledge.
    - Recommendations for future research.
- **Chapter 7: References:**
    - A comprehensive list of all sources referenced in the study.
- **Chapter 8: Appendices:**
    - Additional information and data supporting the research.

CHAPTER 2. : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act of 2002

The Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) of 2002 stands as a crucial regulatory framework overseeing mineral mining and exploration. It aims to provide opportunities for historically disadvantaged individuals, including women, within the mining sector. The Act mandates the submission of employment equity plans outlining the representation of women across all organisational structures at prescribed intervals. Additionally, it established the Women in Mining (WIM) initiative to foster engagement, networking, and information sharing among women in the industry. Development opportunities to enhance women's skills are also expected to be provided by mining companies under this Act (Department of Mineral Resources South Africa, 2022).

However, Dr. Nobuhle Nkabane, Deputy Minister of Minerals Resources and Energy of the Republic of South Africa, highlighted persistent challenges in implementing gender transformation strategies within the South African mining industry. Despite efforts, men still dominate high-ranking decision-making positions. Adjustments have been made to the Mining Charter targets, aiming for 50% of the board and executive leaders to be previously disadvantaged persons, with 20% of them being women. Additionally, targets have been set for women's representation in middle and junior management positions (Department of Mineral Resources South Africa, 2022).

Dr. Nobuhle emphasised key obstacles faced by women, including limited access to the industry, lack of mentorship, poor networks, insufficient skills, and education. The hazardous nature of the mining environment poses significant risks, particularly to women, leading to physical and emotional damage, as well as instances of sexual harassment and violence. Dr. Nobuhle mentioned that the government has formulated a Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Strategy to facilitate gender transformation in the mining sector, aiming to address these challenges (Department of Mineral Resources South Africa, 2022).

2.2 The impact of pregnancy in mining industry

The impact of pregnancy within the mining industry encompasses several facets, contributing to challenges for both the companies and the pregnant employees. Here are some of the notable impacts highlighted:

- **Safety prioritisation**: Safety stands as the paramount concern in the mining industry. The hazardous nature of the mining environment poses significant risks to pregnant women, potentially harming both the mother and the unborn child (Solomons, 2016). Ensuring the safety of pregnant employees becomes a critical challenge for mining companies.
- **Productivity and operational costs**: The productivity of female employees, particularly during pregnancy and childbirth, can be significantly reduced. Mining companies depend on employee productivity to justify the salaries paid. As a result, companies may need to implement measures to accommodate pregnant women, which could potentially increase operational costs (Solomons, 2016).
- **Increased absenteeism and workload impact**: Pregnancy requires regular medical appointments and care, leading to increased absenteeism among pregnant employees. This absenteeism can result in colleagues having to cover additional workload, leading to potential fatigue and negative impacts on the overall work environment (Solomons, 2016).
- **Legal obligations and costs**: Under the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act of 2002, mining companies are legally obligated to ensure the safety and health of all employees, including pregnant women. Compliance with regulations regarding pregnancy in the workplace, such as maternity leave and adjustments in the work environment, entails additional costs for the company (Department of Mineral Resources South Africa, 2022).

These impacts underscore the multifaceted challenges that pregnancy poses within the mining industry, ranging from safety concerns to operational and financial implications for companies, necessitating careful consideration and strategic management.

2.2.1 Mining environment

It's impressive to note the pivotal role mining companies play in upholding corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the communities they operate in, as highlighted in the study by

Dikgwatlhe & Mulenga (2023) across four South African mining provinces. Figure 1, as indicated in the study, portrays the positive perceptions regarding the impact of mining companies on local communities. This demonstrates the significant contributions made by these companies toward enhancing livelihoods and fostering relationships within the areas they operate.

Dikgwatlhe & Mulenga's research underscores that mining companies consistently fulfil their corporate social responsibility obligations, with local communities being the primary beneficiaries. This is indicative of a collaborative effort among the tripartite entities—the government, communities, and mining companies—working in tandem to achieve their respective objectives, resulting in mutually beneficial outcomes (Dikgwatlhe & Mulenga, 2023). This synergy demonstrates a collaborative and symbiotic relationship aimed at creating positive impacts and sustainable development within these regions.

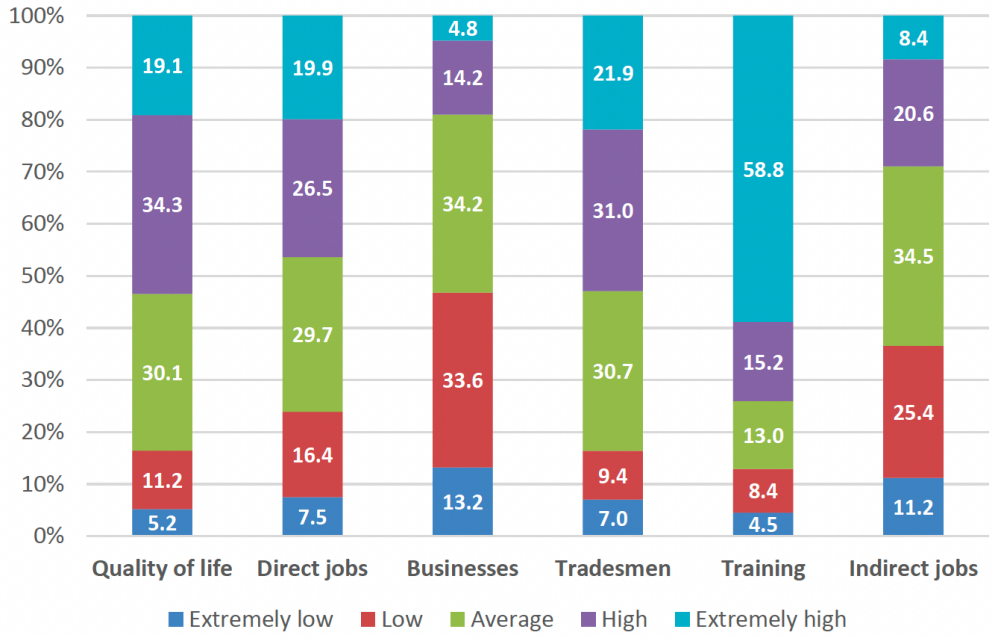

Figure 1: Mining local communities perceptions on the mining activities benefits in their communities

2.2.2 Barrier within the mining industry

The mining industry's substantial contributions to a country's economy are undeniable. However, it's crucial to note a notable challenge arising within this context: the persistent demands from local mining communities. These demands, while stemming from legitimate needs and expectations, have the potential to culminate in community unrest. As highlighted

in the study by Dikgwatlhe & Mulenga (2023), these ongoing demands pose a significant difficulty for mining companies in effectively operating within these regions.

The delicate balance between meeting the economic imperatives of mining operations and addressing the needs and expectations of local communities often becomes a challenging task for these companies. Striking a harmonious relationship that ensures sustainable mining practices while also catering to the social and economic welfare of these communities becomes a paramount challenge within this context. This challenge underscores the importance of fostering constructive dialogue, collaboration, and mutually beneficial solutions to address the concerns of both the mining companies and the local communities they operate in.

2.2.3 Mining organisational structures, including demographics

The organisational structures within the mining industry vary in complexity and size, encompassing roles such as the chief executive officer (CEO), chief operations officer (COO), chief financial officer (CFO), senior managers, technical staff, and support staff. However, a notable trend within these structures has been the historical dominance of men, particularly in senior leadership roles within the industry. Over the years, men have predominantly filled these key positions.

Efforts to promote gender diversity and inclusion, especially in leadership roles, have been actively pursued, largely driven by initiatives like the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA). Recognising the significance of diversity and inclusion, there have been ongoing shifts in senior leadership demographics within the mining sector (Minerals Council South Africa, 2021).

These changes in leadership demographics signify a notable shift in the industry's commitment to fostering gender diversity and inclusivity, indicating an evolving landscape aimed at creating opportunities for women to hold key leadership positions within the mining organisational structures.

2.2.4 The employer responsibilities

The mining industry serves as a key economic pillar in South Africa, providing employment to a significant portion of the population with salaries that often exceed the national average.

Despite this substantial economic contribution, local communities in close proximity to mining operations continue to express discontent and unrest.

One of the responsibilities of mining employers extends beyond merely providing jobs and higher-than-average salaries. They are also tasked with enhancing the quality of life for the communities surrounding their operations. However, despite efforts to improve the quality of life, including economic contributions and employment opportunities, local communities remain dissatisfied. Continuous demands for better living standards and increased wages persist, leading to ongoing unrest and dissatisfaction among these communities, as highlighted in the findings by Dikgwatlhe & Mulenga (2023).

Balancing the economic benefits of mining operations with the social and economic expectations of local communities remains a complex challenge for mining employers. This underscores the need for sustainable strategies that not only prioritise economic growth but also address the social and welfare needs of these communities to foster a more harmonious relationship between the mining industry and its surrounding communities.

2.2.5 Governance

The governance landscape within the mining industry often involves the formulation and implementation of policies to comply with legislation regarding gender transformation. While many mining companies may have established policies aligned with the requirements of gender transformation laws, there appears to be a discrepancy between the policies in place and their actual implementation.

Studies, such as the one conducted by van der Watt & Marais (2021), highlight a notable gap between policy formulation and execution within these companies. The challenges arise from issues related to transparency, as well as deficiencies in planning strategies, leading to subpar implementation of these gender transformation policies.

This lack of transparency and ineffective planning contributes to a disconnect between stated intentions within policies and their actual realisation within the operational framework of mining companies. Consequently, the desired outcomes of gender transformation initiatives might not be fully achieved due to these shortcomings in policy execution. Improving the

transparency of processes and implementing more robust planning strategies could potentially bridge this gap between policy formulation and effective implementation within the mining industry.

2.3 Pregnancy management in the mining industry

Indeed, the presence of women in the mining industry has introduced new considerations and challenges that mining companies need to address, particularly concerning pregnancy management. Historically, many of the tasks within mining were designed and tailored for men, involving heavy machinery and physical strength requirements. As a result, women were often excluded from engaging in these tasks due to the potential hazards posed to their reproductive systems.

The work design and occupational risk assessments within the mining industry have traditionally been tailored to suit male workers. However, with a growing emphasis on gender equality and the increased presence of women in the industry, there's a recognised need to re-evaluate and revise these risk assessments. This re-evaluation is essential to ensure that the industry accommodates and caters to the specific needs and safety considerations of female employees, especially regarding their reproductive health and pregnancy-related concerns (Hermanus, 2007).

Creating a work environment that addresses the unique needs of women, including their physical capabilities and health considerations during pregnancy, is imperative for fostering inclusivity and ensuring a safe and supportive workplace within the mining industry. This shift towards accommodating women's needs is crucial for advancing gender equality and improving the overall safety and well-being of all employees within the mining sector.

2.3.1 Challenges women face in mining

The challenges faced by women in the mining industry are multifaceted and impactful, as highlighted by Dr. Nobuhle (2022) and further supported by research.

- **Access and support**: Women encounter barriers such as limited access to the industry, inadequate mentorship, poor networking opportunities, and challenges in acquiring sufficient skills and education to thrive in this sector.

- **Hazardous work environment**: The mining industry presents a hazardous environment, particularly for women, leading to physical and emotional harm. Instances of sexual harassment and violence, echoing societal abuses, are experienced by women within mining workplaces.
- **Gender-based discrimination**: Women grapple with gender-based discrimination, hindering their progress in senior leadership positions, including boards of directors. This discrimination extends to inadequate equipment, such as personal protective gear unsuitable for women, and inadequate sanitary facilities, creating additional obstacles for female participation in mining operations.
- **Pregnancy and parenting challenges**: Managing pregnancy, maternity leave, and parenting becomes a significant challenge due to the demanding nature of the industry. Worksite changes, extended working hours, and limited childcare services near workplaces compound these difficulties, making it arduous for women to balance familial responsibilities with the demands of the mining industry (Perks & Schulz, 2020).

The existence of these obstacles underscores the need for comprehensive strategies and reforms within the mining industry to ensure gender equality, provide adequate support, and create a safer and more inclusive work environment for women. Efforts such as the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Strategy formulated by the government signal a commitment to addressing these challenges and fostering a more equitable landscape within the mining sector.

2.3.2 Gap between current pregnancy policies and actual

The existing policies within the mining industry are gradually adapting to accommodate the evolving needs of women, particularly concerning pregnancy management. However, several gaps persist between these policies and their actual implementation.

- **Risk mitigation for pregnant women**: Regulations prohibit pregnant women from working underground due to potential risks to the unborn child. Maternity leave guidelines outlined in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act are established. Companies are mandated to isolate pregnant women from hazardous chemicals and provide suitable personal protective equipment (PPE). Moreover, they are directed to implement measures ensuring the management of pregnancy-related risks, education of

female employees regarding pregnancy in hazardous work environments, and allocation of alternative duties during pregnancy (Government Gazette, 1997).

- **Challenges and insufficiencies**: Despite these measures, challenges persist for women in the mining industry. Inadequate facilities, discriminatory practices, and limited access to healthcare services continue to impact female employees. In contrast to mining industries in other countries, the South African mining sector lags behind in addressing these challenges, especially in providing comprehensive healthcare facilities and day-care services for pregnant women.
- **Continuous improvement**: Recognising the persistent challenges, the call for ongoing improvements in pregnancy management within the South African mining industry remains critical. The need for continuous efforts to enhance safety measures and provide better support and facilities for pregnant women is evident (Government Gazette, 1997).

Addressing these gaps between policies and actual practices is essential for fostering a safer and more supportive environment for pregnant women in the mining industry. Continuous improvements, in line with evolving needs and global standards, are imperative to ensure the well-being and safety of female employees during pregnancy within South Africa's mining sector.

2.3.3 Workload distribution

The perception of women's capabilities within the mining industry often reflects historical gender biases, with women being perceived as less capable compared to their male counterparts. This bias manifests in various ways, such as the assumption that women are more suitable for domestic roles rather than holding key positions or making significant decisions within mining companies (Pugliese, 2021).

In the past, societal norms often relegated women to traditional domestic roles while positioning men as the primary providers. However, contemporary attitudes, especially among women in the mining industry, are shifting. Women are aspiring for more opportunities and equal footing within the workplace. They seek not just inclusion but also representation in decision-making processes and key roles traditionally dominated by men.

Efforts towards gender equality and inclusivity are challenging these long-standing perceptions and striving to create a more equitable environment within the mining sector. Women's aspirations for broader roles and equal opportunities are driving the industry to reconsider and re-evaluate traditional gender-based notions, aiming for a more diverse and inclusive workforce where women are recognised for their capabilities beyond stereotypical roles.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological theory

In the context of pregnancy and its impact on women in the ferrochrome industry in South Africa, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a valuable framework for understanding the multifaceted challenges these women face. According to Maslow's theory, human needs are organized hierarchically, beginning with basic physiological needs such as air, food, and shelter, followed by safety, love and belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. For pregnant women in the ferrochrome industry, the fulfilment of these needs can be significantly disrupted. Physiological needs may be compromised due to demanding physical labour and inadequate healthcare. Safety needs, including job security and a safe working environment, are often threatened by the potential hazards associated with the industry. Furthermore, the social and emotional support encapsulated in love and belongingness needs may be strained by workplace discrimination or insufficient maternity policies. Understanding these disruptions through Maslow's hierarchy highlights the importance of addressing each level of need to support pregnant women in achieving overall well-being and professional growth in the industry (McLeod, 2024).

2.4 Impact of pregnancy on women in the mining industry

2.4.1 Senior leadership roles

The landscape of senior leadership roles within the mining industry often reflects unintentional barriers that hinder the career progression of women. Existing policies and work structures inadvertently limit opportunities for women's advancement in mining (Pugliese, 2021). As a result, women frequently find themselves in roles such as administration, cleaning, catering, and others that require fewer technical skills and often offer lower pay scales. Conversely, high-level operational, technical, and senior roles are predominantly occupied by men, creating a significant disparity.

This imbalance not only leads to women having to exceed expectations to gain recognition but also results in instances where women earn less than their male counterparts despite holding similar positions (Kotsadam & Tolonen, 2016). Discrimination, verbal and physical abuse, sexual harassment, and intimidation are persistent challenges faced by women across various career levels within the mining industry.

To address these issues, mining companies must intensify efforts to enhance gender equality awareness and enforce it rigorously within their organisational culture. Accelerated training and development programs aimed specifically at women are crucial to equip them with the necessary skills and opportunities for progression into higher-level positions within the industry (Kotsadam et al., 2017). Creating an environment free from discrimination and providing equal opportunities for career growth for all genders are pivotal steps toward fostering a more inclusive and equitable mining sector.

2.4.2 Employment and labour management

The mining industry's high-risk nature necessitates stringent safety measures for all employees, yet subtle discrimination against women persists, labelling certain roles as "unsafe for women." This perception reflects women as non-technical, fragile, and unsuitable for the mining environment, despite safety protocols designed for all genders (Pugliese, 2021). Additionally, some mining companies engage in tokenistic practices by using women for branding purposes, featuring them in PPE on corporate websites to enhance the company's image rather than valuing their contributions (Perks & Schulz, 2020).

In some countries like South Africa and Australia, there remains opposition from men against their partners working in the mining industry. Despite recent efforts to promote women in mining, progress in attaining senior and legal roles for women remains limited. The mining sector's work environment continues to be challenging, leading to the perception that women involved in mining are those committed to their work, facing financial hardships, or being the sole providers for their families.

These persistent challenges underscore the need for a fundamental shift in the industry's mindset and practices. Efforts should focus not only on promoting women in mining but also on creating a more inclusive and supportive environment where women can access various

roles, including senior and legal positions. Additionally, addressing ingrained biases and fostering a culture that values women's contributions beyond tokenistic representation is crucial for ensuring gender equality and a more equitable mining industry.

2.4.3 Gender equality

The structural and operational framework of the mining industry has historically revolved around the requirements and adaptations suited primarily to men. This approach inadvertently devalues the contributions of women's labour within the mining sector. Rooted in historical patterns dating back to the colonial era, women were traditionally relegated to domestic and reproductive roles, excluded from participating in mine production fields (Pugliese, 2021).

Despite societal evolution and a changing landscape, vestiges of this historical exclusion persist in the mining industry's recruitment processes and work policies. These processes often favour men and are structured in a manner that inadvertently side-lines or undervalues the contributions and potential of women in the sector. The design and operational philosophy of the industry, which originated from a historical context, inadvertently perpetuates a system that continues to disadvantage and undervalue the labour contributions of women within the mining field.

Recognising and addressing these deep-rooted structural biases is crucial for fostering gender equality within the mining industry. Efforts should be made to reform recruitment processes, reshape work policies, and create an environment that values and promotes the full and equal participation of women alongside men in all facets of the mining sector.

2.4.4 Labour planning

The process of obtaining a mining license often necessitates the provision of a collaborative governance plan by the company, as highlighted in research by van der Watt & Marais (2021). This requirement is part of the regulatory landscape aimed at ensuring a comprehensive and cooperative approach within the mining sector.

Given the historical male dominance within the mining industry, the increased participation of women has introduced new challenges. Women often find themselves balancing responsibilities both at work and at home, leading to an increased burden. This dual

responsibility can impact their ability to fully engage in the mining sector, affecting their professional growth and contributions to the industry.

The collaborative governance plan required for mining licenses presents an opportunity for mining companies to address these challenges. Implementing strategies that support work-life balance, provide adequate support systems, and promote inclusivity within the workplace can help alleviate the burden faced by women. By fostering an environment that accommodates the diverse needs of all employees, including considerations for both work and personal life, mining companies can contribute to creating a more equitable and supportive workplace for women in the industry.

2.4.5 Theoretical framework

The impact of pregnancy to the mining companies and to the women in the mining industry will be analysed through structured interviews, survey questionnaire, analysing statistical data, reviews and interpretations, this is similar techniques for a qualitative study done by Dikgwatlhe & Mulenga (2023).

The Social-Ecological Model

The Social-Ecological Model, renowned for its holistic approach to understanding health outcomes stemming from individual interactions within societal and environmental spheres, serves as a robust lens to evaluate pregnancy-related influences. The study navigates the model's layers to assess diverse dimensions:

- Societal pressures and wellbeing: Examining cultural dimensions impacting pregnant employees, evaluating societal pressures, and their influence on work obligations, psychology, and behavioural changes.
- Pregnancy policies and environmental factors: Analysing the implementation and efficacy of pregnancy policies, safety measures, risk assessments, environmental conditions, and hazards management tailored to women in the mining industry.
- Working relationships and organisational culture: Evaluating the treatment of pregnant women in mining organisations, discerning discrimination, harassment, and their impact on working relationships among colleagues, supervisors, and managers.

- Leverage points and diversity statistics: Investigating the leverage points within the working environment, diversity profiles, and organisational measures to retain women while sustaining productivity and profitability.

The model interactions can be depicted by the Figure 2 below.

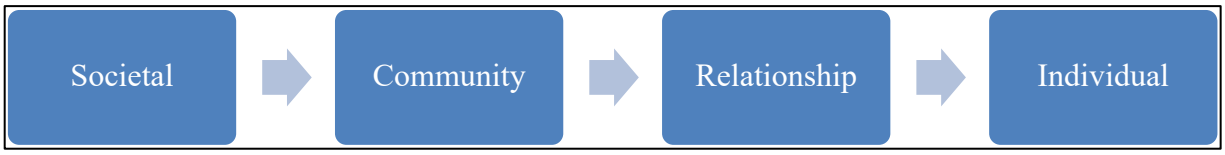

Figure 2: The Social-Ecological Model: A Framework for Prevention (adapted from ATSDR, 2015)

The findings of this research aim to provide nuanced insights into the multifaceted impact of pregnancy in the mining industry. The study endeavours to contribute to the enhancement of workplace policies, practices, and the overall understanding of the challenges faced by pregnant women in mining, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment within the industry.

The Feminist Theory

The Feminist Theory serves as a critical framework, probing existing organisational systems and power imbalances. It examines how these systems inherently perpetuate discrimination and exclusion, particularly in the context of hindrances to women's career advancement. By scrutinising the current structures and systems within mining organisations, this research aims to uncover underlying barriers, specifically those impacting the career trajectory of women.

Key aspects to be investigated through the Feminist Theory include:

- Impact of pregnancy on career projections: Analysing how pregnancy affects the career trajectories of women in the mining industry, exploring impediments and challenges faced during and after pregnancy.
- Career gaps and mitigation strategies: Exploring measures and strategies that mining companies can employ to minimise career gaps for female field employees during their pregnancy periods, focusing on inclusivity, support, and equitable opportunities.

By applying the Feminist Theory as a guiding framework, this research endeavours to illuminate systemic issues and offer insights into reshaping organisational structures and practices within the mining industry. The study aims to contribute to fostering a more equitable and supportive environment, addressing gender-related disparities in career progression resulting from pregnancy, and advocating for inclusive policies and practices.

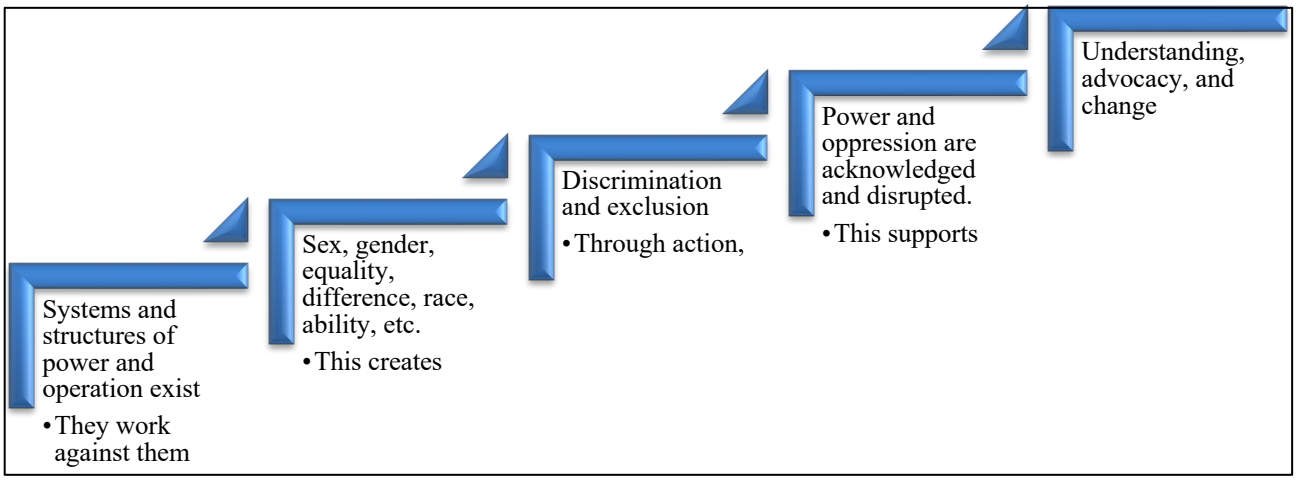

Figure 3: Model of Feminist Theory (adapted from Arinder, 2020)

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this comprehensive examination highlights the intricate challenges faced by women in the mining industry, particularly concerning the impact of pregnancy. The regulatory landscape, as embodied by the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act of 2002 and subsequent initiatives, emphasises the importance of gender diversity but reveals persistent hurdles, as outlined by Dr. Nobuhle Nkabane. Pregnancy in the mining sector presents multifaceted challenges, encompassing safety concerns, productivity implications, increased absenteeism, and legal obligations.

The mining industry, as explored through the lens of corporate social responsibility and governance, demonstrates positive contributions to local communities but also grapples with persistent demands and potential unrest. Additionally, organisational structures within the industry exhibit a historic gender imbalance, although efforts are underway to promote gender diversity.

Pregnancy management policies, while existing, reveal a gap between formulation and execution, underscoring the need for continuous improvement. Women in the mining sector

face numerous challenges, including gender-based discrimination, hazardous work environments, and difficulties in managing pregnancy and parenting.

The impact of pregnancy on women in senior leadership roles further illustrates unintentional barriers hindering career progression, emphasising the need for intensified efforts to enforce gender equality. Subtle discrimination persists in the industry's perception of certain roles as "unsafe for women," and the historical male dominance continues to influence labour planning and the overall operational framework.

Theoretical frameworks, including the Social-Ecological Model and Feminist Theory, provide lenses through which to analyse and address the multifaceted challenges. The study's findings aim to contribute nuanced insights, foster a more inclusive and supportive environment, and advocate for equitable policies and practices within the mining industry.

In summary, addressing the challenges related to pregnancy in the mining industry requires a concerted effort involving regulatory bodies, mining companies, and broader societal awareness. Achieving gender equality and creating a safe and supportive environment for pregnant women necessitates ongoing commitment, policy improvements, and a shift in organisational cultures within the mining sector.

CHAPTER 3. : THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Brief overview of methodology

The qualitative approach adopted in this research seeks to deeply comprehend the lived experiences of women operating within the ferrochrome mining industry in South Africa. This method aims to explore the intricate complexities of individual experiences, steering away from a central focus on demographic factors like age, gender, or ethnicity. Instead, it delves into the nuanced narratives and challenges faced by women in this specific industry setting.

Organisational culture plays a pivotal role in shaping policies and practices, especially concerning pregnant women in mining (Teherani, et al., 2015). This qualitative exploration recognises the profound influence of organisational culture on the experiences of women, particularly during pregnancy, within mining companies. It seeks to assess how the prevailing culture within these organisations impacts the day-to-day experiences, opportunities, and challenges encountered by women in the workplace.

Within the mining industry, there exist not only tangible hazards but also socially constructed risks that disproportionately affect women, especially those who are pregnant. These unique hazards encompass physical demands for certain tasks, exposure to specific chemicals, and other gender-specific risks. This study acknowledges the influence of organisational culture on the recognition and mitigation of such hazards, recognising that cultures unsympathetic to the needs of women may neglect or minimise these risks.

Moreover, the research aims to shed light on the gender-based challenges encountered by women in mining. These include perceptions that certain roles are exclusively for women, discrimination in roles requiring physical strength, and adherence to traditional norms that perceive women as submissive or unfit for leadership positions. By exploring these challenges, the study endeavours to highlight disparities and biases that women face, impacting their career trajectories and workplace experiences.

In essence, this qualitative methodology intends to uncover and understand the intricate dynamics within the ferrochrome mining industry, focusing on how organisational culture,

gender-based discrimination, and societal norms shape the experiences of women working in this environment.

3.2 Justification for the chosen methodology

- **In-depth understanding**: Qualitative research methods offer a robust platform for a thorough exploration and comprehension of multifaceted circumstances. The research questions concerning the impact of pregnancy on various facets within the ferrochrome mining industry, such as career trajectories, pregnancy policies, financial implications, and strategic implementation of women in mining programs, require a nuanced understanding. Qualitative techniques like interviews and observations facilitate the examination of experiences, perspectives, and underlying factors, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of these intricate situations (Hamilton & Finley, 2019).

- **Contextual insights**: The contextual nature of qualitative research excels in capturing the specific dynamics inherent in situations. In the case of the ferrochrome mining industry, comprehending the ramifications of pregnancy necessitates an exploration of the industry's unique context, including its organisational culture and operational dynamics. Qualitative methods enable the in-depth investigation of these contextual factors and their influence on the research questions, providing a nuanced perspective (Hamilton & Finley, 2019).

- **Multiplicity of perspectives**: Qualitative research's strength lies in its capacity to explore diverse viewpoints and multiple perspectives. The research questions involve understanding the experiences and viewpoints of various stakeholders, including pregnant women, mining company employees, and managerial staff. By employing qualitative methods, diverse and rich data can be obtained from different viewpoints, offering a holistic understanding of the issues at hand (Hamilton & Finley, 2019).

- **Flexibility and adaptability**: Qualitative research methodologies offer flexibility in exploring themes, uncovering unexpected insights, and adapting the research design as needed. This adaptability proves invaluable when delving into complex and multifaceted issues, such as examining the impact of pregnancy in the ferrochrome

mining industry. The ability to adjust methodologies enables a comprehensive exploration of the research questions (Hamilton & Finley, 2019).

- **Depth of analysis**: The research questions necessitate an in-depth analysis of the implications of pregnancy across various dimensions of the industry. Qualitative methods facilitate detailed analysis of individual cases, identification of patterns and themes, and the exploration of underlying factors and mechanisms. This depth of analysis is crucial for achieving a comprehensive understanding of the research questions and deriving meaningful insights pertinent to the ferrochrome mining industry (Hamilton & Finley, 2019).

Overall, the qualitative methodology is well-suited to explore the intricate, context-specific nature of the research questions. It allows for an in-depth exploration of individual experiences, diverse perspectives, and contextual factors, providing a rich and comprehensive understanding of the impact of pregnancy in the ferrochrome mining industry. Moreover, it aids in informing strategies for enhancement and sustainability within the industry

3.3 Methods and procedures

3.3.1 Population and sampling strategy

The qualitative study will encompass women who have experienced pregnancy during their tenure in the mining company, including those who have been pregnant, are planning to be pregnant, or are currently pregnant. The sampling will focus on a specific site—the smelter—within the world's largest ferrochrome company, selected to provide a representative sample of the ferrochrome industry within the broader mining sector.

Employing a purposive sampling approach, the study seeks participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research topic. The primary focus will be on women who have encountered pregnancy while employed in the mining company. This selective sampling aims to delve deeply into their perspectives, job roles, and work environments.

Given the vast scope of the mining and ferrochrome industries, the study will concentrate on the smelter, a specific site under the largest global ferrochrome company. This selection is

motivated by the company's standardised procedures and uniform cultures, making it a suitable representative sample to glean valuable insights into pregnant women's experiences within the ferrochrome sector.

The sample size for this study will comprise about 20 women directly affected by pregnancy during their careers in the mining company. This chosen sample size aims to ensure a comprehensive representation of the target population and facilitate thorough data collection and analysis.

In summary, the sample and sampling strategy involve purposive sampling about 20 women who have encountered pregnancy while working within the smelter site of the largest ferrochrome company globally. The study aims to gather substantial qualitative data and insights regarding these women's experiences, job profiles, and work settings.

3.3.2 Data collection strategy

Systematic and ethical data collection: The data collection process will adhere to systematic and ethical guidelines to ensure the reliability and integrity of outcomes. An official request for permission will be submitted to senior management to conduct the study at the specific site. This request will explicitly outline the study objectives, target population, and the sampling criteria. A consent request will be extended to each selected participant, emphasising their right to decline participation freely. Participants will receive a comprehensive overview of the study's scope, objectives, and the rationale behind their selection.

Data collection methods: The primary method of data collection will involve one-on-one interviews. These interviews will encompass a series of questions designed to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of pregnancy on women in the mining industry and the ferrochrome mining companies. Participants who have encountered pregnancy during their tenure in the mining company—whether they have been pregnant, are planning for pregnancy, or are currently pregnant—will be interviewed. The focus will be on exploring the implications of pregnancy on women's experiences, career progressions, and the dynamics within the company.

Ethical considerations: Confidentiality and data security will be strictly maintained throughout the data collection process. Collected data will be treated with utmost confidentiality and stored securely. Participants' identities and sensitive information will be anonymised to protect their privacy and ensure confidentiality.

Data analysis and reporting: The gathered data will be rigorously evaluated in alignment with the study objectives and research questions to identify prevalent trends and derive conclusions. Subsequently, a findings report will be compiled, incorporating conclusive insights and recommendations drawn from the study's outcomes.

3.3.3 Data analysis

Interpreting collected data: The analysis phase of this study will revolve around interpreting the gathered data in alignment with the predefined research questions and study objectives. Given that the data collected primarily involves face-to-face interviews with approximately 20 women who have experienced pregnancy while employed in the mining industry, the analysis will primarily employ qualitative techniques.

Qualitative content and discourse analysis: Content analysis and/or discourse analysis will be the main analytical methodologies used to decipher the textual data extracted from the interviews. These methods will systematically categorise, explore patterns, and identify recurring themes or elements inherent in the participants' experiences and perspectives. By employing content and discourse analysis, the study aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and impacts of pregnancy on women's careers within the mining industry.

Statistical analysis: In addition to qualitative methods, the t-test technique may be employed to compare diverse groups of women in mining, differing in their roles and responsibilities. This statistical analysis will help in discerning potential distinctions or resemblances between office-based and field-based roles concerning the impact of pregnancy on job experiences.

Connecting findings with existing literature: Key findings from the analysis will be compared with existing literature to establish connections, validate or challenge prior research, and contribute to the expanding body of knowledge. This comparative analysis will be executed with precision, emphasising the implications and significance of the findings concerning the research questions and study objectives.

Addressing limitations: The analysis section will transparently address any study limitations, such as sampling issues, potential data discrepancies, or sources of bias or error. By acknowledging these limitations, the study aims to provide a thorough and reliable account of its findings, ensuring the validity and credibility of the research outcomes.

The analysis phase of the methodology will centre on qualitatively interpreting data gleaned from face-to-face interviews with purposively selected participants. Content and discourse analysis will decipher data patterns, while the t-test technique may compare different groups. Findings will be compared with existing literature, limitations will be addressed, and conclusions and recommendations will be drawn in alignment with the research objectives.

3.3.4 Data credibility

Clarity and relevance of objectives: Ensuring data credibility commences with clear, focused, and pertinent research objectives aligned with the population under study. The qualitative method places reliance on trustworthiness, making it imperative to maintain clarity and relevance in the research objectives throughout the study.

Adherence to interview protocols: The trustworthiness of collected data hinges on strict adherence to interview protocols. These protocols will outline the methodology for data collection, ensuring consistency and reliability in the information gathered. A structured approach to interviews will bolster the credibility of the acquired data.

Effective sampling strategies: In this case study, an effective sampling strategy targets the specific group impacted by pregnancy within the mining company. Focused sampling within this demographic ensures that the collected data truly represents the experiences and perspectives pertinent to the research objectives.

Meticulous data management plan: A well-designed data management plan is imperative to maintain data integrity. This plan should outline procedures for data collection, storage, and analysis, ensuring meticulous handling throughout the research process. Adherence to this plan guarantees the credibility and reliability of the final findings.

Consent protocols and ethical considerations: Obtaining informed consent from all participants is paramount for ethical considerations and data credibility. Properly designed consent forms ensure participants understand their involvement in the study, safeguarding their rights and contributing to the ethical integrity of the research.

In summary, ensuring data credibility in qualitative research involves setting clear objectives, adhering to interview protocols, employing effective sampling strategies, implementing meticulous data management plans, utilising reliable statistical tools, and upholding ethical considerations through informed consent procedures.

3.3.5 Ethical issues

Informed consent and confidentiality: Selected participants will receive comprehensive information about the study's objectives, potential benefits, and associated risks. Emphasis will be placed on ensuring confidentiality through signed nondisclosure agreements. Participants will have a clear understanding of how their information will be handled to safeguard their privacy.

Mitigating emotional impact: Sensitive questions in the interview process have the potential to cause emotional distress. Human resources will be available to provide support and mitigate any emotional discomfort. However, it is paramount to avoid questions that may cause undue emotional harm to participants.

Addressing bias: Recognising the potential for bias based on gender and pregnancy status is crucial. Efforts will be made during the data analysis phase to acknowledge and address any biases that may arise, ensuring an objective and fair evaluation of findings.

Balancing benefits and harm: The primary focus of the study is to maximise the benefits while minimising any unintentional harm to participants. Ethical considerations will guide

every step of the research process to ensure that the study's objectives are achieved without causing any undue harm.

Respectful treatment and voluntary participation: Participants will be treated with the utmost respect throughout the study. They will have the freedom to withdraw from participation at any point if they wish to do so, without facing any repercussions. Their decisions regarding participation will be respected without question.

Feedback and transparency: Transparency will be upheld by providing participants with feedback on the study outcomes, regardless of whether the results are favourable or not. This commitment ensures transparency and respects the participants' investment in the study.

In summary, the study will prioritise informed consent, confidentiality, emotional well-being, bias mitigation, balancing benefits and harm, respectful treatment, voluntary participation, and providing transparent feedback to uphold ethical standards throughout the research process..

3.3.6 The research instrument

The primary data collection instrument for this study will be an in-person interview guide developed to gather comprehensive information on participants' working conditions, the demands of their work duties, and their experiences with pregnancy in the mining industry.

Interview questions: The interview guide will incorporate open-ended and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions will encourage participants to freely express their experiences with pregnancy, while closed-ended questions will seek specific details regarding their work environment and job demands.

Purpose of the interview instrument: The interview questions will serve as the foundation for compiling open-ended queries, providing participants with ample opportunity to articulate their experiences, challenges, and insights related to pregnancy in the mining industry.

Document review: Additionally, document review will be utilised as an instrument to examine and compare existing company documents and guidelines with governmental laws pertaining to mining and pregnancy. This review will focus on evaluating alignment with the Basic

Conditions of Employment Act to ensure compliance and identify any discrepancies or areas for improvement.

3.4 Strengths of the research

- **Comprehensive data collection**: Utilising face-to-face interviews and document reviews ensures a multifaceted approach to gather insights. The interviews allow for personal narratives, while document reviews provide structured information.
- **Rich qualitative insights**: The qualitative nature of the study enables the collection of rich, detailed data, offering in-depth insights into the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of pregnant women in the mining industry.
- **Focused sampling strategy**: Employing purposive sampling focused on women who have been pregnant during their tenure in the mining company ensures that the study concentrates on the targeted population, enhancing the relevance and depth of the data collected.
- **Ethical considerations**: Emphasis on ethical practices, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and participant feedback, demonstrates a commitment to ethical research conduct and participant welfare.
- **Data analysis methods**: Employing content analysis, discourse analysis, and statistical techniques (such as the t-test) ensures rigorous data analysis, facilitating the identification of patterns, themes, and potential differences between groups.
- **Case study approach**: Focusing on a specific site within the largest ferrochrome company in the world allows for a detailed examination of standardised procedures and cultural norms within the ferrochrome mining industry, providing valuable insights into this specific context.
- **Comparative analysis**: Comparing findings with existing literature enables the validation, enhancement, or challenge of previous research, contributing to the ongoing discourse on pregnancy in the mining industry.

These strengths collectively support a comprehensive and rigorous exploration of the impact of pregnancy on women in the mining industry, providing a robust foundation for meaningful conclusions and recommendations.

3.5 Weaknesses of the research

- **Limited sample size**:. The inclusion of only 20 participants may constrain the ability to generalize findings to a wider mining industry population. This limitation may hinder the comprehensive representation of diverse experiences, and there's a likelihood that not all participants will be available for interviews.
- **Subjectivity in qualitative data**: Qualitative data, such as interviews, can be subjective and prone to bias, relying on individual perspectives that may not fully represent the broader reality.
- **Potential response bias**: Participants may provide responses influenced by social desirability, potentially altering the accuracy or depth of their experiences and perceptions.
- **Resource and time constraints**: Focusing on a single site within the ferrochrome industry might restrict the examination's scope and depth due to resource limitations and time constraints.
- **Lack of longitudinal data**: The study's cross-sectional nature might not capture changes over time, overlooking the evolving nature of experiences and policies concerning pregnancy in the mining industry.
- **Potential limitation in data analysis**: The selected analysis methods, while comprehensive, might not capture every nuance or complex interaction in the data, leading to potential oversimplification or oversight of critical aspects.
- **Ethical considerations**: Despite efforts to address ethical concerns, sensitive questions about pregnancy and workplace experiences might inadvertently cause discomfort or emotional distress to participants.
- **Possible lack of control for external factors**: Factors beyond the immediate scope, such as regional cultural influences or industry-specific economic conditions, might impact the experiences of pregnant women, but they could be challenging to control or measure.

Recognising and addressing these potential weaknesses can strengthen the research's validity, enhancing the interpretation and application of the findings within the mining industry context.

CHAPTER 4. DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND RESULTS DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The focal point of this study was to delve into the impact of pregnancy on women employed within South Africa's ferrochrome industry. The qualitative approach was employed as the methodological framework, allowing for a refined understanding of this subject. Empirical data collection relied on semi-structured, in-depth interviews incorporating twelve comprehensive questions administered to a cohort of twenty participants. The subsequent analysis of the gathered data was conducted utilising Atlas TI, facilitating a meticulous examination of the multifaceted experiences and perspectives of women navigating pregnancy within the ferrochrome sector. This research endeavours to shed light on the complexities surrounding the intersection of pregnancy and professional life, particularly within the unique context of the South African ferrochrome industry.

4.2 Information consistency and relevance

The word cloud depicted in Figure 4 illustrates the key themes recurring throughout the interviews. Notable terms encompass maternity leave, the mining industry, safe working environments, pregnancy policies, and more. This visualisation confirms the alignment between the collected data and the study's aims and objectives.



Figure 4: Word cloud - Most stated words from the participants

4.3 Participants profiles

The profiles of participants, extracted from the initial interview question, showcase a broad spectrum of diversity, aligning seamlessly with the study's objective of evaluating the impact of pregnancy in the ferrochrome mining industry. The inclusion of women occupying various roles and holding decision-making positions offers a comprehensive representation, facilitating the identification of common impacts and potential variations. Organizing and condensing the interview responses into tables enables a clearer discernment of patterns and distinctions among the shared experiences. Table 1, derived from the first interview question, presents a snapshot of participants' current positions and their years of experience in the mining industry..

Table 1: Participants profiles

Interview question	Participant	Participant's response
1. Can you describe your current role in the mining industry and your	1	Finance Department -Accounts Payable
	2	Day Shift Supervisor - Production at CRP for DCR. Experience from 2005 to date
	3	Metallurgical engineer with 13 years' experience. Currently in Managerial role

experience working in this field?	4	I am currently working as a maintenance artisan electrician at the Furnaces, D3&D4. My experience working in this field have been so challenging and still is because the environment is male dominant. From time to time you have to prove yourself that you can, are able and have the capacity, knowledge and ability to execute your job. Still not trusted and not recognised. Speaking the truth makes you an enemy of the state/management.
	5	I am the SHEQ manager responsible for ensuring compliance on Health , Safety and Environment activities associated with the operation. I am also responsible for the Laboratory operation using the Integrated Management system which includes Quality. I have 19 years in the field of SHEQ.
	6	I am a maintenance electrician at PSP with 5 years in the field.
	7	Production Operator - 13 years in the mining industry
	8	Maintenance Administrator for Logistics - 5 years of working in the mining industry
	9	Production Engineer at the Furnaces. 19 years of working experience in the mining industry
	10	HR Manager - 24 years in HR in the mining industry

Participant	**Group**	**Predominately office/field**
1	Non-decision maker	Office
2	Decision influencer	Field
3	Decision maker	Field
4	Non-decision maker	Field
5	Decision maker	Field
6	Non-decision maker	Field
7	Non-decision maker	Field

8	Non-decision maker	Office
9	Decision influencer	Field
10	Decision maker	Office

4.4 Empirical information

The qualitative analysis of transcribed interviews was conducted using Atlas.TI. Through this analysis, eight distinct themes emerged, each pertinent to understanding the impact of pregnancy on women employed within South Africa's ferrochrome industry. These themes were derived from an exploration of the study's four research questions, aligning with the primary aim of the research.

The study's aim was to comprehensively investigate the multifaceted effects of pregnancy on women working in the ferrochrome industry, with specific focus on South Africa. To achieve this, four pivotal research questions were formulated, guiding the thematic exploration of the collected interview data. The alignment between the research questions, themes, and their respective code groups is detailed in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Analysis of transcribed interviews

Research questions	Themes identified	Linked code groups
How does pregnancy influence the career trajectories and opportunities for women employed in the ferrochrome mining industry?	Career impact and opportunities	• Stalled career growth due to pregnancy • Limitations in career opportunities during pregnancy • Impact on job roles and promotions • Challenges in maintaining work-life balance
To what extent do the pregnancy policies implemented by ferrochrome mining companies align with the basic conditions of employment, and how effective are these policies in practice?	Company policies and support	• Evaluation of company policies regarding pregnancy • Support received from the company during pregnancy • Lack of support or policy implementation by contracting companies • Need for improved, clear, and structured policies
	Work environment safety and accommodation	• Safe working environment considerations • Accommodation policies during pregnancy • Physical work challenges in hazardous areas • Transition to safer roles or environments for pregnant employees • Lack of proper plans or accommodations for pregnant women
What is the financial impact of pregnancy-related considerations on ferrochrome mining companies, including costs associated with accommodation, support, and potential productivity changes?	Financial concerns	• Financial impacts of extended maternity leave • Salary adjustments and benefits during pregnancy • Loss of certain benefits or allowances due to pregnancy

In what ways can companies within the ferrochrome industry strategically implement and maintain a social license that supports and empowers women in their operations, particularly concerning pregnancy-related policies and practices?	Health and well-being	• Physical challenges during pregnancy in a demanding work environment • Emotional stress and pressure during pregnancy • Impact of pregnancy on health and productivity • Need for counselling or support sessions for pregnant employees
	Colleague and management support	• Support from colleagues and management during pregnancy • Lack of understanding or empathy from colleagues, especially male employees • Suggestions for increased support from HR and senior management
	Policy improvement suggestions	• Suggestions for improved pregnancy policies and programs • Flexible work arrangements for pregnant employees • Awareness programs, workshops, or forums on pregnancy in the industry
	Individual advice and experience	• Personal experiences and advice for pregnant women in the industry • Suggestions for self-care, seeking information, and knowing company policies • Advocacy for women's rights and support within the mining industry

4.5 Research questions

4.5.1 *Question 1: How does pregnancy influence the career trajectories and opportunities for women employed in the ferrochrome mining industry?*

a. ***Career impact and opportunities***

Stalled career growth due to pregnancy

This theme delves into how pregnancy acts as a barrier to women's career progression within the ferrochrome industry, encompassing several key aspects:

- Career advancement hurdles: Women shared how their pregnancies hindered their prospects for promotions and access to career growth initiatives. Pregnancy became a significant obstacle to their ongoing professional development.
- Role challenges and workload: Participants expressed difficulties in managing their job roles during pregnancy, facing challenges in handling workloads and physically demanding tasks. This hindered their active participation in high-responsibility positions.
- Reassessing long-term career paths: Pregnancy prompted some to reconsider their career trajectories, leading to potential changes in career aspirations or strategies for achieving a better work-life balance after childbirth.

This theme highlights the multifaceted ways in which pregnancy complicates career paths within the ferrochrome industry. It sheds light on the challenges pregnant women encounter in their pursuit of professional growth. Participant 3 reflected on the impact: "On career growth, my opinion is that it stalled my promotional opportunities. I could not have the children initially planned on (2 years apart) due to operational issues in the plant."

Limitations in career opportunities during pregnancy

This theme encapsulates the challenges that pregnant women face in accessing career opportunities within the ferrochrome industry:

- Access to Advancement: Pregnant employees expressed concerns about limited access to career advancements or growth opportunities. This limitation was attributed to the perception of reduced capabilities during pregnancy.

- Restricted Responsibilities: Many women encountered restrictions in assuming new responsibilities or projects due to their pregnancy status. This hindered their ability to take on challenging roles or expand their professional scope.
- Impact on Promotions: Participants reported experiencing delays or barriers in their career progression paths. Pregnancy seemed to impact decisions regarding promotions or new job assignments, often leading to deferred opportunities.

This theme highlights how pregnancy serves as a significant factor contributing to the limited career pathways available to women in the ferrochrome industry. It underscores the need for strategies that enable pregnant employees to access and pursue career growth opportunities effectively.

Impact on job roles and promotions

This theme focuses on how pregnancy influences job roles and potential promotions within the ferrochrome industry:

- Job role adjustments: Pregnant employees often encountered changes in their job assignments. Some were moved away from hazardous or physically demanding tasks, while others found themselves reassigned to less strenuous roles.
- Promotion delays: Pregnancy appeared to delay promotions or advancements. Participants observed a reluctance among employers to offer new responsibilities or higher positions during pregnancy, affecting their career progression.
- Reduced responsibilities: Women experienced situations where they were excluded from higher responsibilities or leadership roles due to pregnancy. This limitation hindered their capacity to take on more challenging tasks.

This theme highlights how pregnancy impacts job roles and promotional pathways, illustrating a pattern where pregnant employees face alterations or constraints in their career paths. It stresses the need for fair and supportive policies ensuring equal opportunities for advancement regardless of pregnancy status. Participant 3 noted, "For lower levels, it seemed easier to move out of operations and have a substitute but at the managerial level, it impacts that there sometimes are no redundancies within the system."

Challenges in maintaining work-life balance

This theme sheds light on the challenges confronted by pregnant women in the ferrochrome industry as they strive to balance professional commitments with personal well-being:

- Workload challenges: Pregnant employees grappled with managing their workload, particularly in the initial and final stages of pregnancy. Balancing work demands alongside the physical and emotional strains of pregnancy posed a considerable hurdle.
- Stress and fatigue: The job's physical demands coupled with pregnancy-induced fatigue heightened stress levels among women. Juggling work responsibilities and pregnancy demands exacerbated feelings of exhaustion.
- Limited work flexibility: Participants highlighted a lack of flexibility in work hours or arrangements that could accommodate their evolving needs during pregnancy. This rigidity impeded their capacity to effectively manage both work and personal life.

This theme underscores the need for supportive workplace policies that offer flexibility and acknowledge the unique challenges faced by pregnant employees. It stresses the significance of fostering an environment conducive to maintaining a healthy work-life balance, ensuring the well-being of women during this crucial phase. Participant 2 noted, "The bad impact is there because you will be out of your normal duties, especially when you work directly in the plant."

4.5.2 *Question 2: To what extent do the pregnancy policies implemented by ferrochrome mining companies align with the basic conditions of employment, and how effective are these policies in practice?*

a. *Company policies and support*

Evaluation of company policies regarding pregnancy

The theme illuminates pregnant employees' perspectives and evaluations of the policies within the ferrochrome industry:

- Policy clarity and execution: Participants deliberated on the transparency and implementation of existing pregnancy-related policies. Some perceived these policies as lacking clear guidelines on roles, career advancement, or managing job responsibilities during pregnancy.
- Support and adaptation: Women shared contrasting experiences regarding supportive and deficient policies. While some lauded policies that catered to their needs, providing a safer

work environment or permitting work continuation during specific pregnancy stages, others criticised the absence of comprehensive plans for pregnant employees' support.

- Communication and awareness: Participants underscored the importance of disseminating policies effectively. They stressed the need for clearer communication at all organisational levels to ensure all pregnant employees were well-informed and had access to necessary support.

This theme highlights the importance of well-defined and efficiently executed policies that accommodate the distinctive requirements of pregnant employees. It emphasises the necessity for improved communication strategies within organisations to ensure that all pregnant individuals receive the outlined support and guidance in company policies. Participant 2 expressed, "The company can have a proper plan, maybe arrange programs for ladies when they are pregnant," while Participant 5 perceived differently, stating, "There were no challenges. Policy was clear that I needed to report to the clinic, where my work environment was assessed, and the doctor stopped me from going to the plant in my last stage of pregnancy."

Support received from the company during pregnancy

The theme encapsulates the varied experiences of pregnant individuals in the ferrochrome industry:

- Health and safety measures: Several participants acknowledged positive experiences concerning implemented health and safety measures. They valued being relocated to safer work areas or provided with alternatives to avoid hazardous conditions during pregnancy.
- Policy application: Some expressed contentment with policies enabling them to work comfortably until the later stages of pregnancy, reflecting the company's support for pregnant employees.
- Support from management and colleagues: Many praised the assistance received from management and colleagues. They cited instances of understanding and empathy, highlighting support from senior staff or HR, which provided valuable emotional backing.

This theme underscores the significance of supportive measures adopted by companies, spanning from physical workplace adjustments to emotional and managerial aid. It emphasises the crucial role of a supportive work environment in facilitating a healthier and more manageable pregnancy experience for women employed in physically demanding industries like ferrochrome mining. Participant 1 remarked, "Counselling session must be offered when

needed," while Participant 10 emphasised, "Compassion, understanding, and empathy would go a long way. Also, maybe counselling for new or first-time moms."

Lack of support or policy implementation by contracting companies

The theme of reveals the challenging dynamics faced by pregnant employees working for contracting firms within the ferrochrome industry:

- Policy discrepancies: Several participants highlighted the disparity in policy implementation between contracting companies and main employers. They noted that some contracting firms failed to adhere to industry-wide policies that safeguard pregnant employees, leading to inconsistent support or even refusal to accommodate pregnant women.
- Job insecurity: Contracting employees often faced job insecurity or were informed that there was no work available for them if they became pregnant. This lack of job stability created significant stress and uncertainty during their pregnancy.
- Disregard for policies: Participants expressed frustration over contracting companies not aligning with industry standards, neglecting to provide necessary support, or disregarding policies that safeguard pregnant women. This lack of adherence to established protocols created a precarious situation for pregnant employees.

This theme underscores the critical need for consistent policy implementation across all entities involved in the ferrochrome industry. It highlights the vulnerability of pregnant employees working under contracting companies and emphasises the necessity for standardised policies that safeguard the well-being and rights of all pregnant workers, regardless of their employment status within the industry.

Need for improved, clear, and structured policies

The theme encapsulates participants' concerns about the deficiencies in existing policies within the ferrochrome industry concerning pregnant employees:

- Clarity and consistency: Participants underscored the dire need for enhanced clarity and consistency within prevailing policies. They highlighted ambiguities, inconsistencies, and gaps that often left pregnant employees uncertain about their entitlements, rights, and the support available to them during pregnancy.

- Comprehensive scope: There was a unanimous view among participants that current policies lacked comprehensive coverage of various facets related to pregnancy in the workplace. This encompassed guidelines on roles, responsibilities, career pathways, and essential accommodations for pregnant employees.
- Structured assistance: Participants advocated for structured and robust policies that not only prevent discrimination against pregnant employees but also outline detailed provisions for support, accommodations, job security, and career progression during and after pregnancy.

This theme emphasises the critical need for industry-wide policies that are lucid, all-encompassing, and methodically structured to specifically address the requirements of pregnant employees. Participants stressed the urgency of formulating policies that safeguard the rights and well-being of pregnant workers, providing them with a definitive framework of support and protection within the ferrochrome industry. Participant 2 noted, “The companies, they don’t have a proper plan to accommodate the pregnant women.”

b. *Work environment safety and accommodation*

Safe working environment considerations

The theme "Ensuring Safe Working Environments" highlights participants' concerns about the workplace conditions and safety measures for pregnant employees within the ferrochrome industry:

- Physical safety measures: Participants stressed the significance of providing a secure physical environment for pregnant workers, expressing worries about exposure to hazardous materials, toxins, and physical strain. They emphasised the need for improved safety protocols, particularly in high-risk areas, to minimise potential risks to both the expectant mother and the unborn child.
- Psychological well-being: Beyond physical safety, participants underscored the importance of psychological support in the workplace during pregnancy. They highlighted the necessity for empathetic work cultures that understand the emotional and mental needs of pregnant employees, ensuring they feel secure and supported throughout their pregnancy journey.
- Health assessments and customised support: Participants advocated for regular health evaluations and personalised accommodations to address the physical changes and limitations experienced during pregnancy. They called for proactive measures such as

specialised equipment, adjusted workloads, and tailored safety plans to safeguard the well-being of pregnant employees while sustaining productivity.

This theme emphasises the critical requirement for a comprehensive approach to workplace safety, encompassing not only physical hazards but also psychological well-being. Participants highlighted the need for thorough safety measures and support systems tailored to accommodate the unique requirements of pregnant workers within the ferrochrome industry. Participant 6 mentioned, "In our environment, most of the work is physical, which makes it difficult to perform duties while pregnant." Participant 10 expressed, "Towards the end, I was fatigued, which impacted my energy, enthusiasm, and productivity at work." Participant 4 highlighted the challenge of working in a male-dominated environment and the need to continuously prove oneself.

Accommodation policies during pregnancy

The theme refers to the measures and policies in place to support pregnant employees in the ferrochrome industry:

- Workplace adjustments: Participants highlighted the importance of policies that facilitate necessary workplace adjustments for pregnant employees. They emphasised the need for flexibility in duties, work hours, and physical environments to accommodate the physical changes and limitations that come with pregnancy.
- Job role adaptations: Participants expressed the necessity for policies allowing pregnant employees to transition into roles that are less physically demanding or hazardous, ensuring their safety and well-being without hindering their career progression or opportunities for advancement.
- Healthcare support: They stressed the significance of policies that provide access to regular healthcare appointments during work hours without penalisation. These policies aim to ensure that pregnant employees can attend essential medical check-ups without compromising their job security or facing any form of discrimination.
- Transparent guidelines: Participants advocated for clear and transparent policies outlining the rights, entitlements, and available accommodations for pregnant employees. Clarity in these policies helps in avoiding misunderstandings and ensures consistent treatment across the workforce.

Overall, this theme underscores the need for accommodating and supportive policies that consider the unique needs of pregnant employees, enabling them to navigate their work

responsibilities effectively while prioritising their health and well-being during their pregnancy journey within the ferrochrome industry.

Physical work challenges in hazardous areas

The theme sheds light on the difficulties faced by pregnant employees working in hazardous environments within the ferrochrome industry:

- Workplace risks: Participants emphasised the physical risks associated with their roles in hazardous areas, such as exposure to toxic gases, vibrations, or other occupational hazards. They highlighted the challenges posed by these conditions, particularly during pregnancy, which demanded heightened safety considerations.
- Safety measures: Participants stressed the need for stringent safety protocols and measures in these areas. They indicated that standard safety protocols might not suffice for pregnant employees due to their vulnerability, calling for specific, tailored safety guidelines to protect both mother and child during work hours.
- Physical strain: Pregnant employees expressed the strain of performing physically demanding tasks within these environments. They highlighted the impact on their energy levels, productivity, and the general difficulty in executing duties due to the physical demands and potential health risks.
- Supportive adaptations: Participants advocated for policies that enable pregnant employees to transition to less physically demanding roles or areas deemed safer during pregnancy. They highlighted the need for clear guidelines outlining such accommodations to ensure their safety without hindering their employment.

In essence, this theme underscores the critical necessity for tailored safety measures and accommodations in hazardous work environments, especially for pregnant employees. It emphasises the importance of adapting roles or environments to mitigate physical risks and ensure the well-being of pregnant workers in these high-risk areas.

Transition to safer roles or environments for pregnant employees

The theme encompasses the challenges and adjustments necessary for pregnant women working in high-risk sectors, such as the ferrochrome industry:

- Safety priorities: Participants emphasised safety hazards in their regular roles and stressed the need for transitions to safer environments during pregnancy. Concerns were raised

about potential risks to their health and their unborn child due to exposure to workplace dangers.

- Adaptation needs: Pregnant employees highlighted the importance of transitioning to less hazardous roles or areas within the company. They advocated for policies allowing flexible job reassignments or modified duties, ensuring their continued employment while minimising exposure to risks.
- Clarity in policies: Participants expressed the need for explicit policies outlining the process and options for transitioning to safer roles or environments during pregnancy. They sought clear guidelines to facilitate these transitions without ambiguity or detrimental impact on their career paths.
- Supportive measures: Participants stressed the importance of company support during this transitional period. They highlighted the significance of managerial and organisational assistance in facilitating these changes, ensuring a smooth transition that prioritises their safety and well-being.

This theme emphasises the vital need for structured policies that enable pregnant employees in high-risk roles to transition seamlessly to safer work environments. It underscores the importance of clear, supportive guidelines and managerial backing to facilitate these transitions, prioritising the safety and job continuity of pregnant workers within the ferrochrome industry. Participant 4 highlighted a positive aspect: "The good thing about our company is that pregnant women get moved from the plant to a safer area to avoid exposure to risks and hazards."

Lack of proper plans or accommodations for pregnant women

The theme underscores the challenges pregnant employees face in the ferrochrome industry due to inadequate policies and support:

- Lack of tailored assistance: Participants noted the absence of specific plans or structured accommodations for pregnant women at their workplaces. They expressed frustration with the lack of targeted assistance or policies addressing the unique needs of expectant employees.
- Disrupted work continuity: Pregnant women felt that the absence of accommodation plans hindered their ability to work safely and effectively during pregnancy. This lack of support often led to uncertainties about job responsibilities and their future within the company.

- Health and safety risks: Participants raised concerns about potential health risks due to the absence of proper plans or accommodations. They emphasised the importance of tailored arrangements to ensure a safe work environment and minimise risks to both themselves and their unborn children.
- Call for proactive initiatives: Employees advocated for proactive company initiatives, including structured policies catering to pregnant employees' needs. They stressed the necessity for clear guidelines outlining accommodations and support mechanisms during pregnancy.

This theme underscores significant gaps in company policies and support systems, highlighting their adverse effects on pregnant women in the ferrochrome industry. It emphasises the urgent need for comprehensive plans and accommodations tailored to ensure the safety, well-being, and job continuity of expectant mothers within these workplaces. Participant 4 shared their experience: "The biggest challenge I had when I was pregnant was moving to a place that was decided suitable and safe for us."

4.5.3 *Question 3: What is the financial impact of pregnancy-related considerations on ferrochrome mining companies, including costs associated with accommodation, support, and potential productivity changes?*

a. *Financial concerns*

Financial impacts of extended maternity leave

The theme encapsulates the economic struggles faced by women in the ferrochrome industry due to extended periods away from work:

- Financial stress: Participants shared that taking longer maternity leaves caused financial strain. Inadequate compensation or reduced pay during extended leave periods created financial challenges for expectant mothers, impacting their financial stability.
- Income reduction: The lack of substantial financial support during maternity leave affected participants' income stability. Some experienced salary cuts or limited financial assistance while being away from work for an extended duration.
- Pressure of unpaid leave: Participants highlighted the pressure of unpaid or partially paid leave, often prompting them to return to work earlier than desired. Financial constraints due to extended unpaid leaves forced premature returns to the workforce.

- Call for comprehensive support: Employees advocated for enhanced financial support structures during extended maternity leaves. They emphasised the need for policies ensuring adequate compensation or financial assistance to ease the economic burden on expectant mothers.

This theme underscores the financial hardships experienced by women in the ferrochrome industry when opting for longer maternity leaves. It emphasises the necessity for comprehensive financial support systems or policies to guarantee economic stability for pregnant employees during extended periods away from work. Participant 5 stressed this, stating, "The financial issues when you extend your maternity leave. The industry can assist with at least 75% of the pay to help during leave."

Salary adjustments and benefits during pregnancy

The theme encapsulates various aspects related to compensation and benefits for pregnant women in the ferrochrome industry:

- Income considerations: Participants highlighted concerns about salary adjustments during pregnancy. Some mentioned experiencing salary reductions or altered benefits while on maternity leave, impacting their financial stability and overall income.
- Shift allowances and benefits: The theme also encompasses changes in shift allowances or additional benefits during pregnancy. Some participants reported a reduction or loss of these benefits, affecting their total income while expecting.
- Impact on financial stability: Salary adjustments and benefit alterations during pregnancy led to financial uncertainty for participants. The absence of full compensation or reduced benefits during this period caused financial strain, affecting their financial stability.
- Advocacy for equitable compensation: Women emphasised the importance of fair and consistent compensation structures during pregnancy. They advocated for policies that ensure women receive full pay and benefits, guaranteeing financial security during this critical phase.

This theme underscores the challenges faced by pregnant women in maintaining their income stability due to salary adjustments and benefit alterations during pregnancy. It emphasises the need for fair and equitable compensation policies that support pregnant employees, ensuring they receive uninterrupted and adequate financial support during this crucial period.

Loss of certain benefits or allowances due to pregnancy

The theme "Loss of Benefits or Allowances Due to Pregnancy" encompasses the challenges faced by pregnant women in the ferrochrome industry concerning the loss or reduction of specific work-related benefits:

- Shift allowances and benefits reduction: Participants noted a loss or reduction in shift allowances or specific benefits directly tied to their roles while pregnant. This loss impacted their overall income, causing financial strain during pregnancy.
- Altered benefits packages: Some women experienced modifications in their overall benefits packages during pregnancy, including alterations in health benefits, bonuses, or other incentives. These changes contributed to a sense of inequity and financial instability during an already challenging time.
- Impact on financial security: The loss or reduction of these benefits had a tangible impact on financial security. Participants expressed concerns about the financial implications and the lack of comprehensive support from their employers during pregnancy, affecting their overall well-being.
- Advocacy for preserving benefits: Women highlighted the importance of preserving benefits and allowances during pregnancy to ensure financial stability. They advocated for policies that safeguard these benefits, providing continuous support to pregnant employees without compromising their financial security.

This theme illuminates the adverse effects of benefit loss or reduction during pregnancy, underscoring the need for comprehensive policies that protect and maintain benefits for pregnant employees. It emphasises the necessity of equitable treatment to prevent financial strain and ensure a supportive work environment for pregnant women in the industry. Participant 4 described a significant challenge: "The biggest challenge I had when I was pregnant was moving to a place that was decided suitable and safe for us. I was told that because I was now moving to do data capture at the planning office, my salary had to be cut."

4.5.4 Question 4: In what ways can companies within the ferrochrome industry strategically implement and maintain a social license that supports and empowers women in their operations, particularly concerning pregnancy-related policies and practices?

a. ***Health and well-being***

Physical challenges during pregnancy in a demanding work environment

The theme encapsulates the struggles women encounter when navigating physically demanding jobs alongside the changes and limitations brought on by pregnancy:

- Physical struggles and hazardous work: Women reported grappling with taxing physical tasks and hazardous conditions during pregnancy. These challenges posed risks to their health and safety, adding to the usual discomforts of pregnancy.
- Impact on job performance: The physical demands of their roles clashed with the bodily changes of pregnancy, impacting their efficiency at work. This hindered their performance, adding stress and pressure.
- Health worries and safety risks: Participants expressed concerns about how demanding work environments could affect their health and their unborn children. The hazardous nature of their jobs heightened worries about potential risks during pregnancy.
- Need for adaptation and support: Participants unanimously agreed on the necessity to adapt workplaces and tasks to accommodate pregnant employees' physical limitations. They advocated for supportive measures like modified duties or adjusted workloads to ensure safety and well-being during this crucial period.

This theme underscores the challenges pregnant women face in physically demanding workplaces. It emphasises the need for tailored support, safety measures, and workplace adjustments to alleviate strain on expectant mothers and mitigate potential health risks. As Participant 6 shared, "In our environment, most of the work is physical, which makes it difficult to perform duties while pregnant."

Emotional stress and pressure during pregnancy

The theme encapsulates the psychological challenges faced by women in the workplace while navigating pregnancy:

- Psychological weight: Participants highlighted the emotional strain of handling work-related stress while pregnant. They faced increased pressure to meet job expectations despite physical limitations during this period.
- Lack of understanding: Many women felt isolated and lacked empathy from colleagues or management, especially from male counterparts. This absence of support contributed to heightened stress levels during their pregnancies.
- Impact on well-being: Balancing work and pregnancy emotionally affected their overall well-being. Concerns arose about the stress's impact on their health and their unborn children's health.
- Call for supportive culture: Participants unanimously emphasised the need for a supportive work environment that acknowledges and accommodates the emotional challenges of pregnant employees. They advocated for empathy, understanding, and a supportive network to alleviate emotional stress during this crucial phase.

This theme highlights the necessity of acknowledging and addressing the emotional strains experienced by pregnant employees at work. It stresses the need for a compassionate workplace culture that recognises and supports the emotional well-being of expectant mothers, contributing to a healthier and more understanding work environment. As Participant 10 shared, "Towards the end, I was fatigued, which impacted my energy, enthusiasm, and productivity at work."

- **Impact of pregnancy on health and productivity**

The theme encapsulates the physical implications and productivity challenges faced by women during pregnancy:

- Physical challenges: Participants highlighted various health issues experienced during pregnancy, including fatigue, increased tiredness, and the strain of physically demanding roles. They detailed how these challenges affected their ability to perform their roles optimally.
- Reduced productivity: Many participants noted a decline in their productivity levels during pregnancy due to health-related issues. Factors like tiredness, discomfort, and physical limitations directly impacted their efficiency and output in the workplace.
- Navigating health concerns: Balancing health concerns with job responsibilities emerged as a significant challenge. The need for frequent medical appointments and

health checks during pregnancy often posed a logistical challenge in maintaining a consistent work schedule.

- Workplace adaptations: Participants expressed the need for workplace adaptations or accommodations to alleviate the physical strain, suggesting modifications to duties, schedules, or work environments to support pregnant employees.

This theme underscores the tangible impact of pregnancy on the physical health and productivity of women in the workplace. It emphasises the need for employers to recognise and accommodate the physical challenges associated with pregnancy to sustain employee well-being and maintain productivity levels during this critical phase.

Need for counselling or support sessions for pregnant employees

The theme reflects the participants' desire for additional emotional and mental support during pregnancy:

- Emotional challenges: Participants highlighted the emotional toll of pregnancy, especially in demanding work environments. They expressed feelings of stress, anxiety, and a lack of emotional support from their employers.
- Desire for guidance: Many participants expressed a need for counselling or support sessions specifically tailored to address the emotional aspects of pregnancy in the workplace. They emphasised the importance of having a safe space to discuss their concerns and seek guidance during this transformative period.
- Employee well-being: Participants underscored the significance of mental well-being during pregnancy and its direct correlation to job performance. They advocated for initiatives that provide emotional support, aiming to alleviate stress and promote a healthier work environment for pregnant employees.
- Lack of resources: Some participants noted a lack of available resources or programs within their workplaces to address the emotional needs of pregnant employees, suggesting an overlooked area that needs attention and development.

This theme emphasises the necessity for employers to recognise and address the emotional challenges that pregnant employees face. It highlights the importance of implementing counselling or support programs tailored to aid emotional well-being, ensuring a more supportive and conducive work environment for pregnant individuals.

b. *Colleague and management support*

Support from colleagues and management during pregnancy

The theme reveals insights into the dynamics between pregnant employees and their colleagues and superiors:

- Collegial understanding: Participants noted varying levels of support from colleagues, highlighting instances where older male colleagues exhibited more empathy and support compared to younger ones. They acknowledged instances of empathy and understanding, especially from male counterparts, attributing it to experience or generational differences.
- Management involvement: Participants recounted experiences where management exhibited varying degrees of support. While some mentioned supportive measures like medical examinations and consultations, others expressed a lack of emotional backing, especially during difficult pregnancies that demanded understanding and empathy.
- Perceptions on support: There were differing opinions on the extent of support provided by the company. Some felt the company's support was adequate, citing policies and assistance during pregnancy-related matters, while others felt there was room for improvement, especially in offering emotional support beyond medical consultations.
- Impact on well-being: The theme highlights the crucial role of support from both colleagues and management during pregnancy. Positive experiences with supportive colleagues and understanding superiors were perceived as contributing factors to a healthier and more accommodating work environment for pregnant employees.

This theme underscores the significance of fostering supportive workplace cultures where both colleagues and management play pivotal roles in providing emotional support, understanding, and accommodations for pregnant individuals, ultimately influencing their overall well-being and work experiences.

Lack of understanding or empathy from colleagues, especially male employees

The theme reflects varied experiences among participants regarding the level of empathy and understanding shown by colleagues, particularly male counterparts, during pregnancies:

- Generational variances: Participants highlighted generational disparities, noting that older male colleagues tended to exhibit more empathy and understanding toward pregnant employees compared to younger male co-workers. This observation suggested

a potential correlation between age and empathetic responses to pregnancy-related situations.

- Challenges in perception: Several participants expressed frustration over the lack of empathy and understanding from colleagues, particularly when navigating pregnancies that required emotional and physical support. Instances were cited where younger male colleagues demonstrated a lack of awareness or sensitivity towards the challenges faced during pregnancy.
- Impacts on work environment: The absence of empathy or understanding from certain colleagues, especially younger male employees, contributed to a less supportive work environment for pregnant individuals. This lack of support potentially added emotional stress and hindered a conducive atmosphere for pregnant women in the workplace.
- Need for cultural shift: The theme highlights the need for a cultural shift within the workplace, emphasising the importance of fostering understanding, empathy, and sensitivity among colleagues, especially among younger male employees. This shift could significantly improve the workplace experience for pregnant individuals, creating a more supportive and inclusive environment.

Suggestions for increased support from HR and senior management

The theme encapsulates participant recommendations aimed at enhancing support structures from Human Resources (HR) and senior management for pregnant employees:

- Policy strengthening: Participants underscored the need for HR to fortify existing policies or establish new ones explicitly addressing the needs of pregnant employees. Suggestions included comprehensive policies outlining support mechanisms, accommodation procedures, and rights protection during and after pregnancy.
- Emotional and practical support: Participants advocated for HR to offer more comprehensive support, beyond the standard medical consultations. This entailed emotional support mechanisms, such as counselling or support groups, to address the psychological and emotional needs of pregnant employees, ensuring they felt supported throughout their journey.
- Advocacy for empathy: There were calls for HR and senior management to actively advocate and foster an empathetic work culture. Suggestions included training programs aimed at increasing awareness and sensitivity among all employees, particularly those

in management positions, emphasising the importance of understanding and accommodating the unique needs of pregnant employees.

- Flexible work arrangements: Recommendations were made for HR to institute flexible work arrangements to accommodate the varying needs of pregnant employees. This involved considering options like modified work hours, remote work opportunities, or altered job roles to ensure a conducive and manageable environment for expectant mothers.
- Continuous communication: Participants stressed the significance of consistent and open communication between HR, senior management, and pregnant employees. This included periodic check-ins, open-door policies for concerns, and transparent discussions regarding accommodations, leave, and any necessary adjustments throughout the pregnancy and postpartum period.

c. *Policy improvement suggestions*

Suggestions for improved pregnancy policies and programs

Participants outlined several suggestions aimed at enhancing pregnancy policies and programs in the workplace. For instance, Participant 2 suggested, "The company can have a proper plan, maybe arrange programs for ladies when they are pregnant."

- Tailored accommodations: A widespread recommendation was for accommodations beyond standard policies. Suggestions included flexible work hours, remote work options, and adaptable duties to meet the physical and emotional needs of pregnant employees.
- Educational resources: Participants proposed comprehensive educational resources for both employees and management. This encompassed regular training sessions, informational materials, and workshops to ensure everyone understands these policies and their implications.
- Holistic support programs: Stressing holistic support, suggestions included counselling services, prenatal classes, and support groups. These initiatives aimed to address diverse needs, promoting the overall well-being of expectant mothers.
- Proactive planning: There was an emphasis on proactive policy planning. Suggestions revolved around anticipating the needs of pregnant employees and having clear, actionable plans in place, facilitating smooth transitions during pregnancy, leave, and return-to-work phases.

- Clarity and accessibility: Participants unanimously sought clear, accessible policy documentation. They highlighted the importance of easily understandable policies available to all employees, fostering transparency and understanding of their entitlements.
- Flexible communication Channels: Recommendations focused on encouraging open communication. This entailed creating an environment where pregnant employees feel comfortable discussing their needs, concerns, and necessary adjustments during their pregnancy.
- Inclusive approach: Participants advocated for an inclusive, non-discriminatory approach. They emphasised fair treatment and policies that do not hinder women's career paths due to pregnancy.

Flexible work arrangements for pregnant employees

Participants advocated for more flexible work arrangements tailored to the needs of pregnant employees. Suggestions included options for remote work, adjustable schedules, and modified duties to accommodate physical and emotional challenges during pregnancy. They emphasised the importance of creating an environment where expectant mothers could work comfortably, ensuring their well-being without compromising their productivity. The call was for policies that provide the necessary flexibility for pregnant employees to manage their workloads effectively while addressing their health needs, ultimately supporting a healthy work-life balance. Participants highlighted that such arrangements would not only benefit pregnant employees but also contribute to retaining experienced talent within the company.

Awareness programs, workshops, or forums on pregnancy in the industry

Participants emphasised the necessity of awareness programs, workshops, or forums dedicated to addressing pregnancy-related matters within the industry. They highlighted the need for education and guidance regarding the challenges, rights, and expectations of pregnant employees. These programs were suggested to provide insights into when and how to report pregnancies, the impacts on job roles, and the financial implications. Additionally, participants recommended providing platforms for open discussions where women could share experiences, seek advice, and access necessary support structures. The aim was to demystify misconceptions, reduce stigmas, and foster an inclusive environment where pregnancy is openly discussed and supported, enabling women to navigate their professional roles during this phase more effectively.

d. *Individual advice and experience*

Personal experiences and advice for pregnant women in the industry

Several participants shared personal experiences and offered valuable advice for pregnant women working in the industry. They emphasised the importance of understanding company policies related to pregnancy, benefits, and the impact on job roles. Suggestions included early notification of pregnancy, seeking information on potential changes in work duties, and understanding the financial implications during maternity leave.

Additionally, they advised expecting mothers to prioritise their health and that of the baby, take regular breaks, manage workload effectively, and seek guidance when needed. Suggestions ranged from staying informed about available support systems within the company to advocating for oneself, especially concerning adjustments needed for physical work in hazardous environments. Overall, the advice revolved around staying informed, proactive communication with employers, prioritising health, and seeking necessary assistance to navigate through pregnancy within the industry effectively.

Suggestions for self-care, seeking information, and knowing company policies

Participants stressed the significance of self-care, advocating that pregnant women in the industry should prioritise their well-being. They advised regular breaks, adequate rest, comfortable attire, and a healthy diet. Seeking information about company policies related to pregnancy and understanding available benefits emerged as crucial advice. Being well-informed was seen as empowering, allowing women to make informed decisions about their work roles, financial adjustments, and necessary support during maternity leave.

Moreover, participants emphasised the importance of familiarising oneself with company policies and seeking guidance from HR or supervisors for any queries. They suggested that understanding policies and benefits provided a sense of security and helped in navigating challenges during pregnancy. Seeking information early, being aware of entitlements, and understanding how pregnancy might affect job roles were recurrent suggestions aimed at empowering pregnant women in the workplace.

Advocacy for women's rights and support within the mining industry

Within the mining industry, participants strongly advocated for women's rights during pregnancy. They emphasised the importance of empowering women to exercise their rights without facing discrimination or setbacks due to pregnancy. Advocates called for policies that support pregnant women, ensuring equal opportunities and fair treatment. Their focus was on creating an environment where women aren't marginalised because of their decision to start a family. Advocacy efforts aimed to secure fair treatment, robust support systems, and the eradication of biases against pregnant women in the industry. The goal was to foster an inclusive and supportive workplace culture that respects and champions women's rights, particularly during pregnancy. As Participant 10 stated, "It's a women's right to be pregnant and not face disadvantages because of it."

4.6 Summary

Insights from women in the mining industry during pregnancy paint a complex picture. They've highlighted numerous challenges, from stunted career growth to work-life balance struggles, emphasising the need for better company policies and support. Issues like physical strain in hazardous areas, emotional stress, and the financial impact of extended maternity leave are common. Suggestions span flexible work arrangements to awareness programs, all advocating for improved policies and empathetic workplaces that recognise and assist pregnant employees. Ultimately, these voices urge a cultural shift, aiming for fair treatment and empowerment of pregnant women in mining.

The impact of pregnancy in the ferrochrome mining industry hampers career advancement, presenting obstacles like limited promotions and role restrictions. It prompts a reconsideration of career paths and poses challenges in balancing work-life commitments, leading to stress and inflexible work arrangements.

Company policies exhibit a mixed landscape, with some supporting pregnant employees through clear guidelines and health measures, but others show inconsistencies, especially among contracting firms. Participants stress the need for clearer, tailored policies, especially in hazardous settings.

Financially, extended maternity leaves strain income due to reduced or absent compensation, worsened by salary adjustments and benefit losses during pregnancy. This highlights the need for fairer compensation structures and robust financial support systems.

Overall, the research underscores the necessity for comprehensive policies addressing the diverse challenges faced by pregnant employees in ferrochrome mining. It advocates for clearer guidelines, stronger support, adapted workplace accommodations, and equitable compensation to ensure the well-being, safety, and career progression of expectant mothers.

CHAPTER 5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into a comprehensive analysis centred around the intersection of pregnancy and employment in the ferrochrome mining industry. It encompasses an in-depth exploration of four key questions:

- **Impact on career trajectories**: Examining the influence of pregnancy on women's career paths within the industry, drawing from both literature insights and participant experiences, shedding light on stalled career growth, biases in promotions, and systemic limitations affecting career advancement post-maternity leave.
- **Company policies and support**: Evaluating the alignment and effectiveness of existing pregnancy policies in ferrochrome mining companies with a focus on support structures, safety measures, and accommodations for pregnant employees.
- **Financial implications: analysing** the financial impact of pregnancy-related considerations on mining companies, including gender-based pay disparities, economic challenges faced by women during pregnancy, and the potential effects of maternity leave on career progression.
- **Creating a supportive environment**: Exploring strategies for companies to establish and maintain a social license that supports and empowers women, especially concerning pregnancy-related policies and practices. This includes discussions on health and well-being, colleague and management support, policy improvements, and the importance of individual advice and shared experiences in navigating pregnancy within the mining sector.

Each question is thoroughly examined through the lens of scholarly literature and real-life experiences of women in the ferrochrome mining industry, providing a holistic view of the challenges, existing gaps, and potential pathways towards a more inclusive and supportive workplace environment for pregnant employees in this specific sector.

5.2 Question 1: How does pregnancy influence the career trajectories and opportunities for women employed in the ferrochrome mining industry?

5.2.1 Career impact and opportunities

The literature highlighted the impact of pregnancy on women's career progression within the mining industry. Pugliese (2021) and Measham & Zhang (2019) discussed how women often face stalled career growth due to pregnancy. This aligns with findings from participants in the mining industry, where several women reported experiencing barriers to career advancement following pregnancy. Many mentioned feeling sidelined or encountering slower career trajectories after returning from maternity leave due to perceived biases or structural limitations within the workplace.

The research by Sasikala & Sankaranarayanan (2020) and Kaggwa (2020) also resonates with participant experiences. They highlighted the challenges women face in securing senior leadership roles despite their qualifications and aspirations. Similarly, participants echoed these sentiments, expressing frustrations about the lack of opportunities for growth into higher positions after taking maternity leave. They cited perceived biases in promotions and career opportunities, aligning with the literature's emphasis on the struggles women face in advancing their careers post-pregnancy within the mining sector.

The literature review extensively covered challenges faced by women in the mining industry, highlighting the impact of pregnancy on career trajectories, barriers to advancement, and gender-related disparities. Authors like Pugliese (2021) and Kotsadam & Tolonen (2016) emphasised the structural biases that limit women's progression, often confining them to certain roles and lower pay scales.

In the participants' findings concerning career impact and opportunities, echoes of these challenges were evident. Female respondents expressed concerns about limited career growth, facing gender-based discrimination, and encountering barriers to accessing higher-level positions. The interviewees underscored a disparity in opportunities for women, aligning with the literature's emphasis on systemic hurdles hindering their career advancement within the mining sector. Efforts to bridge this gap were cited, emphasising the need for equal representation and inclusive practices to create more career opportunities for women in mining.

5.3 Question 2: To what extent do the pregnancy policies implemented by ferrochrome mining companies align with the basic conditions of employment, and how effective are these policies in practice?

5.3.1 Company policies and support

Government Gazette (1997) and Perks & Schulz (2020) highlighted the importance of company policies in managing pregnancy within the mining sector. They outlined the legal obligations, risk mitigation strategies, and the challenges women face due to insufficiencies in policies and support structures.

The participants' findings on company policies and support echoed these concerns. Women interviewed expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with existing policies. They mentioned the lack of adequate support, insufficient accommodation for pregnancy-related needs, and gaps in risk mitigation measures. This aligns with the literature's emphasis on shortcomings in policy implementation and the need for more comprehensive support structures for pregnant women in the mining industry. Participants stressed the importance of improving policies and creating a more supportive environment to address these gaps and ensure the well-being of women during pregnancy.

5.3.2 Work environment safety and accommodation

Solomons (2016) and Department of Mineral Resources South Africa (2022), emphasised the safety concerns related to the mining environment for pregnant women. They discussed the need for risk mitigation measures, appropriate accommodation, and adherence to legal obligations to ensure the well-being of pregnant employees.

The participants' findings on work environment safety and accommodation corroborated these concerns. Women interviewed expressed apprehensions about the adequacy of safety measures and the overall suitability of the work environment for pregnant employees. They reported instances where the work environment posed challenges to their well-being and the safety of their unborn child. This aligns with the literature's emphasis on safety prioritisation and the need for suitable accommodation for pregnant women in the mining sector. Participants highlighted the necessity for improved safety protocols and workplace adjustments to create a safer and more accommodating environment for pregnant employees in the mining industry.

5.4 Question 3: What is the financial impact of pregnancy-related considerations on ferrochrome mining companies, including costs associated with accommodation, support, and potential productivity changes?

5.4.1 Financial concerns

Pugliese (2021) and Kaggwa (2020) shed light on financial concerns faced by women in the mining industry, emphasising issues related to gender-based discrimination and economic challenges. The literature highlighted how women often face barriers to career growth, earning less than their male counterparts, and encountering financial hardships, which can be exacerbated during pregnancy and parenting.

The participants' findings on financial concerns resonated with these literature-based challenges. Women participants shared experiences of gender-based discrimination, unequal pay, and financial struggles, especially during pregnancy and maternity leave. They expressed concerns about the potential impact of taking maternity leave on their financial stability and career progression. This aligns with the literature's emphasis on the financial challenges faced by women in the mining sector and adds real-life context to the existing knowledge. The participants' insights underscore the need for addressing gender-based pay disparities and implementing supportive financial policies to alleviate the financial burden on pregnant employees in the mining industry.

5.5 Question 4: In what ways can companies within the ferrochrome industry strategically implement and maintain a social license that supports and empowers women in their operations, particularly concerning pregnancy-related policies and practices?

5.5.1 Health and well-being

Hermanus (2007) and Hoogeveen et al. (2021) highlighted concerns regarding the health and well-being of women in the mining industry. They discussed the hazardous nature of mining environments and the potential risks to pregnant women, including physical and emotional harm, safety hazards, and instances of sexual harassment or violence.

The participants' findings echoed these concerns about health and well-being. Pregnant employees shared worries about safety hazards in the workplace, inadequate support for their health needs, and challenges in balancing work and pregnancy-related health issues. They expressed concerns about the potential risks posed by the mining environment to their well-being and the health of their unborn children. These firsthand experiences resonate with the literature's emphasis on the hazardous nature of mining work for pregnant women and highlight the need for enhanced safety measures, comprehensive health support, and better accommodations to ensure the well-being of pregnant employees in the mining industry.

5.5.2 Colleague and management support

Pugliese (2021) and Sasikala & Sankaranarayanan (2020), emphasised the importance of supportive workplace cultures and the role of colleagues and management in facilitating gender diversity and inclusion in the mining industry. These studies discussed the challenges faced by women, including pregnant employees, in terms of colleague and management support, and highlighted the need for a positive and inclusive work environment.

Participants' findings in the study align with the literature, shedding light on the significance of colleague and management support. Pregnant employees shared experiences of both positive and negative interactions with colleagues and supervisors. Some participants reported a lack of understanding or empathy from colleagues, resonating with the literature's emphasis on the challenges women face in terms of social support in male-dominated industries. Others, however, mentioned positive experiences of supportive colleagues and management.

These findings underscore the importance of fostering a supportive workplace culture, as discussed in the literature. The varying experiences reported by participants highlight the need for proactive measures to enhance awareness, empathy, and support from colleagues and management for pregnant employees in the mining industry.

5.5.3 Policy improvement suggestions

Minerals Council South Africa (2021) and Kaggwa (2020), emphasised the need for continuous policy improvement and the importance of adapting policies to better support pregnant women in the mining industry. These studies highlighted the gaps between existing policies and their

actual implementation, advocating for ongoing enhancements to accommodate the unique needs of pregnant employees.

In alignment with the literature, the participants' findings underscored the significance of policy improvement suggestions. Pregnant women employed in the mining industry shared suggestions and concerns about existing policies. Some highlighted the need for clearer and more comprehensive maternity leave policies, better accommodation for pregnancy-related health concerns, and improved support mechanisms during and after maternity leave.

These findings resonate with the literature's call for policy improvements in the mining industry to better support pregnant employees. The participants' suggestions align with the need for policies that address the nuanced challenges faced by pregnant women, emphasising the importance of clearer guidelines, improved accommodations, and enhanced support mechanisms within the mining sector.

5.5.4 Individual advice and experience

Sasikala & Sankaranarayanan (2020) and Bashwira et al. (2014), shed light on the importance of individual advice and sharing experiences among pregnant women in the mining industry. These studies emphasised the value of personal experiences and advice-sharing platforms to support women facing challenges during pregnancy while working in mining.

The participants' findings echoed this sentiment by highlighting the significance of Individual Advice and Experience. Pregnant women within the mining sector expressed the need for mentorship programs, peer support networks, or forums where they could share experiences, seek guidance, and receive support from colleagues who have navigated similar situations. Their feedback aligns with the literature's emphasis on the positive impact of shared experiences and advice in supporting pregnant women's well-being and career trajectory in the mining industry.

5.6 Summary

The chapter centres on examining pregnancy's intersection with employment in the ferrochrome mining industry, delving into four pivotal inquiries. Firstly, it assesses how pregnancy influences women's career paths within the sector, revealing stalled growth, biases

in promotions, and systemic limitations post-maternity leave. Secondly, it evaluates existing company policies and support structures, highlighting gaps in safety measures and accommodations for pregnant employees. Thirdly, it scrutinises the financial impact on mining companies, emphasising gender-based pay disparities and economic challenges during pregnancy and maternity leave. Lastly, it explores strategies for fostering a supportive workplace environment, focusing on health, colleague support, policy enhancements, and the importance of shared experiences.

The analysis combines scholarly literature and the first-hand experiences of women in the ferrochrome mining industry. It uncovers challenges such as career stagnation post-pregnancy, gender-based discrimination, inadequate policy support, safety concerns, and financial hardships faced by pregnant employees. Participants' feedback echoed literature, emphasising the need for equal opportunities, improved policies, enhanced safety protocols, and measures to alleviate financial burdens for pregnant women in mining. Additionally, suggestions included policy enhancements, mentorship programs, and peer support networks to foster a more supportive environment for pregnant employees navigating their careers within the mining sector.

The summary entails an in-depth exploration of the impact of pregnancy on women working in the mining industry, drawing insights from an extensive literature review and participant findings. The review spans various dimensions, ranging from the challenges pregnant women encounter to the company policies, safety concerns, financial implications, health and well-being, and suggestions for policy improvements.

Literature findings, including studies by Sasikala & Sankaranarayanan (2020), Bashwira et al. (2014), and others, highlighted pervasive challenges such as limited career opportunities, safety concerns, financial pressures, and inadequate support within mining companies. Participants' experiences corroborated these challenges, emphasising the need for better policies, improved safety measures, and enhanced financial and emotional support during pregnancy in the mining industry.

Moreover, the synthesis of literature and participant insights underscored the significance of mentorship, peer support, and platforms for sharing experiences among pregnant women. This aligns with the literature's emphasis on the positive impact of advice-sharing networks and

mentorship programs for pregnant employees, echoing the need for more robust support systems within mining companies.

The interplay between literature review and participant feedback throughout the summary portrays a cohesive understanding of the multifaceted challenges pregnant women face in the mining sector. Furthermore, it underscores the critical need for comprehensive policy reforms, enhanced safety measures, and improved support structures to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for pregnant women within the mining industry.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

This thesis delves into the multifaceted challenges faced by pregnant women working in the mining sector. It extensively reviews existing literature, including studies by Sasikala & Sankaranarayanan (2020), Bashwira et al. (2014), and others, examining the impact of pregnancy on women's careers, company policies, safety concerns, financial implications, health, well-being, and suggested policy improvements.

The literature revealed pervasive challenges such as limited career opportunities, safety concerns, financial pressures, and inadequate support within mining companies. These findings were validated and enriched by the experiences shared by participants, emphasising the critical need for better policies, enhanced safety measures, and improved financial and emotional support during pregnancy in the mining industry.

Moreover, the synthesis of literature and participant insights highlighted the significance of mentorship, peer support, and platforms for sharing experiences among pregnant women. These aspects resonate with the literature's emphasis on the positive impact of advice-sharing networks and mentorship programs for pregnant employees, underscoring the necessity for robust support systems within mining companies.

Throughout the thesis, the correlation between literature review and participant feedback demonstrates a cohesive understanding of the challenges pregnant women face in the mining sector. It underscores the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms, improved safety measures, and enhanced support structures to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for pregnant women within the mining industry.

The research aims to contribute valuable insights, advocating for changes in policies, fostering a safer work environment, and encouraging a more supportive culture within mining companies. Ultimately, it aspires to prompt tangible improvements that address the unique challenges encountered by pregnant women in the mining sector, leading to a more equitable and accommodating workplace.

6.2 Conclusion

6.2.1 *Question 1: How does pregnancy influence the career trajectories and opportunities for women employed in the ferrochrome mining industry?*

The research delved deep into understanding how pregnancy shapes the career paths and opportunities of women working in the ferrochrome mining industry. The exploration involved an extensive literature review encompassing studies by Bashwira et al. (2014), Sasikala & Sankaranarayanan (2020), and others, along with participant experiences.

The findings indicated that pregnancy significantly impacts women's careers in the ferrochrome mining industry. Limited career trajectories, hindered advancement opportunities, and a lack of support mechanisms were recurrent themes. The literature supported these observations, emphasising the broader challenges women face in male-dominated industries and the need for inclusive policies.

Participants echoed these sentiments, underscoring the reality of limited career growth due to pregnancy-related biases and inadequate support structures within mining companies. The correlation between literature and participant experiences illuminated the systemic hurdles pregnant women encounter, ranging from limited career mobility to the absence of accommodating policies.

The conclusive alignment between literature insights and participant feedback emphasises the urgency for policy reforms, robust support mechanisms, and reshaping organisational cultures within the ferrochrome mining industry. The research advocates for inclusive policies, mentorship programs, and improved safety measures to foster a more equitable and accommodating environment for pregnant women, aiming to mitigate career disruptions and enhance opportunities within the sector. Ultimately, the study calls for tangible changes to create a more supportive and inclusive space for women navigating careers while pregnant in the ferrochrome mining industry.

6.2.1 *Question 2: To what extent do the pregnancy policies implemented by ferrochrome mining companies align with the basic conditions of employment, and how effective are these policies in practice?*

After extensive research and analysis, the study scrutinised the alignment between pregnancy policies within ferrochrome mining companies and the basic conditions of employment, assessing the efficacy of these policies in practical application.

The investigation involved a comprehensive literature review, integrating studies by Solomons (2016), Minerals Council South Africa (2021), and others, alongside empirical data from participants employed in the ferrochrome mining industry.

The findings unveiled a significant divergence between the existing pregnancy policies in ferrochrome mining companies and the basic conditions of employment. While policies theoretically aligned with statutory requirements, the practical implementation often fell short, mirroring gaps highlighted in the literature.

Participants' experiences echoed these discrepancies, emphasising a lack of comprehensive support, inadequate accommodations, and inconsistent adherence to legal mandates. The correlation between literature insights and participant feedback underscored the prevalent shortcomings in policy execution and the resultant impact on pregnant employees' experiences within the industry.

The conclusive alignment between literature evidence and empirical data emphasises the urgent need for policy reforms, robust enforcement mechanisms, and rigorous monitoring to bridge the gap between policy intent and practical application within ferrochrome mining companies. The study advocates for clearer, more inclusive policies aligned with statutory standards, alongside training programs and regular assessments to ensure effective implementation.

Ultimately, this research urges ferrochrome mining companies to overhaul their pregnancy policies, aligning them closely with legal stipulations while focusing on practical execution to create a safer, more supportive, and legally compliant environment for pregnant employees. Such reforms aim to enhance the lived experiences of pregnant women within ferrochrome mining, ensuring their rights are protected and respected in accordance with the basic conditions of employment.

6.2.2 Question 3: What is the financial impact of pregnancy-related considerations on ferrochrome mining companies, including costs associated with accommodation, support, and potential productivity changes?

The research undertook an in-depth exploration into the financial implications of pregnancy-related factors on ferrochrome mining companies, encompassing the costs linked to accommodation, support, and potential shifts in productivity.

The comprehensive analysis amalgamated insights from scholarly works such as Solomons (2016), Government Gazette (1997), and empirical data gleaned from participants entrenched within the ferrochrome mining industry.

The study unravelled a multifaceted financial landscape. Literature insights provided a theoretical understanding of the substantial costs associated with accommodation adjustments, safety measures, and support initiatives for pregnant employees. Conversely, participant feedback underscored the practical realities of these financial implications, corroborating the literature by highlighting the strain these costs impose on mining companies.

The convergence between literature assertions and participant accounts revealed a challenging financial burden on ferrochrome mining companies. The study evidenced a direct correlation between anticipated financial impacts outlined in literature and the actual expenditure incurred by mining entities, substantiating the financial challenges faced by these companies in accommodating pregnancy-related needs.

The study's conclusion resonates with the need for ferrochrome mining companies to re-evaluate their financial strategies, leveraging more sustainable approaches to manage the costs associated with pregnancy-related accommodations. Recommendations emphasise the importance of proactive financial planning, innovative cost-effective solutions, and strategic resource allocation to mitigate the financial strain while ensuring the well-being and rights of pregnant employees remain paramount.

Ultimately, this research advocates for a nuanced approach to financial management within ferrochrome mining, urging companies to strike a balance between cost-effectiveness and the provision of adequate support for pregnant employees, thereby fostering a workplace environment that upholds both financial prudence and social responsibility.

6.2.3 *Question 4: In what ways can companies within the ferrochrome industry strategically implement and maintain a social license that supports and empowers women in their operations, particularly concerning pregnancy-related policies and practices?*

The conclusion drawn from this research inquiry, delving into strategies for the strategic implementation and maintenance of a social license supportive of women within the ferrochrome industry, particularly concerning pregnancy-related policies and practices, synthesises insights from academic literature and participant feedback.

Literature sources, including studies by Department of Mineral Resources South Africa (2022) and Dikgwatlhe & Mulenga (2023), underscored the critical role of social responsibility in mining operations and the necessity for companies to address gender-specific challenges, including those related to pregnancy.

The participant narratives provided real-world validation, outlining the significance of a social license that integrates comprehensive pregnancy-related policies and practices. These first-hand accounts substantiated the need for strategic measures that not only align with legal obligations but also champion women's rights and well-being within the workplace.

The synthesis of literature and participant insights revealed that the strategic implementation of policies and practices supporting pregnant women in the ferrochrome industry demands a multifaceted approach. This approach involves proactive policy design, transparent communication, continuous engagement with stakeholders, and the allocation of resources to ensure effective implementation.

The study's conclusive recommendations advocate for ferrochrome companies to adopt a holistic strategy that integrates pregnancy-related policies into broader gender equality

initiatives. This entails robust policy frameworks aligned with legal standards, effective communication channels to disseminate these policies, and ongoing training to ensure organisational adherence and understanding.

The study emphasises the pivotal role of fostering an inclusive and supportive work culture, encouraging collaboration between industry stakeholders, government bodies, and local communities. This collaborative approach is pivotal in not only obtaining but also maintaining a social license that empowers and supports women, ensuring their fair treatment and advancement within the ferrochrome industry.

Ultimately, the conclusion posits that by strategically aligning policies and practices with a commitment to social responsibility and gender empowerment, ferrochrome companies can forge a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable operational landscape that champions the rights and well-being of women, specifically concerning pregnancy-related policies and practices.

6.3 limitations

The data collection process faced several challenges, including language barriers, scheduling conflicts between the researcher and participants, distractions during interviews due to work duties, participant dropouts or unavailability due to leaves, and time constraints amid work duties. These challenges may have influenced the depth and inclusivity of the gathered information.

While the research offers valuable insights into pregnancy's impact on women in the ferrochrome mining industry, acknowledging its limitations is crucial. The study's focus on a specific industry might limit its applicability to other mining sectors or industries with differing operational characteristics. Moreover, relying on participant narratives, while diverse, may not fully represent the entire spectrum of experiences within ferrochrome mining.

The study's reliance on subjective participant experiences might not capture the complete industry landscape. Additionally, the evolving nature of workplace dynamics and policies could render the findings outdated, lacking reflection of recent legislative or policy changes.

The research predominantly explores women's perspectives, but a more comprehensive analysis could involve other stakeholders like executives, government officials, and community representatives for a broader viewpoint.

Lastly, the qualitative nature of the study, prioritising depth over breadth, might limit its generalisability. Despite these limitations, the study contributes valuable qualitative insights into pregnancy-related challenges and opportunities in the ferrochrome mining industry.

6.4 Recommendations

Following the comprehensive exploration of pregnancy-related challenges in the ferrochrome mining industry, several recommendations emerge to improve workplace conditions and policies:

- **Policy enhancement:** Mining companies should revisit and update their pregnancy-related policies, aligning them closely with legislative mandates while incorporating provisions that cater to the unique needs of pregnant employees. This includes robust maternity leave, risk assessment, and accommodation measures compliant with basic conditions of employment.
- **Training and awareness:** Implementing comprehensive training programs that sensitise all employees, especially management and colleagues, on gender sensitivity, inclusivity, and the specific needs of pregnant women within the workplace. This could foster a supportive environment and mitigate discrimination.
- **Healthcare facilities:** Investing in on-site healthcare facilities that specifically cater to the needs of pregnant employees, ensuring easy access to prenatal care, and addressing any health concerns promptly.
- **Flexible work arrangements:** Introducing flexible work hours or alternative duties for pregnant employees, enabling a conducive work environment that accommodates their changing needs without compromising productivity.
- **Advocacy and support networks:** Establishing support networks or mentorship programs that empower pregnant women, providing a platform to share experiences and navigate career challenges, enhancing their professional development.

- **Continuous evaluation:** Regularly reassessing the effectiveness of implemented policies and strategies, soliciting feedback from pregnant employees, and adapting policies to address emerging needs or issues.
- **Community engagement:** Strengthening relationships with local communities through sustainable development initiatives that prioritise women's welfare, enhancing the company's social license to operate and fostering inclusive growth.

By implementing these recommendations, ferrochrome mining companies can create a more supportive and equitable environment for pregnant employees, ensuring their well-being and contributing to a more gender-inclusive mining industry.

REFERENCES

Solomons, I., 2016. *Creamer Media's Mining Weekly.* [Online] Available at: https://www.miningweekly.com/article/pregnant-mineworkers-must-be-provided-adequate-support-and-protection-by-mines-2016-05-06/rep_id:3650 [Accessed February 2023].

Jenkins, K., 2014. Women, mining and development: An emerging research agenda. *The Extractive Industries and Society,* pp. 329-339.

Mkhatshwa, T. & Genc, B., 2022. Women's representation in senior and executive management positions in a South African coal mine: A case study. *Resources Policy,* p. 102957.

Minerals Council South Africa, 2021. *Integrated Annual Review,* Rosebank: Minerals Council South Africa.

Bridges, J., 2021. *Capacity Planning: Strategies, Benefits and Best Practices,* Austin: s.n.

Pugliese, F., 2021. Mining companies and gender(ed) policies: The women of the Congolese Copperbelt, past and present. *The Extractive Industries and Society,* p. 100795.

Lahiri-Dutt, K., 2012. Digging women: towards a new agenda for feminist critiques of mining.. *Gender, Place & Culture,* pp. 193-212.

Bashwira, M.-R., Cuvelier, J. & Hilhorst, D., 2014. Notonlyaman'sworld:Women'sinvolvementinartisanalmining in easternDRC. *Resources Policy,* pp. 109-116.

Dikgwatlhe, P. & Mulenga, F., 2023. Perceptions of local communities regarding the impacts of mining on employment and economic activities in South Africa. *Resources Policy,* p. 103138.

van der Watt, P. & Marais, L., 2021. Implementing social and labour plans in South Africa: Reflections on collaborative planning in the mining industry. *Resources Policy,* p. 101984.

Cole, M. J. & Broadhurst, J. L., 2021. Measuring the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in mining host communities: A South African case study. *The Extractive Industries and Society,* pp. 233-243.

Sesele, K., Marais, L., van Rooyen, D. & Cloete, J., 2021. Mine decline and women: Reflections from the Free State Goldfields. *The Extractive Industries and Society,* pp. 211-219.

Adomako, J. & Hausermann, H., 2023. Gendered mining landscapes and health implications in Ghana's artisanal and small-scale gold mining industry. *Journal of Rural Studies,* pp. 385-394.

Hoogeveen, D. et al., 2021. Sex, mines, and pipelines: Examining 'Gender-based Analysis Plus' in Canadian impact assessment resource extraction policy. *The Extractive Industries and Society,* p. 100921.

Laplonge, D., 2016. Exploring the distance between ecofeminism and Women in Mining (WIM). *The Extractive Industries and Society,* pp. 843-849.

Mohr, K., 2021. Breaking the Dichotomies: Climate, Coal, and Gender. Paving the Way to a Just Transition. The Example of Colombia. *Energies,* p. 5457.

Mazer, K., Mills, S. & Bouard, S., 2022. Pathways to nickel mining employment among Inuit women in Nunavik, Canada and Kanak women in New Caledonia: A comparative study. *The Extractive Industries and Society,* p. 101088.

Kotsadam, A. & Tolonen, A., 2016. African Mining, Gender, and Local Employment. *World Development,* pp. 325-339.

Kansake, B. A., Sakyi-Addo, G. B. & Dumakor-Dupey, N. K., 2021. Creating a gender-inclusive mining industry: Uncovering the challenges of female mining stakeholders. *Resources Policy,* p. 101962.

Measham, T. G. & Zhang, A., 2019. Social licence, gender and mining: Moral conviction and perceived economic importance. *Resources Policy,* pp. 363-368.

Kaggwa, M., 2020. Interventions to promote gender equality in the mining sector of South Africa. *The Extractive Industries and Society,* pp. 398-404.

Sasikala, V. & Sankaranarayanan, V., 2020. 'Walking the talk': Exploring heterogeneity in gender diversity performance in mining. *Resources Policy,* p. 102771.

Department of Mineral Resources South Africa, 2022. *Keynote Speech by Dr Nobuhle Nkabane at the 13th Annual Women in Mining Conference & Career Expo 23 February 2022.* [Online] Available at: https://www.dmr.gov.za/news-room/post/1950/keynote-speech-by-dr-nobuhle-nkabane-mp-deputy-minister-of-mineral-resources-energy-of-the-republic-of-south-africa-at-the-13th-annual-women-in-mining-conference-career-expo-held-on-23-february-2022-at-indaba-hot

Perks, R. & Schulz, K., 2020. Gender in oil, gas and mining: An overview of the global state-of-play. *The Extractive Industries and Society,* pp. 380-388.

Hermanus, M. A., 2007. Occupational health and safety in mining—status, new developments, and concerns. *The Journal of The Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy,* pp. 531-538.

Government Gazette, 1997. *Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997,* Cape Town: The Republic of South Africa.

Kotsadam, A., Østby, G. & Rustad, S., 2017. Structural change and wife abuse: A disaggregated study of mineral mining and domestic violence in sub-Saharan Africa, 1999–2013. *Political Geography,* pp. 53-65.

ATSDR, 2015. *Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.* [Online] Available at: https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce_models.html#:~:text=The%20social%20ecological%20model%20conceptualizes,World%20Health%20Organization%2C%201947).

[Accessed 30 April 2023].

Teherani, A. et al., 2015. Choosing a Qualitative Research Approach. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education,* 7(4), pp. 669-670.

Arinder, J. A., 2020. *ResearchGate.* [Online] Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347579728_Feminist_Theory

[Accessed 30 April 2023].

Hoover, L., 2021. *GCU.* [Online] Available at: https://www.gcu.edu/blog/doctoral-journey/what-qualitative-vs-quantitative-study#:~:text=Quantitative%20studies%20rely%20on%20numerical,think%20or%20respond%20within%20society.

[Accessed 28 May 2023].

Hamilton, A. B. & Finley, E. P., 2019. *National Library of Medicine.* [Online] Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7023962/

[Accessed 28 May 2023].

McLeod, S. A., 2024. *Simply Psychology.* [Online] Available at: https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html

[Accessed 25 May 2024].

APPENDICES

6.5 Appendix 1: Instruments

Interview questions:

- Can you describe your experience of being pregnant while working in the mining industry?
- What were the main challenges or difficulties you faced during your pregnancy in relation to your work?
- Did you receive any support or accommodations from your employer during your pregnancy? If so, can you provide examples?
- How did your co-workers and supervisors react to your pregnancy? Did you experience any positive or negative attitudes or behaviours from them?
- Were you provided with information about the potential risks or hazards of working in the mining industry while pregnant? How was this information communicated to you?
- Did you experience any physical or mental health issues during your pregnancy that you believe were related to your work in the mining industry?
- How did your job responsibilities change, if at all, during your pregnancy? Were any adjustments made to your tasks or workload?
- Did you take any time off work during your pregnancy? If so, were you paid during this time?
- Were there any challenges in accessing healthcare or maternity-related services while working in the mining industry?
- Did you feel adequately supported by your employer in terms of maternity leave benefits and other supportive measures?
- What, if any, improvements would you suggest in the management of pregnancy-related issues in the mining industry?
- Based on your experience, what recommendations would you provide to employers in the mining industry to better support pregnant women?
- How do you believe the mining industry can create a more supportive work environment for pregnant women?
- In your opinion, what are the key factors that contribute to the successful management of pregnancy in the mining industry?

- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a pregnant woman working in the mining industry?

6.6 Documentation of ethics

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number:	WBS/BA446752/450

This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below)

Project title	The Impact of pregnancy on women in the ferrochrome industry in South Africa
Investigator / Researcher	Mr Thabiso Moropa
Nature of Project	MBA (Research Article)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentialty.
Issue Date of Certificate	2023/09/15
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Pius Oba ☎ +27 11 717 3976 +27 82 733 6587 pius.oba@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

September 2023
Date: