



**An investigation of men's representation and perceptions in secretarial
administrative support roles**

By

Banikele Olivia, MASHIYANE

20354124

March 2026

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Management Science in
Administration and Information Management

In the

Department of Information and Corporate Management

Faculty of Accounting and Informatics

Durban University of Technology

Durban, South Africa

DECLARATION

I, Banikele Olivia Mashiyane, hereby declare that this dissertation titled: "An investigation of men's representation and perceptions in secretarial administrative support roles" submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management in the Department of Information and Corporate and Management, Faculty of Accounting and Informatics, Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa, is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other university or institution for a degree or diploma. All sources used or referenced in this dissertation have been properly acknowledged.

Date: 31 March 2026

Student: Banikele Olivia, Mashiyane

Date: 31 March 2026

Supervisor: Dr Saroj Bala

Date: 31 March 2026

Co-Supervisor: Dr M Ngibe

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My foremost gratitude goes to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The God Almighty has found the time right to make it happen.

I thank my late mother (Sylvia Nokuphila Mashiyane) and my late father (Jacob Zwelabo Mashiyane) for everything.

This study would not have been possible without the support of the following individuals:

My supervisor Dr S Saroj for coming into my journey at the right time and doing the groundwork that has brought my study this far. Thank you for equipping me with refined knowledge and for restoring my determination to finish.

My Co-supervisor Dr M Ngibe for imparting discipline in me and insisting on nothing less than excellence. Your effortless scholarship is refreshing and fuelling.

My entire family for your unmatched love, support and absolute understanding, even in times where family time was the sacrifice. I thank my daughter (Zenande Yathandwa, Mashiyane) for her patience as I was doing what I had to do.

My participants, who gave of their time selflessly, even when it was not convenient for them to do so. Many blessed returns to you.

My work colleagues who acted as my cheerleaders, some as mentors and consistently spoke words of encouragement to me. Warm thanks to Women Researchers in Humanities and Social Sciences (WoRiHSS) UNIZULU.

ABSTRACT

Years past the dawn of democracy, South Africa has still not yet adjusted to diversifying careers so that diverse groups are free to choose their career paths and are represented in the various career sectors. The trend in various countries such as the United States of America, England, Australia and South Africa is that women continue to be the preferred gender in feminised occupations. This is perceived as odd because when one gender is dominant, dominance should be something that triggers scrutiny. The concern is that with the predominance of one gender, gender issues may be rendered invisible. Systematic work segregation along gender lines is observed in instances where men are assigned policy related work and start off and end their careers in higher status roles with far greater career progression while women occupy lower status jobs with lesser influence and job advancement such as gendered support type roles of typists. The study therefore carefully reflected gendered concepts of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in the perception of males employed in secretarial administrative jobs and interrogated the meaning in the use of gendered occupational titles.

The research was conducted as a case study at a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal in which mixed methods were employed. The study consisted of a target population of 269 employees forming two main sub-populations, namely: a) University administrative secretaries, and b) University management. Mixed methods surveys were administered within a stratified simple random sample of 108 administrative secretaries as a probability strategy to guarantee equitable chances of each unit being included in the population sample. A total of 10 purposive individual interviews with five male administrators and five management staff members were used as a further method of enquiry. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.0 software was used to analyse the quantitative responses, and qualitative responses were analysed thematically.

Key study results revealed that at the university under study, there existed disparities in the representation of men in the secretarial administrative support jobs, and particularly in jobs of 'secretary' which were predominantly held by women. Findings linked the disparities to the negative personal experiences of men in support roles relating to bias and stereotypes rather than their lack of interest in the jobs. Critical barriers identified included: a) companies' preference for women secretaries, b) perceived role incongruency, c) other men not taking up the job roles, d) degradation on the job, and e) lack of job autonomy.

The study therefore sought to underscore the need for addressing and challenging gender stereotypes in the workplace and to promote a more inclusive work environment. It also tabled recommendations and proposed a gender equity plan to address the gender imbalance, including the promotion of gender diversity and inclusion as strategies to mitigate the impact of biases and stereotypes and achieve gender neutrality in the secretarial role.

Key words: secretary, secretarial administrative, gender representation, gender equity gender roles, gender diversity, inclusion, representation, equity in higher education

CONTENTS

DECLARATION	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
ABSTRACT	4
CONTENTS	6
LIST OF FIGURES	14
LIST OF TABLES	15
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	17
1 CHAPTER ONE	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT	3
1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES	4
1.4.1 Research Objectives	4
1.4.2 Research Questions.....	5
1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	5
1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.....	6
1.7 THEORIES OF FOCUS.....	7
1.8 POPULATION	7
1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	8
1.9.1 Research Philosophy	8

1.9.2	Research Approach.....	8
1.9.3	Population	8
1.9.4	Research Methodology.....	8
1.10	DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	10
1.10.1	“Secretary”.....	11
1.10.2	“Administrator”	11
1.10.3	“Secretarial administrative”.....	11
1.11	OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS.....	11
1.12	SUMMARY	13
2	CHAPTER TWO	14
2.1	INTRODUCTION	14
2.2	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	14
2.2.1	Masculinities.....	15
2.2.2	Post-Structuralism Feminism.....	19
2.3	GENDER AND OCCUPATIONS	23
2.3.1	Occupational Gender Segregation	23
2.3.2	Male Unemployment	25
2.3.3	The Role of a Secretary.....	26
2.4	HISTORIC ACCOUNT OF SECRETARIES.....	28
2.4.1	Historic Account of Literature on Secretaries	29
2.4.2	Development of the Secretarial Profession	29
2.4.3	The Gap in Literature	30

2.4.4	Power and Social Stratification.....	30
2.4.5	Cultural Background.....	31
2.5	SECRETARIAL ADMINISTRATIVE GENDER REPRESENTATION TODAY	34
2.5.1	Representation of Males in Feminised Professions.....	34
2.5.2	Males Entering Feminised Occupations	38
2.6	SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO.....	44
3	CHAPTER THREE	46
3.1	INTRODUCTION	46
3.2	RESEARCH DESIGN.....	46
3.3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	47
3.4	RESEARCH APPROACH: MIXED METHODS	47
3.4.1	Design Dimension 1: Purpose.....	48
3.4.2	Design Dimension 2: Theoretical drive.....	49
3.4.3	Design Dimension 3: Timing (simultaneity and dependency).....	49
3.4.4	Design Dimension 4: Point of integration.....	50
3.4.5	Design Dimension 5: Typological versus interactive design approaches	52
3.5	STUDY SETTING.....	53
3.6	POPULATION	53
3.6.1	Study Population	54
3.6.2	Population Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....	55
3.7	SAMPLING.....	55
3.7.1	Sampling Frame	56

3.7.2	Sampling Methods and Procedures	57
3.7.3	Sampling Size	63
3.8	DATA COLLECTION	64
3.8.1	Data Collection Methods and Procedures	65
3.8.2	Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria	70
3.9	PILOT STUDY	71
3.9.1	Pilot Testing Interviews.....	72
3.9.2	Pilot Testing Survey Questionnaires	73
3.9.3	Pilot Testing Results.....	73
3.10	VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY.....	74
3.10.1	Credibility and Trustworthiness: Qualitative Methods.....	74
3.10.2	Validity and Reliability: Quantitative Methods.....	74
3.11	DATA ANALYSIS	77
3.11.1	Qualitative Data analysis.....	77
3.11.2	Quantitative Data Analysis	78
3.11.3	Factor Analysis.....	78
3.12	Ethical Considerations.....	79
3.13	SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THREE	81
4	CHAPTER 4	82
4.1	INTRODUCTION	82
4.2	DOCUMENT ANALYSIS RESULTS (OBJECTIVE 1).....	82
4.2.1	Gender Categorisation and Number Employed per Category	83

4.3	SURVEY QUANTITATIVE RESULTS (OBJECTIVES 1 AND 2).....	84
4.3.1	SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF SECRETARIAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF	84
4.3.2	SECTION B: PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER REPRESENTATION (SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES ACCORDING TO OBJECTIVES).....	89
4.3.3	SECTION C: IDENTIFYING GENDER BARRIERS.....	103
4.4	QUALITATIVE RESULTS (OBJECTIVES 2, 3 AND 4).....	106
4.4.1	CATEGORISATION OF INTERVIEWEES' SUB-GROUPS.....	107
4.4.2	THEMES AND SUB-THEMES	108
A)	Main Theme: Compromised Gender Diversity.....	108
B)	Sub-Theme 1: Contribution to Gender Equity.....	109
C)	Sub-Theme 2: Potential for Inclusivity	109
4.4.3	INTERVIEW RESPONSES: MALE ADMINISTRATORS (SUBGROUP 1).110	
4.4.4	INTERVIEW RESPONSES: MANAGERS (SUBGROUP 2).....	127
4.5	SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR.....	141
5	CHAPTER 5	143
5.1	INTRODUCTION	143
5.2	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES ONE AND TWO.....	143
5.2.1	Main Theme: Compromised Gender Diversity.....	143
5.2.2	Sub-Theme 1: Contribution to Gender Equity.....	144
5.2.3	Sub-Theme 2: Potential for Inclusivity	146
5.3	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES TWO AND FOUR	147
5.3.1	Gender Stereotypes	148

(Sub-Theme 1: Contribution to Gender Equity and Sub-Theme 2: Potential for Inclusivity).....	148
5.3.2 Job Challenges.....	154
5.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES THREE AND FOUR.....	154
5.4.1 Bias Informed by Personal Experiences.....	155
(Sub-Theme 1: Contribution to Gender Equity)	155
5.4.2 Results Oriented Position	157
(Sub-Theme 2: Potential for Inclusivity)	157
5.5 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	158
5.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FIVE	160
6 CHAPTER 6:	162
6.1 INTRODUCTION	162
6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY	162
6.2.1 Key Literature Findings.....	163
6.3 ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	164
6.3.1 Objective 1: To determine gender representation within the secretarial administrative staff population at the selected university in KZN in the year 2024....	164
6.3.2 Objective 2: To identify the attitude of secretaries towards their roles within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal	167
6.3.3 Objective 3: To identify the attitude of managers towards the role of secretarial administrative support staff within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal	169
6.3.4 Objective 4: To identify the critical barriers preventing the representation of men in secretarial jobs at the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal	171

6.4	6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS	174
6.4.1	To establish a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) to address the gender imbalance 175	
6.4.2	To mitigate the impact of biases and stereotypes	175
6.4.3	To promote gender neutrality of the secretarial role	176
6.5	LIMITATIONS	177
6.6	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	178
6.6.1	Comparative study of other universities	178
6.6.2	Varying impact of salary on different personnel levels	178
6.6.3	Career pathing for secretaries	178
6.7	CONCLUSION.....	178
6.8	SUMMARY OF CHAPTER SIX	180
	Referencing	181
	APPENDIXES.....	198
	APPENDIX A – Letter of Request to Conduct Research at a selected university in KwaZulu- Natal	198
	APPENDIX B – Letter of Approval to Conduct Research.....	199
	APPENDIX C – Ethical Clearance Certificate issued by DUT.....	200
	APPENDIX D – Survey Letter of Information and Consent Form	201
	APPENDIX E – Research Interview Letter of Information.....	204
	APPENDIX F – Interview Letter of Consent.....	208
	APPENDIX G – Survey Questionnaire for Secretarial administrative Staff	210
	APPENDIX H – Interview Schedule for Male Administrative Staff	215

APPENDIX I – Interview Schedule for Managers219

APPENDIX J - Human Resources Document Depicting Support Jobs by Gender223

APPENDIX K – Certificate of Editing227

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1 Masculinity Theory - Hierarchy	16
Figure 2-2 United States Administrative Assistant Male to Female Ratio	27
Figure 2-3 Australian Workforces by Occupation and Gender – May 2022	36
Figure 2-4 Mostly Women Employed in Clerical Positions in South Africa Compared to Men	37
Figure 3-1 Illustration of 4 possible integration pathways across outcome oriented research	51
Figure 3-2 Illustration of 2 Sub-Groups of the Study	54
Figure 3-3 Sampling Process Steps	56
Figure 3-4 Five Strata	58
Figure 3-5 Stratified sampling formula	59
Figure 3-6 Subgroups for Qualitative Procedure.....	62
Figure 3-7 Recommended Sample Size Based on Research Strategy	64
Figure 3-8 Transformative Mixed Method Design	65
Figure 3-9 Cronbach Alpha Formula.....	76
Figure 3-10 Strength of Association Determination	76
Figure 3-11 Ethical issues in research according to the study participants.....	80
Figure 4-1 Distribution by Race	86
Figure 4-2 Personnel Level of Position in the Office	87
Figure 4-3 Work Unit Deployment.....	89
Figure 4-4 Factors Discouraging Men from Wanting to be Secretaries:	105

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1 Cross classification of themes arising from the interviews on the essentialist study	39
Table 3-1 KMO and Bartlett's Test.....	79
Table 4-1 University Secretarial administrative Support Staff Representation.....	83
Table 4-2 Age (years) Gender Cross tabulation	85
Table 4-3 Cross Tabulation of Males vs Female Support Staff Job Permanency	87
Table 4-4 Consensus on the Description of the Role of a 'Secretary': Responses by Male and Female Support Staff	90
Table 4-5 Predominant Gender of Secretaries at the University:.....	91
Table 4-6 Gender Associated with Job Title of 'Secretary':.....	92
Table 4-7 Job Role Similarity of 'Secretary' and 'Administrator':.....	92
Table 4-8 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:.....	94
Table 4-9 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:.....	95
Table 4-10 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:.....	96
Table 4-11 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:.....	97
Table 4-12 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:.....	99
Table 4-13 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:.....	100
Table 4-14 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:.....	101
Table 4-15 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:.....	102
Table 4-16 Men's Avoidance of Secretarial Jobs in Belief they are Better Suited for Women: Responses by Male and Female Support Staff.....	104
Table 4-17 Interview Participants:.....	107
Table 5-1 Critical Barriers Preventing the Representation of Men in Secretarial Jobs:	159

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO)

Administrator (Admin)

Human Resources (HR)

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

Diversity; Equity; and Inclusion (DEI)

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

'Define, Explain, Justify, Apply' (DEJA)

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to provide context in relation to the representation of men in secretarial administrative support jobs, as well as their attitudes and those of selected employees of the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) towards the title of “male secretary”. The identified context in relation to gender is broadly laid out in the background to the study and formally presented in the problem statement. The core intent of the study is made explicit in the aim, and a brief course of action is presented in the form of specific study objectives. The significance of the study is discussed with reference to the axiological issue of gender inequality as well as its expected contribution to the knowledge base whilst noting envisaged output and impact thereof. Lastly, the chapter provides an overview of the chapters in the dissertation as well as the definitions of terms.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

African culture is known to edify the role of a man rather than a woman in societal positioning (Azuike 2019:1). The selected African university under study, physically located amid the Zulu culture in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa thus makes a relevant backdrop to study the subject of patriarchy owing to the physical location and cultural setting.

Patriarchy results in undesired effects in individuals as well as the society. These effects include: dysfunctional social practices resulting in people (male and female) being prevented from evolving, progressing and reaching their full potential (Naples 2020: 69). In the context of secretarial work it has ordinarily operated as a long-standing tradition of dominant male bosses with female secretaries in subordinate positions (Meredith 1955: 299-301; Golding 1986: 94, Hooke 2016: 1-4, Muis and Thenikusuma 2019: 2). Feminism on the other hand was introduced as means of breaking away from this and similar cycles, liberating women to be more than note taking supporting secretaries in an office setting and introducing them to strategic positions once reserved only for males (Turk 2014:1). In the context of

universities, secretaries continue to be majority women who are the unseen employees, less recognised and are at the bottom of the rank and pay scale (Listermann and Salinas 2024:258).

The growth of male dominated sectors is less prominent compared to the female dominated sectors which are currently thriving (Delfino 2021: 1). Despite this, research reveals that only a few men aspire to work in female-dominated jobs (Yavorsky and Dill 2020: 1; Milner et al., 2018: 16; Froehlich et al. 2020 :484). This is in spite of female jobs having the potential to offer some men job stability, job prestige, career development, as well as a wider scope for job searches (Yavorsky and Dill 2020: 12-13). In support, a study by Froehlich et al. (2020: 484-485) indicates that men are perceived to be overrepresented in traditionally male jobs and underrepresented in traditionally female jobs. Puzio and Valshtein (2022: 271) also point out that women outnumber men in jobs that are traditionally associated with femininity. They refer to how this phenomenon is poorly understood and widely understudied by scholars. A study by Mochahary (2023: 5) examined more closely the case of women and showed how they are often targets of societal disorders of unequal treatment. In separate dissertation findings by Petersen (2023: 4), workplace culture is revealed to mirror the values of the society, observed to be edifying men to seniority while tying women to subservient roles, such as that of administrative support roles. Bain & Company, Inc. is a management consulting firm that advises the world's business leaders on strategy, operations and other business matters. Research by Bain & Company, Inc. (2017: 6-12) uncovered that social constructs, and not personal factors, limit the progress of women in their careers. Women, due to internalised or external pressures, find themselves having to be the ones to conform to a caregiver role even in a workplace setting (ILO-UNICEF 2018: 3).

Currently, the progress on achieving gender equality is slowing down globally (UNDP 2019:9-10), even though equal employment opportunity is being promoted worldwide (Leibbrandt and List 2018: 17). Voorspoels (2018: 85) in their study revealed that encouraging discussions on gender inequality at work can act as a strategy to improve gender quotas in a work-place setting. Attitudes about gender roles are instilled in men and women at a young age and remain with them as adults (Pessin and Arpino 2018:15). This study therefore identified an opportunity to advocate for gender equity in view that gender role attitudes can be influenced by certain factors at individual, peer and societal levels to name a few (Patel et al. 2021: 1). The Social Norms Learning Collaborative (2021: 6), a funded learning collaborative that specialises in strengthening the capacity of researchers

in five communities globally, asserts that social norms have a direct impact on human behaviour and change. A study by Neville et al. (2021: 1) highlights social norms and social identities as important factors to consider when effecting change in large numbers. Perry et al. (2021: 5) in their study state that change in behaviour is affected by regulatory responses, nonregulatory responses, education and financial incentives. In order to realise proportionate gender representation in the secretarial administrative field and further achieve parity, the study effected the agenda for social justice by inducing the perception that humans are equal in worth and status. Social constructs such as gender stereotypes can be harmful when they start to limit women's and men's professional careers (United Nations 2022b: 3-4).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In an organisational context, diversity; equity; and inclusion (DEI) are progressive concepts that challenge marginalisation, particularly of minority groups, by embracing diverse identities to foster balanced representation in the workplace. There is often denial regarding how differently men and women experience the workplace in relation to opportunities and treatment (Baczor 2022: 5). Women have made significant progress entering male-dominated jobs, however, men have made far less progress entering female-dominated jobs (Yavorsky and Dill 2020: 1). The question of why men are not entering women dominated spheres was raised by Delfino (2021: 1) with reference to possible barriers to their entry and also by Ferreira and van Antwerpen (2012: 1) with relation to men's negative attitudes towards these roles.

In the context of the selected university as a case study, the research addressed a similar observation that men may not be adequately represented, and women may continue to be overly represented in the secretarial administrative domain, particularly in jobs titled 'secretary'. The study framed this observation within the concepts of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' and pondered them as limiting factors for both men and in progressing and reaching their full potential in the secretarial administrative field.

Statistical evidence reveals that in various countries, women were generally the predominant gender in the feminised secretarial administrative support jobs. This trend was observed in countries such as the United Kingdom, with 24.6% male and 75.94% female secretaries (Careersmart 2020b); Australia, with 73% female and 27% male clerks and administrators (State Government of Victoria, 2022); and the United States of America, with 12.2% male and 83.5% female secretaries (Zippia, 2021b). Moreover, it was noted that in South Africa clerical jobs were where most women were employed with a share of 16.4% compared to men who were notably less represented at a share of 5.4%. (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2024). The study therefore aimed to determine whether similar trends were observable in the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal, as the immediate surroundings, and to determine the drivers behind the observed trends when perceived through the chosen theoretical lenses.

Lastly, this study was deemed vital due to the awareness that organisations that are diversified thrive in various aspects that encourage their success, including pooling of the best talent, productivity, innovation and diversified thinking (Garcia *et al.* 2016: 1).

1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study was to investigate the representation of men in secretarial administrative support jobs and the attitudes of men and selected employees of the selected university in KZN towards the title of “male secretary”.

1.4.1 Research Objectives

The following objectives were established to achieve this aim:

Objective 1: To determine gender representation within the secretarial administrative staff population at the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal in the year 2024.

Objective 2: To identify the attitude of secretaries towards their roles within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal.

Objective 3: To identify the attitude of managers towards the role of secretarial administrative support staff within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal.

Objective 4: To identify the critical barriers preventing the representation of men in secretarial jobs at the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.4.2 Research Questions

This study intended to answer the following research questions:

What is the gender ratio in the secretarial administrative staff population at the selected university in KZN in year 2024?

What are the attitudes of secretaries towards their roles within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal?

What is the attitude of management towards the role of secretarial administrative support staff within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal?

What are the critical barriers preventing the representation of men in secretarial jobs at the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Plenty is written about female secretaries but there is not near enough written about male secretaries. The study therefore endeavoured to contribute new understanding and information on male secretaries and address issues relating to the subjects involved. The study is expected to contribute to the eradication of inequality in the administrative work field. The value and relevance of the study is in the advocacy for a gender diverse and inclusive workplace culture that minimises or eliminates barriers to the entry of men into secretarial administrative support jobs and other feminised occupations. The study demonstrated in context how masculinities and femininity manifest in the corporate space, particularly in the administrative field. Taking into consideration the high rate of unemployment in South Africa currently, and in line with the masculinities theoretical framework adopted, the study findings encourage appropriately skilled men to apply for job

opportunities as secretaries with the purpose of opening up broader opportunities for their employment. The feminist theory adopted has its focus in understanding the processes through which inequality, including gender inequality, are experienced by female secretaries with the aim of eradicating that inequality.

Secretarial administrative staff, institutional management, personnel involved in staff recruitment and selection and policy makers are among the key stakeholders who stand to benefit from this research. The main beneficiaries, the secretarial administrative staff, are empowered by the research findings to advocate for their equitable treatment in practices relating to hiring, promotion, career development, work task allocation, organisational relations and other issues. The findings equip management to strengthen their strategies for measuring gender diversity and monitoring the envisaged organisational transformation. University institutions provincially in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as other organisations, also benefit from the study as it offers a glimpse into the reasons why men continue to be underrepresented in administrative and/or secretarial support positions for the eradication of inequality in the administrative work field. The study further provides a comprehensive reflection on experiences of both applicants of secretarial administrative jobs as well as the personnel involved in hiring to identify any gaps that may translate into barriers to equitable representation of genders in secretarial jobs. Contextually relevant policies can be drafted based on real life experiences and attitudes of secretarial administrators and key personnel in the workspace who have first-hand organisational relations with the secretarial administrative staff to avoid gender oversight of nuanced considerations.

The research provides guidance on ethical conduct that allows for equitable standards in hiring and other work-related practices. It has the potential to inform richly gender equity plans established in organisations in a manner that promotes gender equality within the secretarial administrative field and transform how men are perceived in the context of feminised jobs, irrespective of the profession. Actionable plans and transformation strategies can be drafted based on the study findings.

The study has the potential to be published in a research journal as an article and may also be presented as a paper at a conference.

1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study addressed the issue of gender representation with specific focus on the representation of men in secretarial administrative support jobs. The representation of both men and women in the secretarial administrative field was investigated and contrasted for conclusive findings.

1.7 THEORIES OF FOCUS

There are two main theoretical delimitations of the study bound within the secretarial administrative field, namely: (a) masculinities, and (b) post-structuralism feminism. In the masculinities theoretical lens, focus was not on any specific aspect of masculinities, but rather, the study was based on the masculinities framework in general. In the feminism lens, the focus of the study was particularly on post-structural feminism with the exclusion of the broader spectrum of the feminist theoretical framework.

1.8 POPULATION

The size of the population of the study was limited to 269 university employees under employ in the year 2024 with the exclusion of employees undergoing internship within the institution. The specific population units included in the study sampling frame comprised of the university secretarial administrative staff and management irrespective of gender, age, race, permanency, office unit, or work experience. The study identified the following five categories which make up the university secretarial administrative staff subgroup according to job positions: (1) secretaries/assistants, (2) administrators, (3) officers, (4) coordinators and (5) clerks/data capturers/switchboard operators. University employees with job positions as listed (**see Appendix J for the table of participants as sourced from the HR database**) were included in the 'secretarial administrative staff' population subgroup. In the 'secretarial administrative' category of 'officers', the following job positions were excluded from the subgroup due to the specialised nature of the work in safety and security, rather than administration, namely: safety officer, investigation officer, protection officer, VIP security officer and security officer. 'Management' as a subgroup included all upper, middle and lower management university employees with 'secretarial administrative' staff under their deployment.

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design serves as a guide to demonstrate how answers to the research questions and ultimately the findings of the research can be deemed credible to be consumed by knowledge users (Asenahabi 2019: 87). The study adopted a transformative mixed method design following the trajectory of advancing social justice by identifying gender imbalances in the secretarial administrative field and acknowledging the vulnerabilities of the gender groups in relation to their work.

1.9.1 Research Philosophy

This study was philosophically founded on pragmatism as an approach that embraces the integration of positivist and interpretivist means of investigating the truth. Pragmatism is aligned with the mixed methods approach and is underpinned by the belief that the most suitable methodology to adopt is one that is most instrumental in resolving the practical research problem at hand, irrespective of its positivist or interpretivist nature (Shan 2022: 1).

1.9.2 Research Approach

The study adopted the mixed methods approach, a flexible approach that permits the possibility of combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, data and designs in conducting scientific research (Shan 2022:1).

1.9.3 Population

The size of the target population of the study was limited to 269 employees of a selected university in KZN in the year 2024 and did not include employees employed under internship. The study sampling frame comprised of two main subgroups, namely: a) secretarial administrative staff and b) management disregarding gender, age, race, permanency, office unit or work experience. The 10 identified categories of the secretarial administrative staff subgroup included: (a) secretaries/personal assistants, (b) administrators, (c) administrative secretaries, (d) administrative assistants, administrative officers, (f) officers, (g) co-ordinators, (h) clerks, (i) data capturers and (j) switchboard operators.

1.9.4 Research Methodology

1.9.4.1 Sampling Techniques

Consistent with the mixed methods approach adopted, sampling techniques employed were a combination of probability and non-probability sampling methods for both population sub-group 1 (secretarial administrative staff) and sub-group 2 (management). The adoption of probability random sampling, which ensured population representation, did not afford control over the sampling process while the non-probability random sampling permitted control in the selection of relevant population elements during the sampling process. The adoption of both methods therefore benefited the study with both representation and suitability of participant (Etikan and Bala 2017: 215).

A probability method of simple random sampling and stratified sampling strategies were utilised to obtain a sample to conduct a survey on sub-group 1 (administrative support staff) alone. The stratified purposive sampling strategy was utilised on both sub-group 1, to sample specifically male administrative secretaries, and sub-group 2, to sample management staff members identified as units in the position to answer the pertinent research questions.

1.9.4.2 Sample Size

A sample size of 108 respondents to a mixed methods survey questionnaire were obtained from sub-population 1 (administrative secretaries) who were drawn from a sampling frame of 155 units as advised by the 'Sample Size for a given Population Size' determined by Krejcie and Morgan (1970 :608) and implemented in various recent studies (Rostini, Souisa, Masmarulan and Yasin 2021: 903).

The study adopted the 'Define, Explain, Justify, Apply' (DEJA) method which considered the mental reasoning for the sample sizes whereby reaching satisfactory data collection was the primary indicator of sample size (Mthuli, Ruffin and Singh 2022: 810). A total of 10 purposively selected participants were sampled for interviews. A total of nine interviews were targeted as recommended in the study by Hennink and Kaiser (2022: 1) on sample sizes in qualitative research, however, saturation was reached earlier. Male administrators reached saturation at five interviews, thus the sample size was five, and managers' responses also reached saturation at five interviews resulting in the same sample size.

1.9.4.3 Instruments

The triangulation of various data collection methods promotes rigour (Cardno 2019:626). The study therefore adopted a combination of documentary evidence, surveys and interviews as methods of enquiry. The instruments utilised included qualitative organisational HR documentary sources, mixed methods survey questionnaires and qualitative interview schedules.

1.9.4.4 Data Analysis Tool

The quantitative responses were analysed using the SPSS version 29.0 software and descriptive statistics were presented in the form of graphs, cross tabulations and other figures. Inferential techniques were adopted and incorporated the use of correlations and chi square tests to interpret p- values. Correlations analysis was conducted to show the link between the variables in the quantitative data and a correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength of relations between the variables (Temizhan, Mirtagioglu and Mendes 2022: 272).

Content and narrative thematic analysis were adopted to analyse qualitative data. This involved the researcher closely inspecting the validity of the content or narratives to ascertain salient themes and how they aligned with the meaning present in the data set.

1.9.4.5 Ethical Considerations

Scientific discretion was upheld by ensuring that the research conducted adhered to the ethical protocols and procedures and, through reflexivity, trustworthiness, honesty, reliability and impartial conduct during investigation were ensured (Bos 2020: 1, 2,18).

An ethical clearance certificate was obtained through the DUT Institutional Research and Ethics Committee, and a gatekeeper's letter was also obtained from the university under study stating all relevant terms and conditions of the university and that of the POPIA (**see Appendix B for the letter of approval to conduct research**).

1.10 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In order to achieve a better contextualisation of the study, the following terms are defined conceptually as well as operationally in relation of this research:

1.10.1 “Secretary”

The term “secretary” comes from the Latin word “secretarius” which refers to someone who maintains confidentiality of a secret (Muis and Thenikusuma, 2019:2). In the context of this study, the term refers to a man or woman employed in an office to assist with day to day business tasks while without autonomy in judgement and decision-making in the execution of tasks. Tasks of a secretary include: welcoming visitors, managing calls, managing the diary or schedule of a business or business unit, records management, minute taking, managing correspondence as well as other administrative duties.

1.10.2 “Administrator”

The term refers to a man or woman who manages or organises the public or company business matters or that of an institution. It also refers to an employee in an office who handles records, accounts and other activities in the office (Oxford University Press, 2023). In the context of this study, the term refers to a man or woman employed in an office to carry out company or institutional business relating to the planning, organising and running of a business or institution while exercising autonomy in judgement and decision-making. This includes activities such as compiling reports, submissions, or memorandums; organising conferences; research; creating agendas; project management; but does not include diary management or providing receptionist services as key performance areas.

1.10.3 “Secretarial administrative”

International company ‘SmartPA’, experts in administrative and telephonic services with a specialist training programme accredited by the global standard Continuing Professional Development Standards Office (SmartPA 2023a), differentiates between an ‘administrative assistant’ and a ‘secretary’. They primarily point out that the roles are similar with the main difference being that the role of an administrative assistant offers more autonomy in judgement and decision-making than that of a secretary. They explain that the role of the secretary is more clerical and does not allow this type of independence (SmartPA 2023b). In the context of this study, the term ‘secretarial administrative’ is a term encompassing a job of a clerical nature, irrespective of whether or not there is autonomy in judgement or decision-making in the relative duties.

1.11 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

There are six chapters in this research study:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

The first chapter provided an outline of the study's introduction, background, problem statement, research aim and objectives, the significance of the study, the purpose of the study, theories of focus, the population, research design and the definitions of terms.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter two initially provides an introductory outline of the chapter and presents 'masculinities' and 'post-structuralism feminism' as the theories of focus. It proceeds to overview recent studies on gender and occupations, inspecting closely patterns on occupational gender segregation and the role of a secretary. The chapter further provides a reflection on the historic account of secretaries and the development of the profession over the years. It provides the scope of the literature, alluding to the gap in literature, and discusses power relations and culture. In conclusion, the chapter addresses the prominent issue of the representation of males in feminised occupations and their entry into these occupations.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter presents and analyses the research design and methodology employed in the study. In line with the study's aims and objectives, it explores and justifies the approaches adopted in the research investigation, with reference to the study setting, population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, piloting of the study, study validity and reliability, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Interpretation of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Chapter four provides a comprehensive interpretation of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the results. The results are interpreted in line with the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussions

Chapter five provides a detailed overview of the findings. It analyses and discusses these findings with reference to the study aims and objectives.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides a detailed summary of the study's conclusions and offers practical recommendations to foster a more gender inclusive work environment in the secretarial administrative field.

These recommendations are intended to benefit the various stakeholders in gendered matters, including policymakers, implementers and promoters.

1.12 SUMMARY

Chapter One introduced the study, provided its background and context, and stated the research problem, objectives and significance. Moreover, it outlined the study's purpose, theories of focus, and the research design and methodology. Lastly, it defined key terms relevant to the study's discussions to guide interpretation. The next chapter will examine existing literature on the study's critical areas of discussion to gather information to help achieve the research objectives.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background of men's representation in feminised jobs and provides a general glimpse of the worldwide progress on occupational gender equity. Two theoretical frameworks, the "Masculinities" and "Post-structural feminism" lenses, are presented as underpinning the study along with relevant arguments and previous research conducted on the topic. Using a historic approach, the chapter gives an elaborate historic account of secretaries with specific focus on literature on secretaries as well as the development of the secretarial profession. The review transitions from the historical overview to a contemporary analysis of the literature on secretaries, acknowledging first the gap in literature as well as other relevant issues relating to power, social stratification and culture. Amid the literature, the main research issue, which is the representation of males, is explored with reference to male entrance into feminised professions, the barriers involved, discrimination against men and gender role congruity.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Empirical evidence from a study by Bareket and Fiske (2023: 637) across domains depicts ambivalent sexism as a well-coordinated system designed to maintain control over women and sometimes men. The current study was therefore framed from a masculinities as well as post structural feminist perspective to argue the case for both men and women in the workplace. Bareket and Fiske (2023: 637) emphasise the roles sexist attitudes play in aggravating gender inequality. They explain this in terms of ambivalent sexism described as two opposing but complementary sexist ideologies, namely 'hostile sexism' and 'benevolent sexism'. They further differentiate the two describing 'hostile sexism' as women seeking to gain power over men and 'benevolent sexism' as viewing women as pure and moral yet weak, passive and in need of protection by their male counterparts. In the current study, this may be perceived to be true in the sense that hostile sexism may be in effect if women are the predominant gender in the secretarial administrative domain and have marked it as their territory, perceiving themselves as better performers in support roles. On the other side of

the coin, with benevolence sexism, it may be a case of benevolence with implicit malevolent intent of purposely positioning women in stagnant jobs in the field, such as that of 'receptionist' or 'secretary', in the name of offering women employment opportunities while men are not employed in these particular roles. It is therefore important to consider exactly in which job titles women are inclined to be employed in secretarial administrative support and compare that to their male counterparts in the field. The importance of this is articulated well in the results of a study by Morando (2023: 1) with reference to reports that benevolent sexism is detrimental to women's personal and professional well-being and implies lower levels of career aspiration and impacts task performance. Results from the study revealed that benevolent sexism notably reduced a positive relationship between work engagement, psychological capital and organisational support and outcomes.

2.2.1 Masculinities

According to Gottzén, Mellstrom and Shefer (2019: 2000), 'men' and 'masculinities' have become the benchmark against which everything else about human nature is explained, so much so that they have been overlooked as problem areas. The study by Heckler (2022: 85) argued that the study of masculinity with intent could potentially empower scholars and practitioners in the administrative field. Heckler perceived that this could assist them to comprehend within greater context how masculinity is at play. It can also highlight how it has significant impact in public organisations so that they can firmly work towards mitigating it.

Anderson and Magrath (2019: 14), in their undertaking to define masculinity as a concept, find that certain principles are salient as common beliefs among scholars. Scholars are in agreement that: there is no one unified masculinity, but rather multiple types of masculinities. These masculinities evolve over time and include that of the body which are also located in the social context. Masculinity refers to social codes perceived as indicators of certain emotions and behaviours by males, and, arguably, in the case of feminine masculinities, indicating some female emotions and behaviours as well.

Literature points at various types of masculinities constructs, namely: **a) hegemonic masculinity, b) complicit masculinity, c) marginalised masculinity and d) subordinated masculinity**. At the top of the gender hierarchy is the hegemonic or apex type masculinity. This type suggests that a 'real man' must be dominant (Bishop 2018; Wojnicka, 2021: 200; Messerschmidt, 2019: 85).

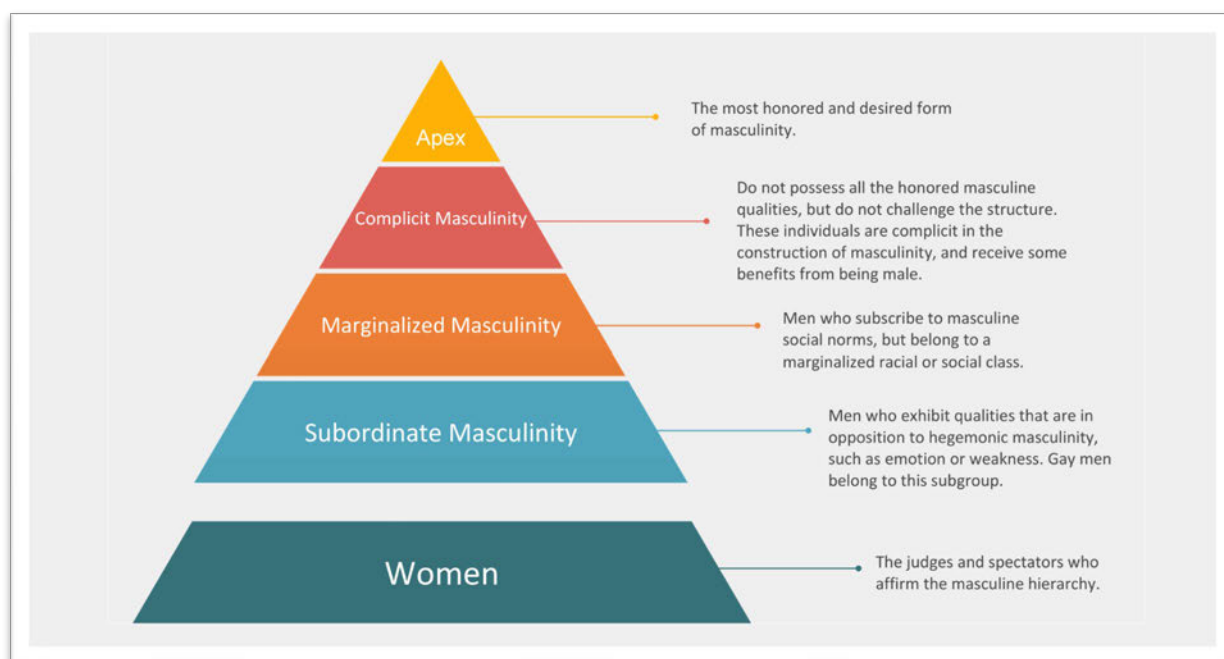


Figure 2-1 Masculinity Theory - Hierarchy

(Anon 2025)

a) Hegemonic Masculinity

Numerous discussions in literature evidence how ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is sustained through privilege. It is also said to be maintained through the subordination of other masculine and feminine identities (Wojnicka 2021: 200; Bishop 2018; Salazar *et al.*, 2020: 2; Messerschmidt, 2019: 85). Those who engage in hegemonic masculinity therefore have more access to power and privilege than those who do not (Mayeza and Bhana 2021: 47). Cislaghi and Heise (2020: 408) expand on this concept by explaining the impact of power relations between men and women in that they determine whether new norms in a society are accepted or not. The norms whereby the interests of certain members of society determine what is acceptable or not raises questions of dominant and subordinate power relations.

Influential Sociology theorists such as Gramsci, Connell and Messerschmidt perceive that hegemonic masculinity dominates certain groups of men. This is said to be done through cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization and the marginalisation and delegitimizing of alternatives (Yang 2020: 320). The concept of ‘masculinities’ incorporates certain languages, behaviours and practices existing in specific cultural and organisational locations which culturally define a man as not feminine (Council of Europe 2022: para. 3 line

1). The Council of Europe, political authoritarians who uphold human rights in Europe (Kleinsorge, 2019), point at the existence of dominant codes within masculinities. They highlight that these codes put pressure on men to abide by them and create an expectation around them resulting in undesired outcomes for the society as a whole, including women.

I argue that this type of pressure emanating from a masculinities outlook negatively impacts both men and women as it compromises inclusivity in the workplace whereby one gender is favoured over another in a job role. Results of a study by Mousa (2021: 119) show that diversity management and organisational inclusion are vital for ensuring contentment and a state of well-being of all in the work place. Excluding an employee in certain aspects of a job and in favour of another in some because of their gender may therefore lead to discontentment of the employee who is in a disadvantaged position.

b) Complicit Masculinity

With regards to the negative impact on women, I observe that this may contribute to men being afforded undue benefits in the workplace as a means of overcompensating for their minority status in female dominated jobs. Courtesy may also be afforded to men to protect their masculinity in ways that exclude and therefore disadvantage women. This is attested to by results of a study by Moskos (2020: 537) that report a number of benefits enjoyed by males in female dominated domains. These included males being favoured as job applicants, receiving extra support at work, being subject to less stringent rules and regulations and generally being favoured by bosses and clients.

Particularly in the administrative field, the subordination of women may manifest itself in the selective placement of women only in 'secretary' or feminised job roles to affirm men's masculinity in the workplace thus mirroring the dominant position of a man in society. This view is supported by Rai (2021: 59) who argues that dominant classes preserve their supremacy over subordinate groups to further their interests. Another theoretical perspective that attests to this is that of influential sociologist scholar Pierre Bourdieu. They point out the existence of class systems of domination and the integration of status subordination based on certain group demographics, including gender (Blunden 2021: 387).

c) Subordinate and Marginalised Masculinity

Many studies involving men's experiences point to the existence of power and systems of gender inequality which they experience as not all men are in favour of dominant masculinity

norms (Christofidou 2020: 81; Waling 2019: 363-364). To argue the case of men, one may state that men are also disadvantaged by masculinities and do not always benefit from them. It may be argued that through masculine social codes, undue pressure is put on men to exclude themselves from all forms of perceived femininity (Council of Europe 2022: para. 3 line 4), including pursuit of feminised jobs which in the end limits their scope of job search. This observation is further affirmed by the study by Moskos (2020: 536) that revealed that men use various strategies as coping mechanisms against the negative reactions from others such as friends and family when employed in feminised occupations. These include: (a) 'bragging' about opportunities afforded to them by working with predominantly women as a heterosexual man, (b) needing to negotiate their identity so it is not compromised by the feminised nature of the work and (c) disassociating themselves from the work by not disclosing their occupation. Contrary to the findings in a gender essentialist study by Moskos (2020: 537) that posits that men benefit by being favoured for employment in female dominated jobs, in the current study, it is also considered that men may be disadvantaged. It is viewed that they may not be considered for these same feminised jobs where women are predominant. This observation is with reference to the main findings of a study by Schaerer *et al.* (2023: 1) that revealed that across decades there has been a persistent pattern of discrimination against male candidates for stereotypically female jobs. In support, statistics show that in various countries, women are the predominant gender in clerical occupations. They include countries like the United Kingdom (Careersmart 2020b), Australia (State Government of Victoria, 2022) and the United States of America (Zippia, 2021b), and South Africa (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2024).

Connor *et al.* (2022: 1) explain the evolvement of masculinities over time as resulting from the changes in society and culture. Their experiment is evidence of the ongoing reconceptualisation of masculinities and acknowledges the emergence of new masculinities which challenge the traditional masculinities initially conceptualised. Results of their study identify four elements as principle to the new emerging masculinities, namely: (a) inclusivity, (b) being in touch with one's emotions, (c) physicality and (d) resistance to traditional interpretations of masculinities. Their findings reveal that contemporary masculinities are well received by heterosexual men in general and are advantageous to the men themselves as well as the society. The results of the study are deemed credible as a systematic review and synthesisation of research was carried out on contemporary masculinities. Moreover, a literature search was undertaken on 10 databases. Reeser (2020: 11) attributes the reconceptualising of masculinities as a multiple rather than a singular concept to the earlier

work of influential sociologist scholar R. W. Connell. Messerschmidt (2019: 85) argues that Connell's reformulation of hegemonic masculinity stemmed from misconceptions of the original concept, which previously focused on the dominance of certain masculinities over femininity and other men. Critics misunderstood the initial concept by treating it as a specific "type" of man, applying it inconsistently, and ignoring its focus on gender inequality. Despite these criticisms, the reformulated concept maintained its focus on the relational nature of gender and the patterns of hegemonic masculinity. In addition to the initial conceptualisation, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) incorporated the role played by the subordinated groups in perpetuating the hegemonic dominance. This was with acknowledgement of the intersectional nature of gender with race, class and other factors. Furthermore, strategies for challenging the dominating hegemonic masculinities and finally the acknowledgement of the existence of hegemony at local, regional and global levels were identified (Messerschmidt, 2019: 85). Researchers continue to review the concept of masculinity today and generally hold the view that: men are subjected to the pressures of conforming to the dominant ideas of being a man. If they do not, are typically subordinated and socially marginalised (2021: 7; King *et al.* 2021: 1; Roper and Tosh 2021: 1-3). According to Reeser (2020: 11), Connell further contributed to the body of knowledge by acknowledging early a relationship between power and masculinities in their critique of the concept.

2.2.2 Post-Structuralism Feminism

The results of a study by Schaerer *et al.* (2023: 1) reflect that, over the years, there has been a reduction of discrimination against female candidates when contending for jobs with their male counterparts. Contrary to these results, however, a study by Campero and Fernandez (2019: 1487) explored theories of gendered organisations that maintained that organisations generally tend to disadvantage women for jobs, including jobs where women were the predominant gender. In this study, the world was also viewed through the feminist post-structuralism lens. The post-structuralism feminism lens was chosen to unveil some of the ways the women are disadvantaged in domains where they are said to be the predominant gender, such as the secretarial administrative support domain.

In support, a study by Moskos (2020: 536) revealed that men used a variety of strategies to negotiate their acceptance in the female work domains, and that one of the strategies was retitling the job to avoid or minimise association with femininity. The need for men to disassociate themselves with femininity using linguistic means through job titles raised

questions about women's position in society's hierarchy, more especially if men reserve job titles of 'secretary' only for women. Post-structuralism feminism as an ontological approach is therefore a justified one for this study as it interrogates particular forms of exclusionary and privileged subject positions. It achieves this with a focus on how language and patriarchal concepts construct and perpetuate discrimination. It also offers a means of conceptualising ways of resisting and raising consciousness of these exclusionary and privileged subject positions (Agarwal 2018: 424).

Lawson (2020: 2) refers to how language is used by men to maintain their privileged position in general society. A linguistics study conducted by Reem and Haifa (2020: 11) in the field of academia demonstrated how grammar can be evidential of practices that go against the progress of women in gender specific languages. The study interrogated the meaning in the use of gendered occupational titles in higher education settings. Specifically it looked into whether Saudi women academics prefer to represent themselves using Arabic feminine or masculine markers. The frequency of gender markers relative to positions' titles were analysed quantitatively. The findings revealed that a majority of Saudi women academics opt to use more masculine markers in their academic titles than female gender markers (Reem and Haifa, 2020: 9). This raises a question for the researcher as to why women academics find a masculine marker preferable to a female one. It further raises the question of whether association with femininity in a professional world carries with it some undesired disadvantage whilst masculinity, on the contrary, provides some professional benefit to one associated with it.

On the bases of post-structuralism feminism as a theoretical lens, I argue that linguistic means is one of the ways used to maintain the privileged and hegemonic position of men in corporate society, particularly in the administrative field. I perceive that exposing the use of language as a sexist strategy through which the power of men is maintained in the administrative field is key to ensuring proportional gender representation of secretaries. In the results of a study conducted by Galizzi, McBride and Siboni (2023: 14) on male and female roles in the work environment, one respondent indicated that "the boss is a man and the secretary is a woman". This statement by the respondent during the interview demonstrated how a word like "secretary" can be understood in a stereotypical way and how this is casually seen in the society. Perception is a potential gender barrier as it poses career limits to both genders.

Monster, a 25 year old global leading company in connecting people and jobs (MONSTER 2022), states in their article how most people generally think of secretaries as women (Martin 2022). Hartford Courant, one of the oldest and continuously published large newspapers in the United States (Hartford Courant 2022) in one of its publications revealed that certain titles such as 'administrative assistant', 'administrative professional' or 'research assistant' are sometimes permitted as alternatives for men to use instead of the term 'secretary'. This is done because the term 'secretary' is associated with a woman and society still perceives men as not being 'secretaries' and thus it makes people in general uncomfortable to comprehend the concept of a male secretary (Seguro 2017).

Post-structuralist and feminist movements share a self-conscious critical relationship to established philosophical traditions. Shared concepts between the two movements relate to language, discourse, difference and deconstruction (Scott 1988: 34) which are aspects the study sought to interrogate. Agarwal (2018: 424) elaborates by explaining that language is a means of giving meaning to experiences and that communities define themselves via shared language and shared assumptions which in turn give meaning to language. Subjectivities are therefore in relation to discourses of institutions or communities which sustain specific values and forms of social power.

An experiment conducted by Sullivan (2015: 23-24) investigated how the general public assesses job applications. The results of the study revealed that manipulation of job title was successful in creating gendered positions that were considered unequal in terms of both gender distribution and salary. In the discussion of the results, they state that using the title "Executive Secretary" resulted in judgments associated with feminine positions. In contrast, using the title "Executive Chief of Staff" resulted in judgements associated with masculine positions. Participants who were given a job description with the feminine title considered that position to be occupied by a higher percentage of women than those who were exposed to the masculine title. Likewise, the participants who were given a job description with the masculine title considered that position to be occupied by a higher percentage of men than those exposed to the feminine title. Fric and Galli da Bino (2018: 7) refer to a study to test for gender discrimination in recruitment. In the experiment, the researchers sent out pairs of carefully matched applications describing identical qualifications and experience to advertise job vacancies in the UK. Statistically significant discrimination against men was found in the 'female occupation' 'secretary' and against women in the 'male occupation' 'engineer'. The study by Kim *et al.* (2020: 1) shows that it is not ideal that women be

discriminated upon at a workplace, whether in hiring, promotion, work assignment or other means as this results in depressive health symptoms in the long run.

A research study by Arceo-Gomez et al. (2022: 99) which relates stereotyped language in job advertisements to the gender gap in posted salaries reveals that stereotyped language leads to gender segregation in the labour market. This is in view that women and men tend to apply to jobs stereotypically associated with their gender. Occupational segregation is evident even though it is not desirable (Breda *et al.* 2020: 31063; Froehlich et al. 2020: 484). Some occupational titles are even marked for the predominant gender in the occupation (Bovin 2016: 1). One of the reasons why occupations end up segregated is because of job advertisements which act to filter by gender. Cultural conditioning also has an impact in that it imposes on men (and women) not to act on job advertisements that contain phrasing biased against their gender (Carey 2017).

Maclaran and Stevens (2019: 7) refer to the main scholars Derrida and Foucault who impressed that language reflects the interests and biases of the dominant group in a society. They explained that post-structuralism thought seeks to expose how concepts are constructed through discourse such as systems of expression that have ideological connotations as a result of implicit power relations. Prowell (2019) explains the post-structuralist ontology which renders the nature of one's reality and everything one understands about herself or himself and the world as subjective. It was perceived that this subjective reality is shaped by the intricacies of language and political discourse. Leotti, Sugrue and Winglez-Yanez (2021: 3) further explain that people create reality in their social interaction and therefore truth does not exist. We thus ought to look for meaning, understanding and power to change. According to Cislighi and Heise (2020: 408), questioning the truth is vital as some norms and practices can, in fact, be harmful. Totaljobs Group is a leading United Kingdom online solutions recruitment partner comprising of a network of brands which provide access to over 21 million searchable candidate profiles (Totaljobs Group 2020). This specialist organisation explains that language is not neutral, but incorporates personal assumptions, social norms and cultural ideologies. Languages also help us order and categorise the world. Stereotypes of what men and women can or should do is rooted in language and culture and linguistic gender bias has been identified as a flaw (Carey, 2017).

Post-structuralism deconstructs conceptual opposites which depend on each other for meaning. This includes binary oppositions such as masculinity versus femininity. This meaning is hierarchical whereby one term is usually privileged over the other (Maclaran and Stevens 2019: 5). Hegemonic masculinity represents the power of the privileged over the other, that is, men's power at the expense of women, and elite men's power at the expense of other men. In Connell's theory, even men who do not live up to the ideals that supposedly justify the subordination of women may support such gender ideals. This is because in the end "most men benefit from the subordination of women, and hegemonic masculinity is the cultural expression of this ascendancy" (King, Calasanti and Pietila 2021: 1).

2.3 GENDER AND OCCUPATIONS

This section closely inspects gender and occupations by interrogating occupational gender segregation alongside male unemployment and how this translates within secretarial jobs. The literature explores the observed undue benefits afforded to men in their minority status in the female domain. It looks into how their masculinity is shielded at the disadvantage of women when only certain job roles, mostly with less power and prestige such as 'secretary' or 'receptionist', are reserved only for women. The disadvantaged position of men emanating from the masculine social codes that pressure men to exclude themselves from all forms of femininity is condemned. This is done with reference to the negative impact that it has on their career aspirations and livelihood, especially in the unemployment context of today.

2.3.1 Occupational Gender Segregation

Ferrary and Déo (2023: 2797) in their study point out a concern that social construction of gender has contributed to differentiating genders based on the ways that they experience the world or their internalised beliefs. The results of the study point at balanced-gender diversity at work, particularly at staff level, as ideal and deem it a significant factor in the successful performance of an organisation. The study showed how it positively impacted the organisation's performance and sustainable competitive edge by creating value. In support, Kiradoo (2022: 139) advises based on the findings of their study that prioritising diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) can reap organisational benefits. These include: improved organisation performance, increased employee engagement and enhanced innovation. Results of another study by Zhang (2020: 1) present a further perspective that the relationship between gender diversity and performance depends on how well that diversity

has been accepted as an organisation's norm and regulatory factor. Managing diversity at work is therefore perceived as vital for successful business operations. Despite this, various studies have reported that gender segregation across occupations is still a challenge (Breda *et al.* 2020: 31063; Froehlich *et al.* 2020: 484).

There are some identified ways in which gender segregation is evident in literature. This includes: social ordering (Horowitz, Stodolski and Peters 2019: 316), gender stereotypes (Puzio and Valshtein 2022: 271), gender roles (Verniers and Vala 2018: 1), schooling systems (Kriesi and Imdorf 2019: 18) and biases in occupational hiring (Hays-Thomas 2016: 9-10). In childhood, gender segregation involves schools assigning masculine roles to boys and feminine roles to girls (Yang 2020: 319). Segregation by gender in adolescents involves the fostering of traditional gender role beliefs by socialisation agents such as the parents and teachers (Han 2021: 27). Linguistic forms shape how children and adolescents perceive professions causing them to view some jobs as masculine and better suited for males and other as female typed (Reem and Haifa 2020: 7).

In adults, job segregation gets even more complex as it is evident where there are persistent distinctions between male and female jobs (Bishu and Headley 2020: 1063) which may raise questions about hierarchisation of jobs for men versus women. Rustamov (2022 :29) described this in their conference proceedings publication using the metaphoric concept of "Man is up, Woman is Down". They explained in the context of middle management the phenomenon of a 'frozen middle' whereby a women's progress up the corporate ladder slows down or halts at the middle management level. This is while men ride past women to the top to more senior roles perceived more fitting for a man. Further, with adults, gender segregation manifests itself in gender biases in organisations. This is well articulated by the study by Sultana, Cavaletto and Bosu (2021: 1) conducted to understand the status quo of four dimensions of gender biases among computing organisations. The four dimensions of gender biases were: a) lack of career development opportunities, b) task selection, c) unwanted sexual attention and d) harassment using humour or gestures. The dimensions showed how, based on gender, the following ensued: career progression was halted, mundane or simpler tasks were assigned to women and sexist behaviour, being a target of exclusive attitudes or humour took away from women's identities. What was noted with concern in the results was how such gendered attitudes and biases were not realised as being in play and having an effect. These lead one to think it is their own inadequacy that is

placing them at a particular position at work. Segregation by gender is therefore a practice traceable from childhood until adulthood (Mehta and Smith 2019: 2).

2.3.2 Male Unemployment

In some parts of the world today where the quality of jobs is generally poor, men are observed to be becoming more unemployed while women mostly assume the available low status jobs not pursued by men (International Labour Organisation 2021). A study by Yavorsky and Dill (2020: 5) revealed that a majority of men would not consider assuming female dominated jobs unless they were compelled by factors such as pay or prestige.

Men and women are experiencing a challenge of unemployment globally (O'Neill 2021; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2021; International Labour Organization 2021). Estimations are provided by Statista (2021), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021) and International Labour Organization (2021). These are based on statistics from the organisations as they are established international standard setting organisations in their respective focal areas on labour issues. Globally, countries leading in the highest unemployment rates are: South Africa (29.2%), Djibouti (26.1%), Equatorial Guinea (25%), Botswana (24.9%), Grenada (22.9%), Eswatini (22.7%), Lesotho (22.4%), Gabon (20.4%), Namibia (19.9%) and Curacao (19.1%). The trend reveals the top ten countries with the highest unemployment rate are mostly based on the African continent. This was reported by the World Bank 2020 data, which is the most recent available data on global unemployment comparisons (World Population Review 2023). The statistics are according to the World Population Review and are credible as they are obtained from sources supported by governments internationally such as the CIA World Factbook 2021, the World Bank 2021 and the International Labour Organisation (2021). Since the first quarter of the year 2019 until the third quarter of the year 2022, the rate of unemployment in South Africa has been mostly gradually on the rise with very little notable improvement (Statistica 2022). South Africa, in the second quarter of the year 2022, had an increase of 132 000 in the number of unemployed people which landed it at approximately eight million people who were not employed. In the third quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate rose to 59.6% among young South Africans aged between 15 to 24 years. Among workers aged 35 to 44 years, the unemployment rate was at 27.9% in the same period. The unemployment impacted the youth the most in the labour market. In the period, there was a 2,0% increase in unemployment among the youth aged 15-34 as 92 000 more youth were unemployed landing them at a total of 4,8 million unemployed youth (Statistica 2022). Economic

development data from the UNCTAD Prosperidad para todos (2021), an organisation collaborating with governments in 195 countries, reflects men's heightened global unemployment rate in year 2020, partly due to the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. In the second quarter of year 2021, 34.9% of men in South Africa were unemployed, however, according to the expanded definition of 'unemployment', 46.6% were categorised as unemployed in the third quarter of the year (Statistics South Africa 2021). The unemployment of young men in Africa shows a decline since year 2012, however, this is in fact an indication of a graver problem of the poor state of the labour market where people survive by doing informal menial jobs (International Labour Organization 2021b). Omarjee (2021) sources evidence from Statistics South Africa that the youth in South Africa in particular categorises 63.2% of age group 15 to 24 and 41.2% of age group 25-34 as unemployed and that there is generally a shift towards unemployment.

Men, are willing to negotiate their traditional masculine role when faced with compelling life situations such as unemployment (Reichelt, Makovi and Sargsyan 2021: S241). The negotiation of gender roles includes transitioning into feminised jobs which are female-dominated.

2.3.3 The Role of a Secretary

Steegh *et al.* (2021: 41) reflect on a statement by lawyer and activist Florynce Kennedy (1916-2000) that a very few jobs require one to be male or female in order to execute and therefore all other jobs should be open to all genders to self-regulate their careers. One ought to focus on self-regulating their career with goal setting and development, information seeking, planning and execution of their behaviour and feedback monitoring (Hirschi and Koen 2021: 1) rather than being concerned with suitability for a job role based on gender. According to Oladeji and Afolabi (2021: 137), a secretary "has mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, exercises initiative and judgement, and makes decisions within the scope of assigned authority...is in charge of records, correspondence, minutes of meetings, and related affairs of an organisation...". This is affirmed by Ozoemenam and Asogwa (2023: 88-89) who point out that a secretary should ideally possess the following skills: records management, administering correspondence, interpersonal communication and be versatile with technology. Dosunmu, Bukki and Akintola (2018: 59) in agreement explain how the effectiveness of a secretary is depended on skills training in new emerging office technologies. They further reiterate the statement by researcher Bolade (2002) that personal

characteristics of a good secretary are helpfulness, professional conduct, problem solving and prevention and a welcoming personality. Data USA is a single data portal which obtains its data from the O*Net dataset sponsored by the United States Department of Labour (Data USA 2021). Research by Data USA (2021) in support depicts that administrative secretaries need (amongst other skills) more than the above average amount of service orientation, time management and active listening skills.

Oppong (2023: 1) advises, with reference to Fortes (1980), that the status of gender cannot be accurately captured without making comparisons between the genders as that would distort the reality. Research was conducted by the Zippia scientific team (2021a) whose information is credible as it consults 30 million profiles, verified against the United States of America census. The study reveals that the United States of America employs approximately 2,285,166 administrative assistants with a ratio of women administrative assistants dominating at 87.3% compared to that of men at 12.7% (Zippia 2021a). The male representation in this number is mostly employed in the job title of ‘administrator’ rather than ‘secretary’. Reem and Haifa (2020: 11) state that “Feminisation of occupation has been correlated with occupation devaluation, and the use of masculine titles is correlated with prestige”.

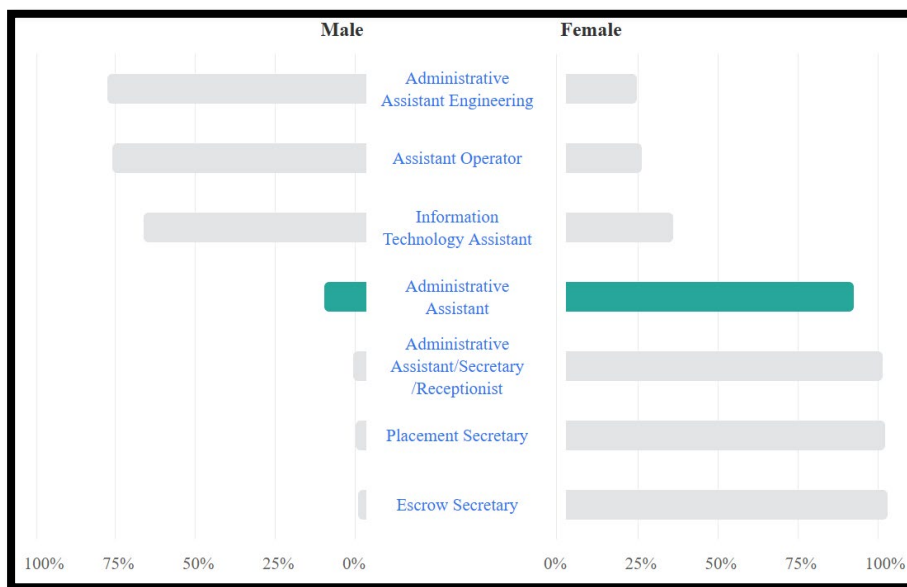


Figure 2-2 United States Administrative Assistant Male to Female Ratio

(Zippia 2021a)

It was of interest to the researcher that the percentage of males was higher in job titles that accommodated the title of 'administrator' and much lower in titles that accommodated the title of 'secretary'.

Yadav (2021) highlights how an administrator's job, unlike that of a secretary, is more than just an office desk responsibility. They point out how this is evident in their higher pay scale, the manner in which they engage stakeholders and their independence in the overall execution of duties. A differing perspective is that of Mesquita, Oliveira and Sequeira (2019: 5) who distinguish between two main levels in the administrative professional field, namely: (a) the basic level administrative assistants and (b) the top level administrative assistants. At the basic level are the administrative assistants whose role includes day to day operational duties which are clerical and may require proficiency as a user of computers and electronics. At the top level are executive assistants or executive secretaries whose tasks demonstrate autonomy in decision-making through problem solving and negotiation in the execution of their tasks. This they carry out over and above the duties also executed by administrative assistants.

A study conducted by Cortina, Rodriguez and Gonzalez (2021: 91) revealed that women are often excluded from jobs that require decision-making and supervisory tasks. Representation of men in administrative job titles which are linked with autonomy in decision-making and leadership in some tasks, and lesser representation in secretarial job titles, raises a question. It considers whether men subtly pursue a dominant position even in the feminised secretarial occupation in order to preserve their masculinity.

2.4 HISTORIC ACCOUNT OF SECRETARIES

Literature reveals that until World War I, only males were secretaries (Golding 1986: 96; Ferreira and van Antwerpen 2012: 249). The first secretaries provided services to superiors as scribes (Golding 1986: 95). A historic account of literature in the general secretarial administrative field is traceable from as early as year 1870 (Davies 2004: 34-43). Approximately a century later, authors were still contributing to the body of knowledge (Bennett 1943: 360-363; Meredith 1955: 299-301; The British Medical Journal 1971: 676-677). Around two decades later, from year 1980, a steady build-up of knowledge in the field was noticeable.

2.4.1 Historic Account of Literature on Secretaries

An investigation by Rommelspacher (2022: 560-561) contributed to the historical account of South Africa to trace whether clerical work went from being a male occupation to being dominated by women decades later as was the trend globally in the early twentieth century. The study looked into the women's role in the office between 1900 to 1960. Findings of the study revealed that clerical work did transform from being a male occupation to being dominated mostly by women. The study further revealed that the feminisation of the occupation was more rapid in Cape Town than other parts of the country. During the same period, however, other countries like America and Canada were already ahead with the feminisation of the clerical jobs as South Africa only adopted the trend at a later stage.

2.4.2 Development of the Secretarial Profession

The term "secretary" comes from the Latin word "secretarius" which refers to someone who maintains confidentiality of a secret (Muis and Thenikusuma 2019: 2). Literature shows evidence of the existence of secretaries and related occupations and titles over the years. Some administrative secretaries however, are not classified as professionals, for example, stenographers (Muis and Thenikusuma 2019: 2). Popular earlier secretarial administrative roles included that of stenographers (Davies 2004: 25; Meredith 1955: 299); typists (The Michigan Law Review Association 1918: 187); clerks (Davies 2004: 26; Patterson 1980: 351; Chanen 1999: 74); receptionists (Meredith 1955: 301; Chanen, 1999: 74), administrators (Ferreira and van Antwerpen, 2012: 250) and countless others. Some secretaries since the earlier period have been specialising in other fields as medical secretaries (Bennett 1943: 360; The British Medical Journal 1971: 676-677; Hooke 2016:1-4); military secretaries (Sasson-Levy 2007: 481); higher education faculty secretaries (Patterson 1980: 351; Rytberg and Geschwind 2019: 1059); law secretaries or clerks (Sheldon 1981: 346; Chanen 1999: 74) and many others. Highly esteemed secretaries served in positions such as that of executive secretaries (Meredith 1955: 300; Patterson 1980: 351) or personal assistants (Sheldon 1981: 346). Types of secretaries generally found today include: secretaries (Muis and Thenikusuma 2019: 2), executive secretaries (Mambo 2022: 1348), secretariats (Kallivayalil 2019: 239), administrators (Mesquita, Oliveira and Sequeira 2019: 5; Rytberg and Geschwind 2019: 1059-1060), administrative secretaries (Li *et al.* 2019: 290), administrative assistants (Siregar 2018: 29) to mention a few. There are some administrative secretaries, however, who prefer to refer to themselves as 'professional

support staff' and insist on de-associating themselves from other secretarial titles with emphasis on their roles as specialists in their domain (Ryttberg and Geschwind 2019: 1060).

2.4.3 The Gap in Literature

Apparently, the years-worth of literature on administrative secretaries has not given adequate attention to the inclusion of males in the female-dominated position of secretary. Results of the review analysis by Garg and Sangwan (2020: 12) of trends on workplace inclusion from 2010 to 2017 suggest that more research is required in the area of workplace inclusion and its effects. In support, Rezai *et al.* (2023: 59) underscore the need to understand the drivers and obstacles to workplace inclusion better to achieve equitable representation at work. Zimmerman *et al.* (2021: S64) are of the view that, although gender norms and power are linked, their understanding as a social phenomenon is still pondered in depth. Further contribution in literature with specific focus on gender relations is therefore needed. Although not extensive, some literature was identified as evidential of the existence of issues pertaining to power, culture and social stratification in the secretarial field.

2.4.4 Power and Social Stratification

The early years of the 20th century reflected secretarial administrative occupations as low status jobs with unequal power relations between a secretary and their boss. They were the type of jobs where a secretary helped fulfil the goals of others in the work place (Meredith 1955: 299-301; Golding 1986: 94, Hooke 2016: 1-4, Muis and Thenikusuma 2019: 2). Power relation studies view one who has power over another as being able to influence them to achieve their own interests (Nye 2020: 94). A good example of this was in that secretaries often undertook extra roles at work without due compensation, including major responsibilities of their line managers (Meredith 1955: 300). In the medical field, for example, some of the extra roles included assuming the role of care taker of other professionals in the medical field (Hooke 2016: 2). In the military, women were often employed as cheap labour and viewed as 'office wives' (Sasson-Levy 2007: 481). Giani, Hope and Skorge (2021: 827) point out that genders are always seeking to affirm their gender roles in a social space. Management in the workplace (who were mostly males) viewed secretaries as trophies that affirmed their own success and status of importance (Chanen 1999: 74, Sasson-Levy 2007: 481). The job title status of a secretary implied existence of hierarchies in the work place as well as structural power with implications on status congruence which had to be maintained (Hegtvedt 1988: 141; Smith *et al.* 1989: 341-342). Hierarchies act as a divide of people according to the power they possess, better referred to as stratification

(Jarman, Lambert and Penn 2021: 271; Flemmen, Jarness and Rosenlund 2019: 816). Horolets *et al.* (2019: 316) refer to sociologist scholar Bourdieu who stated that each person is assigned a role in a social space which determines their actions and limitations, as well as the opportunities that they will be exposed to. The perceived subordinated position of a secretary negatively affected the attitudes of others towards secretarial jobs over time where they were not desired as a profession (Kennelly, 2002: 618). These observations support the statement by Patel, Santhya and Haberland (2021: 1-2) that gender norms directly impact on work opportunities and power distribution. Literature suggests that it was, however, not always the case that secretarial work was not considered a status occupation.

2.4.5 Cultural Background

Kiradoo (2022: 139) in their study describe the issue of workplace diversity, equity and inclusion as critical. The results of their study advocate for an inclusive workplace culture that acknowledges and values individual differences, promotes equality and respect and presents equal opportunities for all. In support, the results of the study by Galizzi, McBride and Siboni (2023: 16) highlight the need for a cultural context that does not involve stereotypes that restrict genders in pursuing their career goals. The results enlighten the social reproduction and construction of gendered barriers as an institutionalised social practice within universities. The study further served to confirm how organisational constraints and social stereotypes complement each other to undermine gender related choices of women in the workplace. Reem and Haifa (2020: 10) make reference to Cech (2015) who posits that cultural perspectives and ideology determine the formation of one's professional identity. Women disrupted the workforce in the late nineteenth century when they dominated the secretarial field, replacing men as men were elevated to more prestigious and better paying work (Lingel and Crawford 2020: 7). It is worth noting that the secretarial field was over gendered by women (Sasson-Levy 2007: 481) when the worth of the job was depreciated to a lower status. According to the results of a study by Hancock, Clarke and Anorld (2020: 1), it is still the case today that male typed occupations are rated as more prestigious than female typed ones. This is consistent with the current situation as evident in research conducted by Hamjediers (2023: 252) in Germany which concluded that an increase in women's labour market resulted in a lesser number of men in female-dominated jobs. The decrease in the number of men entering female-dominated professions was recorded at 21.5%. Reem and Haifa (2020: 11) state that "Feminisation of occupation has been correlated with occupation devaluation". There exists underlying assumptions about the value of work performed by men and women. This is explicitly evident in regulatory

frameworks and wage setting systems where undervaluation of feminised work is unjustified (Foley and Cooper, 2021:466). Some authors previously pointed out how gender roles were enforced by undervaluing the contribution of women as means by which men retained their power and self-perception in society (Kennelly 2002:603). Puzio and Valshtein (2022: 271) in their study using narrative literature review supported by a grounded theory analysis make reference to recent evidence of devaluation of feminised skills today as was the case in the past. A study by Yilmaz and Sürgevil (2020: 85) reveals that women are generally accepted as having a lower status than that of men merely because of their gender. The over gendering of women in a job considered to be low status on its own is viewed by the researcher as an indication of potential issues. Gender overrepresentation in certain occupations is often viewed as normal by many when in fact it serves to foster inequalities Froehlich et.al. (2020: 484). UNICEF South Asia is an organisation in South Asia whose commitment is to improve children's rights in partnership with governments, academia, civil society and other influential social structures (UNICEF South Asia 2017). UNICEF South Asia's (2017: 5,10,14) research reveals how in the context of education of young women, social and gender norms are found to have an effect on gender equity in that they provide both opportunity as well as barriers. The barriers stated include limiting and de-valuing girls leading to their deprivation of certain benefits in the long run.

It was therefore a positive action that women were allowed to work, however, their de-valuing in the work place was a barrier to their success. Du, Xiao and Zhao (2020: 478) state that "recent work has shown that cultural norms about the appropriate role of women in society contribute to gender inequality". This shows how a woman, based on culture, is expected to assume a certain gender role in society. In support Fric and Galli (2018: 1) explain that "Cultural perceptions also seem to affect discrimination against both men and women. Men are stereotypically viewed as more aggressive, stronger and dominant and according to the traditional division of labour are expected to be primary breadwinners for their families. In contrast, women are seen as more submissive and caring and are expected to take the main responsibilities for household work". One respondent in a study by Lingel and Crawford (2020: 7) described secretarial work as "House work of the office". In the working world, when women entered the secretarial field, they were assigned traditionally female gender roles of care givers within the various fields. This is evident in literature which documents female nurse-secretaries during war (Bennett 1943: 360; Sasson-Levy 2007: 481-507). The term 'Girl Friday' was loosely used to refer to secretaries and secretaries were 'exalted' by branding office machine gadgets with a female name (Meredith 1955: 299).

In 1942, a company executive, in a noble attempt to honour the behind the scenes work of secretaries by establishing a 'National Secretaries Week' in their speech, made reference to the secretaries as the "wonderful girls" (Meredith 1955: 299). Today, the introduced artificial intelligence secretaries who are non-human mostly are designed with artificial female personas. This invokes the cultural figure of a female secretary and affirming the expectation that a secretary should be a woman (Lingel and Crawford 2020: 2). The behavioural norms exhibited in the stated diverse scenarios imply traditional gender perceptions and expectations that the secretarial field is better suited for a woman. The norms are further suggestive of the stereotypical social views as stated by Fric and Galli da Bino (2018: 1) that women are more submissive and caring and should assume the role of a care taker in a social setting while men must exhibit dominance and strength. This is supported by a study conducted by Kang, Tse and Toh (2019: 1) that provides evidence of how occupations are reliably stereotyped according to the measurement of warmth and competence. These are instances whereby women are more visible in jobs that require high warmth and low competence. Moreover, associations of secretaries made up of only women started emerging (Meredith 1955: 300). The gender composition of such societies suggests traditional gender roles influence on the self-concept of women caused them to cement their presence through the establishment of such groups. This is in line with the view that norms influence people's beliefs and actions (Cislaghi and Heise 2020: 407). The understanding in gender studies is that internalised beliefs about one's gender role influences one's occupational ambitions (Dicke, Safavian and Eccles 2019: 1). The ambitions of women in the establishment of such solidarities, therefore, manifested their internalised self-beliefs and self-perceptions about their assigned role in the social space of work. In this way, occupation gender stereotypes may lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. This may mean a certain demographic group avoids certain job occupations as they do not view themselves as a stereotypical fit of that particular group but rather associate with a different specific group (Bhaskaran and Bhallamudi 2019: 1).

The United Nations Population Fund, known as UNFPA, is an organisation that partners with governments, civil society and other agencies in more than 150 countries to advance women and children's human rights empowerment (United Nations Population Fund 2021a). Their reports show how traditions and cultural beliefs dictate how humans behave without them even realising it. It is therefore not always by their own choice how they behave (United Nations Population Fund 2021b: 2). Cislaghi and Heise (2020: 407) in support state that

beliefs can be institutionalised. Sidhu *et al.* (2021: 1677) highlight the importance of institutionalised beliefs and expectations in that they affect gender behaviour. Neville *et al.* (2021: 2) explain that every society has its own rules and standards which construct behavioural expectations and that individuals or collectives in a society are expected to abide by them. The beliefs are so engrained within individuals that whenever they deviate from their expected gender roles they may experience guilt and try intentionally to realign themselves with gendered norms (Giani et al. 2021: 827). In a society, consequences are put in place should any member of the society deviate from societal norms (Perry *et al.* r 2021: 2).

2.5 SECRETARIAL ADMINISTRATIVE GENDER REPRESENTATION TODAY

Findings in a study by Taflaga and Kerby (2019: 1) show how gender representation is a systematic effort of distinguishing work done by a woman from that of a man solely along gender lines. The study shows how men are given higher status work from the onset of their careers, while women occupy lower status jobs such as gendered support type roles. It is therefore important to discuss the representation of males in the context of the pre-determined job roles of a man versus that of a woman and what this implies regarding the representation of males in feminised job roles.

2.5.1 Representation of Males in Feminised Professions

It is eminent from an empirical study conducted by Abdullah *et al.* (2023: 220) that men, to a certain extent, do harbour some interest in feminised careers. Factors identified as contributing to Malaysian men's participation in non-traditional careers were mainly stated to be: i) personal factors, relating to self-interest and ii) varied external factors, including financial disadvantage and support from family and friends. In a similar study conducted by Fox and Barth (2017: 460) it was concluded that men are more interested in no-title occupations, especially if masculine characteristics are used in the description of the job. Also, in another study conducted by Cortina, Rodriguez and Gonzalez (2021: 91), it was revealed that women are mostly discriminated upon in male-dominated occupations whilst men are mostly discriminated upon in female dominated occupations. It is therefore evident in the results of these studies that men's interest in jobs that are feminised may be affected by various factors. These factors must be taken into serious consideration in order to achieve more men entering female dominated jobs.

Various studies show that gender role stereotypes and expectations have been carried over from the past and are the root of inequalities today (Hentschel, Heilman and Peus 2019: 1; Fisher and Ryan, 2021: 237). Career Smart is an independent careers website established by Prospect, a trade union based in the United Kingdom which represents more than 145 000 members who work as scientists and other specialist roles (Prospect 2021). Careersmart data is trustworthy because Prospect is an established company with a history of 100 years of administration (Prospect 2021) and uses the latest official data sources. Moreover, the data is used to provide detailed analysis of all occupations as categorised by the official United Kingdom Office for National Statistics' Standard for Occupational Classification codes (Careersmart 2020a). The Careersmart (2020b) data shows that in the United Kingdom, there are fewer males in secretarial administrative jobs compared to females: 24.6% of company secretary employees are males and 75.94% are females, and in other administrative occupations, 24.12% of employees are males and 75.88% are females.

A workplace data audit conducted in Australia maintained this trend. In Australia, in the clerical and administrative workers, a majority, 73%, are women and a minority, 27%, men. When compared to other occupations, however, it is prevalent that males in male dominated job roles are the majority. For instance, managers are mostly men at 62% and the minority women at 38%; technicians and trades workers are a majority 84% men and only 16% women; and labourers are a majority 64% men with a minority of 36% women. The opposite is true in jobs requiring feminine traits of warmth and care such as community and personal service work in which women dominate at 69% and males are a minority at 31%. A similar trend is observable in the Australian Victorian public sector. The deviant statistics are those of professionals showing that women are making strides in entering the professional fields as they dominated at 56% and males at 44% (State Government of Victoria 2022).

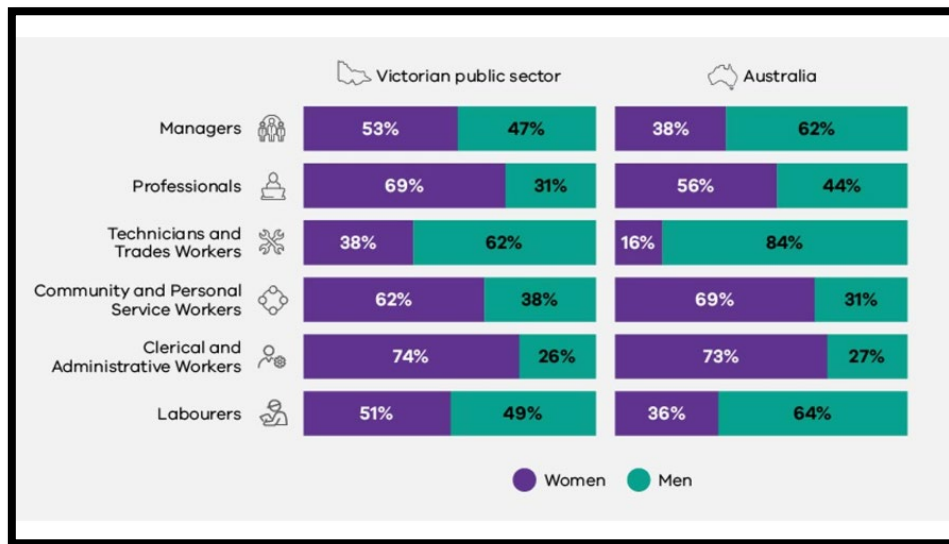


Figure 2-3 Australian Workforces by Occupation and Gender – May 2022

(State Government of Victoria 2022)

Zippia is an online recruitment platform that used a database of 30 million user profiles to estimate the demographics and statistics for secretaries in the United States of America. Their data shows that 12.2% of secretaries are men, 83.5% are women and the other 4.3% is unknown (Zippia 2021b). Zippia’s research is the most credible career outcomes report because it uses uniform methodology over a longer period of time and employer-verified information provided by the federal government (Augustana University and Streufert 2020).

In South Africa, the trends observed are much the same as those of the stated countries. The jobs where women are most likely to be employed in South Africa are the traditionally female clerical, technical and domestic jobs. According to the Department of Statistics South Africa (2024) the gender predominantly represented in clerical jobs is women at 16.4% while in comparison men are a minority of 5.3%.

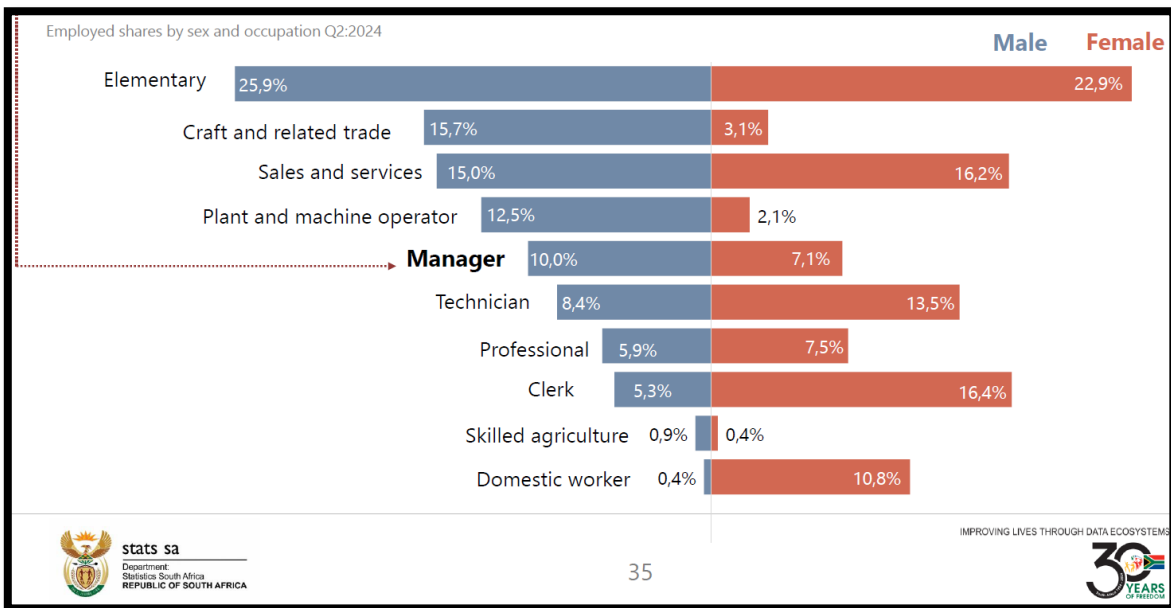


Figure 2-4 Mostly Women Employed in Clerical Positions in South Africa Compared to Men - 2nd Quarter of Year 2024
(Department of Statistics South Africa 2024)

Similar trends were observed in other feminised professions. In nursing, statistics by Career Smart (2020) show that in the United Kingdom, only 15.9% of nurses are male and 84.1% are female. In the United States of America, 15.9% of nurses are males, while 78.7% are females and the other 5.4% is unknown (Zippia 2021).

Yavorsky and Dill (2020: 1) observe that women have made significant progress entering male-dominated jobs, however, men have made far less progress entering female-dominated jobs. A question of why males are not entering the female dominated spheres was raised by Delfino (2021: 2) with reference to possible barriers to their entry. Statistics by Kräft (2021: 1), in collaboration with Frontiers in Sociology, an international scholarly forum for high quality society investigation and international readership reveal that in the United Kingdom, for instance, 43% of women work as professionals in male dominated jobs. According to Statista (2021), a leading provider of market and consumer data by over 1100 experts across 170 industries and 150 countries, Mongolia; Kiribati; Dominican Republic and Cambodia are the top five identified countries with the highest share of women employed in male dominated STEM fields.

2.5.2 Males Entering Feminised Occupations

Eliminating barriers to career progress based on social identities such as gender remains amongst the biggest challenges of the 21st century (Flory *et al.* 2021: 1). In the same way that women experience gendered barriers in male dominated jobs related to the type of work, task allocation and promotion (Bishu and Headley 2020: 1063) or societal stereotypes, lack of mentoring and development opportunities (Bain and Company, Inc. 2017:14,18,20), men are exposed to barriers in female dominated fields. This observation is affirmed by the results of a study by Campero and Fernandez (2019: 1487) that revealed that both men and women are equally disadvantaged for positions that are dominated by those who are of an opposite gender to them. Men could possibly embrace feminised occupations if they were exposed to them to some extent. This inclination in thought is persuaded by the study conducted by Hamjediers (2023: 524) which showed that men who were pre-exposed to female occupations during civilian service were 11.9% more likely to enter female dominated occupations as their first job. Men that never received such prior exposure to female dominated occupations were only 8.7% likely to pursue said occupations. It has been found that a male stepping into a female domain may not be met with opposition as many may dread. Contrary to the anticipated backlash phenomenon that posits that changes to the status quo to accommodate minorities would result in resistance by the majority, a study by Karlsson (2019: 2) showed that this was not the case. The results provide evidence of a decrease in the level of majority resistance directed towards the minority when they change a well embraced and significant status quo. An intersectional perspective field experiment by Di Stasio and Larsen (2020: 229) conducted in five European countries on the bases of gender demonstrated how gender is not the only discriminatory factor of concern, and points at race as part of the equation as well. The results of the experiment reveal that for female typed jobs, the hiring preference is generally for white women over men while women of colour do not have an advantage over men of the same race. The results further reveal that black and middle Eastern men experience the most racial discrimination in male typed jobs. The study pointed out that the greater discrimination on black and middle Eastern men is possibly due to their stereotyped masculinity positioning them as a threat in an occupational context.

2.5.2.1 Barriers to Men’s Entrance into feminised Jobs

A study by Rezai *et al.* (2023: 59) found that barriers relating to one’s attitude were the most reported barriers to workplace inclusion. One such example is from a study by Oh (2019) that revealed that, in general, identity or one’s concept of self may be a barrier to the supply of labour and prevent appropriate job positioning. This was affirmed in a different study by Coffman *et al.* (2019) focusing on how gender stereotypes impact belief. The study revealed that both men and women value positive job feedback when it arrives in a gender congruent occupational domain.

Moskos (2020: 527) in their study puts forth gender essentialism as central in describing the phenomenon of men’s representation in female dominated occupations. In as much as the study revealed men’s advantaged position based on the accrued benefits they enjoyed in being prioritised when entering female dominated domains, the reverse was also observed. The study further pointed at various factors that reduce men’s willingness to pursue and retain employment within female dominated occupations. Moreover, it was discovered that there are also other factors that limit men’s entry into gender atypical jobs. These were summarised with reference to the cross classification of themes arising from the interview data as follows:

Table 2-1 Cross classification of themes arising from the interviews on the essentialist study

	Segregation	Integration
Supply side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men's aversion to employment within female-dominated jobs • Negative experience of female-dominated work environment • Unfavourable labour market characteristics deterring men (i.e., short hours, low pay) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors and processes that moderate the impact of gender essentialist exclusion • Benefits accrued to men due to their minority status as workers • Standard labour market attractors (job availability, positive aspects of work)
Demand side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essentialist notion of appropriate jobs for men and women • Preference for female essentialist attributes • Belief that women are better • Segregating labour market processes (employment practices and working conditions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for male workers • Men counteracting negative effects of a female-dominated workforce • Demand for minority workers

Moskos (2020: 532)

Examples of various barriers involved include men's uncertainty about their success in female domains, and the anticipation for preference of female employees in female domains (Delfino 2021: 2). Within specific occupation types, barriers exist as well. In nursing, an online survey involving 498 male nurses revealed the following barriers: (38%) nursing is traditionally considered a female profession (38%), the stereotype that male nurses are gay (29%), poor pay (15%) and a lack of role models (15%) (Kronsberg, Bouret and Brett 2018: 47). In the female dominated field of childcare education, the barriers include society's disapproval of male teachers following child abuse cases disproportionately related to male teachers (Fric and Galli da Bino 2018: 8).

In the secretarial administrative field in particular, historically men who ventured into female dominated jobs as secretaries experienced various challenges which acted as barriers in their pursuit of a secretarial career. These included: astonishment from people when they encountered a male secretary and not a female one, the salaries of secretaries which were on average low, males had to put extra effort to prove their capabilities in the secretarial field, they were often bypassed for promotion consideration because it was believed the roles were more suitably for women, most people thought of male secretaries as being feminine or gay, the possibility of a male secretary working for a female boss was often a controversial issue (Johnson Publishing, 1984). Some potential barriers are observable in the secretarial administrative field even today. These include human resources practices which produce and sustain gender inequality from recruitment to promotion. These practices include gender-based stereotypes which affect which candidates get recruited for certain job roles and which are excluded as well as how salaries are negotiated (Gordon and True 2019). A research study by (González, Cortina and Rodriguez 2019: 187) revealed that gender bias in recruitment results from employer's stereotypes and prejudices. A study by Rice and Barth (2016: 1) attests to this by demonstrating stereotyping of genders where men and women are differentiated according to their traditionalist gender roles by evaluators during hiring. Results of a study by Bareket and Fiske (2023: 637) showed how benevolent sexism in particular acted through prejudices to enforce such traditionalist gender roles and was more attuned to role-related cues. In expansion, three studies by Zell *et al.* (2016: 287) revealed that psychological differences between genders are often exaggerated due to underlying sexist ideologies. Morando (2023: 1) provides guidance in their study by stating that other means in which gender stereotypes manifest is through sexist assumptions which are not ideal as they result in gender inequalities.

Verniers and Vala (2018: 2) caution that gender differentiation is a component of sexism in particular and may be related to gender discrimination in the workplace. They explained that the maintenance of power asymmetry through traditional gender roles is at the core of this component. Yavorsky and Dill (2020: 2) state two reasons why men avoid female-dominated jobs: firstly, they generally pay less and secondly, they do not want to be perceived as challenging masculine ideals. Moreover, Forkuor, Buari and Aheto (2020: 40) state that men are sometimes even ridiculed with (feminine) name calling for undertaking female jobs. In support, Sultana *et al.* (2021: 1) explain in their study how, based on assumptions of sexual orientation informed by the type of job performed, one may become a target of exclusive attitudes or humour that derogate one's identity, including sexual orientation as an identity.

2.5.2.2 Discrimination against Men in the Secretarial administrative Field

Various authors advocate for equal employment opportunity as a principle to be maintained in diversity across various gender contexts for the marginalised to compete fairly for a job (Baker, Ali and French 2019: 1-2; Williamson, Carson and Foley 2020: 235; Jordan 2022: 41-43). There has been increased perceptions that men too, as with women, experience discrimination based on their gender (Fric and Galli da Bino 2018: 1; Napier, Suppes and Bettinsoli 2020: 1192). Gottzen, Mellstrom and Shefer (2019: 2009) acknowledge that due to women being mostly the ones affected by gender discrimination, men's vulnerabilities relating to gender discrimination have been overlooked. The economics and quarterly review report by Thirusanku and Singh (2021: 210) reveals that differential treatment as evidence of discrimination in the work place extends as far as recruitment, remuneration and restrained development practices of an organisation.

2.5.2.3 Discrimination in Recruitment Practices

Discrimination in general results in depressive symptoms and other undesired health related effects (Kim *et al.* 2020: 1). Countless cases and social experiments document compelling evidence of discrimination against men during recruitment in female dominated jobs (Fric and Galli da Bino 2018: 6; Ahmed, Granberg and Khanna 2021: 1; Di Stasio and Larsen 2020: 229; Yavorsky 2020: 4). In relation to secretarial administrative job recruitment in particular, the discrimination against men was also detected in varying countries. These include the United Kingdom and France as well as in varying job positions, such as secretary and receptionist jobs (Fric and Galli da Bino 2018: 6). Furthermore, evidence of discrimination against men in female-dominated or feminised jobs is recorded in studies

such as that conducted by Yavorsky (2019: 461). Findings by Yavorsky (2019) reveal gender and work inequality and highlight the importance of a multidimensional approach to hiring-related inequality. The study conducted was scientifically sound as its methodology utilised official audit data. The researcher further conducted an analysis of more than 3000 job advertisements and hiring practices among employers across two gendered occupational dimensions. In a similar study on gender discrimination across occupations in Sweden conducted by Ahmed *et al.* (2021: 59), it was ascertained that male applicants were half as likely as female applicants to be favoured for female-dominated jobs. It was also concluded that, in general, employer response rates during recruitment were higher for women. Results from the study by Ahmed *et al.* (2001) are deemed reliable as an analysis of employer responses to more than 3 200 fictitious job applications across 15 occupations was undertaken to determine the outcome.

Napier *et al.* (2020: 1192) in their study point out that, at times, both genders can be in denial about the existence of discrimination and argue that this is in fact an individual coping mechanism. An example of this denial was observed in the study by Fric and Galli da Bino (2018: 1) in which they refer to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) organisation. The organisation speculates that men may not feel the issue of discrimination is important to them hence are underrepresented in dialogue on the issue. They further state that men do not present themselves for action or discourse even though there are areas in which discrimination against males is evident. The information provided by EIGE is invaluable as the organisation operates within the framework of European Union policies on matters relating to gender discrimination (European Institute for Gender Equality 2022).

An investigative report by Fric and Galli da Bino (2018:15) looked at research results of Eurofound, a European union agency established by the European Council Regulation to provide knowledge for improved living conditions in Europe. The results reviewed European's working conditions survey in the year 2015 which examined cases from five countries and affirmed that men do experience gender related discrimination in the work place.

The study by Ferreira and van Antwerpen (2012: 255) revealed that men who pursue the secretarial profession enrolled in an office management course at a higher institution of learning experience discrimination as a minority and generally perceive the profession negatively. Male students' qualitative responses revealed the following barriers relating to

discrimination against males which discourage them from pursuing the secretarial profession:

(a) Use of the female gender identity:

The use of “she” or “her” in reference to all students during office management lectures was stated to create an expectation that the occupational domain is reserved for women rather than men (Ferreira and van Antwerpen 2012: 257). The use of vocabulary “the girls” in the workplace in reference to adult women such as receptionists or other office assistance has been viewed critically on various levels as it may imply one of a lesser level of thinking like a child and has gendered undertones in reference to the job role (Mirmirani 2020: 1). Similar experiences are observed with male nursing students who expressed concern in one study by O’Lynn (2004:229-230) that nurses are referred to as “she” in textbooks (Kronsberg et al. 2018:47). In another separate nursing study by Kalemba (2016: 1, 73), a male nurse stated “It’s uncomfortable for us to be called sisters”.

(b) The lack of representation of male office managers:

Male office management students observed a lack of balance and inequality reflected in literature in terms of gender representation of males in the secretarial field (Ferreira and van Antwerpen 2012: 258). The issue of the lack of role model representation was observed to be a barrier not only in the secretarial occupation, but in other occupational domains also. Kronsberg *et al.* (2018: 47) in their study identified that male nursing students were at risk of dropping out of nursing programmes due to experiencing isolation as a gender minority and the lack of male role models or mentors. In nursing literature, as with the office management course, there was no history of male nurses reflected. A study by Bain and Company, Inc. (2017: 18) revealed that women in the male domain of senior leadership experienced a similar challenge in navigating the field when faced with challenges which are unique to women due to a lack of access to female mentorship.

(c) Not having pride in pursuing office management as a career choice:

Peers studying more conventional male courses being perceived to be more masculine made male office management students feel inferior for pursuing an occupation perceived as feminine. This resulted in self-consciousness about their course of study (Ferreira and van Antwerpen 2012: 259). In the same way that office management male students experienced undesired differential treatment from their peers pursuing conventional male courses, the males in the female dominated nursing field had a similar experience.

According to a study by Kronsberg et al. (2018: 48), males in nursing experienced a variety of differential treatment such as exclusion from certain 'feminine' nursing duties or being seen as the assisting 'muscle' and not a competent nurse. Hays-Thomas (2016: 3) observes that underrepresented groups, when excluded, may feel like the outsider within and experience special stresses, resign prematurely, remain stagnated at entry levels in the organisation or even be terminated.

2.5.2.4 Gender Role Congruity

Numerous authors problematise role congruity in general as a predictor of negative prejudicial evaluations (Luong, Knobloch-Wester and Niewiesk 2020: 4-5; Wang *et al.* 2019: 745; Funk 2019: 1; Wiedman 2020: 793). Various discussions of the concept of gender role congruity reveal an expectation that both men and women align with prescriptive gender norms (Wang *et al.* 2019: 745; Schock, Gruber and Ortner 2019: 190; Kim *et al.* 2020: 1). People who occupy gender atypical roles experience backlash motivated by the perception that the existing hierarchy in which men have more status than women is under threat. Men who succeed in feminine occupations often do not receive the due respect for their contribution compared to a woman who offers the same contribution (Lips 2020: 28). Luong *et al.* (2020: 4-5) and Koburtay, Syed and Haloub (2019: 833) in their studies highlight how women who are gender incongruent with their jobs experience a lack of representation in that particular field and further point out gender issues of unequal opportunities.

2.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO

This chapter centred on the 'Masculinities' and 'Post-structuralism feminism' theoretical frameworks as means of unveiling the disadvantaged position of both men and women in the female dominated secretarial administrative jobs. It highlighted the interests held by men in pursuing secretarial administrative jobs and discussed the various strategies that they use to forge their acceptance in the work environment traditionally associated with women. Juxtaposed to the entrance of men, the effect that this has on women was noted whereby inclusivity as a culture in the workplace comes into consideration to mitigate the disadvantage of having one gender favoured over another in a specific administrative job role. Discussions generally outlined gendered occupations, a historic account of secretaries, the scope of literature to date and the gender representation of men amidst the feminisation of some jobs. These discussions compelled one to seriously interrogate the types of jobs

titles assigned to women versus men in the secretarial administrative space and to question the underlying meaning of the types of jobs assigned to each gender. The following chapter will present and analyse the research design and methodology adopted to achieve the study's aims and objectives.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter (literature review), adopting the ‘masculinities’ and ‘post-structuralism feminism’ as underpinning lenses presented the main research issue of men’s representation in secretarial administrative support roles. The discussions in the chapter explored in depth male entrance into feminised professions, the barriers involved, discrimination against men and gender role congruity. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the research design, research approach, study setting, population, sampling, pilot study and data collection methods implemented in conducting the research study. In this chapter, the mixed methods design plan to find answers on male representation in the secretarial administrative field is outlined. The mixed method approach incorporated both the quantitative and qualitative research design aspects in order to ascertain participant perceptions, feelings and understanding on male representation in the secretarial administration field while quantifying definite and unchangeable reality on the subject. Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017: 108) identify at least two distinct meanings of “design” in mixed methods: the process of “designing” as a verb, and another, the noun “design” as result of designing as a verb. In mixed methods, both the meanings are relevant. The study adopted a mixed methods research design.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A quality research design must produce a plan which forms strong evidence of answers to the research questions and be able to convince users of the acceptability of the findings (Asenahabi 2019: 87). Alavi *et al.* (2018: 527) caution that researchers risk designing flawed studies if their theoretical framework and its components are not linked to their research methods. Research methods are explained as a way of collecting data adopted for the purpose of identifying and explaining a phenomenon under study (Firdaus *et al.* 2021: 31). As further guided by Asenahabi (2019: 76), the research questions of the study, as well as the literature reviewed on masculinities and post-structuralism feminism as underlying theories, were considered in the design plan. The data collection methods, organisation and analysing techniques were also outlined on the plan as required.

Six major mixed methods designs/approaches are classified by Creswell and Plano Clark: a) the convergent parallel design, b) explanatory sequential design, c) exploratory sequential design, d) embedded design, e) multiphase design and f) transformative designs (Gunbayi 2020: 52). The transformative mixed method design was adopted in the study as the nature of the research aimed to advance social justice by identifying gender power imbalances in the secretarial administrative profession and empower the gender groups in their work setting given their vulnerabilities. The post-structuralism feminism as the feminist lens transformative variant in which the study was framed was used. Masculinities was used as the socioeconomic class lens transformative variant in which the study was framed using the socioeconomic class theoretical lens (Gunbayi 2020: 54). The feminist perspectives were used to illuminate the use of language as a strategy through which power of men is maintained in the administrative field. The masculinities perspective was used to bring attention to the possible compromised position of a man when seeking a job in the secretarial administrative field and the suppressed challenges he may face.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology is described as encompassing various methods and rules adopted in science or a specific discipline. Methodologies are generally divided into qualitative and quantitative (Firdaus, Zulfadilla and Caniago, 2021: 1). This study employed sequential transformative mixed methods and made use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to address the research problem viewed through the theoretical lenses of gender and relating to social justice issues of inequality and inequity.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH: MIXED METHODS

The study adopted the mixed method approach. Mixed methods combine at least one qualitative and one quantitative research component (Leavy 2022: 18). The qualitative approach aims to solve societal problems using firsthand textual data from sources such as life experiences that help to show the problems that people are struggling with in their lives using non numerical methods. The quantitative approach, on the other hand, aims to explain a phenomenon by sourcing numerical data with the intent of addressing specific questions on the phenomenon (Taherdoost 2022: 54). In an empirical study conducted by Harrison *et al.* (2020: 7), mixed methods articles were reviewed across four highly ranked

management studies journals over a period of six years. Findings showed that the most common reason for an article to be rated as having a low level of rigour was a lack of successful integration of the qualitative and quantitative data components, resulting in underreporting in one aspect of the two. Mixed methods interrogate the breadth and depth of understanding and involve corroboration of information. This includes corroboration of evidence in the form of data collection, analysis and inference techniques (Harrison, Reilly and Creswell 2020: 2). Considering the stated, the study gathered different types of evidence that worked together to build a case on masculinities and feminism. The evidence facilitated better understanding of male representation in the secretarial administrative field from both the quantitative and qualitative theoretical foundations thus establishing the desired robustness and rigour in methodology (Vu 2021: 1,8).

Ten mixed methods approaches are identified, which are further divided into four major groups, namely: (i) sequential design, (ii) concurrent design, (iii) multiphase design and (iv) multilevel design (Almeida 2018: 137). The study adopted the use of the sequential design approach referred to as the transformative sequential design involving either the collection of quantitative data first followed by qualitative data or vice versa (Pardede 2019: 236). The transformative sequential design adopted was guided by some of the major design dimensions. These were stated by Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017: 109) namely: purpose, theoretical drive, timing (simultaneity and dependency), point of integration and typological versus interactive design approaches. Multiple secondary dimensions were also identified during the design process.

3.4.1 Design Dimension 1: Purpose

The aim was to achieve complementarity and congruency of quantitative results obtained from population statistics revealed in the university's documentary analysis, survey and interview qualitative responses obtained from survey and interview of the respondents. The nature of 'male representation in the secretarial administrative profession' as a research problem was contextualised through qualitative justification of the quantitative survey results. The qualitative data aimed to illustrate and make sense of the quantitative data in order to extend the length and breadth of the study. Mixing methods was therefore a means of increasing the credibility of the results whereby both the quantitative and qualitative results served to affirm the status quo on the problem at hand. According to Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017: 110-111), purposes of mixed methods or reasons for mixing qualitative

and quantitative approaches are classified in numerous ways, including study complementarity, context, illustration and credibility.

3.4.2 Design Dimension 2: Theoretical drive

A descriptive study design was adopted to obtain straight forward and firsthand reflective description of the phenomena experienced (reflected in opinions, attitudes and behaviours) by the administrative secretaries and management at the university (Turale 2020: 289). More importance and focus was placed on the qualitative component of the research. The theoretical drive utilised was both “inductive”, representing the qualitative data, and “deductive”, representing the quantitative data. “Equal-status mixed methods research”, also referred to as the “interactive mixed method research” permitted the mixing and combination of inductive as well as deductive theoretical drives and belief systems (Schoonenboom and Johnson 2017: 112). The inductive approach was implemented by scoping two theories to frame the problem observed, namely the masculinities and post-structural feminism theories and then obtaining data as evidence of the existence of the problem as framed in the theories. In this way, the study went from theory to data (Young *et al.* 2020: 1122). The deductive approach was implemented by obtaining data on the theoretically framed problem and asking questions through questionnaires and interviews. This was done with the purpose of identifying the thematic alignment of the responses with the theories adopted. In this way, the study went from data to theory (Young *et al.* 2020:1122). The quantitative component was used to show statistical evidence of gender representation in the secretarial administrative field. The qualitative component in the same way was used to exhibit the general perspectives that impact on and explain the statistical representation of both genders.

3.4.3 Design Dimension 3: Timing (simultaneity and dependency)

The main distinction between the concurrent and sequential designs is in the timing. In a sequential design, research components are dependant and therefore implementation of the next step depends on the preceding step (Schoonenboom and Johnson 2017: 113). The sequential design was adopted in the study. The first research component was initiated by obtaining the quantitative statistical data in the form of documentary evidence which were the official university documents. The quantitative data obtained was for the purpose of carrying out the first research objective where numerical data on the following objective was obtained:

- To determine gender representation within the secretarial administrative staff population at the selected university in KZN in the year 2024.

The data was analysed and results were obtained from the first research component by analysing HR documents as the implementation of the second research component depended on the results of the first one. Thereafter, the second research component was initiated by conducting semi-structured interviews with a) male secretarial administrative staff and b) management staff members at the university. Lastly, research questionnaires were issued to the secretarial administrative staff. The qualitative data obtained was for the purpose of carrying out the second, third and fourth research objectives where the following text based data was obtained.

3.4.4 Design Dimension 4: Point of integration

The intra- and inter-phase integration mechanisms were applied in the study based on the integrative mechanisms model by Lynam *et al.* (2020: 4). The authors in their study devised a model to illustrate four possible integration pathways across an outcome-oriented research project or programme. They reimagined and reframed integration in mixed method studies to reduce the power of the qualitative-quantitative dichotomy while offering new ways of conceptualising integration. The model illustrates how integration expands from weak integration to strong integration and shows 'no integration' to be an almost impossible condition.

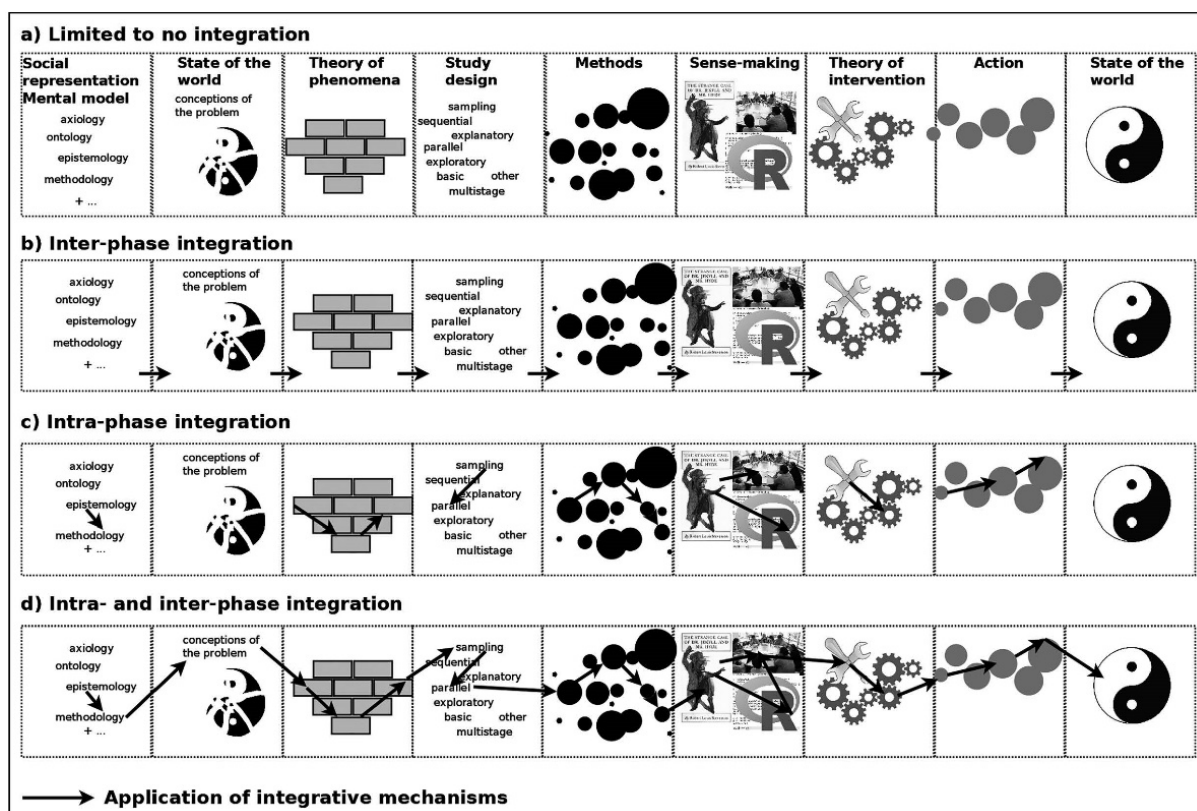


Figure 3-1 Illustration of 4 possible integration pathways across outcome oriented research

Lynam *et al.* (2020: 4)

In the model, Lynam *et al.* (2020: 4) explain that: “The four panels of the figure reflect different patterns of integration from limited to no integration in panel (a) to interphase and interphase in panel (d). The scope of integration relates to the span of what has been integrated. The more phases (columns in the figure) or elements (units within a phase or column) that are integrated the greater the span. The finer the individual elements the more granular the integration”.

Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017: 115) guided the study on the various points at which research methods can be mixed. The various points at which the researcher integrated the research methods in the study as guided were: a) theoretical drive, b) purposes, c) research methods, d) data, e) analysis and f) results. The contribution of the study by Lynam *et al.* (2020: 8) further supported the approach that outcomes of a mixed method study should be

broadened. They considered other aspects such as knowledge and awareness. The study therefore also considered the: g) knowledge and h) awareness aspects of the study.

In the study, the two theories, masculinities and post-structuralism feminism, were integrated as transformative theories to address a gender equality issue from two different but complementary aspects. The transformative nature of the theories mixed various evidence to build an awareness case of the existence of a problem of questionable male representation as secretaries. The theories were integrated in the objectives of the study and, as a result, were integrated in the chosen instrument questions as well. The theories and theory related issues were discussed in relation to each other in the literature review. The right questions were asked to participants with various roles, perceptions and experiences on the research problem to obtain valid and reliable answers to maximise the knowledge captured. The study was integrated in terms of its purposes by ensuring complementarity. This was done by contrasting the quantitative results obtained from population statistics revealed in university HR documentation and the survey, with those results obtained from qualitative responses of the respondents. The nature of the problem was contextualised through qualitative justification of the quantitative survey results. Inductive and deductive reasoning were integrated as a strategic fit to obtain both qualitative and quantitative meaning. The qualitative data illustrated and made sense of the quantitative data to extend the length and breadth of the study. Discursive deconstructive reading was done which enabled categorisation of identified issues and hierarchising of some participants. The results obtained were synthesised with the quantitative documentary evidence obtained.

3.4.5 Design Dimension 5: Typological versus interactive design approaches

A study by Almeida (2018: 137) concluded that sequential designs are advantageous in that they facilitate the integration of both quantitative and qualitative aspects leading to higher implementation time. Concurrent designs, on the other hand, lead to difficulties in integration of the quantitative and qualitative aspects. The transformative sequential design was used in order to facilitate the mixing of the methods in line with the mixed method approach adopted in the study. It was important to adopt a design that is sequential. This was based on the view that in analysing the definition of 'integration', Lynam *et al.* (2020: 4) point out that each definition encountered encompassed the aspect of 'integration' as an important defining characteristic.

There was also the 'transformative' aspect that was adopted in the methodology to ensure that actions taken drove change and facilitated the process of society change. The transformative change included change in perceptions which perpetuate gender inequalities by the corporate society in relation to male secretaries versus female secretaries. Data collection methods probed thoughts on the part of participants including the administrative secretaries themselves as well as line managers. Facilitation of mixing of methods while driving transformative change relating to gender inequality in the work place was therefore supported by the 'transformative sequential design' typology.

Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017: 121) refer to Maxwell and Loomis (2003) describing an interactive approach as consisting of the following design components: goals, conceptual framework, research question, methods and validity. The interactive approach was therefore not adopted in view that essential elements of the design process such as timing and point of integration which are directly related to the chosen mixed method approach were not considered.

3.5 STUDY SETTING

The research was conducted at the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal, Main Campus, KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa. Other campuses of the university did not form part of the study's geographical location.

3.6 POPULATION

There is usually both an intrinsic and extrinsic reason for pursuing a study of a particular group. The motivations often lean on perceived significance of a specific phenomenon or on the enhanced comprehension of a problem when set against a specific theoretical backdrop (Knott *et al.* 2022: 2). Populations are a critical aspect of research methodology that orientate an audience into the context and focus of the study. Their purpose is to assist with defining the study's boundaries. This is achieved by identifying the group the study will be focusing on (population of interest), the main group being studied (target population), the sub-populations from which a sample will be drawn (sampling frame) and the sub-populations who will be the sample. Determining the population is important to advance credible and impactful research by ensuring that units who do have the desired attributes are included in the study and that those who don't are excluded (Hossan, Mansor and

3.6.1 Study Population

The population for this study consisted of staff members employed at the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal, KwaDlangezwa Main Campus, KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa.

The target population for the study was a total of 269 employees who were identified as two main sub-populations forming part of the study, namely: **a) All university secretarial administrative (Sub-group 1)** and **b) University management staff members (Sub-group 2)**.

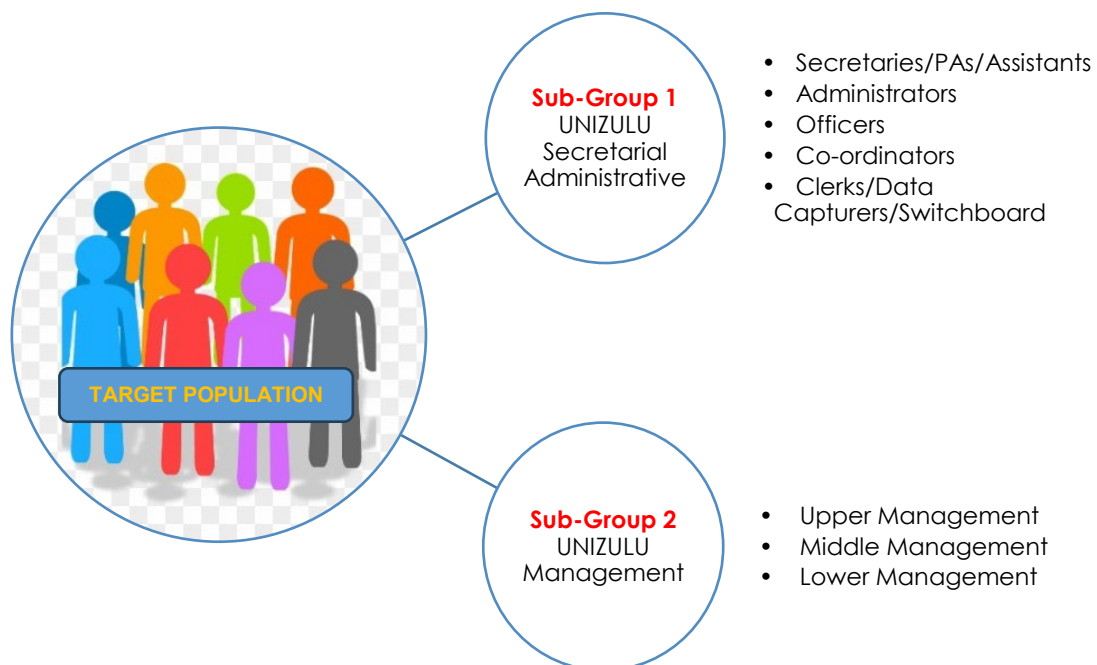


Figure 3-2 Illustration of 2 Sub-Groups of the Study

The study aimed to distinguish between the opinions of the two sub-groups based on their unique experiences and insights as well as their job responsibilities which were not the same. The study further distinguished the secretarial administrative sub-group as the group that was directly linked with the aim of the study for which the management sub-group shared their opinions and experiences during data collection. The two sub-groups were therefore not regarded as a single population.

3.6.2 Population Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The size of the target population of the study was limited to 269 employees of a selected university in KZN in the year 2024 with the exclusion of employees undergoing internship within the institution. The specific university population units included in the study sampling frame comprised of the secretarial administrative staff and management irrespective of gender, age, race, permanency, office unit, or work experience. The study identified 10 categories which made up the university secretarial administrative staff sub-group according to job positions. These were: (a) secretaries/personal assistants, (b) administrators, (c) administrative secretaries, (d) administrative assistants, administrative officers, (f) officers, (g) co-ordinators, (h) clerks, (i) data capturers and (j) switchboard operators. University employees with job positions as stated in **Appendix D** attached were included in the 'secretarial administrative staff' population sub-group. In the 'secretarial administrative' category of 'officers', the following job positions were excluded from the sub-group due to the specialised nature of the work in safety and security, rather than administration, namely: safety officer, investigation officer, protection officer, VIP security officer and security officer. 'Management' as a sub-group included all upper, middle and lower management university employees with 'secretarial administrative' staff under their deployment.

3.7 SAMPLING

Often it may be demanding for an entire targeted population to be studied due to the costs, time or manpower it would take. Sampling, which encompasses drawing a subset representative of the population, therefore becomes an alternative strategy for ensuring feasibility of the study. A sample is deemed representative if it is sufficient to be indicative of the entire population, which depends on three aspects, namely: sampling methodology, sampling size and the response rate (Acharya *et al.* 2013: 330). Taherdoost (2016: 19) provides guidance that the sampling process should consist of a six-step process. The process is said to include the following steps: 1) precisely define the target population, 2) select a sampling frame, 3) choose a sampling technique, 4) determine a sample size, 5) collect data and 6) measure the response rate. These steps were accordingly implemented in the study.

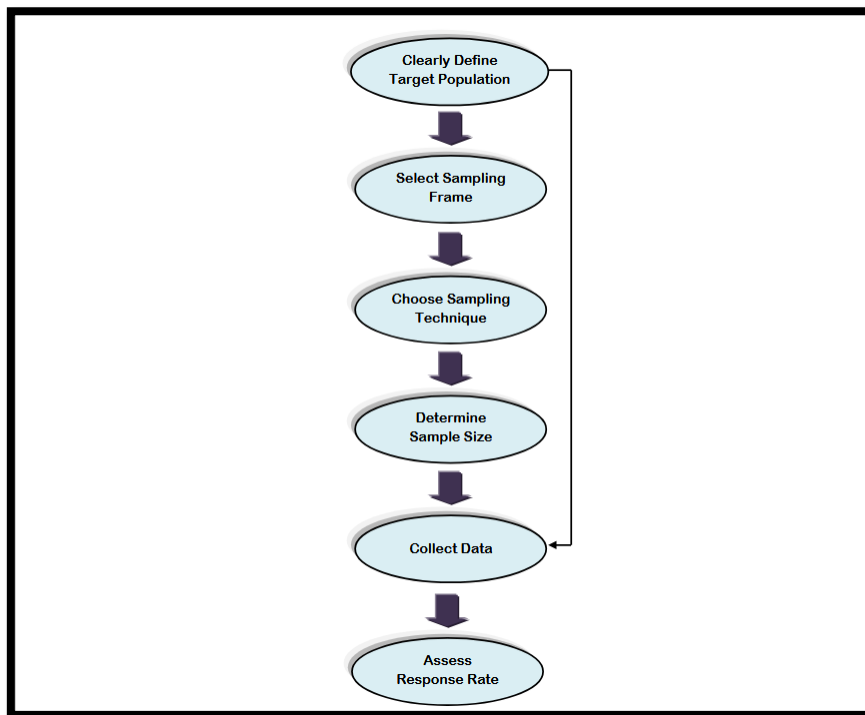


Figure 3-3 Sampling Process Steps

(Taherdoost 2016: 19)

3.7.1 Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is described as comprising of cases from which a sample will be obtained which ought to represent the targeted population sufficiently (Taherdoost 2016: 20). Briefly, it is a sub-set of the target population that has been organised into a strategy to recruit study participants. Sampling frames usually come in various formats, such as a person’s contacts, social media groups, location addresses and organisational lists. (Casteel and Bridier 2021: 347).

The sampling frame (**see Appendix J for the table of participants as sourced from the HR database**) for the two population sub-groups of ‘administrative support staff’ and ‘management’ who formed part of the study consisted of:

- 155 Secretarial administrative support staff (19 secretaries/personal assistants, 32 administrators, 22 administrative secretaries, 2 administrative assistants, 8 administrative officers, 45 officers, 17 co-ordinators, 8 clerks, 1 data capturer and 1 switchboard operator).

- 114 Management staff (8 top management, 22 middle management and 84 lower management). (Human Resources Records 2024)

As idealised, the two sampling frames in the study were aligned to the chosen sampling methods (Casteel and Bridier 2021: 347).

3.7.2 Sampling Methods and Procedures

Sampling methods are broadly categorised into two: the probability sampling method, as well as the non-probability sampling method, each with its own strategies. Sampling strategies associated with the probability method generally include systematic, cluster, simple random and stratified sampling strategies. The employment of these implies that a unit has a known and non-zero chance of being included in the population sample. The non-probability method on the other hand utilises convenience, quota, snowball and purposive sampling strategies, meaning that elements of the population do not have a guarantee or equal chance of being selected to form part of the population sample (Turner 2020: 8-9). Regarding the drawing of elements for samples, the use of probability random sampling does not allow for control while the non-probability random sampling gives control over the process. The combination of both methods therefore affords a study the benefit of both representation and suitability of participants (Etikan and Bala 2017: 215).

This study thus adopted a combination of probability and non-probability sampling methods for both sub-group 1 and sub-group 2 populations as follows:

3.7.2.1 Stratified Random Sampling – Sub-group 1 (155 Administrative Support Staff)

The probability methods of simple random sampling and stratified sampling strategies were utilised to draw a sample to conduct a survey on the targeted administrative support staff sub-population. To conduct quantitative sampling, the homogenous population of administrative secretaries was stratified into five strata consisting of: (a) **Secretaries / personal assistants**, (b) **administrators**, (c) **officers** (d) **co-ordinators** and (e) **clerks/ data capturers/ switchboard operators**.

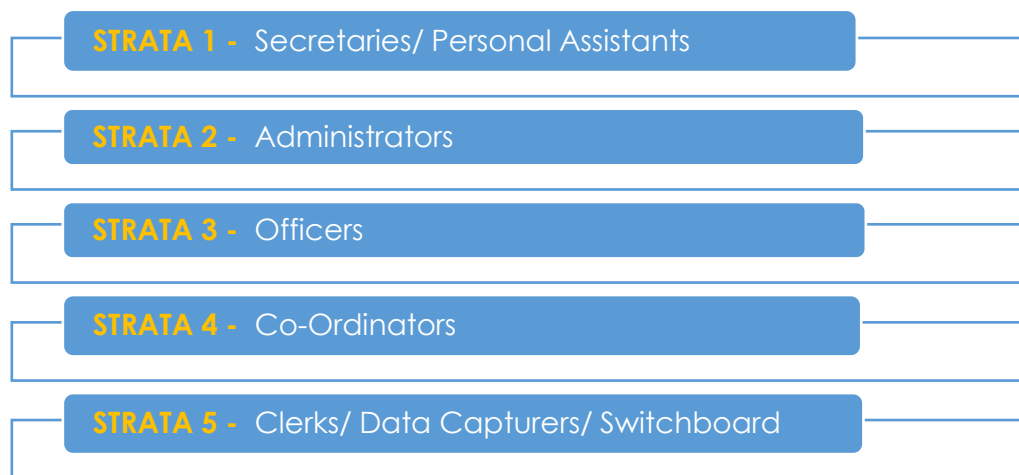


Figure 3-4 Five Strata

3.7.2.2 Sub-groups for Quantitative Procedure

In the stated method of stratification, the examination of the relationships between the population subsets was made possible (Crossman 2020: para.4 line 4), which aligned with what the researcher aimed to achieve. Dr L. N. Wambugu, a lecturer at the University of Nairobi and amongst others, a board member in the Research and Evaluation Society of Kenya (Wambugu, n.d.), provides guidance on five steps to be followed when conducting stratified random sampling. These included: 1) stratifying the population, 2) developing the sampling frame, 3) determining the sampling size, 4) generating a table of random numbers and 5) sampling within strata using simple random sampling. In support, Iliyasu and Etikan (2021: 24) explain that stratified sampling must involve: 1) a sampling frame, 2) target population split into groups, 3) choosing a representative sample, 4) conducting sub-group research and 5) the adoption of simple random sampling when sub-groups are formed. The stated five steps identified and explained by Wambugu were adopted in the research methodology as follows:

1) Stratifying the population

The administrative secretaries' population was stratified. This was achieved by first ensuring that sample size n (equals to 108) was distributed among the different strata making up the population sampling frame. According to Fernandez *et al.* (2016: 4), a good sample must accurately reflect the population in characteristics such as gender, age, race and ethnicity to improve representation of all population units. The distribution of the sample numbers was therefore done proportionally in the study to increase representativeness of the sample by taking into consideration characteristics of interest to the research such as gender, job title and work unit. This was carried out by first determining the proportional representation

of each unit of study making up the heterogenous study population of 155 secretarial administrative employees of the university. The WallStreetMojo Editorial Team, a registered chartered financial analyst company that provides financial educational and online courses (WallStreetMojo Editorial Team 2022) recommends the following formula be used for the proportional formulation of strata:

$$N_i = \frac{N_i}{N} \times n$$

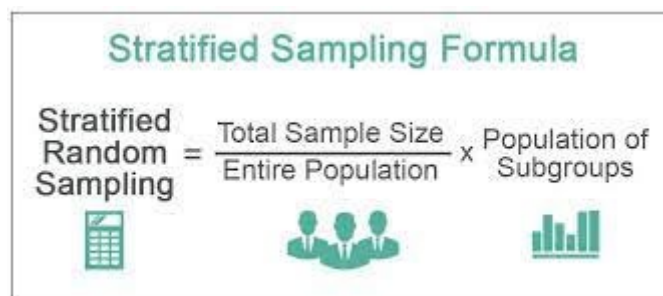


Figure 3-5 Stratified sampling formula

(WallStreetMojo Editorial Team 2021)

2) Developing the sampling frame

The population was stratified into identified sub-groups. A sampling frame was thereafter constructed, listing all secretarial administrative employees of the selected university in KZN who were in the population of interest using secondary data from the university’s human resources office. The sampling frame consisted of various identified population sub-groups according to job titles as listed on the HR database, namely: (1) secretaries/personal assistants, (2) administrative officers/assistants, (3) co-ordinators, (4) clerks and (5) receptionists/switchboard operators. A method of ‘same sampling fraction’ within strata was adopted to determine the number of units that would be sourced to form part of each sub-group for the purpose of proportional allocation of units into the identified strata. It was advised that proportional amounts of units of the same characteristics with specific distinguishing aspects be randomly selected to avoid the bias of some units having a higher chance of being selected than others (Crossman 2020: para.2 line 3). Individual employees who were units forming the population were therefore allocated into the various homogenous strata according specific characteristics.

3) Determining the sample size

A sample was drawn from each of the identified homogenous sub-groups using the following mathematical equation as recommended by Dr L. N. Wambugu when determining the sample size from each stratum:

$$\frac{\text{Number of units per subgroup}}{\text{Population size}} \times \text{Sample size} = \text{Stratum sample size}$$

Wambugu (2021)

4) Generating a table of random numbers, and 5) Sampling within strata using simple random sampling

Simple Random Sampling

In each stratum, simple random sampling was applied because selecting units of a group randomly and by chance in this manner ensured the quality of the sample was not affected as every unit had an equal chance of being selected in the sample (Iliyasu and Etikan 2021: 24-25). This was carried out by generating five tables of random numbers for the five strata using the Microsoft Excel computer program. The researcher used the random numbers to select the units randomly to form a sample in each stratum.

Allocation of Sample in Strata - Administrative Secretaries

In order to ensure representation of each administrative secretary as a unit, the total heterogenous secretarial/administrative staff population of 155 units was stratified into homogenous strata according to job positions. This meant that same job titles were grouped together to form a further division into strata including gender. A sample was then drawn from each newly established strata whose size was determined using the same formula:

$$\frac{\text{Number of units per subgroup}}{\text{Population size}} \times \text{Sample size} = \text{Stratum sample size}$$

Wambugu (2021)

After the sample sizes of the newly established strata were determined, simple random sampling was initiated in each stratum. This was done by assigning a number to each unit in the newly established stratum. In each stratum, a random number was chosen. The chosen numbers in each stratum represented the sampled group for each stratum from which descriptive and inferential data were to be collected.

3.7.2.3 Stratified Purposive Sampling – Sub-group 1 (Administrative Support Staff) and Sub-group 2 (Management)

In qualitative research, applying the appropriate sampling technique can exceptionally improve the rigour of a study (Gill 2020: 579). It is further important to take into consideration various factors which have a bearing on the study, such as the enquiry strategy, theoretical framework, research approach, job positions and experiences of respondents (Mthuli, Ruffin and Singh 2022: 817).

As advised by Iliyasu and Etikan (2021: 24), stratified sampling must involve securing a sampling frame, splitting the target population into groups, choosing a representative sample and conducting sub-group research. This procedure was adopted in order to conduct qualitative sampling in the current study as follows:

For securing the two required sampling frames of: a) male administrators and b) management, the entire heterogenous population of 269 units was stratified into three homogenous sub-groups consisting of: (a) **female secretarial administrative staff (107)** (b) **University male secretarial administrative staff as critical cases (48)**, and (c) **University management (114)**.

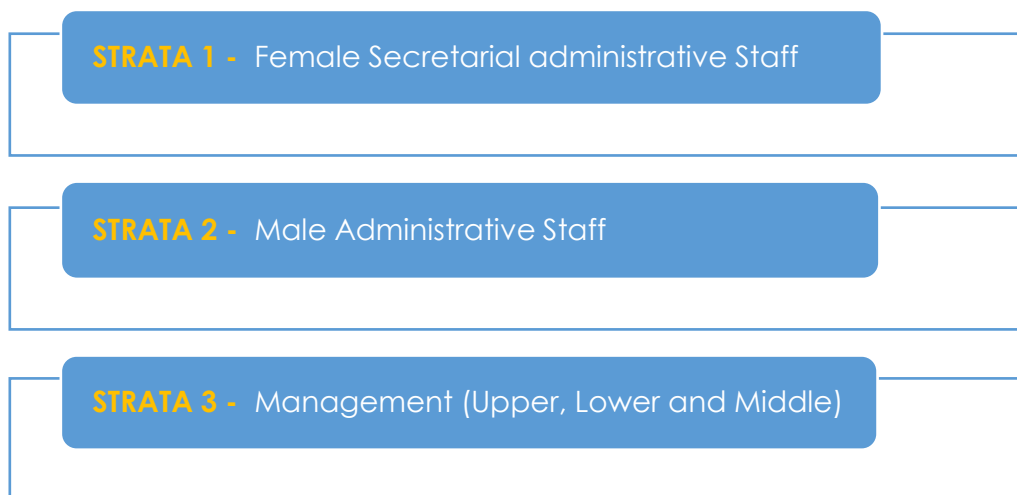


Figure 3-6 Subgroups for Qualitative Procedure

The participants were populated in an MS Excel spreadsheet according to their homogenous strata and the stratification process unfolded as follows:

Strata 1 (female secretarial administrative staff) did not form part of the sample to participate in the one-on-one interviews and were therefore excluded. A mix of stratified purposive sampling techniques were utilised to draw two different sub-population samples to conduct one-on-one interviews within each population. The sample frame for strata 2 (male administrators) was made up of a total of 48 units. The sample frame for strata 3 (managers) was a total of 114 units. Purposive sampling was an appropriate technique as it yields valid and reliable results as characteristically the participant sourced to form part of the sample would be those closely related to the purpose of the research (Thomas 2022: 1). In alignment with the study objectives and the participants' availability and consent to participate, knowledgeable and particularly experienced participants were identified and purposively included taking into consideration the objectives of the study (Nyimbili and Nyimbili 2024: 90, 98). In both strata 2 and strata 3, the DEJA analytic tool for a priori mapping of qualitative study sample sizes ('Define, Explain, Justify, Apply') method was applied whereby reaching satisfactory data collection formed part of an important indicator of sample size (Mthuli, Ruffin and Singh 2022: 810).

The component of consistency was implemented in the appropriate inclusion of both genders in the sample using strategies that eliminate unfair bias. Inclusion of both genders equitably and allowing male secretarial administrative support staff to respond directly to

their own experiences as men in feminised support occupations guaranteed the study was rational and dependable.

3.7.3 Sampling Size

a) Quantitative Sampling Size

Various recent studies refer to the earlier work of Krejcie and Morgan (1970: 608) who simplified sample size decisions using the 'Sample Size for a given Population Size' table to calculate the sample size for their study populations. This includes the research conducted pertaining to strategic agility and performance by the Department of Cooperative Economics and Management *et al.* (2020: 41) as well as that pertaining to causal relationships in business by Rostini *et al.* (2021: 903).

A sample size of 108 survey questionnaire respondents was therefore sourced from a single sub-population of administrative secretaries sized 155 in total as guided by the 'Sample Size for a given Population Size' table.

b) Qualitative Sampling Size

The sampling size for the qualitative aspect of the study was informed by the study by Hennink and Kaiser (2022: 1) that reviewed empirical studies relating to sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research. The study confirmed that qualitative studies can reach saturation with very small sample sizes ranging between nine and 17 interviews. The study further adopted the DEJA analytic tool for a priori mapping of the qualitative study sample sizes. DEJA is a 'Define, Explain, Justify, Apply' method whereby the mental reasoning for the sample sizes based on the stated is demonstrated. Reaching satisfactory data collection formed part of an important indicator of sample size (Mthuli, Ruffin and Singh 2022: 810).

Strategy	Author	Type of data	Number
Narrative research	Creswell (2002)	Interviews	2 or 3
	Stake (2006)	Single case	4–10
Case atudy research	Yin (2011)	Single case	25–50
	Marshall et al. (2013)	Single case	15–30
	Creswell (2014)	Cases	4–5
	Morse (1994)	Interviews/observations	30–50
	Creswell (2002)	Interviews	15–20
Grounded theory studies	Marshall et al. (2013)	Interviews	20–30
	Charmaz (2014)	Interviews	25
	Corbin and Strauss (2008)	Interviews	5
	Morse (1994)	Interviews/observations	30–50
	Bernard (2000)	Interviews	30–60
Ethnographic studies	Morse (1994)	Interviews	30–50
	Bernard (2000)	Interviews	30–60
Ethnoscience	Colaizzi (1978)	Interviews	12
	Dukes (1984)	Interviews	3–10
Phenomenological studies	Morse (1994)	Interviews	6
	Ray (1994)	Interviews	8–12
	Creswell (2002)	Interviews	5–25
	Smith et al. (2009)	Interviews	3–10

Figure 3-7 Recommended Sample Size Based on Research Strategy

(Mthuli, Ruffin and Singh 2022: 813)

A sample size of between nine and 17 interviews was targeted in the qualitative aspect of the study, however, the sub-populations interviewed reached saturation before the estimated range. Provisionally, at least nine interviews were targeted for both the male administrators (strata 1) and managers (strata 2), however, satisfactory data collection was achieved earlier.

For male administrators, saturation was reached at five interviews, making the sample size five. Managers' responses also reached saturation at five interviews, making the sample size five.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is a necessary step when investigating a research problem and data is the anticipated output of the process. The nature of the data may either be primary or secondary, depending on the data collection methods used. Primary data is data collected for the first time and data collection methods include interviews, questionnaires, observations and other methods. Secondary data, on the other hand, is data previously collected by someone else, sometimes statistically validated, and may include published and unpublished data such as books, journals, autobiographies and other types (Mazhar *et al.* 2021: 6-7).

3.8.1 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

The study adopted the use of the sequential design approach referred to as the transformative sequential design. A transformative sequential design involves the collection of data in a sequential manner. This can be done either by collecting quantitative data first followed by qualitative data or vice versa (Pardede 2019: 236). In this method, the theoretical perspective of the researcher informs the order of data collection (Almeida 2018: 140). In the end, the results from both methods are combined (Pardede 2019: 236). Kimmons (2022: 123) refers to Creswell (2008) in stating that the transformative mixed-method research design has the advantage in that it can be based on one or more other designs. This study therefore was able to adopt the exploratory sequential design approach that is highly recommended when developing a new survey as was the case in the current study as it permitted customising of the research instrument questions. The quantitative results were therefore able to be used to explain qualitative results for the purpose of instrument development and to confirm the theories at hand.

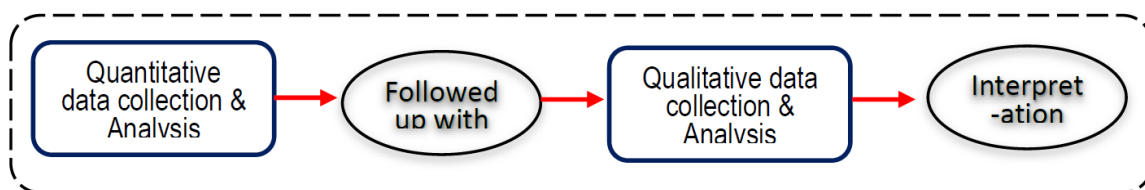


Figure 3-8 Transformative Mixed Method Design

(Pardede 2019: 236)

Data collection methods adopted in the current study included documentary evidence, surveys and interviews.

The data was collected from the following 15 work units in the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law; Faculty of Education; Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering; Office of the Vice-Chancellor; Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellors; Facilities Management Division; Finance Division; Human Resources Division; Institutional Planning; HEMIS; Institutional Support Division; Office of the Registrar; Research and Innovation Division; and Teaching and Learning Division.

a) Documentary Evidence

Documentary evidence is often perceived as an inferior method of collecting data when weighed against the more popular methods such as surveys or interviews when in fact it is equally as good and, even at times, more plausible , (Mogalakwe 2006: 221). Cardno (2019: 626) describes documentary evidence as the use of documentary sources including private or public organisational documents, more notably as supplementary sources to add rigour to a study when used in combination with other methods as it facilitates the desired triangulation. The value of using documentary evidence is said to be enhanced in case study research. Although the method is stated to be a straightforward, efficient, cheaper and generally more practicable one, however, like all other methods, it does sometimes warrant ethical clearance, usually when the documentary source belongs to an organisation.

Permission was obtained from the university to access personal information data on the population of interest to the study. Permission was granted by the university in line with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) which was to be strictly observed by the researcher in conducting the research. This was further ensured by the DUT Research and Ethics Committee upon issuing the ethical clearance certificate to conduct research. Documentary evidence was obtained from the university's Human Resources Division for the purpose of deciphering the demographics of the employees in relation to gender representation by referring to documented employee statistics (**see Appendix J for the table of participants as sourced from the HR database**).

b) Survey Questionnaire (Administrative Support Staff)

A questionnaire is an instrument for collecting information comprising of a set of questions to be completed by a targeted population when it is not feasible to meet with each participant individually. It is favoured in that it provides a structure for questions and accommodates a large sample size while obtaining accurate data in a time efficient manner (Taherdoost 2021: 14, 16). A differentiation is made between a 'survey' and a 'questionnaire-based survey'. The former involves a surveyor collecting information from respondents with standard answers, while the latter has the expectation that respondents first comprehend the questions being asked and then answer them with sincerity. A questionnaire of a survey-based research in general consists of questions intended to address the research problem at hand by collecting diverse types of data (Aithal and Aithal 2020: 3-4). Data collected can

either be qualitative or quantitative in nature and analysed efficiently using relevant software programs (Taherdoost 2021:14,16). Exemplarily the data relates to participant demographics, personal opinions and facts. A questionnaire is further able to employ the assistance of designated scales to obtain intangible information such as feelings and attitudes (Aithal and Aithal 2020: 3-4). Taherdoost (2021: 16) explains the steps for designing a questionnaire as involving determining the methodology, feasibility, instruments, sample, conducting a pilot test and revising the proposed questionnaire instrument.

The questionnaire in the current study was designed in a way that allows the obtaining of diverse views through triangulation. In this way, a convergent design was also incorporated to increase the credibility of the questionnaire (Creswell and Clark 2017: 87). The questions used in the research instruments were adopted in the study based on the guidance provided by Kimmons (2022: 124). Kimmons highlights that acceptable research must align research questions with methods, acknowledge the standards of rigour for both qualitative and quantitative approaches and collaborate with various researchers. The questionnaire therefore was a mixed method questionnaire consisting of open, closed and Likert scale questions which were based on literature consisting of findings of other researchers to foster collaboration. Closed ended questions were pre-coded for ease of analysis with a range of answers for respondents to choose from while the open ended questions allowed the respondents to articulate their own responses (Taherdoost 2021: 14-15).

3.8.1.1 -Survey Questionnaire Design and Dissemination (Administrative Support)

The questionnaire was composed of three sections, namely: Section A, Section B and Section C. Section A, for the purpose of obtaining descriptive information on participants, required the following personal details of participants: gender, age, race, job level, job permanency, work experience and job unit deployment. Section B, in line with the third objective, was interested in determining the relationship between the perceptions of the secretarial administrative staff on the representation of both genders as secretaries in the workplace. This was to facilitate comparison with the ratio of male/female secretaries actually employed for integration and interpretation of results. Section C, in line with the fourth objective, aimed to identify the types of barriers, if any, preventing the representation of men in secretarial jobs in the university. The mode of administration of the survey questionnaire (**see Appendix G for survey questionnaire for secretarial administrative staff**) involved forwarding an online link via the Google docs app to a sample of 108 secretarial administrative staff from 15 university work units. The consenting respondents completed the questionnaire by issuing

their responses within the given deadline period of six weeks following which the link automatically expired. The opted online mode of administration of the questionnaire was advantageous in that it was a cost-effective (Taherdoost 2021:15).

c) Interviews

Interviews are verbal means of collecting qualitative data whereby the researcher leads the conversation with questions that the participant responds to in their own words about how they understand the context of their world. This method is versatile in that it can be used in combination with other qualitative and quantitative methods. Interviews generally take the forms of structured (with rigid interview guides), unstructured (with free-flowing interview guides) and semi-structured (with a compromise of both) (Knott *et al.* 2022: 1). Semi-structured interviews in particular have the primary benefit of allowing the interviewer to probe further amid interview proceedings for enhanced clarity on any discussion matter whilst still maintaining a disciplined structure of questions with concepts to be covered. They are therefore usually a combination of open-ended questions and probing questions. An interview schedule in this instance is not meant to be read word for word and allows an interview conversation to drift naturally (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik 2021: 1358). Although interviews are a widely preferred method, reservation should be held regarding their use as in some instances, such as in observation research, they may not be the strategic choice (Knott *et al.* 2022: 1). Moreover, it is vital that they are authentic and conducted skillfully and in an unbiased manner (Mazhar *et al.* 2021: 7).

Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021: 1359-1360) recommend the following seven methodological considerations and procedures for conducting effective semi-structured interviews:

Step 1: Weigh the relevance of semi-structured interviews in addressing the research objectives.

Step 2: Sampling and participant recruitment

Step 3: Data collection design detailed to include a developed interview guide

Step 4: How the interview will be transcribed, and means of transmitting and storing data

Step 5: What data analysis method will be used

Step 6: Drawing conclusions

Step 7: How results will be reported

In the current study, one-on-one interviews were purposively conducted with the following subgroups: (a) critical cases of male administrators and (b) management.

Sampled units from the sub-population of 48 male administrators and 114 from the sub-population of managers were contacted via the university emails database. Participants who consented to participate virtually provided their confirmation to be interviewed via the MS Teams email calendar and those who preferred to engage face-to-face confirmed via email or telephonically. Semi-structured interview schedules with mainly open-ended questions and a few quantitative close-ended questions were used as instruments, whereby both demographic data of respondents as well as in-depth information were obtained from both sub-groups respectively.

3.8.1.2 - Male Administrators – Interview Instrument

The interview schedule for male administrators (**see Appendix H for the interview schedule for male administrative staff**) was composed of five sections, namely: Section A, Section B, Section C, Section D and Section E. Section A, for the purpose of obtaining descriptive information on participants, required the following personal details of participants: gender, age, race, job level, job permanency, work experience and job unit deployment. Section B, through the use of open-ended questions and in line with the reviewed literature, aimed to obtain in depth information on secretarial job skills and responsibilities on a daily basis. This was done to determine the gendered nature of the secretarial administrative jobs. Section C was aligned with literature on power relations, particularly gender power relations as well as relations between an employee in an authoritative position with their subordinate. It further addressed the 3rd objective of determining the relationship between the perceptions of the corporate society on the representation of both genders as secretaries in the workplace, particularly from a subordinate position. Section E, in line with the fourth objective, was aimed at identifying the types of barriers, if any, preventing the representation of men in secretarial jobs within the university.

3.8.1.3 - Management – Interview Instrument

The interview schedule for managers (**see Appendix I for the interview schedule for managers**) was composed of six sections, namely: Section A, Section B, Section C, Section D, Section E and Section F. Section A, for the purpose of obtaining descriptive information on participants, required the following personal details of participants: gender, age, race, job

level, job permanency, work experience and job unit deployment. Section B, in line with the reviewed literature, aimed to explore the potential use of language as a strategy through which the power of men is maintained in the secretarial administrative field. This applied in instances where job roles with similar job descriptions were titled based on the gender assigned to the job. This was done by first establishing the common understanding of the secretarial administrative job roles. Section C was aligned with literature on power relations, particularly gender power relations as well as relations between a manager in an authoritative position with their subordinate. Section D aimed at addressing the third objective of identifying the perceptions of the managers towards the representation of both genders as secretaries in the workplace. Section E, in line with the fourth objective, was aimed at analysing the impact of gender roles on the secretarial administrative employees in the university.

3.8.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

When engaging with a population, including any sub-population, it is imperative that they be unambiguously defined in terms of the scope of their boundaries. Such boundaries or eligibility criteria may border around the study variables such as, for instance, the geographic location of the participants, or the qualitative experience of the participants. This exclusivity is important to ensure that those who do not represent the study's needs do not form part of the study as this could compromise the integrity of the study by misrepresenting the population that is in fact being targeted. The inclusion and exclusion criteria should therefore be clearly defined in key terms (Casteel and Bridier 2021: 344).

In constructing the current study's inclusion/exclusion criteria, the specific objectives, research questions and research constraints including time and financial resources (Bougie and Sekaran 2019: 237) were therefore considered. Study participants were selected from all established strata whilst ensuring representativeness of the units in the strata. The study included only the following characteristics when evaluating representativeness: age, race, work experience and whether the employee was a permanent or temporary contracted employee. This was based on the fact that the researcher did not aim to engage in a study that was excessively detailed and extensive in scope (Moran 2018: para.3 line 4).

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: Sub-group 1 (155 Administrative Support Staff)

The study participants from all secretarial administrative established strata were included in line with the theoretical framework and objectives of the study. They were therefore included

as they were in a better position to narrate accurately their own personal experiences relating to the representation of men as secretaries. Their responses assisted to answer realistic study questions pertaining to gender imbalance, attitudes on gender, as well as existing barriers to male representation in the secretarial administrative field. Administrative secretaries who were not adequately experienced, such as interns, were not included. The male administrative support staff as units in the population were included as critical outlier cases in terms of gender representation in the secretarial administrative job positions. Their critical attributes were that they were (a) males and (b) employed in the support jobs under study.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: Sub-group 2 (114 Management)

The management sub-group was included as they were in a better position to address the research question by narrating their own daily experiences working with support staff as management at the university. In line with the third research objective, the purpose of including sub-group 2 was to ascertain the attitudes of management as selected participants in authoritarian positions. Identifying management attitudes was also in line with the chosen theoretical lenses on masculinities and post-structuralism feminism in relation to representation of males as secretaries. Describing the management sub-group assisted in obtaining categorical data at a micro level such as the managerial job levels and their assigned job roles in the context of gender and power relations.

3.9 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is an implementation feasibility study to test the practicability of methods and procedures that one intends to use in the main study (Teresi *et al.* 2022: 95). It aims to mitigate any uncertainties the researcher might have about the design and implementation of the study (Pearson *et al.* 2020: 1). When planning to administer a questionnaire, pilot testing presents an opportunity for the researcher to revise any construct items, add or remove questions, reshuffle the order of questions, or amend any misunderstandings on the questions by the respondents. The researcher further monitors whether there is enough variation in the response to various questions or whether respondents score near zero or maximum score in a particular question to support proceeding to conduct the main study (Aithal and Aithal 2020:6). What is of utmost importance in qualitative interviews is the validity and reliability of data which is satisfied by appropriately undergoing the full pre-interview, during interview and post-interview stages. During the pre-interview, participants

and questions are decided in line with the study objectives and proper meeting arrangements are made. During interviews participants are thoroughly briefed on the study and provided with a comfortable setting to participate in the interview. Post-interview, data is analysed and refined for use in the main study (Gani, Rathakrishnan and Krishnasamy 2020: 141-142). In this way, the pilot study contributes to the development of the researching strategy and helps to measure the outcome of employing the strategy and to determine the suitability of the methods chosen for the main research (Pearson *et al.* 2020: 1).

In the current study, a pilot study was conducted on two sub-groups extracted from the target population, namely: (a) male and female administrative secretaries in general and (b) managers. Results of the study by Nakazawa (2011: 93) show that pilot studies are more effective in manageable sample sizes from 30 subjects. Furthermore, focus should be on reducing error variance and rectifying anomalies. Buschle, Reiter and Bethmann (2022: 823) concluded in their study that the most vital aspect of the pre-testing of a questionnaire was common understanding of the questions among participants. This refers to questions that serve to answer the main questions of the study. In the current study, the questionnaire and interview schedules, particularly the questions, were tested on respondents representing a smaller set of the target population to test the practicability and sensitivity of the instruments. Pretesting of the research instruments was conducted in order to detect any flaws in the instruments' designs that could compromise the quality of responses by the respondents.

3.9.1 Pilot Testing Interviews

The pre-test 10% sample size for the two sub-groups to participate in the pre-test qualitative interviews procedure was drawn using a purposive non-probability sampling method from:

- A sample of nine male administrative secretaries, whose participants were two in total.
- A sample of nine management personnel, whose participants were two in total.

The pre-test involved the testing of interview schedules whereby a letter requesting the participant's consent to participate in the research was forwarded via email to the two groups. Two pre-test semi-structured interview schedules custom designed for the two sub-groups were used to conduct the individual interviews. Conducting the pilot study involved three stages. Prior to the interview, the researcher prepared the draft interview schedule of

questions as relevant to the study objectives and ensured participant meetings were officially secured in terms of date, time and meeting platform. The stage during the interview involved the researcher providing the interview participants with a safe, secluded environment to express themselves and ensured that they were advised of their rights in relation to their participation and the handling of their information. The researcher further observed closely the responses of the participants and how clearly they were able to comprehend the questions being asked in line with the intended meanings. Post the interview, the participants were offered an opportunity to ask questions and the pilot study was reflected upon for areas of improvement in the methodology and the instruments adopted.

3.9.2 Pilot Testing Survey Questionnaires

The pre-test 10% of the sample size of 108 administrative secretaries, equivalent to 11 participants, was randomly drawn. This was guided by the results of the study by Perneger *et al.* (2015: 151) which showed that the detectable occurrence of the problem can be adjusted from five percent, which is at risk of being easily missed in a small sample, to 10% to make the pre-test more practical. In support, Aithal and Aithal (2020: 6) state that the sample should not be too small as to interfere with the statistical power of a study. Probability sampling using the stratified random sampling method was implemented to select the 11 participants simulating the environment planned for the main study. A semi-structured questionnaire along with a letter of consent was issued as part of the quantitative pre-test procedure. This involved an online link being forwarded via the Google docs app to the 10% sample of 11 secretarial administrative staff stratified within the 15 university work units. The consenting respondents completed the pilot questionnaire and letter of consent online by issuing their responses within the given deadline of two weeks following which the link automatically expired.

3.9.3 Pilot Testing Results

The pilot study was reflected upon and it was concluded that revisions were not necessary. Methodically, the proceedings were found to be seamless and the instruments were able to obtain the data intended without any barriers to communication. The questionnaire and interview schedules as instruments were therefore deemed fit for use to conduct a full research study that was valid and reliable. Responses obtained from the questionnaires and the three interview schedules were not included as part of the responses in the main study.

3.10 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity refers to how accurately a method measures what it is intended to measure (Chikwe and King-Agboto 2022: 2556). Reliability aims to confirm the consistency and stability of the results to a level whereby, were a retest to be done, similar results would be obtained (Hajjar 2018: 47). One of the greatest disadvantages associated with case study research approaches such as the current one is the inherently low validity and reliability (Quintao, Andrade and Almeida 2020: 264). Part of enhancing validity and reliability in the current research therefore involved conducting a pilot study to confirm whether what was being measured by the documentary evidence, interviews and surveys was aligned with what the study intended to measure.

3.10.1 Credibility and Trustworthiness: Qualitative Methods

When analysed more closely, validity and reliability are, in fact, not viewed entirely the same in quantitative and qualitative aspects of research. From a qualitative aspect, validity and reliability aims for transparency and transferability therefore placing value on evidence and trustworthiness. These notable differences have led to alternative terms such as credibility, dependability, trustworthiness, transparency and transferability being used in qualitative research in the place of validity and reliability. Triangulation, low-interference description and audit trails in particular are some of the identified practices that infuse trustworthiness in the research being conducted to ensure reliability of qualitative data (Vhu 2021: 1, 8).

To ensure trustworthiness in the current study, method triangulation of the various ways of collecting data, including documentary evidence, interviews and surveys, was used to enhance the reliability of the study. In the presentation of qualitative data, some of the responses were not reconstructed to allow the audience's critical appraisal of the findings. Lastly, an audit trail was provided by issuing a detailed account of how qualitative themes were justified and linked to qualitative data interpretations and the recordings of the interviews were kept as evidence for auditing purposes (Vhu 2021: 6).

3.10.2 Validity and Reliability: Quantitative Methods

Validity and reliability are means of qualifying both quantitative and qualitative research as being of an acceptable standard, however, more so for quantitative research. Validity and

reliability from a quantitative view denote how closely results match the reality being measured the replicability of results in different contexts respectively (Vhu 2021: 1, 8). The validity of inferences made during quantitative data analysis depend on the superiority of constructed measures, proper handling of misplaced data, appropriate measurement of a dependent variable and model verification (Abulela and Harwell 2019: 1). Quantitative data analysis avoids personal bias by creating a distance between the data and researcher during the data management and critical thinking processes (Kotronoulas *et al.* 2023: 9). It further avoids weak reliability and validity evidence that can potentially distort inferences (Abulela and Harwell 2019: 1).

A) Questionnaire Internal Consistency

Cronbach Alpha is a test method ideal to measure reliability in social and behavioural contexts (Ravinder and Swaraswathi 2021: 2943) as relevant to the study, especially to enumerate the errors in a total or average score of a multi-item scale. The unobservable constructs which were measured by the multi-item Likert-type scale in the survey questionnaire were: “perceptions on gender representation” and “perceived gender barriers” (Hayes and Coutts 2020: 1). Cronbach Alpha was adopted as it assists in measuring the internal consistency of the questionnaire multi-item scale as a research instrument. This undertaking was imperative to ascertain how the various individual questions validated the relationship with one another. It is required to achieve a Cronbach Alpha value that is high as this heightens the confidence that the test employed is internally consistent and therefore relates the various questions to one another. A low Cronbach Alpha value was not desirable as this would have the opposite effect and lessen the confidence that the test was consistent (Hayes and Coutts 2020: 4).

Schrepp (2020: 248) refers to the principle that similar score results are to be expected if a certain demographic group undergoes the same test and that great deviation from the expected would indicate an unreliable measure. It was anticipated that respondents who scored higher on specific question themes would also score higher in other question themes which are closely related to those themes. The MS Excel software program was used to calculate the Cronbach Alpha value. The following Cronbach Alpha formula was used:

Cronbach's Alpha:

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{k}{k-1} \right) \left(\frac{s_y^2 - \sum s_i^2}{s_y^2} \right)$$

Figure 3-9 Cronbach Alpha Formula

(O'Loughlin 2020)

The Cronbach Alpha formula was applied and the score obtained was 0.867. The score being between the scale of 0.8 to 0.9 indicated that the questionnaire instrument was internally consistent and highly reliable. This was based on the strength of association determination as a guide (Nawi, Samat and Mustapha 2020: 24).

Alpha Coefficient Range	Strength of Association
< 0.6	Poor
0.6 to < 0.7	Moderate
0.7 to < 0.8	Good
0.8 to < 0.9	Very Good
0.9 >	Excellent

Figure 3-10 Strength of Association Determination

(Nawi et al., 2020: 24)

B) Confidence Level and Margin of Error

Quantitative results are deemed reliable firstly based on the study confidence level and margin of error determined. The study determined the amount of precision needed in estimating the population characteristics of interest. Thereafter, the amount of chance the researcher was willing to take in making errors in estimation of the population parameters was decided (Bougie and Sekaran 2019: 227). The study thus aimed for a survey target response rate of no less than 60% from a target population of 269 employees and sample size of 108 employees and the study managed to obtain a confidence level of 95% with a five percent margin of error.

3.11 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a phase in a research study involving scientific and systematic analysis of data sets collected for the purpose of reaching a research conclusion. There are many methods of analysing data, depending on the research approach chosen. The types of data analysis for a qualitative study include ethnographic data analysis, grounded theory data analysis, phenomenological data analysis, constant comparative method analysis, or language-based data analysis. For a quantitative study, the different types of analysis are normative analysis, descriptive analysis, status analysis, classification analysis, evaluate analysis, comparative analysis, or cost effective analysis (Tabuena and Hilario 2021: 1, 3).

3.11.1 Qualitative Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is based on the conceptualisation of language to give meaning using various methods such as content analysis, discourse analysis and narrative analysis. Qualitative analysis comprises of describing in summary the data obtained from the respondents and comprehending their case. Moreover, the researcher must make sense of emerging themes and patterns, categorise them and acknowledge any outlier cases so that raw data can be converted to knowledge. This process in the current study involved content analysis. The process involved organising data into themes, reading and coding data so that each theme was thoroughly explained and data categorised according to the associative code to allow data presentation and interpretation (Tabuena and Hilario 2021: 5-7).

Individual interviews with male secretarial administrative staff and management were carried out for data collection. A thematic and content analysis based on the survey questionnaires and interviews was used to identify similar and contradictory themes between the participant responses. In conducting qualitative data analysis, the researcher considered the validity of the words in content analysis as well as individual themes in thematic analysis to determine whether or not they accurately reflected the meaning evident in the data set. The two data analysis methods of content and thematic analysis were mixed together to strengthen the reliability of the study. The semantic differential scale was also used for qualitative data analysis as it was relevant to the concept under study: the scale was anchored from both a linguistic and conceptual point of view and there was no contextual contamination (Verhagen, Hooff and Meents 2015: 112).

3.11.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Data analysis in quantitative research is the use of statistics to make inferences. It implies that once one gains access to data, it must be screened for errors and missing values and variables must be defined and coded accordingly. Statistics have the advantage of handling large numbers of data, variables and samples to quantify effects, explore relationships and summarise characteristics for generalisation of a population (Kotronoulas *et al.* 2023: 1).

In the current study, SPSS version 29.0 software was used to analyse the quantitative responses. The summary of the variables in the data set, referred to as 'descriptive statistics', was presented in the form of graphs, cross tabulations and other figures to show what a typical sample generally looked like (Kotronoulas *et al.* 2023: 1). Inferential techniques adopted in the study incorporated the use of correlations and Chi square test values interpreted using p-values. Correlations analysis was adopted to explain the relations between the variables present in the quantitative data using a correlation coefficient to measure the strength of association between the variables (Temizhan, Mirtagioglu and Mendes 2022: 272). The Chi square test was used to determine whether there was any correlation between nonnumeric variables commonly used in statistics studies (Turhan 2020: 2576). The p-value, which is the value for probability emanating from statistical tests, served as means of telling to a certain confidence level whether an effect, relationship or difference was in existence (Kotronoulas *et al.* 2023: 1).

Bivariate correlation was performed on the ordinal data whereby positive values indicated a directly proportional relationship between variables and negative values indicated the opposite. The Spearman's rho coefficient was utilised to show significant relationships between variables (indicated with * or **). Pearson's goodness of fit Chi square test, which allows the use of statistical methods that do not depend on normal distribution to interpret findings, was also used in the study to determine whether scoring patterns were significantly different per statement (Turhan 2020: 2576).

3.11.3 Factor Analysis

Often loading a questionnaire with a lot of statements can work against it in that it may not be able to issue understanding of the variables involved. Factor Analysis is therefore adopted to eliminate unnecessary questions from the final constructed questionnaire. This questionnaire evaluation method directs focus onto a few prominent factors rather than an enormous number of factors. Factor Analysis, as concluded by the results of the study by

Shrestha (2021: 4), is a capable approach to obtain significant factors to explain the extreme variability of units under study. The Factor Analysis formula was applied only to Likert scale items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) of Sampling Adequacy value should be greater than 0.500 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significance value should be less than 0.05. The result obtained showed that all of the conditions for the Factor Analysis were achieved as illustrated in the table below.

Table 3-1 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.739
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	378.341
	df	21
	Sig.	< 0.001

3.12 Ethical Considerations

An expectation of any research scientist is that they are trustworthy, honest, reliable and impartial and conduct research that follows set protocols and procedures. Individuals and organisations are now compelled to justify the manner in which they conduct their research so that researchers can be held accountable for any intended or unintended offense they induce to another party as a result of their research. This is especially important as any scientific research can be linked to questionable research practices or research that is highly controversial with scientific fraud and other risks associated with research procedures. Reflexivity is therefore imperative as a means of critically reflecting on one's own actions and that of another in the context of research and accountability (Bos 2020: 1, 2, 18). Drolet *et al.* (2022: 275) pinpoint ten categories of ethical issues that are experienced by researchers according to participants in their study. The issues identified were: 1) research integrity, 2) conflict of interest, 3) respect for participants, 4) lack of supervision and power imbalances, 5) individualism and performance, 6) inadequate ethical guidance, 7) social injustices, 8) distributive injustices, 9) epistemic injustices and 10) ethical distress. The presence of such issues in research involving human beings warrants approval by an ethics committee. The committee ensures that ethical principles and legal rights of participants are not invaded, and this over and above the assurance of quality and safe research methodologies (Sanchez, Bezhoid and Farnos 2023: 201).

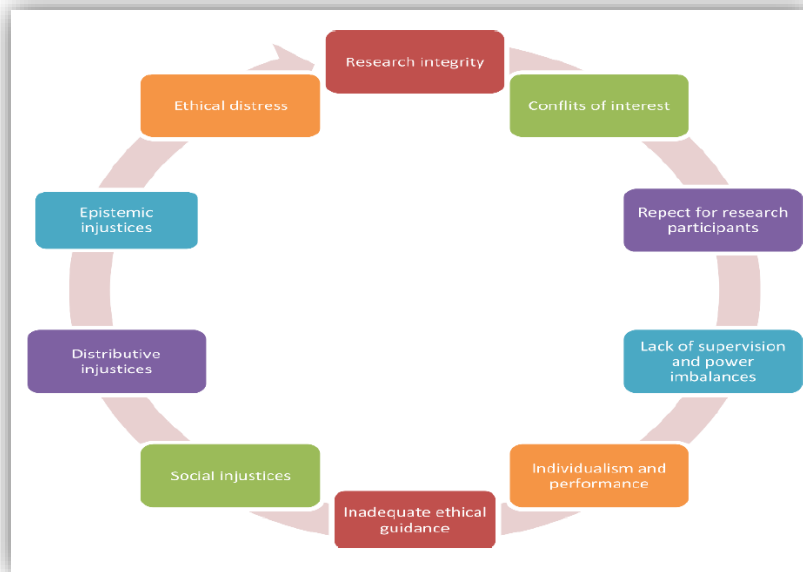


Figure 3-11 Ethical issues in research according to the study participants

(Drolet *et al.* 2022: 275)

The DUT Institutional Research and Ethics Committee through its official processes considered the application for ethical clearance made by the researcher. The ethical approval was granted for a period of one year and further issued an ethical clearance certificate number IREC039/23 (**see Appendix C for the ethical clearance certificate**). The selected university in KZN was issued with a letter of request to conduct research (**see Appendix A for letter of Request to Conduct Research**) accompanied by the official research proposal, ethical clearance certificate, as well as proposed research instruments. The university Research and Ethics Office considered and approved the request made issuing a gatekeeper’s letter stating all relevant terms and conditions of the university and that of POPIA (**see Appendix B for the letter of approval to conduct research**).

Upon approval of the request to conduct research by the university, foremost, the researcher observed shared values in scientific research by committing to objectivity during research due to a conflict of interest in being a member of the university under research (Bos 2020: 40). The targeted population was issued with a letter of information (**see Appendix D for survey letter of information and consent form, see Appendix E for Research Interview Letter of Information, see Appendix F for interview letter of consent**). The letter assured participant protection during research and implied researcher accountability for intentional or non-intentional harm caused to a participant (Bos 2020: 18). The letter also affirmed

anonymity and confidentiality in the handling of data collected. Declaring anonymity defined the degree to which a participant could be identified as a participant in the study. Declaration of confidentiality made official the researcher participant agreement to safekeep data and private information collected from a participant (Bos 2020: 156).

Sanchez, Bezhoid and Farnos (2023: 201) concluded in their study that obtaining informed consent was an important aspect to observe during data collection as it provided solid proof of adherence to autonomy to participate. The participants were therefore also issued with a letter of informed consent to ensure that they had willingly agreed to participate in the study. Informed consent is further described as an instrument that safeguards confidentiality of the participant's sensitive or private information entrusted to the researcher (Bos 2020:154). This, therefore, ensured that the data obtained during the study would be stored and disposed of in a manner that ensured confidentiality of participants. It further ensured that the data would be kept for as long as it served the purpose of the research in password encrypted files, not easily accessible to the public. When no longer needed, the hardcopy data was to be destroyed with a shredder and the softcopies deleted completely from the electronic system after five years.

3.13 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THREE

This chapter presented the plan adopted to achieve the objectives of the research investigation. It described the combination of the approaches and strategies employed and justified the complementarity of the methods in being the best workable solution to find answers to the research questions posed by the study. Moreover, the chapter defended the validity and reliability of the methods, provided a demonstration of how it was piloted and how ethics were considered in the entire process of enquiry. The following chapter will interpret the results of the various types of data obtained in relation to the study aims and objectives.

CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the mixed method design plan that was adopted in this study. As indicated in Chapter Three, data was collected from a selected university in KZN through documentary analysis of HR documents, secretarial administrative staff survey questionnaires and interviews with selected male administrative staff and managers. Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 108 secretarial administrative staff and 108 were returned which gave a response rate of 100%. The quantitative survey data was analysed using SPSS version 29.0 and presented as descriptive statistics using graphs and cross-tabulations. The qualitative data was analysed thematically.

Consistent with the mixed method approach, this chapter will describe how the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study were interpreted. This will be done by looking at interpretations of data emanating from firstly, the documentary analysis; secondly, the survey questionnaire; and lastly, the individual interviews. The documentary analysis section will simplify data on staff gender representation as sourced from the HR documentation. This will be followed by survey quantitative results parted into three sections, namely: Section A (biographical data of secretarial administrative staff), Section B (perceptions of gender representation) and Section C (identifying gender barriers). Thirdly, the data obtained from the two groups (the male administrators and the managers) will be interpreted thematically and in line with the study objectives and theoretical frameworks.

The discussion of the findings will be covered in Chapter Five.

4.2 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS RESULTS (OBJECTIVE 1)

(Objective 1: To determine gender representation within the secretarial administrative staff population at the selected university in KZN in the year 2024)

The document analysis data was collected for the purpose of addressing the first research objective. This section presents the official year 2024 Human Resources Department data from a selected university in KZN pertaining to gender representation within secretarial administrative support staff.

The document was originally created to serve an operational database function for the division. Upon data cleaning for the study context and protection of private information, a secondary document was created from the primary HR document to reflect only the data that was relevant to the study and in compliance with the Protection of Private Information Act. This was the clean information used to present the results of the study.

4.2.1 Gender Categorisation and Number Employed per Category

Table 4-1 University Secretarial administrative Support Staff Representation

NUMBER EMPLOYED IN SUPPORT JOB ROLES AT A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Support Job Titles	Male	Female	Number Employed	Percentage Employed
Secretary/ Personal Assistants	0	19	19	12%
Administrator	12	20	32	21%
Administrative Secretary	1	21	22	14%
Administrative Assistant	1	1	2	1%
Administrative Officer	3	5	8	5%
Officer	18	27	45	29%
Coordinator	9	8	17	11%
Clerk	3	5	8	5%
Data Capturer	0	1	1	1%
Switchboard Operator	1	0	1	1%
Total				

Table 4.1 above reflects the support jobs represented by gender and numbers as documented in the HR data base (see corresponding **Appendix A**).

According to the documentary analysis:

The data obtained showed that a majority of the support staff were officers at 45 (29%) with predominantly 27 (60%) females and a lesser 18 (40%) males. The second largest category was administrators represented by 32 (21%) employees with a majority, 20 (63%), females and fewer, 12 (37%), males. Other job titles were administrative secretaries at 22 (14%) with a significant 22 (92%) females and fewer, two (8%), males; secretaries/personal assistants at 19 (12%) with all 19 (100%) secretaries/personal assistants being female and none, 0 (0%), male; coordinators at 17 (11%) with a trivial difference of nine (53%) males and eight (47%) females; administrative officers at eight (5%) with a significant five (63%) females and fewer, three (37%), males; clerks at eight (5%) with a majority, five (63%), females and fewer, three (37%), males. The least significant groups were administrative assistants: two (1%), data capturer: one (1%) and switchboard operator: one (1%).

4.3 SURVEY QUANTITATIVE RESULTS (OBJECTIVES 1 AND 2)

Guided by the objectives of the study, sections A, B and C making up this segment deliver explanations on the survey quantitative results on secretarial administrative staff with reference to their biographical data, perceptions on gender representation and identification of gender barriers.

4.3.1 SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF SECRETARIAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

(Objective 1: To determine gender representation within the secretarial administrative staff population at the selected university in KZN in the year 2024)

This section provides descriptive data on the demographics of 108 participants who were secretarial administrative staff members at a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal. It reveals their gender, age, race, personnel level of position in the office, work permanency and the work unit deployment.

The biographical data was collected for the purposes of linking a specific demographic to trends that emerge from the research enquiry.

4.3.1.1 SURVEY RESPONSES BY SECRETARIAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:

4.3.1.1.1 Gender Distribution by Age

The table below provides a synopsis of the age and gender distribution of administrative secretaries at the university.

Table 4-2 Age (years) Gender Cross tabulation

Age (years) * Gender Crosstabulation

Age (years)		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
18 - 30	Count	1	6	7
	% within Age (years)	14,3%	85,7%	100,0%
	% within Gender	4,2%	7,1%	6,5%
	% of Total	0,9%	5,6%	6,5%
31 - 40	Count	10	44	54
	% within Age (years)	18,5%	81,5%	100,0%
	% within Gender	41,7%	52,4%	50,0%
	% of Total	9,3%	40,7%	50,0%
41 - 50	Count	8	24	32
	% within Age (years)	25,0%	75,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	33,3%	28,6%	29,6%
	% of Total	7,4%	22,2%	29,6%
> 50	Count	5	10	15
	% within Age (years)	33,3%	66,7%	100,0%
	% within Gender	20,8%	11,9%	13,9%
	% of Total	4,6%	9,3%	13,9%
Total	Count	24	84	108
	% within Age (years)	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%

Table 4.2 above depicts the overall gender distribution by age in secretarial administrative support jobs at the university. A significant number, 84 (77.8%), were females and the much lesser quota of 24 (22.2%) were males. Of the majority respondents, who were females, 44 (52.4%) were between the ages of 31-40 years, 24 (28.6%) between 41-50 years, 10 (11.9%) were 50 years and above, and six (7.1%) were 18-30 years. Of the males, who were the least represented, 10 (41.7%) were between the ages of 31-40 years, eight (33.3%) between 41-50 years, five (20.8%) were 50 years and above, and one (4.2%) was between 18-30 years. These findings are consistent with the findings of the HR documentary analysis which also showed women as the predominant gender in the secretarial administrative support roles.

The above table clearly displays that in all age groups reflected, females were the most represented in support roles. A study conducted by Cortina, Rodriguez and Gonzalez (2021: 104) revealed that men were mostly discriminated upon in female dominated occupations. A study by Abdullah *et al.* (2023: 205) revealed that men, to a certain extent, do harbour some interest in feminised careers. The lack of representation of men in the current study, therefore, could be indicative of an existence of biases.

4.3.1.1.2 Distribution by Race

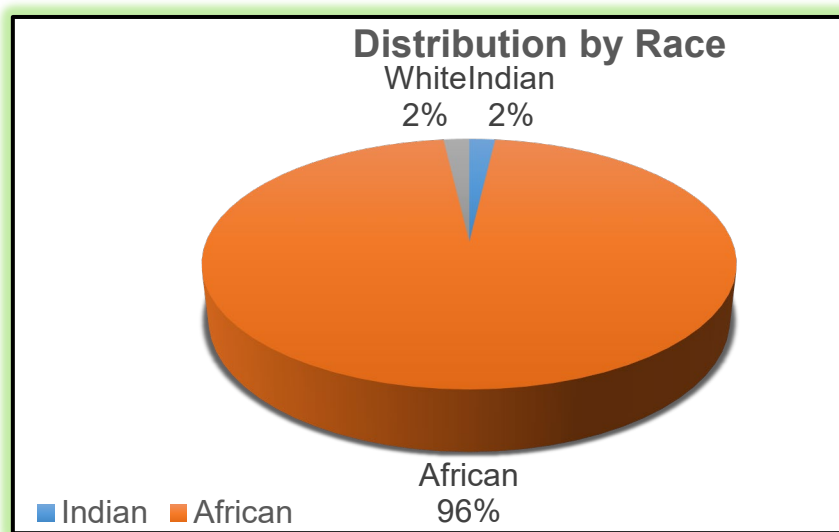


Figure 4-1 Distribution by Race

Figure 4.1 depicts the race of the study participants as significantly 104 (96.3%) African, two (1.9%) Indian and two (1.9%) white. This is consistent with the predominant race where the university is located being African as well.

4.3.1.1.3 Personnel level of position in the office

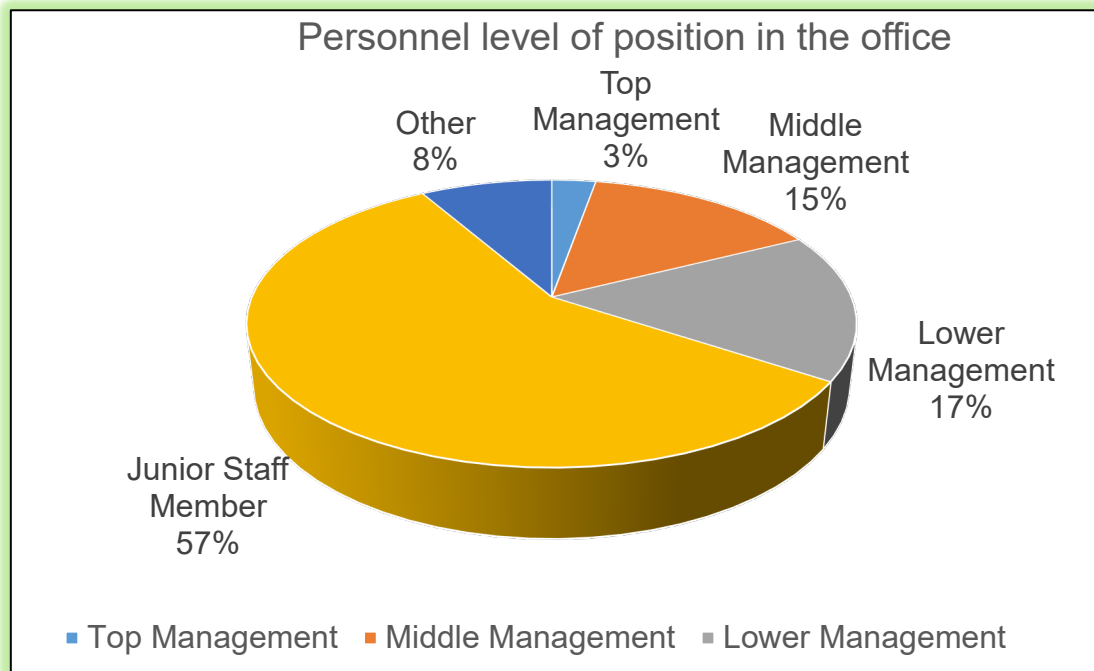


Figure 4-2 Personnel Level of Position in the Office

Figure 4.2 depicts that more than half, 62 (57%), of participants perceived themselves to be junior staff members, 18 (17%) deemed themselves to be lower management, 16 (15%) middle management, nine (8%) indicated ‘other’, while three (3%) considered themselves as part of top management. A considerable number of participants who indicated they were in senior positions were, according to HR documentation, still at a junior staff level. This may be an indication of an expectation in relation to career progression based on the acquired work experience and potential issues of career growth and development.

4.3.1.1.4 Crosstabulation: Job Status and Gender

Table 4-3 Cross Tabulation of Males vs Female Support Staff Job Permanency

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Kindly indicate whether you are permanent or	Permanent	Count	23	72	95
		% within Kindly indicate whether you are permanent or non-permanent staff member	24,2%	75,8%	100,0%
		% within Gender	95,8%	85,7%	88,0%
		% of Total	21,3%	66,7%	88,0%
		Count	1	12	13

non-permanent staff member	Non-permanent	% within Kindly indicate whether you are permanent or non-permanent staff member	7,7%	92,3%	100,0%
		% within Gender	4,2%	14,3%	12,0%
		% of Total	0,9%	11,1%	12,0%
Total	Count		24	84	108
	% within Kindly indicate whether you are permanent or non-permanent staff member		22,2%	77,8%	100,0%
	% within Gender		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% of Total		22,2%	77,8%	100,0%

The participants were asked if they were permanent staff members of the university or non-permanent. As shown in **Table 4.3**, females, being the predominant gender at 77.8% compared to males at 22.2%, constituted 72 (66.7%) of the total permanently employed support staff, while males accounted for only 23 (24.2%) of the total. However, relative to their lesser representation, men were more inclined towards being permanently employed in the support jobs at 95.8% than the significantly represented females whose job permanency was at 85.7%. Non-permanent support staff, who were a majority female, made up 12 (92.3%) of the total support staff job permanency distribution while males accounted for only one (7.7%) of the total. This meant that relative to both genders' representation, there were more non-permanent female support staff (14.3%) compared to a lesser number of males who were non-permanent at (4.2%). These results could be indicative of the prioritisation of men in general and how their roles are more valued and women's roles less valued even in similar job roles. In the literature, a study by Yilmaz and Sürgevil (2020: 85) revealed that women are generally accepted as having a lower status than that of men merely because of their gender.

4.3.1.1.5 University Office Unit Deployment

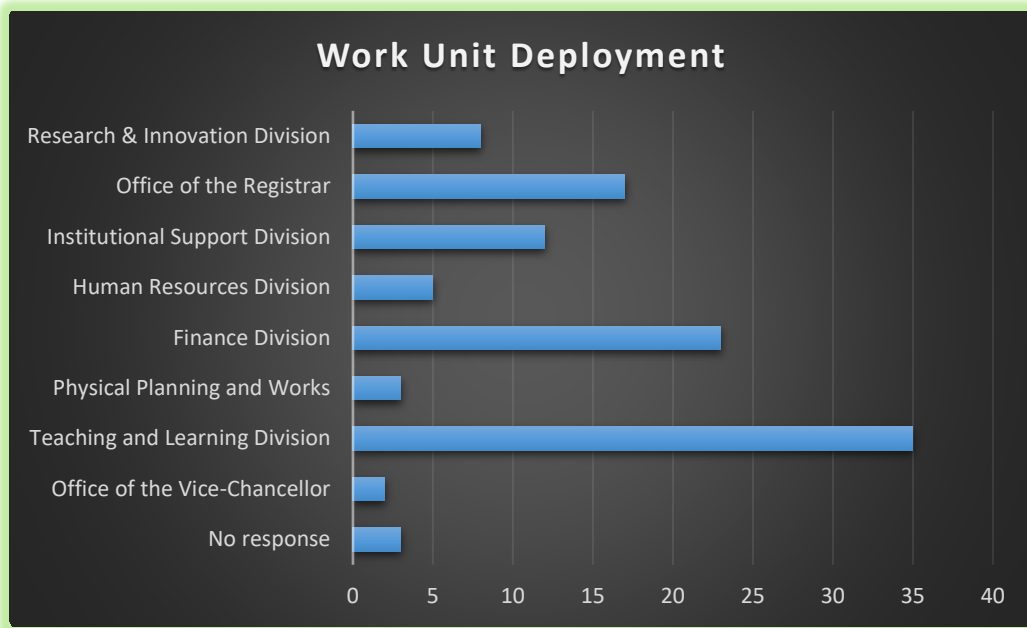


Figure 4-3 Work Unit Deployment

Figure 4.3 depicts that the majority of secretarial administrative staff are deployed in the Teaching and Learning Division – 35 (32.4%) – while 23 (21.3%) are deployed in the Finance Division and 17 (15.7%) in the Office of the Registrar respectively. The balance of the staff distribution was divided among various other units with 12 (11.1%) in the Institutional Support Division, 8 (7.4%) in the Research and Innovation Division, 5 (4.6%) in the Human Resources Division, 3 (2.8%) in Physical Planning and Works and 2 (1.9%) in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. No responses were obtained from 3 (2.8%) of the participants.

4.3.2 SECTION B: PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER REPRESENTATION (SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES ACCORDING TO OBJECTIVES)

This section provides participants' perceptions on gender representation with particular reference to job role and job title congruency with a specific gender. The responses were collected using quantitative closed ended questions with a few open-ended questions to elaborate on some closed questions. The narrative qualitative responses to open-ended questions 2.5 and 2.6, as aligned with their chosen options, were incorporated in the qualitative results sections to form part of the thematic content analysis. The closed-ended responses given in this section aligned with the following study objectives:

- **Objective 1:** To determine gender representation within the secretarial administrative staff population at the selected university in KZN in the year 2024.
- **Objective 2:** To identify the attitude of secretaries towards their roles within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal.

4.3.2.1 Secretaries ensure organisations run smoothly by attending to organisational tasks

Table 4-4 Consensus on the Description of the Role of a ‘Secretary’: Responses by Male and Female Support Staff

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Secretaries ensure organisations run smoothly by attending to organisational tasks such as: records management, managing appointments, organising meetings, minute taking, travelling arrangements and other tasks	Count	24 _a	83 _a	107
	% within Secretaries ensure organisations run smoothly by attending to organisational tasks such as: records management, managing appointments, organising meetings, minute taking, travelling arrangements and other tasks	22,4%	77,6%	100,0%
	% within Gender	100,0%	98,8%	99,1%
	% of Total	22,2%	76,9%	99,1%
	Count	0 _a	1 _a	1
	% within Secretaries ensure organisations run smoothly by attending to organisational tasks such as: records management, managing appointments, organising meetings, minute taking, travelling arrangements and other tasks	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
Disagree	% within Gender	0,0%	1,2%	0,9%
	% of Total	0,0%	0,9%	0,9%
	Count	24	84	108
Total	% within Secretaries ensure organisations run smoothly by attending to organisational tasks such as: records management, managing appointments, organising meetings, minute taking, travelling arrangements and other tasks	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%
	Count	24	84	108

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0,05 level.

Table 4.4 above depicts that, generally, the secretarial role as understood by a majority, 107 (99.1%) of respondents, is that: “*Secretaries ensure organisations run smoothly by attending to organisational tasks such as: records management, managing appointments, organising meetings, minute taking, travelling arrangements and other tasks*”. All 24 (100%) male respondents agreed with this description, however, 83 (98.8%) of the female respondents agreed, with only one (1.2%) female respondent who disagreed. Participant vast consensus on the responses provided confidence that the role of a ‘secretary’ was understood in the same context by both genders and the researcher. The responses were further consistent with literature with Oladeji and Afolabi (2021: 137) describing that a

secretary has command of office skills and manages records, correspondence, minutes of meetings and related concerns of an organisation.

4.3.2.2 The gender of secretaries that I come across in the university offices is generally:

**Table 4-5 Predominant Gender of Secretaries at the University:
Responses by Male and Female Support Staff**

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
The gender of secretaries that I come across in the university offices is generally:	Mostly female secretaries	Count	23 _a	83 _a	106
		% within The gender of secretaries that I come across in the university offices is generally:	21,7%	78,3%	100,0%
		% within Gender	95,8%	98,8%	98,1%
	Equal number of Males and Females	% of Total	21,3%	76,9%	98,1%
		Count	1 _a	1 _a	2
		% within The gender of secretaries that I come across in the university offices is generally:	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
Total	% within Gender	4,2%	1,2%	1,9%	
	% of Total	0,9%	0,9%	1,9%	
	Count	24	84	108	
Total	% within The gender of secretaries that I come across in the university offices is generally:	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level.

Table 4.5 depicts that a significant number, 106 (98.1%), of participants, of whom the majority, 83 (98.8%), were females and 23 (95.8%) were males, perceived the secretarial jobs to be female dominated. A negligible two (1.9%) participants, of whom one (4.2%) was male and one (1.2%) was female, viewed both males and females to be equitably represented. None of the participants 0 (0.0%) came across male secretaries.

Perception by the majority that secretaries are typically women serves as evidence of female dominance in secretarial jobs as the status quo. The study conducted by Hamjediers (2023: 524) showed that men who were not pre-exposed to female occupations were less likely to pursue them. The limited exposure of men to the secretarial jobs was therefore flagged as a concern regarding the possibility of equitable representation in the secretarial job roles and perpetuation of gender roles in the workplace. Considering that often the term 'secretary' and 'administrator' are used interchangeably by some, there is a possibility that the few participants that perceived equitable representation of both genders had combined the 'secretarial' and 'administrative' roles to mean the same.

4.3.2.3 I generally think of secretaries as being of the following gender:

**Table 4-6 Gender Associated with Job Title of ‘Secretary’:
Responses by Male and Female Support Staff**

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
I generally think of secretaries as being of the following gender:	Female	Count	16 _a	46 _a	62
		% within I generally think of secretaries as being of the following gender:	25,8%	74,2%	100,0%
		% within Gender	66,7%	54,8%	57,4%
		% of Total	14,8%	42,6%	57,4%
	Male and Female Equally	Count	8 _a	38 _a	46
		% within I generally think of secretaries as being of the following gender:	17,4%	82,6%	100,0%
		% within Gender	33,3%	45,2%	42,6%
Total	% of Total	7,4%	35,2%	42,6%	
	Count	24	84	108	
	% within I generally think of secretaries as being of the following gender:	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
		% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level.

Table 4.6 depicts that a majority, 62 (57.4%), of participants, predominantly women, 46 (54.8%), and a minority of 16 (66.7%) men, thought of secretaries as being of the female gender. A slightly lesser 46 (42.6%) of participants, consisting of a majority of women, 38 (45.2%), and fewer men, eight (33.3%), related the position to both men and women equally. This shows that men, more than women, associate the secretarial job with women. It further shows that there is no great difference between how some participants associate the secretarial role mainly with the female gender, and some equally with both genders, even though the results project its association with the female gender as marginally higher. Similar results are related in a study conducted by Sullivan (2015: 23-24), where the title “Executive Secretary” resulted in judgments associated with feminine positions. It was interesting to note that a portion of participants (57.4%) were able to associate solely women with the job title of ‘secretary’ but were not able to associate solely men with the same (0%).

4.3.2.4 Secretaries’ and ‘administrators’ generally require similar skills to carry out their jobs in the office and sometimes have similar roles

**Table 4-7 Job Role Similarity of ‘Secretary’ and ‘Administrator’:
Responses by Male and Female Support Staff**

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Secretaries' and 'administrators' generally require similar skills to carry out their jobs in the office and sometimes have similar roles in the office with the main difference being the job titles	Agree	Count	23 _a	73 _a	96
		% within Secretaries' and 'administrators' generally require similar skills to carry out their jobs in the office and sometimes have similar roles in the office with the main difference being the job titles	24,0%	76,0%	100,0%
		% within Gender	95,8%	86,9%	88,9%
		% of Total	21,3%	67,6%	88,9%
	Disagree	Count	1 _a	10 _a	11
		% within Secretaries' and 'administrators' generally require similar skills to carry out their jobs in the office and sometimes have similar roles in the office with the main difference being the job titles	9,1%	90,9%	100,0%
		% within Gender	4,2%	11,9%	10,2%
		% of Total	0,9%	9,3%	10,2%
	Other	Count	0 _a	1 _a	1
		% within Secretaries' and 'administrators' generally require similar skills to carry out their jobs in the office and sometimes have similar roles in the office with the main difference being the job titles	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
		% within Gender	0,0%	1,2%	0,9%
		% of Total	0,0%	0,9%	0,9%
Total	Count	24	84	108	
	% within Secretaries' and 'administrators' generally require similar skills to carry out their jobs in the office and sometimes have similar roles in the office with the main difference being the job titles	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0,05 level.

Table 4.7 depicts the response to the statement: “*secretaries' and 'administrators' generally require similar skills to carry out their jobs in the office and sometimes have similar roles in the office with the main difference being the job titles*”. Three main responses were identified. A significant proportion, 96 (88.9%), of participants, agreed that the two roles of ‘secretary’ and ‘administrator’ required similar skills. These participants were predominantly, 73 (86.9%), women with only 23 (95.8%) men. A few, 11 (10.2%), participants, predominantly women, 10 (11.95), and only one (4.2%) man disagreed with this view. The last participant (0.9%) was marked as a deviation response at one (1.2%) women.

The responses by those in agreement demonstrated that the personal experiences of the majority were that one can acclimatise efficiently from one role to another through the facilitation of akin skills sets. Findings from a study by Odusina, Dasaolu and Agbonna (2022: 65) counted communication skills, analytical skills, managing priorities, cultural sensitivity, planning and organising skills, innovation skills, information and technology skills amongst the vital skills a secretary should possess. Given that in both ‘secretarial’ and ‘administrative’ roles one is usually expected to attend to customer queries and be welcoming as well as have technical skills to assist them, it was imminent that a majority would perceive the likeness. The inclination to disagree by the few participants was viewed as a potential demonstration of their awareness of the focused nature of the administrative

jobs in that they deal with specific projects or portfolios and clientele rather than general secretarial work.

4.3.2.5 Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a female/male whose job is secretarial

**Table 4-8 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:
Most Suitable Job Title for a Female Secretary**

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a female whose job is secretarial, and state why	Secretary	Count	5 _a	24 _a	29
		% within Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a female whose job is secretarial, and state why	17,2%	82,8%	100,0%
		% within Gender	20,8%	28,6%	26,9%
		% of Total	4,6%	22,2%	26,9%
	Administrator	Count	4 _a	15 _a	19
		% within Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a female whose job is secretarial, and state why	21,1%	78,9%	100,0%
		% within Gender	16,7%	17,9%	17,6%
		% of Total	3,7%	13,9%	17,6%
	Administrative Secretary	Count	15 _a	39 _a	54
		% within Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a female whose job is secretarial, and state why	27,8%	72,2%	100,0%
		% within Gender	62,5%	46,4%	50,0%
		% of Total	13,9%	36,1%	50,0%
	Other	Count	0 _a	6 _a	6
		% within Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a female whose job is secretarial, and state why	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
		% within Gender	0,0%	7,1%	5,6%
		% of Total	0,0%	5,6%	5,6%
Total	Count	24	84	108	
	% within Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a female whose job is secretarial, and state why	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0,05 level.

With reference to contending job titles of ‘secretary’, ‘administrative secretary’, ‘administrator’ and ‘other’ support job titles, according to **Table 4.8**, half, 54 (50.0%), of the participants, of whom most were women, 39 (46.4%), and a few men, 15 (62.5%), held the view that female secretaries should be referred to as ‘administrative secretaries’. ‘Secretary’ was the second most preferred job title to refer to a female secretary according to a majority, 29 (26.9%), of the participants. Of these, 24 (28.9%) were women and only five (20.8%) were men. ‘Administrator’ was the least preferred job title to refer to a female secretary according to a majority, 19 (17.6%) participants, of whom most were women, 15 (17.9%), and only four (16.7%) men.

**Table 4-9 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:
Most Suitable Job Title for a Male Secretary**

		Gender		Total	
		Male	Female		
Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a male whose job is secretarial, and state why	Secretary	Count	0 _a	13 _b	13
		% within Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a male whose job is secretarial, and state why	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
		% within Gender	0,0%	15,7%	12,1%
		% of Total	0,0%	12,1%	12,1%
	Administrator	Count	14 _a	40 _a	54
		% within Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a male whose job is secretarial, and state why	25,9%	74,1%	100,0%
		% within Gender	58,3%	48,2%	50,5%
		% of Total	13,1%	37,4%	50,5%
	Administrative Secretary	Count	10 _a	24 _a	34
		% within Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a male whose job is secretarial, and state why	29,4%	70,6%	100,0%
		% within Gender	41,7%	28,9%	31,8%
		% of Total	9,3%	22,4%	31,8%
Other	Count	0 _a	6 _a	6	
	% within Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a male whose job is secretarial, and state why	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	0,0%	7,2%	5,6%	
	% of Total	0,0%	5,6%	5,6%	
Total	Count	24	83	107	
	% within Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a male whose job is secretarial, and state why	22,4%	77,6%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% of Total	22,4%	77,6%	100,0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0,05 level.

With reference to contending job titles of ‘secretary’, ‘administrative secretary’, ‘administrator’ and ‘other’ support job titles, **Table 4.9** depicts that ‘administrator’ was the preferred job title for male secretaries, a view also held by half, 54 (50.5%), of the participants, of whom the majority, 40 (48.2%), were women, and the minority, 14 (58.3%), were men. ‘Administrative secretary’ was the second most preferred job title to use to refer to a male secretary according to a majority, 34 (31.8%) participants. Of these, the majority, 24 (28.9%), were women and the minority, 10 (41.7%), men. ‘Secretary’ was the least preferred job title to use to refer to a male secretary according to 13 (12.1%) participants, all of were women, 13 (15.7%).

The comparison between the two results, **Table 4.8 and 4.9**, shows how the job title of ‘secretary’ was associated more with women than with men. These results support the statement in literature in the results of a study by Galizzi, McBride and Siboni (2023: 14) that “the boss is a man and the secretary is a woman” made by a respondent demonstrating how a word like “secretary” can be understood in a biased stereotypical way. The results of the two tables 4.8 and 4.9 further show how the job title ‘administrator’ was associated less with women and more with men. Hartford Courant, one of the oldest and continuously published

large newspaper in the United States (Hartford Courant 2022) revealed that certain titles such as ‘administrative assistant’, ‘administrative professional’ or ‘research assistant’ are sometimes permitted as alternatives for male secretaries to use instead of the term ‘secretary’. In the current study, this may indicate appropriation of males with roles that are less subservient where they are able to practice greater autonomy.

It was of interest that even though the generic job title of ‘secretary’ itself was contested, it was by far not given preference in terms of suitability by the majority for use to refer to either gender. The study by Akagha *et al.* (2023: 793) unveils a paradigm shift in the role of secretaries on account of enhancing administrative services. The inclination of the majority towards the title of ‘administrative secretary’ from the traditionally female gender role of ‘secretary’ could potentially imply that the nature of the job today has a vital ‘administrative’ aspect that needs to be acknowledged.

4.3.2.6 Secretary as an appropriate job title for a man or woman

**Table 4-10 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:
Secretary as an Appropriate Job Title for a Woman**

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Secretary is an appropriate job title for a woman	Strongly Agree	Count	2 _a	13 _a	15
		% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a woman	13,3%	86,7%	100,0%
		% within Gender	8,3%	15,5%	13,9%
		% of Total	1,9%	12,0%	13,9%
	Agree	Count	6 _a	23 _a	29
		% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a woman	20,7%	79,3%	100,0%
		% within Gender	25,0%	27,4%	26,9%
		% of Total	5,6%	21,3%	26,9%
	Neutral	Count	9 _a	18 _a	27
		% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a woman	33,3%	66,7%	100,0%
		% within Gender	37,5%	21,4%	25,0%
		% of Total	8,3%	16,7%	25,0%
	Disagree	Count	5 _a	15 _a	20
		% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a woman	25,0%	75,0%	100,0%
		% within Gender	20,8%	17,9%	18,5%
		% of Total	4,6%	13,9%	18,5%
Strongly Disagree	Count	2 _a	15 _a	17	
	% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a woman	11,8%	88,2%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	8,3%	17,9%	15,7%	
	% of Total	1,9%	13,9%	15,7%	
Total	Count	24	84	108	
	% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a woman	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0,05 level.

Table 4.10 reflects that participants who were neutral, therefore undecided whether ‘secretary’ was an appropriate job title to use to refer to a woman, were a significantly lesser

proportion – 27 (25.0%). Of these, the majority, 18 (21.4%), were women and the minority, nine (37.5%), were men. Male participants were more undecided (37.5%) on whether to appropriate the job title ‘secretary’ to refer to female secretaries than female (21.4%) participants. Participants who disagreed that ‘secretary’ was an appropriate job title for a woman were a significant minority, 20 (18,5%), of whom the majority, 15 (17.9%), were women and the minority, five (20.8%), men. Male participants were therefore disagreed more (20.8%) that women can be referred to as ‘secretaries’ than women (17.9%) participants.

29 (26.9%) participants agreed that ‘secretary’ is an appropriate job title for a woman secretary. Participants who held this view were predominantly, 23 (27.4%) women, with only six (25.6%) men. Only slightly fewer, 17 (15.7%), participants strongly disagreed that ‘secretary’ was an appropriate job title for a woman. Of these, the majority, 15 (17.9%), were women and only two (8.3%) were men. The results show that the inclination to strongly disagree that men be referred to as secretaries was almost the same as that of women which raised the possibility that the strong opinion held related to the nature of the job itself rather than gender. The smallest group of participants, 15 (13,9%), were those who strongly agreed that ‘secretary’ was an appropriate job title for a woman secretary. Participants who held this view were predominantly, 13 (15.5%) women, and only two (8.3%) were men.

**Table 4-11 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:
Secretary as an Appropriate Job Title for a Man**

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Secretary is an appropriate job title for a man	Strongly Agree	Count	1 _a	2 _a	3
		% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a man	33,3%	66,7%	100,0%
		% within Gender	4,2%	2,4%	2,8%
		% of Total	0,9%	1,9%	2,8%
	Agree	Count	2 _a	10 _a	12
		% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a man	16,7%	83,3%	100,0%
		% within Gender	8,3%	11,9%	11,1%
		% of Total	1,9%	9,3%	11,1%
	Neutral	Count	10 _a	27 _a	37
		% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a man	27,0%	73,0%	100,0%
		% within Gender	41,7%	32,1%	34,3%
		% of Total	9,3%	25,0%	34,3%
	Disagree	Count	8 _a	27 _a	35
		% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a man	22,9%	77,1%	100,0%
		% within Gender	33,3%	32,1%	32,4%
% of Total		7,4%	25,0%	32,4%	
Strongly Disagree	Count	3 _a	18 _a	21	
	% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a man	14,3%	85,7%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	12,5%	21,4%	19,4%	
	% of Total	2,8%	16,7%	19,4%	
Total	Count	24	84	108	
	% within Secretary is an appropriate job title for a man	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level.

Table 4.11 reflects that a majority, 37 (34.3%), of participants were neutral and therefore undecided whether ‘secretary’ was an appropriate job title to refer to a man. Of the participants who held this view, significantly more, 27 (32.1%), were women than men, 10 (41.7%). This shows that male participants were more undecided (41.7%) on appropriating the job title ‘secretary’ in reference to male secretaries than female (32.1%) participants. 35 (32.4%) participants disagreed that ‘secretary’ was an appropriate job title to refer to a man. A significantly higher proportion, 27 (32.1%), of participants who held this view were women than men, eight (33.3%). Male participants were only slightly in disagreement (33.3%) that men can be referred to as ‘secretaries’ when compared to women participant responses of (32.1%). Participants who agreed that ‘secretary’ is an appropriate job title for a man were significantly lesser, 12 (11.1%), of whom the majority, 10 (11.9%), were women and the minority, two (8.3%), were men. The results therefore suggest that women were more in agreement than men that ‘secretary’ was a suitable term to use to refer to a female secretary and were less keen to refer to male secretaries using the same title of ‘secretary’ as were the men. 21 (19.4%) participants strongly disagreed that ‘secretary’ was an appropriate job title for a male secretary. Of participants who held this view, significantly more, 18 (21.4%), were women than men, three (12.5%). Participants who strongly agreed that ‘secretary’ was an appropriate job title for a man were significantly less – only three (2.8%), of whom two (2.4%) were women and one (4.2%) was a man. This shows that there were more participants that held a strong opinion about the use of the title ‘secretary’ to refer to women

but significantly fewer participants who held the same view about males being referred to as secretaries.

Various studies show that gender role stereotypes and expectations have been carried over from the past and are the root of inequalities today (Hentschel, Heilman and Peus 2019: 2; Fisher and Ryan 2021: 237). The responses on the appropriateness of the job title ‘secretary’ in tables 4.10 and 4.11 displays a contrast between conformity to traditional gender roles, advocacy for change on how the role is viewed and indecisiveness between the two positions.

4.3.2.7 Administrator as an appropriate job title for a man or woman

**Table 4-12 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:
Administrator as an Appropriate Job Title for a Man**

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Administrator is an appropriate job title for a man	Strongly Agree	Count	4 _a	10 _a	14
		% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a man	28,6%	71,4%	100,0%
		% within Gender	16,7%	11,9%	13,0%
		% of Total	3,7%	9,3%	13,0%
	Agree	Count	9 _a	34 _a	43
		% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a man	20,9%	79,1%	100,0%
		% within Gender	37,5%	40,5%	39,8%
		% of Total	8,3%	31,5%	39,8%
	Neutral	Count	7 _a	17 _a	24
		% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a man	29,2%	70,8%	100,0%
		% within Gender	29,2%	20,2%	22,2%
		% of Total	6,5%	15,7%	22,2%
	Disagree	Count	3 _a	12 _a	15
		% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a man	20,0%	80,0%	100,0%
		% within Gender	12,5%	14,3%	13,9%
		% of Total	2,8%	11,1%	13,9%
Strongly Disagree	Count	1 _a	11 _a	12	
	% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a man	8,3%	91,7%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	4,2%	13,1%	11,1%	
	% of Total	0,9%	10,2%	11,1%	
Total	Count	24	84	108	
	% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a man	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level.

Table 4.12 depicts that the majority, 43 (39.8%), of the participants, predominantly women, 34 (40,5%), and nine (37.5%) men, agreed that ‘administrator’ was an appropriate job title for a male. A notable 33 (30.6%) participants, of whom the majority, 25 (29.8%), were women and eight (33.3%) were men, were neutral on whether ‘administrator’ was an appropriate job title for a woman. There was less disagreement in males being referred to as ‘administrator’, a view held by fewer, 15 (13.9%), participants, of whom the majority, 12

(14.3%), were women and the minority, three (12.5%) men. A total 14 (13.0%) of the participants, 10 (11.9%) women and four (16.7%) men, strongly agreed that ‘administrator’ was an appropriate job title for a man. The minority group, 12 (11.1%) participants, of whom 11 (13.1%) were woman and only one (4.2%) a man, consisted of those who strongly disagreed that ‘administrator’ was an appropriate job title for a man.

**Table 4-13 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:
Administrator as an Appropriate Job title for a woman**

		Gender		Total	
		Male	Female		
Administrator is an appropriate job title for a woman	Strongly Agree	Count	3 _a	8 _a	11
		% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a woman	27,3%	72,7%	100,0%
		% within Gender	12,5%	9,5%	10,2%
	Agree	% of Total	2,8%	7,4%	10,2%
		Count	8 _a	28 _a	36
		% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a woman	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%
	Neutral	% within Gender	33,3%	33,3%	33,3%
		% of Total	7,4%	25,9%	33,3%
		Count	8 _a	25 _a	33
	Disagree	% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a woman	24,2%	75,8%	100,0%
		% within Gender	33,3%	29,8%	30,6%
		% of Total	7,4%	23,1%	30,6%
Strongly Disagree	Count	4 _a	13 _a	17	
	% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a woman	23,5%	76,5%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	16,7%	15,5%	15,7%	
Total	% of Total	3,7%	12,0%	15,7%	
	Count	1 _a	10 _a	11	
	% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a woman	9,1%	90,9%	100,0%	
Total	% within Gender	4,2%	11,9%	10,2%	
	% of Total	0,9%	9,3%	10,2%	
	Count	24	84	108	
Total	% within Administrator is an appropriate job title for a woman	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0,05 level.

Table 4.13 depicts that there was slightly less agreement that ‘administrator’ was an appropriate job title for women, a view held by a significant 36 (33.3%) of the participants, of whom the majority, 28 (33.3%) were women and the minority, eight (33.3%) were men. There was less neutrality in males being referred to as ‘administrator’, a view held by significantly fewer participants, 24 (22.2%), of whom the majority, 17 (20.2%), were women and the minority, seven (29.2%), men. A total of 17 (15.7%) participants, predominantly women, 13 (15.5%), and only four (16.7%) men, disagreed that ‘administrator’ was an appropriate job title for a woman. The conviction that women be referred to as ‘administrator’ was lower with only 11 (10.2%) of the participants in strong agreement – predominantly women, eight (9.5%), and only three (12.5%) men. Strong disagreement that women should be referred to as ‘administrator’ was held by only 11 (10.2%) of the participants , of whom the majority, 10 (11.9%), were women and the minority, one (4.2%), a man.

The results for tables 4.12 and 4.13, therefore, generally show that there was more indecisiveness about the use of the job title of ‘administrator’ to refer to the female gender, however, the indecisiveness was less with its use to refer to the male gender. In literature, Hartford Courant, one of the oldest and continuously published large newspaper in the United States (Hartford Courant 2022) revealed that certain titles such as ‘administrative assistant’, ‘administrative professional’ or ‘research assistant’ are sometimes permitted as alternatives for male secretaries to use instead of the term ‘secretary’. Furthermore, in the current study, the job title of ‘administrator’ was generally promoted more for the male gender than the female gender and this may be indicative of potential acceptance of males in roles that are less subservient where they are able to practice greater autonomy like that of ‘administrator’ rather than ‘secretary’.

4.3.2.8 Receptionist as an appropriate job title for a man or woman

**Table 4-14 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:
Receptionist as an Appropriate Job Title for a Woman**

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a woman	Strongly Agree	Count	6 _a	13 _a	19
		% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a woman	31,6%	68,4%	100,0%
		% within Gender	25,0%	15,5%	17,6%
		% of Total	5,6%	12,0%	17,6%
	Agree	Count	6 _a	31 _a	37
		% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a woman	16,2%	83,8%	100,0%
		% within Gender	25,0%	36,9%	34,3%
		% of Total	5,6%	28,7%	34,3%
	Neutral	Count	8 _a	13 _a	21
		% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a woman	38,1%	61,9%	100,0%
		% within Gender	33,3%	15,5%	19,4%
		% of Total	7,4%	12,0%	19,4%
	Disagree	Count	3 _a	14 _a	17
		% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a woman	17,6%	82,4%	100,0%
		% within Gender	12,5%	16,7%	15,7%
		% of Total	2,8%	13,0%	15,7%
Strongly Disagree	Count	1 _a	13 _a	14	
	% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a woman	7,1%	92,9%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	4,2%	15,5%	13,0%	
	% of Total	0,9%	12,0%	13,0%	
Total	Count	24	84	108	
	% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a woman	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level.

Table 4.14 depicts that a majority, 37 (34.3%), of the participants, predominantly women, 31 (36.9%), and only six (25.0%) men, agreed that ‘receptionist’ was an appropriate job title for a woman. One of the largest groups, 34 (31.5%) of the participants, 28 (33.3%) women

and six (25.0%) men, disagreed that ‘receptionist’ was an appropriate job title for a man. A noteworthy 34 (31.5%) participants, a majority of 26 (31.0%) women and a minority of eight (33.3%) men, were neutral and undecided on whether ‘receptionist’ was an appropriate job title for a man. There was less strong disagreement in women being referred to as ‘receptionist’, a view held by significantly fewer participants, 14 (13.0%), of whom the majority, 13 (15.5%), were women and the minority, one (4.2%), male. The minority group, 19 (17.6%) of the participants, predominantly women, 13 (15.5%), and fewer, six (25.0%), men, strongly agreed that ‘receptionist’ was an appropriate job title for a woman.

**Table 4-15 Responses by Male and Female Support Staff on:
Receptionist as an Appropriate Job title for a Man**

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a man	Strongly Agree	Count	3 _a	2 _b	5
		% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a man	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
		% within Gender	12.5%	2.4%	4.6%
		% of Total	2.8%	1.9%	4.6%
	Agree	Count	2 _a	12 _a	14
		% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a man	14.3%	85.7%	100.0%
		% within Gender	8.3%	14.3%	13.0%
		% of Total	1.9%	11.1%	13.0%
	Neutral	Count	8 _a	26 _a	34
		% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a man	23.5%	76.5%	100.0%
		% within Gender	33.3%	31.0%	31.5%
		% of Total	7.4%	24.1%	31.5%
	Disagree	Count	6 _a	28 _a	34
		% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a man	17.6%	82.4%	100.0%
		% within Gender	25.0%	33.3%	31.5%
		% of Total	5.6%	25.9%	31.5%
Strongly Disagree	Count	5 _a	16 _a	21	
	% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a man	23.8%	76.2%	100.0%	
	% within Gender	20.8%	19.0%	19.4%	
	% of Total	4.6%	14.8%	19.4%	
Total	Count	24	84	108	
	% within Receptionist is an appropriate job title for a man	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%	
	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level.

Table 4.15 depicts significantly less agreement that ‘receptionist’ was an appropriate job title for males, a view held by a much smaller proportion, 14 (13.0%), of the participants, of whom the majority, 12 (14.3%), were women and the minority, two (8.3%), were men. There was further less disagreement in women being referred to as ‘receptionist’, a view held by a significantly lower proportion of 17 (15.7%) of the participants, of whom the majority, 14 (16.7%), were women and the minority, three (12.5%) men. Less neutrality and indecisiveness was recorded in women being referred to as ‘receptionists’, a view held by a significantly lesser portion, 21 (19.4%), of the participants, of whom the majority, 13 (15.5%), were women and the minority, eight (33.3%), men. A notable 21 (19.4%) participants, 16

(19.0%) women and only five (20.8%) men, strongly disagreed that 'receptionist' was an appropriate job title for a man. Those who strongly agreed that males be referred to as 'receptionists' were significantly fewer, five (4,6%) participants, of whom the majority, three (12.5%) were men and the minority, two (2.4%) women.

The results of tables 4.14 and 4.15, therefore, generally show that there was more disagreement and indecisiveness about the use of the feminised job title of 'receptionist' to refer to the male gender. The indecisiveness, however, was less on its use to refer to the female gender as there was significantly more agreement that the job title 'receptionist' be used to refer to a woman. This disposition may be attributed to the traditional female attributes, such as approachability or low expertise, associated with the nature of the job and thus the perception that the role is for women. A study by Kang, Tse and Toh (2019: 1) provided evidence of how occupations are reliably stereotyped according to the measurement of warmth and competence whereby women were more visible in jobs that require high warmth and low competence.

4.3.3 SECTION C: IDENTIFYING GENDER BARRIERS

This section identifies, from the responses of the participants, barriers to gender representation as experienced in the secretarial administrative roles. The responses were collected using quantitative closed-ended questions with one open-ended question. The narrative qualitative response to the open-ended question, 2.10, was incorporated in the thematic content analysis in the qualitative results section. The closed-ended responses given in this section aligned with the following study objective:

- **Objective 4:** To identify the critical barriers preventing the representation of men in secretarial jobs at the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal.

4.3.3.1 Men's avoidance of secretarial jobs in belief they are better suited for women

Table 4-16 Men's Avoidance of Secretarial Jobs in Belief they are Better Suited for Women: Responses by Male and Female Support Staff

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Men generally avoid secretarial jobs as they believe they are better suited for women	Strongly Agree	Count	10 _a	18 _b	28
		% within Men generally avoid secretarial jobs as they believe they are better suited for women	35,7%	64,3%	100,0%
		% within Gender	41,7%	21,4%	25,9%
		% of Total	9,3%	16,7%	25,9%
	Agree	Count	7 _a	47 _b	54
		% within Men generally avoid secretarial jobs as they believe they are better suited for women	13,0%	87,0%	100,0%
		% within Gender	29,2%	56,0%	50,0%
		% of Total	6,5%	43,5%	50,0%
	Neutral	Count	5 _a	13 _a	18
		% within Men generally avoid secretarial jobs as they believe they are better suited for women	27,8%	72,2%	100,0%
		% within Gender	20,8%	15,5%	16,7%
		% of Total	4,6%	12,0%	16,7%
	Disagree	Count	1 _a	5 _a	6
		% within Men generally avoid secretarial jobs as they believe they are better suited for women	16,7%	83,3%	100,0%
		% within Gender	4,2%	6,0%	5,6%
		% of Total	0,9%	4,6%	5,6%
Strongly Disagree	Count	1 _a	1 _a	2	
	% within Men generally avoid secretarial jobs as they believe they are better suited for women	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	4,2%	1,2%	1,9%	
	% of Total	0,9%	0,9%	1,9%	
Total	Count	24	84	108	
	% within Men generally avoid secretarial jobs as they believe they are better suited for women	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% of Total	22,2%	77,8%	100,0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Gender categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0,05 level.

Table 4.16 depicts that a majority, 47 (56.0%) of the participants, agreed that men generally avoided secretarial jobs as they believed they were better suited for women. The second largest group, who strongly agreed with this view, were also women, 18 (21.4%). In contrast, men who agreed with this view were significantly less than women, with 10 (41.7%) in strong agreement and seven (29.2%) who agreed in general. Those who held a neutral view were predominantly women, 13 (15.5%), while the minority, five (20.8%), were men even though proportionally within gender, percentages suggested that men held a more neutral position than women. The women who disagreed were slightly more 5 (6,0%) than men 1 (4,2%). An equal number of females 1 (1,2%) and males 1 (4,2%) strongly disagreed although proportionally within gender, percentages suggest that men held this position more than women.

The results show that that female support staff were generally of the view that men were avoiding secretarial jobs because they believed they were better suited for women. Male

support staff who held the same view were however fewer, indicating that there may be other factors involved causing them to be less represented in secretarial jobs.

4.3.3.2 Factors discouraging men from wanting to be secretaries

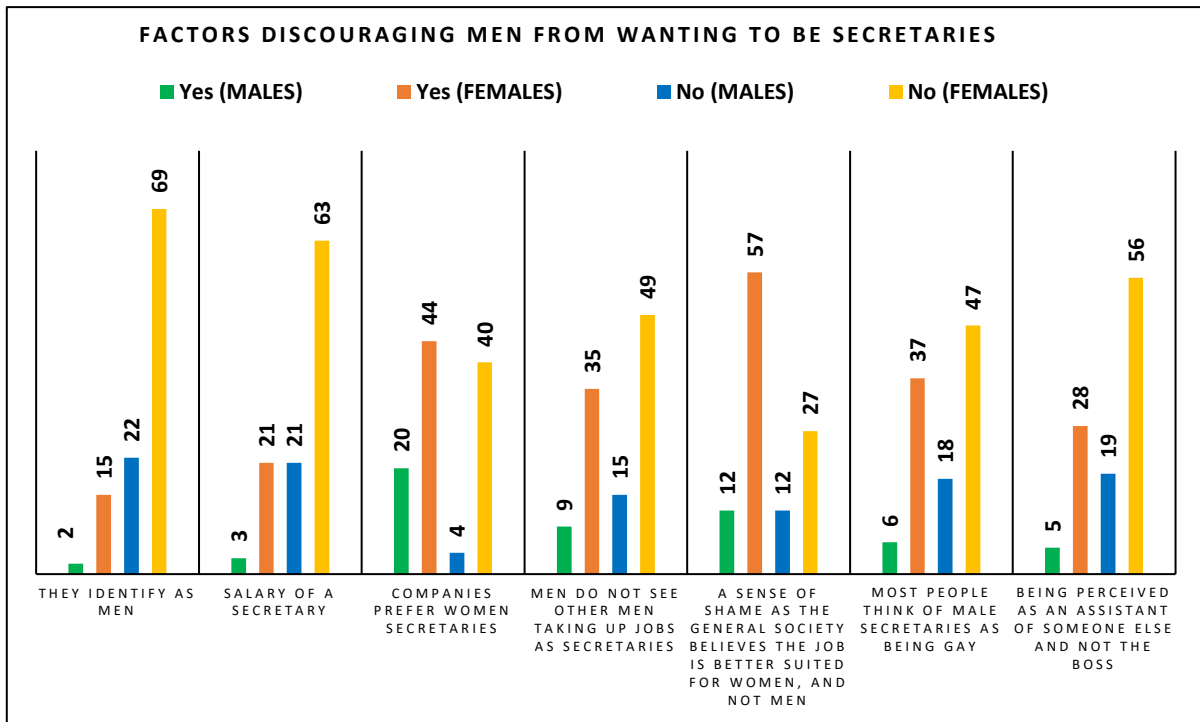


Figure 4-4 Factors Discouraging Men from Wanting to be Secretaries:

Responses by Male and Female Support Staff

Figure 4.4 depicts that a majority, 57 (67.9%) of the participants, who were predominantly female, were of the view that the major primary factor discouraging men from wanting to be secretaries was ‘a sense of shame as the general society believes the job is better suited for women and not men’. This, however, was rated by men, 12 (50.0%), as the second major factor. Men, 20 (83.3%), perceived the biggest factor discouraging them from pursuing jobs as secretaries to be the perception that ‘companies prefer women secretaries’, similar to women, 44 (52.4%), who perceived it as the second biggest factor. The third major factor according to female participants, 37 (44.0%), was that ‘most people think of male secretaries as being gay’, however, significantly fewer males, six (25.0%), held this view. For male participants, nine (37.5%), ‘men not seeing other men taking up jobs as secretaries’ was the third prominent discouraging factor, which women, 35 (41.7%), perceived as the fourth prominent factor. The fifth discouraging factor for males as pointed out by female

participants, 28 (33.3%), was 'being perceived as an assistant for someone else and not the boss', which for male participants, five (20.8%), was the fourth most discouraging factor. In contrast, men who agreed with this view were significantly fewer than women, with 10 (41.7%) in strong agreement and seven (29.2%) who agreed in general. Another factor named by the majority of female participants, 21 (25.0%), was the 'salary of a secretary', with which three (12.5%) men agreed. Lastly, predominantly female participants, 15 (17.9%), stated the perception that 'they identify as men' as a factor, with which only two (8.3%) men agreed.

The results show that although the perceived reasons why men are not pursuing secretarial jobs may be highlighted as the same by both genders, their prioritisation slightly differs. Based on the perceptions of male support, who are also the main subjects of study, the three major discouraging factors were: 'companies' perceived preference for female secretaries', 'a sense of shame as the general society believes the job is better suited for women and not men' and 'men not seeing other men taking up jobs as secretaries' respectively. These observations by men may explain why in some parts of the world men are progressively becoming unemployed while women have opportunities in low status jobs that men are not encouraged to do (International Labour Organisation 2021). It is possible that it is precisely because of the reasons pin-pointed by men that a majority of them would not consider assuming female dominated jobs unless they were compelled by certain factors (Yavorsky and Dill 2020: 5).

4.4 QUALITATIVE RESULTS (OBJECTIVES 2, 3 AND 4)

Sequel to the previous section which captured the survey quantitative results in line with the first objective, quantifying gender representation among secretarial administrative population, this segment in contrast represents qualitative perspectives obtained. The perspectives were obtained from the secretarial administrative staff open-ended survey responses and also from interviews conducted with the two sub-groups, namely the male administrators and the managers using stratified purposive sampling. A 'Define, Explain, Justify, Apply' (DEJA) analytic tool for a priori mapping of qualitative study sample sizes whereby the mental reasoning for the sample sizes is demonstrated was adopted. An estimated nine interviews were targeted for male administrators (sub-group 1) and nine interviews for managers (sub-group 2). Saturation was reached at five interviews, rendering a sample size of five for both sub-group 1 and sub-group 2.

Key themes consisting of one main theme and two sub-themes were identified for data analysis. Data coding using thematic reasoning and a theme illustration diagram was used to present the definition of key themes and their interpretations in relation to participants' responses.

4.4.1 CATEGORISATION OF INTERVIEWEES' SUB-GROUPS

To illustrate the relevance of the knowledge possessed by the interviewees in answering the study's research questions, Table 4.17 below provides vital information. The information includes their age, qualification obtained relevant to their role, their work experience within the field in which they are operating and responsibilities associated with their role.

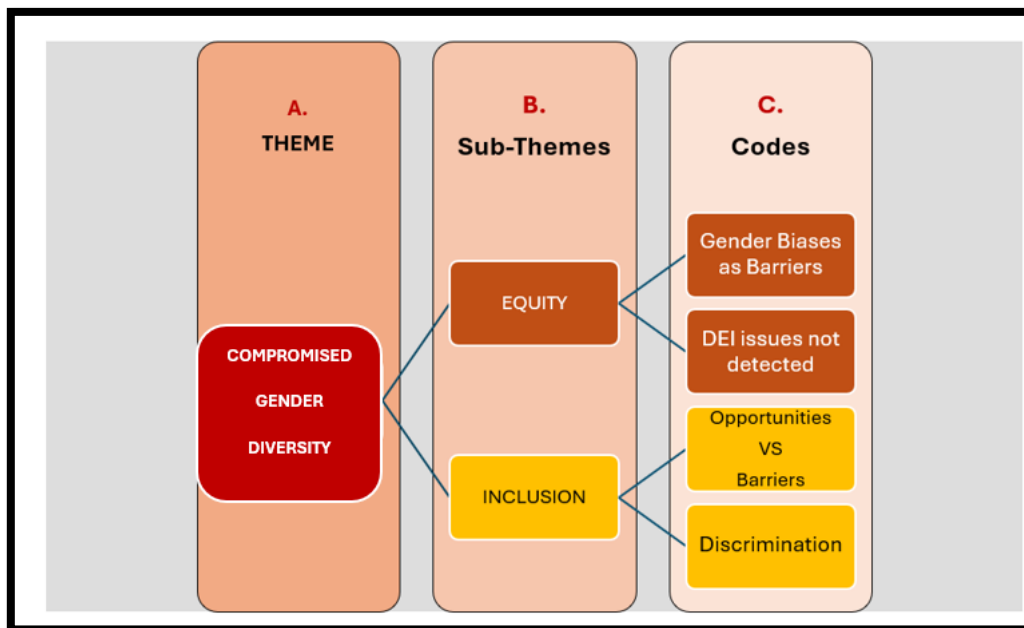
**Table 4-17 Interview Participants:
Male Administrators Sub-group and Managers Sub-group**

Male Administrators Sub-Group - Interviewees				
Male Administrator Name	Age	Qualifications	Work Experience	Responsibilities
A	31-40	Diploma Accounting	1-5 years	Coordinate planning and preparation of annual grants and reporting to Department of Higher Education
B	31-40	B Administration Honours	1-5 years	Recruitment, selection and performance management
C	41-50	Diploma Office Management and Technology	6-10 years	Marks capturing and computation, attending Examination Committee meetings, Examination Committee reporting
D	31-40	B Information Studies Honours	1-5 years	Research committee and general Administration
E	51 +	Diploma Human Resources	11-15 years	Training and Development, Performance Management
Managers Sub-Group - Interviewees				
Manager Name	Age	Management Level	Work Experience	Unit
A (f)	31-40	Lower	1-5 years	Examinations

B (f)	41-50	Middle	16+ years	Faculty of Commerce and Law
C (m)	41-50	Middle	16+ years	Registration
D (f)	41-50	Lower	16+ years	Faculty of Education
E (m)	51+	Middle	16+ years	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

4.4.2 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

‘Compromised gender diversity’ was identified as the main theme consisting of two sub-themes, namely: ‘contribution to gender equity’ and ‘potential for inclusivity’ for data analysis purposes. Data codes identified under ‘contribution to gender equity’ included: a) gender biases and barriers and b) DEI issues not detected. Data codes identified under ‘potential for inclusivity’ included: c) ‘opportunities vs barriers’ and d) ‘discrimination’.



4. 1 Illustration of Themes

A) Main Theme: Compromised Gender Diversity

“Compromised gender diversity” maps the participants’ experiences alluding to the existence of disparities in the participation of men versus women in secretarial administrative

support roles. It highlights the participants' perceived over gendering of women in secretarial roles as a glaring issue bordering on inequalities. Disproportions and differences in how the genders are embraced in the various support roles were identified and explained as mainly rooted in issues relating to 'equity' and 'inclusion'. This theme displays how certain secretarial administrative support roles are normatively aligned to a prescribed gender and how this practice is reasoned with bias by participants and the university employees in general.

B) Sub-Theme 1: Contribution to Gender Equity

"Contribution to Gender Equity" as a sub-theme assisted to lay bare the internal and external effects of biases that cause men and women not to operate on the same level field as exhibited by the participants in their responses. It outlined the constant ways that society in general, including the participants themselves, contributed to perpetuating gender biases which incited the exclusion of men and over gendering of women in secretarial job roles at junior levels. Existing inequities in the treatment of the two genders meant that men were not participating as equals to women who were predominantly represented, nor had an equal status to women, and that they were generally found not to be the appropriate choice when it came to secretarial administrative job roles. The sub-theme exposed how men's unique circumstances in being disproportionately underrepresented while women were over gendered was generally not taken into consideration nor perceived as an issue. Men's identities as men in the secretarial administrative support roles were almost prescriptive of prejudice, unfair treatment and limited prospects of being represented in the job role while the opposite was observable of women. Importantly, the possibility of an element of 'discreteness' in the way that gender biases exist but are not perceivable for address is brought forth. The theme interrogates the lack of impactful action to mitigate the disadvantaged positions of both genders where men are not appropriated to secretarial roles, and women are appropriated more to secretarial roles which are related to characteristics of servitude.

C) Sub-Theme 2: Potential for Inclusivity

'Potential for inclusivity' acknowledges from the participant responses that in the secretarial administrative support roles, unlike women, men's presence was often not acknowledged as pivotal for the success of an office in the same favourable way that the women's presence was embraced. In exploring opportunities versus barriers, male interest in secretarial jobs was measured against the conduciveness of the environment where there were

impediments to men and women accessing the same opportunities, rights and freedoms which prevent them from participating as equals in secretarial administrative support jobs. It shows how the often-concealed interest by males in pursuing a career in the secretarial field was an opportunity for the university to capitalise on a more inclusive culture in terms of gender by embracing both men and women equally in these roles from junior levels. The sub-theme explores the opportunities and threats of the gender imbalance status quo to transformative action for the purpose of advocating for a more level operational ground for both men and women in these support roles. The focus is drawn to the specifics mentioned in the participants' responses that highlight the reasons why men have an interest or disinterest in job opportunities of this nature.

4.4.3 INTERVIEW RESPONSES: MALE ADMINISTRATORS (SUBGROUP 1)

4.4.3.1 Main Theme: Compromised Gender Diversity

When requested to share what gender they believed most secretaries to be in the university, in line with the quantitative responses of secretarial administrative staff, of whom a majority perceived female predominance, the male administrators also indicated they perceived women to be the predominant gender. These responses of the male administrators reflected that clerical work was predominantly female, a trend noted since the early twentieth century (Rommelspacher 2022: 560-561). The following responses illustrate this finding:

Male Admin C: *In this university we have more female secretaries.*

Male Admin D: *Ahh...I have never come across a male secretary. No.*

When probed further on what had informed their belief that women were the predominant gender in the university, the participants presented various perceptions which suggested a presence of inequitable treatment of the genders. The perceptions were traceable to: (a) diversity, equity and inclusion issues going undetected, (b) societal conformity to traditional norms and expectations and (c) feminisation of secretarial support roles. The following responses illustrate this finding:

Male Admin D: *I have never thought about it you see.*

Male Admin A: *as we grew up in this university, every secretary, even for our fathers, they were female.*

Male Admin D: *for example...ehrr...the line manager can make a request for them to fetch a glass of water for them...like ...go and fetch some water for me, if, it is a female, unlike with a male gendered person.*

With reference to a study by Bareket and Fiske (2023: 637), these findings point at an environment for 'sexist ideologies' to thrive where women, due to their predominance, are either trapped in stagnant jobs or seeking power over men in the field.

4.4.3.2 Sub-Theme: Equity

When requested to identify from a list given, the factors that prevent men from pursuing secretarial work, the male administrators unanimously indicated that the following two factors prevented men from pursuing jobs as secretaries:

- a) Companies prefer women secretaries
- b) Men not seeing other men taking up jobs as secretaries

Consistent with the secretarial administrative staff responses, the perceived companies' preference for women secretaries re-occurred as one of the prevalent factors that prevent men from pursuing secretarial work. According to the literature, women experience gendered barriers in male dominated jobs related to the type of work, task allocation and promotion (Bishu and Headley 2020: 1063) or societal stereotypes and job development (Bain and Company, Inc. 2017: 14, 18, 20). In the current study, the same was perceived, however, this occurrence was in context of the male gender. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin C: *Yes, a lot of companies (prefer females). It's unfair, it's unfair. You will find that many do have that thing.*

Male Admin E: *Yes, that's also an influence (men not seeing other men taking up jobs as secretaries)*

On other factors presented as possible reasons that prevent men from pursuing jobs as secretaries, there were those who agreed with certain factors as contributing while others disagreed. The following reasons were contentious as illustrated in the responses:

- a) Salary of a secretary

Male Admin B: *No, it's not the salary. There are secretaries who are well paid.*

Male Admin D: *Can be one of them (the salary).*

- b) A sense of misplacement

Male Admin A: *Yes it's the same as the stigma issue.*

Male Admin D: *Not really.*

- c) People assuming male secretaries to be gay

Male Admin C: *Yes, that's true. It's like when you're a secretary for a male boss, you know what I mean.*

Male Admin B: *I'm not so sure about this one.*

- d) Being perceived as an assistant and not the boss

Male Admin A: *But they need to change, that you need to have to develop yourself.you can't run away from that. There will always be someone who's your boss. Unless you change and empower yourself.*

Male Admin D: *No, that's not the reason.*

The findings in this study imply that although opportunity for employment in the job of a secretary is open to both genders, biases such as company preference for female secretaries and observing the culture of masculinities to determine suitability of the secretarial job for men may negatively impact representation in secretarial jobs. This is

not in ignorance of other factors found to have some negative bearing on male representation due to their association with the low status of femininity (Yilmaz and Sürgevil 2020: 85). In support, research by UNICEF South Asia (2017: 5, 10, 14) reveals from the context of education that social and gender norms affect gender equity in that they provide both opportunity as well as barriers. We can, therefore, conclude that there are opportunities for males to be employed as secretaries, however, gendered barriers to their representation exist in many forms.

When asked to share gender related challenges faced by secretarial administrators, the male administrators distinguished between challenges experienced by both genders and those particular to a specific gender. Exploitation, however, was identified as the main challenge common to both genders. The following reasons illustrate this finding:

Male Admin B: *Yeah it happens jah. I once worked in this department. The boss, she was a female. She was studying, you see. The things relating to research and stuff. Would give it to the secretary to do that for her you see.*

Male Admin C: *They can try to use that because you are a male and you are a secretarial administrator.....Whenever they want something they tend to think that you are so weak that they can do whatever they want.*

Men's challenges in female dominated fields are evident in various studies such as one conducted by Delfino (2021: 2) which identified men's uncertainty about their success in the female domains and perceived preference for female employees as challenges. Challenges stated to be experienced by males in the current study included: a) heterosexuality of males in secretarial positions being questioned, b) males' preference to work independently and c) feminisation of the secretarial job. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin A: *That those are the challenges that because you only see a guy who is a secretary who works in the office, the moment you walk out, you think he is gay. Yeah. Some are even taken as far as that being told that "Hhai wena hai wena" (come on man, come on) yabo (you see). I think that's the most vicious one. Same like the ladies.*

Male Admin B: *As a male I would like to assume that maybe I would like to have that arrangement with my manager to say these are your duties, these are the time lines.*

Male Admin E: *in the secretariat there is quite a lot like I reiterated before to say, when the word 'Secretary'. The first thing that jumps to one's mind if that position opens up or is occupied by someone. A female will come into the picture because it's been like coded in the people that are not especially to me its people that are not well read.*

Challenges stated to be experienced by women included sexual harassment, which on the extreme end included unsolicited attention from male bosses, and the stereotype that women are at times moody. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin C: *it depends on your boss and how professional he is. Some they will just use that because he is the boss he can do he can say whatever to a secretary. Some they can even propose them to go out with them you see. And then you find that the secretary is uncomfortable with that.*

Male Admin C: *Yes, he said he preferred me. The reason being, it was his reason. He wanted me. Women tend to come up at some point moody. Males have consistent moods...Yeah. Males are open books. So if they are experiencing a problem, they come to you and discuss that particular problem they are experiencing.*

The findings in the current study imply that men may not be avoiding jobs as secretaries due to existing challenges as challenges were experienced by both genders in the secretarial administrative jobs, although not always in similar ways. The perpetuated masculinity ideals linked to negatively biased perspectives on how a man or a woman performs in a secretarial administrative role emerged as a potential barrier to diversified representation. In such instances, the study by Heckler (2022: 85) perceives that masculinity with intent could potentially empower practitioners in the administrative field by assisting them to understand within context how masculinity is at play and has significant impact in public organisations.

When asked to share their view on the perception that men view secretarial work as better suited for women, the male administrators indicated that some men were of the view that secretarial work belonged to women while others expressed gender neutrality. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin B: *I mean, you guys (women) God created you in such a way that you would be servants to males. And for us its difficult.*

Male Admin D: *But this job is for women. and also the dominance of women amongst the organisation plays a huge role... Or like they tend to prefer women more than men because it's something like a norm.*

Male Admin A: *If you are able to perform for the position you're hired in, it shouldn't be gender specific because now you are being hired there to execute the company's objectives.*

The findings imply that there are gender role beliefs engrained in men that affect their self-identity and job positioning in relation to secretarial work leading them to perceive the work as reserved for women. In support, a study by Oh (2019) revealed that in general, identity or one's concept of self may be a barrier to who is employed and prevent appropriate job positioning.

When asked to share their view on the perception that women view secretarial work as better suited for women, although some of the male administrators deemed this a question only women can answer for themselves, some agreed women perceived secretarial work as better suited for them. A differing perspective was the threat to job security as experienced by any employee, irrespective of gender, resulting in territorial behaviour. This was a significant question to obtain responses to as a study by *Rezai et al.* (2023: 59) found that barriers relating to one's attitude were the most reported barriers to workplace inclusion. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin B: *I'd rather they speak for themselves.*

Male Admin C: *Yes you can go to let's say in an interview they (women) go tell you outside and say no this job is for women and so jah they do have that.*

Male Admin A: *No, I think. Because it happens whether it's a female versus a female. It happens whether it's a female versus a male. There is that perception, they'll say there is a secretary and then they will hire an administrator. There is a perception now that no the administrator has come to take my job, while that's not the case.*

The current study findings imply that secretarial work is generally not appropriated to the male gender by both men and women. This view is demonstrated in a larger scale by statistical trends observed in various countries such as The United Kingdom (Careersmart 2020a), Australia (State Government of Victoria 2022) and others including South Africa (Department of Statistics South Africa 2024) where secretarial administrative work is female dominated. It can therefore be concluded from the findings that personal beliefs are still held by both men and women that secretarial jobs belong to women.

When asked to share their view on the perception that personnel at work view secretarial work as better suited for women, the male administrators indicated that they perceived this to be true, providing various reasons for this perception. The reasons included women secretaries being overlooked as an issue and deemed a norm, preference for female secretaries by personnel and women being perceived as more approachable. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin D: *I don't see any view cause like in most cases usually secretaries are female so you don't get shocked when you see a secretary who is female.*

Male Admin A: *I find that women, they are more approachable than male counterparts, yeah. I think that's where the strong point of a woman is. It's easier to go to a woman secretary about something rather than a male.*

A study by Karlsson (2019 :2) showed that the backlash phenomenon which suggests changed status quo to accommodate minorities would result in resistance by the majority, was not the case as results showed a decrease in the level of majority resistance directed towards the minority. Therefore, although the personnel at work view secretarial work as

more suitable for women as the status quo, acceptance of men in such positions is possible to achieve without resistance.

When asked to share their view on the perception that the human resources department views secretarial work as better suited for women, some male administrators perceived an existence of hiring biases while others viewed the opposite. Biases identified included biases by HR staff resulting from personal beliefs and those from external pressures from bosses who at times indicated a preference for a woman secretary. Participants who did not perceive biases stated so on the bases of observed policy practices and the possibility of a lack of interest in the jobs demonstrated by males rather than a lack of interest by HR staff. It was particularly important to explore any potential barriers during hiring as the study by Hamjediers (2023: 524) showed how men can embrace feminised occupations when exposed to them. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin E: *The same, the same. I upbringing, i background, yibaggage, will be part of the society. I culture of the organisations it tells you ukuthi kushukuthi uHR awuwenzile umsebenzi wayo (that HR has not conducted their job with integrity) because njengoba uHR uwuvenue guard nje (since HR is the custodian) a custodian it's also a van guard, ngamanye amazwi uyena oprotector (in other ways they are responsible for enforcing protocol during hiring).*

Male Admin B: *view every applicant as equal right. But then there is that element of maybe the manager's preference to say what the manager would prefer. Because you find that someone else would say no I cannot work with a man.*

Male Admin C: *Even during shortlisting you will find that there are five women and only two men... sometimes it's like that because men won't apply for those kinds of. They are not used to applying for those kinds of positions. But even them, the human resources would just show this by the lot of women.*

Male Admin A: *I think they also do not, because oh well maybe in the past, but not since they changed in labour practices, every post I've seen advertising these types of positions, they have a clause to encourage males, people with disabilities, coloureds and Indians, and even white males to apply.*

The current study findings, therefore, reveal a threat of occupational gender segregation due to the personal hiring biases held by various role players in the organisation. This is supported by the study by Hays-Thomas (2016: 9-10) uncovering that one of the ways in which gender segregation is evident is through biases in occupational hiring. This, therefore, means that a gap exists to address the biases present so as to address the issue of male representation in secretarial jobs.

When asked to share their view on the perception that men avoid the job title of 'secretary' to protect their social identity as men, the male administrators indicated that they perceived that men did not wish to be associated with the job title. This was in line with what was pointed out by The Council of Europe, political authoritarians, that there exists dominant codes within masculinities which put pressure on men to abide by them and create an expectation around them (Kleinsorge 2019). In the context of the study the expectation would be that a man that abides by the masculinities code does not undertake a feminised occupation. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin B: *I agree with this a lot 100%... I mean, just imagine telling someone you're a secretary.*

Male Admin C: *They really don't, angifuni ukuphosisa (I don't want to lie) to say they would be dying of joy because of just because of the name 'secretary'. Like "you're a secretary? Oh! Ok. A secretary? A man? Who does that?"*

The finding that men do not wish to be associated with the feminised job title of 'secretary' implies a challenge in recruiting men into jobs as secretaries. This means that women will also continue to be overrepresented in low status jobs that make them vulnerable targets to various inequalities relating to pay and other factors. This is already observed in some parts of the world today where women are located in poor quality low status jobs not pursued by men (International Labour Organisation 2021).

4.4.3.3 Sub-Theme: Inclusion

Male administrators, when asked to share what they understand by the terms 'secretary' and 'administrator', generally did not view the job roles as being the same although some commonalities were observed. The job title 'secretary' was explained as involving ordinary day-to-day office duties while the title 'administrator' described a focus on the

operationalisation of a specific portfolio often directly linked to an organisation's strategy. These responses not only affirm the quantitative responses obtained from the secretarial administrative staff regarding the understanding of the role of a secretary, but they further provide an analysis of the secretarial role when compared to that of an administrator. The following responses illustrate this finding:

Male Admin A: *Secretaries are responsible for assisting with day to day correspondence and carry out administrative tasks.*

Male Admin E: *.... if you are an administrator then you are now supporting the HR (Human Resources) strategy under the Department of OD (Organisational Development) and the Client Services so you are operationalising that strategy. That's the function of the administrator or administrative personnel. If then, therefore you club the two. What it tells me is that you haven't done your homework thoroughly, because to me those are two entirely different roles.*

The findings imply that the job title of 'administrator' was not deemed the same as the title 'secretary'. This may explain why the secretarial administrators' responses indicated that men were more represented in the title of 'administrator' which was perceived as more gender neutral than the more feminised title of 'secretary'. We can, therefore, conclude the presence of masculinity ideals around the job title itself where it is not associated with men and what culturally defines a man as not feminine (Council of Europe 2022: para. 3 line 1).

When asked whether they believed the job skills required by a secretary and an administrator were the same, male administrators pointed at the responsibilities associated with a particular job as the main determinant of skills required in that job. Interpersonal skills were, however, isolated as an indispensable skill required in both jobs. This finding aligns with the quantitative responses of secretarial administrative staff where majority males agreed the two roles required similar skills. This qualitative response assists further by showing the bias and reservations on the agreeability. The following responses illustrate this finding:

Male Admin C: *Well it depends, what are requirements or what is required to them.*

Male Admin A: *Both positions require you to be a people orientated person.... Technically, they require the same skills.*

The findings reveal, therefore, that male administrators deemed the responsibilities associated with a job as relevant in determining job skills required rather than any indicator of masculinities languages, behaviours and practices as a culture (Council of Europe 2022: para. 3 line 1). We can, therefore, conclude that gender related masculine ideals should not be relevant in determining who is employed as a secretary and that one's job competency should take premise.

When asked whether it mattered which gender was assigned the job title of 'administrator', the male administrators indicated that the job title 'administrator' was a gender neutral one and therefore appropriate for any gender. The male administrators generally expressed an inclusive gender outlook that places primacy on job efficiency. This was consistent with the study's quantitative responses by secretarial administrative staff where a majority indicated the 'administrator' job title as appropriate for both genders. The following responses illustrate this finding:

Male Admin B: *administrator job title should be sort of neutral.*

Male Admin D: *No, I don't think it matters...as long as the job is done.*

The results of a study by Flory *et al.* (2021: 1) caution that eliminating barriers to career progress based on social identities such as gender is amongst the major challenges of the 21st century. The current study findings imply that although premise was placed on one's efficiency on the job, males perceived the job title 'administrator' as gender neutral and preferable to use. This means that men perceive the nature of the job as a potential gendered barrier to appropriateness to a job role based on one's gender.

When asked whether it mattered which gender was assigned the job title of 'secretary', the male administrators indicated that based on their personal beliefs and the observation of perceptions held by others in the workplace, gender was irrelevant. They placed importance on job efficiency. In support, the study by Steegh *et al.* 2021: 41) asserts that most jobs do not require one to be of a specific gender to be able to occupy the position. It was observed, however, that the quantitative responses of secretarial

administrative staff showed a strong inclination not to use the title of 'secretary' to refer to either of the genders.

The following responses illustrate this finding:

Male Admin C: *Really, it doesn't matter. Whoever is there, the person must do the job, must be male or female. Its fine.*

Male Admin A: *No...for our Prof. it doesn't matter the name, the title. If you need to do something, you do it.*

The findings in the current study, therefore, imply that male administrators perceive that when males find themselves in positions of feminised job roles such as that of a secretary, they still feel obliged to maintain the job efficiency despite biases they may have on the feminised nature of the job. This means that men may feel the need to adapt their masculinities in the feminised role as men tend to find ways to negotiate their masculinities when compelled by life situations (Reichelt *et al.* 2021: S241).

When asked whether they have ever been assigned either a male or a female boss whilst in an administrative job role, the male administrators unanimously indicated that they have had the experience of having both a male and female line manager. The following responses illustrate this finding:

Male Admin A: *on the nursing department side, my boss is female, on the project administration for the grants, my boss is male.*

When probed further to share their views on the two experiences, the participants confirmed both experiences of a male boss and that of a female boss as suitable working arrangements for them. They, however, maintained that gender should not be given superiority on the job, pointing out that work relations were impacted by gender dynamics resulting from cultural upbringing. This was a particularly significant aspect to explore in the context of the study's theoretical framework to understand how the various masculinities come into play at work (Anderson and Magrath 2019: 14) particularly when male administrators find themselves occupying subordinated positions (Moskos 2020: 536) at work. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin A: *I think then to me, they are the same because they all want us to meet their target.*

Male Admin B: *I don't have a problem, whether it's a male or female boss. But the title matters to me.*

Male Admin E: *At people, at first glance I look at them as the image of God before classifying them. That's the background I was brought up with, to say. We look at the human being first you know before allocating roles of whether a female or male. And then you take it from there. When it comes to relating because the manner of approach to a male species, versus a female species. It's supposed to differ. Yes. If I say differ not in terms of respect but in terms of conveying your mannerism. There is a way in which we engage as gents, but there is a way in which we need to convey or engage, to a female. Jah. Even the words. There are some words that you cannot say to a lady, but you can say to a person that is a male... That's that's what I'm talking about now is more of a cultural upbringing, because you can even see it in other races.*

The current study findings imply that relations at work were suitably arranged, however, there existed a differentiation in the different relations based on gender. This meant that relations with each gender depended on their position in the social hierarchy, a bar through which human relations are explained (Gottzén *et al.* 2019: 2000). In support, Ferrary and Déo (2023: 2797) point at the social construction of gender as contributing to segregating genders based on the ways that they experience the world or their internalised beliefs, and encouraged gender diversity at work.

Male administrators were asked about the gender dynamics of the boss/secretary work arrangement. The male administrators in response indicated that they observed two kinds of relationship dynamics between a boss and a secretary as very rare, namely: (a) a female boss with a male secretary and (b) a male boss with a male secretary. They identified the two most common relationship dynamics between a boss and a secretary to be: (a) a male boss with a female secretary, and (b) a female boss with a female secretary. In support, the quantitative responses of male secretarial administrative staff indicated that they perceived the biggest factor discouraging them

from pursuing jobs as secretaries to be the perception that 'companies prefer women secretaries'. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin D: *Ahh...I have never come across a male secretary? No.*

Male Admin A: *A female boss with a male secretary? No, rare!*

Male Admin D: *secretaries that I know of are females... According to the environment where we are they are female.*

The findings in the current study imply that for every boss/secretary gender work dynamic, the secretary would always be female and never a male. Similarly, in a study conducted by Galizzi, McBride and Siboni (2023: 14) on male and female roles in the work environment, one respondent indicated that "the boss is a man and the secretary is a woman". It is, therefore, perceived as the status quo that women are always the secretaries and not men.

When probed about possible explanations for the identified gender dynamics between a boss and secretary (where the secretary is always the women), the male administrators indicated foremost that it may be due to the fact that men did not want to be referred to as 'secretary'. They also indicated that there existed a belief that feminine traits of a care giver are appropriate for women and that the organisational culture accepts women secretaries as the norm. The conformity to gender norms as implied in the study responses served as an example of context of previous studies that show how men are pressured to conform to hegemonic ideas of being a man, and if they do not, are typically subordinated and socially marginalised (Khumalo *et al.* 2021: 7; King *et al.* 2021: 1; Roper and Tosh 2021: 1-3). The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin A: *I don't know but I think guys are just scared to be called a secretary.*

Male Admin B: *I'm not sure whether it's this work environment...*

Male Admin B: *Hoo hai ziyadumake phela lapho (all hell breaks loose on that one),kumnandi (they enjoy it), mawukbuka nje (just looking at them, the female secretary). ...when I look at the mentality of the human species it's nice*

just to whenever you arrive at work it's nice just to feel like if you you're coming home. Home, away from home. Women are really beautiful truly, truth be told.

The findings of the current study therefore serve as evidence that conformity to traditional gender roles persists and are not congruent with the idea of males entering secretarial jobs.

When asked to share how they have experienced development and empowerment in their administrative job roles, the male administrators generally indicated having been presented with adequate opportunities to grow both in their current and potential future jobs. These opportunities included study bursaries and on the job workshops and training. They, however, highlighted that it was the responsibility of each individual to take advantage of the growth opportunities. According to Bain and Company Inc. (2017: 18, 20) lack of mentoring and development opportunities are some of the challenges experienced by women in predominantly male fields, hence, with the positions reversed (Department of Statistics South Africa 2024), it was important to determine whether the same is experienced by men. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin A: *I am able to study via the university so there is space for development and empowerment... Yes, there are workshops.*

Male Admin B: *I think they are serving both purposes, they are preparing me for the current position and for the future. I think I'm getting a lot here just recently. Just enrolled for a management development programme which I believe is preparing me for the future although I'm currently at an administrative level.*

Male Admin C: *Yes, it is everybody's responsibility to do that, to to use those benefits, those are benefits that we need to use.*

Another opinion presented was that the secretaries and administrators were not given optimum development and empowerment opportunities due to the university being a semi-public sector organisation where the maturity level was at growth stages. The following response illustrates this finding:

Male Admin E: *Five years, then the maturity, then we'll start seeing in the maturity. Then also what is lacking.*

The findings therefore imply that apart from the gap presented by the fact that the university has still not reached its maturity level, in general, opportunities for development are presented to males in the secretarial administrative roles and, therefore, can be ruled out as a potential barrier to their entry into secretarial administrative job roles. In support, the quantitative responses of secretarial administrative staff reflect biases such as the perceived preference for female secretaries by companies as discouraging males from pursuing jobs as secretaries. Biases are linked to discrimination. Along this line, Verniers and Vala (2018: 2) caution that gender differentiation is a component of sexism and may be related to gender discrimination in the workplace as a means of maintaining power asymmetry through traditional gender roles. The conclusion is, therefore, that the barriers to men's entry are of a different nature, devoid of lack of career growth opportunities.

When asked whether they believed societal beliefs about gender encouraged men to be secretaries, the male administrators indicated that in some ways they did, while in others they did fall short. The areas that were found to be encouraging men were based on perceived transformation whereby men were accommodated through the use of the job title 'administrator' rather than 'secretary'. What was deemed discouraging was that men were not seen occupying jobs titles of 'secretary'. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin E: *Yes, it does, because if I think even now igama lamasecretaries (the job title of 'secretary') is starting to change. Most of the time you find that it's an administrative person so it does. This stigma of secretary being only females is...*

Male Admin B: *It doesn't. Or my observation has been that when you are a secretary you're just there to serve someone, to assist someone, and sometimes they happen maybe to overstep that professional relationship and then maybe end up delegating some duties that are sort of personal, they do that, and so as a man you wouldn't like that because I'm sure you've heard that there are some bosses that as a secretary would say can you go and fetch my kids at school.*

The findings in the current study demonstrate that there is a consistent attempt to disassociate from femininity through discursive means by not relating the job title of 'secretary' to a man to preserve men's masculine supremacy. In support, the masculinities ideals do not weigh the value of the job itself but put premise on adhering to the culture of male supremacy (Council of Europe 2022: para. 3 line 1). In support, Lawson (2020: 2) refers to how language is used by men to maintain their privileged position in general society. We can, therefore, conclude that men were encouraged to be in the role of 'secretary' only if there is disassociation from femininity using discursive means with preference of the gender-neutral title of 'administrator'.

When asked whether the way in which the job title of 'secretary' is advertised and understood in general encourages men to apply for jobs as secretaries, the male administrators had differing opinions around the gender neutrality of the advertisements. While some participants observed the advertisements explicitly stated men should apply and were communicated in a gender neutral manner, others observed the opposite. It was noted in the quantitative results of secretarial administrative staff that a little over half of the participants agreed men generally avoided secretarial jobs, raising questions about other aspects affecting male representation as secretaries apart from male avoidance. According to a study by González, Cortina and Rodriguez (2019: 187) gender bias in recruitment results from employer's stereotypes and prejudices. It was therefore essential to view secretary job advertisements critically. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Male Admin A: Yes, because now even during those adverts they do put a clause that says that men are encouraged to apply.

Male Admin C: No. If you see some of the advertisements for this for this position, there is this thing that they normally mention that makes the men think this job is for a woman.

The current study findings imply that apart from the gender neutrality of job advertisements, other factors relating to identity affect male representation as secretaries. In support of this, a study by Oh (2019) reveals that self-identity may act as a barrier to job positioning, therefore, it can be concluded that how men view themselves in the context of their environment affects which jobs they agree to undertake.

4.4.4 INTERVIEW RESPONSES: MANAGERS (SUBGROUP 2)

4.4.4.1 Main Theme: Compromised Gender Diversity

When asked to share from their general observation what gender they believed most secretaries to be in the university, the managers indicated that they generally observed women to be the predominant gender. The following responses illustrate this finding:

Manager B: *Mostly its females.*

Manager C: *Currently it's dominated by females.*

The findings aligned with the quantitative responses of the secretarial administrative staff whose majority also indicated female predominance in secretarial jobs. In support, the Department of Statistics South Africa (2024) reflected the gender predominantly represented in clerical jobs to be women at 16,4% with men least represented at 5.3%. These findings therefore mark female predominance in secretarial jobs as the status quo.

4.4.4.2 Sub-Theme: Equity

When requested to share what it is that they understand by the terms 'secretary' and 'administrator', the managers described the two roles similarly in terms of designated responsibilities relating to clerical duties. Managers did not refer to gender when describing the roles. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager C: *Secretary for me is a position of a person who supports the designated office either a manager or whoever.*

Manager E: *to a large extent the secretary plays an important role of ensuring the functioning of the committee or committees.*

Manager B: *One, an administrator is the face of the department. Two, that person will keep all the important documents of the department. That person will also schedule meetings for the department. That person will also deal with queries that relate to the department. And send them to the right people in the department.*

These findings confirmed that from a management perspective, the job of 'secretary' and 'administrator' was understood in terms of a mastery of office duties, as pronounced in the literature by Oladeji and Afolabi (2021: 137) and Mesquita, Oliveira and Sequeira (2019: 5). We can, therefore, conclude that the management interpretation of the terms 'secretary' and 'administrator' were aligned accurately with that of the study in describing office management responsibilities rather than the gender of the person occupying the role.

When asked whether they believed a 'secretary' and an 'administrator' required similar job skills, some managers made a distinction between the two roles while others viewed them as similar. In both arguments, gender was not raised as a factor. The managers who made a distinction indicated that certain abilities defined the job of an administrator, namely: a) increased job responsibility, b) focused service clientele and c) increased job autonomy. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager E: *an administrator also has the ability to develop or innovate new processes or converge processes to ensure that the organisation is effective and runs smoothly.*

Manager C: *Administrator it's a level above secretary. Administrator is a person who's expected to make decisions of that particular position and also able to administer the work based mostly to given clients or clientele.*

The managers who indicated that the two roles were identical labelled them as interchangeable. This response aligned with quantitative responses from support staff where the majority indicated the roles required similar skills. This view was further upheld in a study conducted by Odusina *et al.* (2022: 65) where the secretary job skills were described similarly as in a separate study on administrators by Mesquita, Oliveira and Sequeira (2019 :5). The following response illustrates this finding:

Manager B: *Unfortunately, for me at my university, I don't know who's the secretary who's an admin, because we call them as if it's the same thing, so I don't know. I'll have to know their title from HR to know that this one Ohh! its a secretary. This one is an administrator.*

These findings therefore imply that men in possession of administrative skills can take on jobs as secretaries.

When asked whether it mattered which gender was assigned the job title of 'administrator' or 'secretary', some managers expressed gender neutrality regarding job titles emphasising competency while others appropriated the job title of 'secretary' to women offering various reasons associated with stereotypes. The following responses illustrate this finding:

Manager C: *when it comes to administrators, I don't think I have a preference. Anybody who goes to an interview and performs. We select that person. It's not prescriptive.*

Manager E: *the title that is ascribed to it is a secretary, so if a male person gets the job, I can't see why they now need to change the title of that designation. It'll stay secretary.*

Manager A: *It's better if they can say I know my son is working there as an administrator, rather than saying that he's a secretary.*

Manager C: *When you see a lady, you, you feel warmth. I can get example when you go to a hospital when you see a nurse being a lady, you become. You feel that I'm gonna be taken care of. Different when you see a male you know so. So same thing as secretary. There is that motherly love you expect no matter the state of mind. Even if I'm frustrated as a student because my module is not there. My mark. But when I talk to a lady, I feel like you're gonna say OK. Let's wait. Let me get someone to help you.*

The responses indicating gender neutrality confirmed the quantitative responses by secretarial administrative staff, the majority of whom were undecided whether a male or female employee should be referred to as an 'administrator'. The managers' responses indicating a preference for female secretaries was noted to align with the quantitative results of secretarial administrative staff as well in that participants who disagreed that 'secretary' was an appropriate job title for a woman were significantly lesser. The

responses indicating gender neutrality issued by some of the managers in the current study aligned with the previous study conducted by Ferrary and Déo (2023: 2797) which advocated for inclusivity at work staff level for improved organisational performance. In contrast, some of the responses issued in the current study implied the existence of gender stereotypes in that the job titles of 'administrator' and 'secretary' were linked to gender.

The managers were asked whether they have ever been assigned an administrator or secretary of the same or opposite gender as themselves and were requested to share regarding the suitability of both arrangements. The managers in response indicated that, in terms of gender dynamics, they had experienced all types of administrative support work arrangements apart from one in which a secretary is male. Some preferred specific gender dynamics arrangements, while others were neutral. Aligned to the quantitative responses of secretarial administrative staff whose majority were undecided whether men should be referred to as 'secretary', some managers indicated a preference for mostly women secretaries. The managers reported both negative and positive experiences with a specific gender leading to gender stereotyped preferences while others indicated they never experienced any issues. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager D: *Ahh...I have never come across a male secretary? No.*

Manager A: *It would be even more easier if the same gender is given as a secretary. For example, if I'm the female manager, then I prefer to have a female secretary, even with the men it is fine. They can still handle with the female secretary.*

Manager B: *One, he is approachable. He doesn't act like you know how our administrators, sometimes they, they are gatekeepers. If you want access to the XXXX, you have to pass through the administrator. The administrator might say no the XXXXX is busy, make an appointment. But my one is very accessible so they are not scared to come to say please. Only takes few minutes and then he will make it happen. Then he's a good communicator, is well, he doesn't have the mood swings. Maybe that's where I'm going. He doesn't have the mood swings. Whereas our female administrators, they tend to have the mood swings. He doesn't procrastinate. When the job is given to him, he does it, he finishes it.*

Manager E: *I don't find that to be any conflict in that I can work with all persons. And so, so far in my experience, I had no issues.*

According to a study by Galizzi *et al.* (2023: 16), an ideal cultural context should not permit stereotypes as they place either gender at a career disadvantage. In the current study, some of the responses issued by managers, however, did not align with this ideology. They demonstrated how some normalised practices at work, such as preferring female secretaries, can induce social stereotypes that compromise the representation of men in secretarial jobs. Those who indicated neutrality and did not bare stereotypes demonstrated the proposed ideal cultural context to be followed.

The managers were asked how often they came across a boss with a secretary of the same or opposite gender as themselves and were requested to share regarding their gender relations and the suitability of the arrangement. The managers in response indicated that for a male or female boss, the secretary would always be female. Some indicated that males were often represented as secretariats in committees or as administrators rather than as 'secretaries'. This aligns with the quantitative responses of secretarial administrative staff whose majority indicated that most secretaries were female. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager D: *secretaries that I know of are females... According to the environment where we are they are female.*

Manager E: *I haven't experienced where a boss is a female and then a secretary is a male. No, I haven't. If a boss is a lady the PA would be a lady as well if a boss is a male, the PA would be a lady, so most of the PAS and secretaries are ladies, whether a boss is a male or female.*

Manager A: *Just for the secretary job itself, we need a lot of patience, I guess. And they have to take it. They have to observe things that's going around and they have to act according to the situation, the circumstances. I think females are more mature enough to handle the situation. Either it's a, it's any conflict or if it's any happy situation. So females can basically they can handle any situation. ... And it is more convenient with the gender, any physical needs that we have, it is easy to*

communicate with the female secretary rather than an opposite gender, so they will have more understanding.

Gender roles are amongst the major ways that segregation by gender manifests (Verniers and Vala 2018: 1). Job segregation becomes eminent whenever there is differentiation between male and female jobs (Bishu and Headley 2020: 1063) as evident in the current study which indicated only women were secretaries whilst men in similar roles occupied titles of administrator or committee secretariat. These findings, therefore, imply a presence of segregation by gender and a lack of gender diversification where the job of 'secretary' was appropriated to the role of a woman rather than a man in any given work arrangement.

Managers were asked to share how they perceived administrators/secretaries to be experiencing development and empowerment in their roles over time. The managers in response indicated some development was offered by the university, mostly related to skills training to improve performance in their current jobs and further study bursaries. They highlighted that each secretarial administrative staff member was personally responsible for utilising available opportunities for their own career growth. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager A: *Particularly the record keeping, file planning, cleaning, utilising using the Excel, Microsoft, all of those. So we do have training and last year I sent two, I sent XXX to attend that, this year as well.*

Manager B: *I'll give you two experiences. The first one. Opportunities were offered to her to be developed, but she refused any development she'd have any excuse not to go for trainings.... That was a she yes...Then the current one who is a male. He takes every opportunity that is given to him...It's up to a person whether he wants to be empowered or not.*

According to a study by Yavorsky and Dill (2020: 12-13), female jobs may offer some men job growth and expand the scope of job searches. Evidence in the current study implies that although the feminised secretarial administrative jobs offer limited growth in terms of offering mostly training for current jobs, job growth opportunities were made available through bursary offerings to pursue future careers.

When asked whether, in their opinion, 'secretary' was an appropriate job title for either gender and their reasons why, the managers indicated appropriateness of the term 'secretary' to be based on the nature of the job and not gender. Some managers perceived the title of 'secretary' to be congruent with the secretarial responsibilities, while others perceived the opposite. They highlighted that this type of role can be assumed by either gender. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager C: *a secretary is. Like I said, it's not a gender. It's not person a gender. It's a position that comes with a particular responsibility.*

Manager B: *For me, I'll say I'll say no. Why? Because the the job that they do is more or less similar. I wouldn't want to call it a secretary. So it's. Similar to, it's similar to admin, but now we also have a PA, which makes it more confusing. But they will say, a PA, sometimes manages your diary and all that and all that. So it becomes a challenge. But I feel that we should scrap. The word 'secretary'.*

These findings from the managers assist to provide possible motivations behind significant quantitative responses obtained from secretarial administrative staff indicating neutrality on whether 'secretary' was an appropriate job title. In line with the study by Mesquita *et al.* (2019: 5) which counts secretaries as being amongst the two main levels in the administrative field, findings in the current study point at consistent blurred lines in the duties of a 'secretary' and 'administrator'. This means that if men are represented in administrator job titles, they can also be represented in job titles of 'secretary' as the roles are similar.

When asked whether, in their opinion, 'administrator' was an appropriate job title for either gender and their reasons, the managers indicated that the title was appropriate for both genders due to the nature of the job which was administrative. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager D: *As they support, the administrative activities of the institution. Yeah, its yeah, so yes, administrator is a good one.*

Manager E: *it's a title, a male can function as an administrator and a female can function as an administrator.*

A study by Moskos (2020: 536) points at strategies men use to align with the masculinities code which involves negotiating their male identity in a predominantly female career or disassociating with feminised work by not revealing their job titles. The findings in the current study reveal the general acceptance of the use of the job title 'administrator' for both genders, as also seen in the quantitative responses of secretarial administrative staff. This may prove beneficial in facilitating men's negotiation of their masculinity in the female dominated clerical field (Department of Statistics South Africa 2024).

When asked whether they found men to be equitably represented compared to women in job interviews for job advertisements for 'secretaries', the managers indicated they observed disproportionate gender representation as interviewees were predominantly female. The following response illustrates this finding:

Manager B: *in those interviews... I have sat in one for secretary and all of them were females.*

When further asked to share whether they believed men found these opportunities appealing, the managers indicated that the general perception is that the job of 'secretary' is for the female gender. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager D: *because they still think the job is meant for females.*

Manager A: *I don't think so. The first preferences are given to the women.*

A study by Moskos (2020: 527) revealed that there are various factors that have a bearing on men's representation in gender atypical jobs such as their lack of interest, negative experiences, undesirable labour conditions and gender roles and stereotypes. The findings in the current study imply that it is mostly women who are represented in interviews for secretarial jobs thus resulting in inequitable representation in secretarial jobs. The study further reveals that the factors that impact the representation of men in secretarial jobs mainly border on the gender stereotypes held that the job of a 'secretary' is appropriate for women rather than men.

The managers were asked to share whether they thought societal beliefs about gender encourage men to become secretaries. In response the managers indicated that the issue pointed towards the identity of a man in society and what the society deemed the role of a man to be. Reem and Haifa (2020: 10) make reference to Cech (2015) who suggests that one's cultural views and beliefs regulate one's professional identity. The responses by managers show how the maintenance of masculinity is important to a man and how everyone in the social context understands this in normative terms. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager A: *Because I think the men are...that they make up the family. So. So they have to. It also shows the status in the among the relatives or it's better if they can say I know my son is working there as an administrator, rather than saying that he's a secretary*

Manager E: *Technically, they've been indoctrinated to believe that females have the skills to type, and they're very good typist, and therefore they are good secretaries now. That kind of perception has been indoctrinated into people, and therefore you find that sometimes when we stand and look at this, we feel that why are they, you know, making it seem like this job is only for female? It's not because they are doing that. They've been programmed to think like that.*

Hegemonic masculinity dominates through cultural consent and the delegitimizing of alternatives (Yang 2020: 320). The findings in the current study imply that to a certain extent there might be an expectation by people in general that men strive to align with cultural constraints on masculinity by not pursuing jobs that are seen as feminine and appropriated to women such as that of 'secretary'.

When asked whether the way the job title of 'secretary' is portrayed and understood in general encourages men to apply for jobs as secretaries, the managers indicated that the feminisation of the word 'secretary' was linked to feminised duty expectations regarding the role. This was said to result in men not being encouraged to apply for jobs as 'secretaries'. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager B: *One, the word 'secretary', is not understood. Two, I don't think that it encourages men to apply for the job. Because you don't see them applying for the*

job. It means they're not interested, but yet there are so many unemployed, but they don't apply for it.

Manager E: *even my expectation is that sometimes you you come back and say, can I have a a cup of coffee? I'm thinking if I say that to a male, I'm coming back ekse mfethu ngicela ungenzela icoffee (hey man can you make me a cup of coffee) *laughs*. You're not. You're asking, but it's gonna be difficult to him running around with cups, cleaning inkomishi nezipuni (cups and tea spoons) and all that, you know.*

Among the principles salient in masculinities is the disassociation from femininity (Anderson and Magrath 2019: 14) . Moreover, work associated with the female gender is often undervalued and this type of gender related depreciation is unfounded (Foley and Cooper, 2021: 466). The findings in the current study imply that the job of 'secretary' has become feminised to an extent that it no longer resonates with masculinity ideals and in thus may not be appealing to the male gender.

4.4.4.3 Sub-Theme: Inclusion

Managers were asked to indicate from a list the factors that prevent men from pursuing secretarial work. Listed factors included: a) salary of a secretary, b) companies' preference for women secretaries, c) men not visible assuming jobs as secretaries, d) a sense of misplacement experienced by men, e) being assumed to be gay, f) being perceived as assistant rather than a boss. In response managers highlighted that men were generally discouraged by companies' perceived preference for female secretaries, and that men were not seeing other men pursue jobs as secretaries. This was stated to be despite the fact that job advertisements did not specify a preferred gender incumbent. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager E: *Yeah, I think, uh, especially when the advert does not declare that they are looking for a female or they're looking for a male. They are silent about that. Then male applicants could kind of feel disadvantaged and think that you know what, seeing how this company has operated in the past, they only had female secretaries and they the high possibilities that they will be looking again for a female.*

Manager B: *From the advertisements that I have seen of secretaries and admin assistant, none of them had had stipulated that they wanted female secretary.*

Some of the factors stated as possibly preventing men from pursuing jobs as secretaries, were contested. The following responses illustrate these findings:

a) Salary of a secretary

Manager E: *Salary of the secretary, that's gonna be yes. If the men are the only providers for their family, now that amount is not enough. So most of the men They have to earn a lot to support their family while the female is just contribution here and there so the salary of the secretary is very low*

Manager B: *Unfortunately I don't know salaries of secretaries.*

b) A sense of misplacement

Manager A: *Because we still, even in the linear years, it's better to try that men be in the key work abroad, even if he could put petrol pump or something, it's fine, but they don't want to tell that he is a secretary you know.*

c) People assuming male secretaries to be gay

Manager C: *So what I'm saying is it's just because of the element of the feminine touch on the job and the people they associate it with that. But I don't think it's a, it's a true reflection. No, I don't think so.*

Manager E: *stereotyping is very prevalent in society and when back with that same mindset that we spoke about earlier, who realises that secretary should be only females see a male functioning in that, they'll say, oh, this guy must be gay. You know, that's why he's in that room. And so if that is something that is being pushed in society around social settings, then you'll find men who want to shy away.*

d) Being perceived as an assistant and not the boss

Manager A: *With the men How can they say that? She is a woman and how can she order me to do this. What is wrong with me that I can't even see it in my office? Yeah, even at the administrator level the male dominance is still there.*

Although masculinities are the benchmark of how humans relate to the world (Gottzén et al. 2019: 2000), Mousa (2021: 119) asserts that diversity management and organisational inclusion are essential to contentment and well-being in a workplace. The findings in the current study show how certain masculinities behaviours and practices are at play and act as a barrier to men's entrance into the job of a 'secretary' due to its perceived feminisation. This observation leads to the conclusion that diversity and organisational inclusion is somewhat compromised in the secretarial administrative field.

When asked to share their view on the perception that men view secretarial work as better suited for women, the managers indicated that people in general and males in particular held this belief due to various reasons and avoided secretarial jobs. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager A: *Jah, they think that secretarial work is best suited for women, for the reason that women have more mental stability.*

Manager C: *Yes, I think it comes with that. It's a natural for me. I always say it's also the society's mentality and male's mentality that they themselves being a secretary to another male might be questioned also and not only a boss being questioned like why are you having a male secretary, but also them that so you are secretary to this guy? so the world would view it as in many forms you know.*

When asked to share their view on the perception that women view secretarial work as better suited for women, the managers indicated that women were conditioned to be naturally at ease in secretarial jobs. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager A: *You know, as a woman, like the secretarial job is comfortable for me, rather than an administrator who is in a position to decide something. Jah it's better, its comes with more peace.*

Manager E: *they've been indoctrinated to believe that they're only good to do typing and typing equals better opportunity to become a secretary. Therefore, they too believe in their mindset.*

The findings in the current study imply that men avoid secretarial jobs while women are open to pursuing them. A similar trend is observed in parts of the world where there are job crises in that men opt to succumb to the vulnerability of unemployment rather than pursue certain jobs to which women are open (International Labour Organisation 2021). It is concluded that the secretarial job may be amongst the jobs that men are not willing to pursue despite the unemployment crisis in South Africa (Statistica 2022) thus negatively affecting male representation in the secretarial jobs.

When asked to share their view on the perception that personnel at work view secretarial work as better suited for women, the managers indicated that the job was still appropriated to women. They however pointed out that an inclusive outlook was being adopted where both men and women can be equally embraced in the role of a secretary. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager B: *I don't think they would mind. They just need to be given that opportunity to explore, to see whether how is the male. But me having both experiences, I think it's it's it's OK you can. that job can be given to anyone.*

Manager D: *the perception will remain as long as the name of the title is still the secretary or the personal assistant.*

Numerous studies reported segregation by gender across occupations to still be a an undesirable encounter (Breda *et al.* 2020: 31063; Froehlich *et al.* 2020: 484). This was also evident in the current study findings which reveal that to an extent, a traditional female gendered role is still attached to the job title of 'secretary'. This could therefore compromise the representation of men in the feminised secretarial jobs as they do not fit the masculine ideals which are perceived as the standard norm (Gottzén *et al.* 2019: 2000).

When asked to share their view on the perception that human resources department view secretarial work as better suited to women, the managers indicated that often HR

personnel act for the benefit of the organisation. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager D: *what exactly is the institution doing? You know, will that kind of institution really need female, you know... human resources will be guided by the nature of these kind of things in an organisation.*

Manager A: *With the human resource department I can say that it's something that they can negotiate and they've been doing that their entire lives, but men can negotiate. And even when the human resource department is thinking about long term vacancy providence, they need someone who can withstand the pressure that university has or the department has that don't come on the page on the letter that we are signing, so they have to have some employee who is understanding. Who has an understanding of the setup and act according to the need bending here and there for the smooth flow but with the men. Sometimes they can be very stubborn. So with the human resource they prefer women as they're suited for salary negotiation. Even if we want extra work to be added, being ordered and then say yes, we don't fight.*

The managers further indicated that although the HR department is perceived to be complying to fair organisational recruitment practices, the predominance of women as secretaries did bring the integrity of the hiring process into doubt. In support, Thirusanku and Singh (2021: 210) state that the presence of discrimination in the work place can be perceived as early as at the recruitment stage. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager C: *I've never seen a secretary that's displaced by HR and sitting at HR which which are males, I've always seen as females, which means even the recruitment that forces them to call females.*

Scholars observe that in order to achieve diversity, competing for jobs ought to be on level grounds, even across genders and especially within the context of marginalisation of one group in favour of another (Baker, Ali and French, 2019: 1-2; Williamson, Carson and Foley 2020: 235; Jordan, 2022: 41-43). The findings of the current study reveal that equal footing in terms of gender when competing for secretarial jobs is ensured by the

HR department during recruitment, however, the desired diversity is yet to be achieved. This is in reference to the responses by secretarial administrative staff who indicated a major disproportion in representation in that secretaries were predominantly female. This implies that, in general, men do experience some barrier in their entry into the job title of a secretary.

When asked to share their view on the perception that men avoid the job title of 'secretary' to protect their social identity as men, the managers indicated that they perceived this to be the case. The following responses illustrate these findings:

Manager B: *I think they do, Yes they do, yes they do otherwise we will be seeing lots of them. They prefer to be "amaphara" (hobos) than to be secretaries.*

Manager E: *affected Men's ego. If I had to say that therefore they think like now I don't want to be a secretary because my peers will laugh at me.*

This view is supported by the study by Moskos (2020: 536) that reveals that often men feel the need to negotiate their identity when they find themselves appointed to feminised work by disassociating themselves from the work where possible. The findings in the current study imply that men will adopt strategies to avoid disapproval by family, friends and colleagues of their choice of a feminised job such as that of a secretary.

4.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR

The chapter described how the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study were interpreted. The qualitative data emanating from the documentary analysis of HR documents included data on gender categorisation and numbers per category. Quantitative data extracted from the mixed method survey instrument was interpreted with reference to participant biographical data, and their perceptions on gender representation and identification of gender barriers. Qualitative data obtained from the mixed method survey of secretarial administrative staff and interviews with male administrators and management was interpreted thematically. The themes identified were the main theme of 'compromised gender diversity' which consisted of two sub-themes, namely: 'contribution to gender equity' and 'potential for inclusivity'. The data was interpreted utilising the data codes identified, namely: a) gender biases and barriers

and b) DEI issues not detected, c) 'opportunities vs barriers' and d) 'discrimination'. The following chapter will present the key findings of the study in accordance with its objectives.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four presented both the quantitative and qualitative results of the study and their interpretation based on the participants' responses.

In this chapter, the key findings of the study are presented in accordance with its objectives. They are further discussed thematically portraying the main theme 'Compromised Gender Diversity' underpinning the two sub-themes 'Contribution to Gender Equity' and 'Potential for Inclusivity'. The discussions are framed on literature employing the masculinities and post-structural feminism theoretical frameworks.

5.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES ONE AND TWO

(Objective 1: To determine gender representation within the secretarial administrative staff population at the selected university in KZN in the year 2024)

(Objective 2: To identify the attitude of secretaries towards their roles within the selected university in KZN)

5.2.1 Main Theme: Compromised Gender Diversity

The analysis of primary documentary evidence from the university's HR division presented in **Table 4.1** revealed that secretarial administrative staff at the university were (for the purpose of this study) categorised into 10 designation types. The identified designations and their representation were depicted as: officers 45 (29%), administrators 32 (21%), administrative secretaries 22 (14%), secretaries/personal assistants 19 (12%), coordinators 17 (11%), administrative officers eight (5%), clerks eight (5%), administrative assistants two (1%), data capturer one (1%) and switchboard operator one (1%). The majority of secretarial administrative staff (32.4%) were deployed in the 'Teaching and Learning Division', (21.3%) in the 'Finance Division' and (15.7%) in the 'Office of the Registrar' respectively.

Three key qualitative response sources were engaged to affirm the findings in the analysed documents, namely: a) secretarial administrative support staff, b) male administrators, and c) managers. Respondents' qualitative responses corroborated with each other and with the HR documents analysed in identifying women as the predominantly represented gender in secretarial administrative support roles. They further validated each other's general observations that for a male or female boss, the secretary would always be female.

Men not being equitably represented in feminised jobs such as secretarial administrative support jobs was not unique to the university under study. Literature depicts similar trends globally. For example, in the United Kingdom (Careersmart 2020b) and the United States of America (Zippia, 2021a) women are thriving in the various support roles described as administrative. Furthermore, other feminised professions such as nursing experience similar gender disproportions as a majority of nurses in the United Kingdom (Careersmart 2020b) and the United States of America are noted to be female (Zippia, 2021a).

The findings in the current study further show that a majority of the secretarial administrative support staff were employed in the top three job categories of: officers (29%), administrators (21%) and administrative secretaries (14%). In most of the secretarial administrative categories, women were the most represented gender. The categories that were an exception were the administrative assistants, with an equal number per gender; co-ordinators, composed more of men than women; and switchboard operators with a man and no women. This means that at the university under study, there were no men employed under the job title 'secretary' and therefore all secretaries were female. This further reveals that there were also no men employed under the job title 'personal assistant'. **(see Table 4.1)**

5.2.2 Sub-Theme 1: Contribution to Gender Equity

The secretarial administrative support staff in their responses indicated that 'secretaries' and 'administrators' generally required similar skills to carry out their jobs in the office and sometimes had similar roles in the office with the main difference being the job titles. Such job titles were so closely related that at times they would be used interchangeably. This is supported by literature. One of Hartford Courant's (2022) publications revealed that certain titles, such as 'administrative assistant', 'administrative professional' and 'research assistant' were sometimes used as alternatives for male secretaries instead of the term 'secretary'. This shows that the title of secretary is closely adaptable to that of an

administrative title, however, men were not represented in secretarial positions even though they had the required skills to assume the roles. They were instead better represented in other roles perceived as gender neutral such as 'administrator' roles.

As shown in **Table 4.1**, males were represented frequently in jobs incorporating the gender-neutral job titles of "administrator", "officer" and "co-ordinator". In this regard, this study is also viewed through the feminist post-structuralism theoretical lens with specific reference to Lawson (2020: 2) who alludes to how language is used by men to maintain their privileged position in general society. Men in the current study not being represented by the job title 'secretary' while having better representation in other job titles that happen to require similar skills could indicate that they associate themselves with a slightly more privileged position. The job titles such as 'administrator' where men are represented more are viewed as privileged with reference to the responses by managers. Managers described the job of 'administrator' as having increased responsibility, increased autonomy and being a job rich in terms of knowledge on policies and reporting. The job role was described to be at times a level higher than that of a secretary with greater prospects of development, unlike a secretarial job that was perceived as limiting in terms of growth. In support of this, a study by Taflaga and Kerby (2019:1) identified a pattern of systematic gendered staffing where men were appointed in policy work and began and ended their careers in higher status jobs with greater prospects for growth while women occupied lower status jobs with lesser influence and autonomy such as gendered support roles like typists.

The male administrators described the nature of the growth and development that they were receiving from the university as the type that grooms them in their current position and for senior positions in the future. On the contrary, the predominantly female job of 'secretary' provided growth and development more notably in current positions. This included skills workshops and training such as minute taking, record keeping, file planning, utilising Excel and Microsoft office software and similar trainings. In comparison, administrative jobs offer entry level managerial training and further on the job training whereby the administrator shadows the manager as part of succession planning. These are development opportunities not linked to the secretarial jobs predominantly occupied by women.

Males whose job titles incorporated 'secretary' all had the title 'administrator' incorporated to make 'administrative secretary', instantly positioning them for broader prospects for growth due to the title of 'administrator'. From a feminist post-structuralism theoretical view,

this may be an example of how privilege is maintained for men. From a masculinities perspective, incorporating 'administrative' may be interpreted as means of gender neutralising the title 'secretary' and disassociating from anything feminine and linked to a lower social class and limited career possibilities. This may be an attempt to allow men to enter secretarial positions without the low status of a secretary. In literature, Reem and Haifa (2020: 11) state that "Feminisation of occupation has been correlated with occupation devaluation", hence men may want to avoid these roles. According to the results of this study, jobs labelled as 'secretary', which were deemed to have fewer growth prospects, were the types of jobs in which no men were appointed, and which appointed 100% women.

This corroborates with the responses of secretarial administrative staff whose majority were inclined to appropriating the job title 'administrator' to men as shown in **Figure 4.11** but not appropriating men to the job title 'secretary', as shown in **Figure 4.10**. Participant qualitative responses explained that according to societal norms, often the job title 'secretary' was linked to a female and was deemed incongruent with a description of a male. This, however, was not the case with the job title of 'administrator' which was appropriated more favourably to males than 'secretary'. This observation raised, on the other end, a masculinities argument based on how various scholars conceptualise masculinity characteristics (Khumalo *et al.* 2021: 7; King *et al.* 2021: 1; Roper and Tosh, 2021: 1-3). It considers the possibility that men in the secretarial administrative support domains may be subjected to the pressures of conforming to the dominant ideas of being a man to avoid having their masculinity questioned. These existing pressures may be manifesting themselves as resistance to all things associated with femininity, including the job title of 'secretary' usually associated with women. This understanding may assist to give a complete picture of what is in fact being depicted by the issue of representation in a more theoretically inclined perspective.

5.2.3 Sub-Theme 2: Potential for Inclusivity

Managers who participate in the recruitment process for the secretarial administrative support staff confirmed that a preference for women in such roles does exist. This was also generally perceived to be the case by male administrators in their responses and in the responses of the support staff in general. The norm of persistently employing mostly women for secretarial administrative work was perceived as evidence that the secretarial administrative field has not yet embraced otherness in line with transformative policies and programmes in place. The lack of diversity exposed in the gender representation was

critically analysed by the respondents as indicative of important issues for address. Gender equity and inclusion, particularly of men in secretarial administrative jobs, was flagged in the statements of participants as a persisting issue that blends in as a norm and goes unnoticed. Some of the participant responses obtained demonstrate how a lack of representation of men in these particular jobs is not thought of as an issue nor linked to live consequences by some.

Men's unemployment because of not being included and not being equitably presented with opportunities was challenged with seriousness calling for societal transformed beliefs about the gendered nature of the role of administrative secretaries. Literature shows that in South Africa the youth is said to be affected the most by unemployment (Statistica 2022). Most of the secretarial administrative support jobs at the university are at junior levels (**Figure 4.2**). This is generally where the youth are positioned to start their careers and yet the male youth are subjected to the issue of female dominance in this particular field as well as issues of identity that they have to battle.

By identifying gender disproportions, the results of the study deemed diversity as discounted in the university secretarial administrative support staff employ. Notwithstanding strides made by the university to foster diversity in its employment policies, the evidence of men not being equitably represented in secretarial administrative jobs was glaring both in official university documentation as well as in responses by participants in the study.

5.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES TWO AND FOUR

(**Objective 2:** To identify the attitude of secretaries towards their roles within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal)

(**Objective 4:** To identify the critical barriers preventing the representation of men in secretarial jobs at the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal)

5.3.1 Gender Stereotypes

(Sub-Theme 1: Contribution to Gender Equity and Sub-Theme 2: Potential for Inclusivity)

When analysed, the factors mentioned in the study as discouraging men from pursuing secretarial jobs are not linked to men's lack of interest. This affirms literature with reference to an empirical study conducted by Abdullah *et al.* (2023:220) that showed that men, to a certain extent, do harbour some interest in feminised careers. According to the study, one of the factors identified as contributing to Malaysian men's participation in non-traditional feminised careers includes personal factors relating to self-interest.

The secretarial administrative support roles were composed of a majority of employees in the older age group category which could be indicative of a good employee retention rate (**Table 4.2**). Most of the employees were African, indicative of potential shared values and cultural norms by various ethnic groups (**Figure 4.1**) fostering a general sense of ease with one's social context. Moreover, most of the secretarial administrative support staff were permanent staff members (**Table 4.3**). All these factors were perceived as positive pull factors that could potentially interest one in such roles, however, challenges were uncovered that were potentially making the job roles less appealing and acting as barriers to gender diversity in the support roles. The stereotyping and challenges reported by the secretarial administrative support staff indicated that they harbored some reservations about the nature of their jobs which might ultimately translate into barriers to entry into the job field. The undesired stereotypes and challenges as experienced by men, in particular, may potentially be incongruent with what they understand their role to be as a male in a social context.

The secretarial administrative staff in general highlighted certain factors that they perceived to be more notably discouraging men from pursuing jobs as secretaries (**Figure 4.3**) as well as on the job challenges that exist.

5.3.1.1 Companies' Preference for Women as a Barrier

One of the most prominent factors that prevailed from the responses of the support staff in general as the reason why men are discouraged from pursuing jobs as secretaries is the perception that companies prefer women secretaries (**Figure 4.3**). Consistent with the responses of secretarial administrative support staff in general, male administrators also indicated the same. Literature further refers to men's anticipation for preference for female

employees in female domains as a form of barrier to men's entry in feminised jobs (Delfino 2021: 5, 12, 32).

The inclination towards this belief by the general support staff, including the male administrators themselves as men, was not unreasonable nor unsupported. This outlook was informed by the gender biases individuals in the organisation were perceived to have which acted as barriers in achieving equity in the secretarial administrative support roles. The participants identified societal gender role beliefs and expectations as the foremost factors that contributed to the feminisation of the secretarial job and further inciting of gender role stereotypes. In literature, the study by Galizzi, McBride and Siboni (2023: 16) highlighted the need for a cultural context that does not involve stereotypes that restrict genders in pursuing their career goals. The study enlightened how social reproduction and the construction of gendered barriers are an institutionalised social practice within universities.

5.3.1.2 Gendered Job Roles

The participants perceived that the job role of secretary was for women and not men and that generally people expect to see women in the role of 'secretary'. This is evidence of what is stated in literature as explained by Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, one of the first to point out the existence of class systems based on certain group demographics, including gender (Blunden 2021: 387). The stereotypes may be perceived as a means of keeping each gender tied to their class level. In so doing, men may find it challenging to enter the secretarial job roles whilst women may be seen only fit to these types of roles.

The stereotypes relating to the job as per the empirical findings, include:

- Females are more suited for secretarial roles than men
- A woman is who people expect to see in the role of secretary
- Men cannot be referred to as a 'secretary'

5.3.1.3 Gender Bias

A majority of the secretarial administrative staff in general related the secretarial position to a female gender specifically, with a few relating it to both the male and female gender equally (**Table 4.7**). They further perceived that men generally avoid secretarial jobs based on the belief that they were better suited for women (**Figure 4.3**). Their responses were consistent

with male administrators' responses, some of whom perceived that secretarial work belonged to women whilst others expressed gender neutrality. This perception was not peculiar as literature shows similar trends. For example, a study by Rommelspacher (2022: 560-561) demonstrated how for decades in South Africa and globally, the trend was to assign clerical work to women. The male administrators who indicated that men viewed secretarial work as better suited for women explained that this perception was greatly influenced by the societal norms and beliefs in terms of one's personal background.

Another perception shown in the responses was that women perceived these jobs to be better suited for them as women. This can be corroborated by literature explaining the understanding in gender studies that internalised beliefs about one's gender role influences one's occupational ambitions (Dicke *et al.* 2019: 1), hence women owning such roles. The participant responses, however, stated that this is not always the case and pointed at other factors that come into play, such as office politics in relation to job positions. Moreover, male administrators were also of the view that even personnel at work believed secretarial work better suited to women.

On the perception that the human resources department viewed secretarial work as better suited to women, the male administrators were impartial and reported various factors. They acknowledged that HR staff, influenced by personal upbringing, may project some bias, however, they were guided by university policies on recruitment and hiring. They further flagged the pressure from intruding bosses who indicate personal preference for a woman as a major influence on who gets hired. They also considered that the HR department may not be receiving many applications from men. Religious as well as ethnic beliefs were highlighted amongst the type of beliefs that shape perceptions of gender roles including the secretarial job role. Male administrators whose stance was gender role neutral reasoned this on the basis of job competence as a just consideration and on concerns about the high rate of unemployment which shifts one to prioritise livelihood.

5.3.1.4 Society Belief that the Secretarial Job is Better Suited for Women

Another factor perceived as discouraging men from entering secretarial job roles was the perceived sense of shame that men felt as society believes secretarial jobs are better suited to women and not gender congruent with men. Literature describes how it is not easy for a man in feminised jobs. According to Forkuor *et al.* (2020: 40), that men are sometimes even ridiculed with (feminine) name calling for undertaking feminised jobs. A study by Oh

(2019: 6) revealed that in general, identity or one's concept of self may be a barrier to the supply of labour and prevent appropriate job positioning.

5.3.1.5 Stereotypes Relating to Personal Attributes on the Job

The participants in their responses indicated that competencies in the role of secretary, namely: organisation skills, good communication, reception, multitasking, patience, to mention a few are associated with the female gender. These efficiencies were isolated as traits that men do not generally possess stemming from the stereotypes that women are more suited for the roles. A few negative stereotypes, however, were also linked to females in favour of males. Stereotypes mentioned in the participant responses, a majority whom were female (as the domain is predominantly female, (**see Appendix J**)) included statements such as:

- Woman are more warm, approachable and welcoming.
- Woman are more organised than men.
- Woman can multitask and men can't.
- Women are more helpful and men are lazy around the office.
- Women pay more attention to details and men are easily distracted.
- Women are moody and men are more emotionally stable.
- Women make emotional decisions and men use their heads.
- Men are immature sometimes.

It was concerning to note that the negative stereotypes about men, misappropriating them to the roles, were mostly coming from women. In this way, women participated in linking the secretarial administrative jobs to themselves as females. These are the very same jobs that women indicated in their responses were associated with low pay and lower stature. In literature, Yavorsky and Dill (2020: 1) state poor pay as one of the reasons men avoid feminised jobs. Moreover, the responses by women affirm the reconceptualisation of masculinities by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) to expose that sometimes it is the subordinated groups that play a role in perpetuating the hegemonic dominance in acknowledgement of the intersectional nature of gender, class and other factors.

5.3.1.6 Stereotypes Relating to Sexual Orientation

In the literature, the findings of Connor *et al.* (2022: 1) reveal that there is an ongoing reconceptualisation of masculinities and that contemporary masculinities are well received by heterosexual men in general and are advantageous to the men themselves as well as society. One of the elements of the new emerging masculinities is the resistance of traditional interpretations of masculinities.

In the current study, there were some participants who believed pursuing a secretarial job may cause a man's sexual orientation to be questioned (**Figure 4.3**) or be perceived as homosexual. Some of the male administrators' responses alluded to this as being one of their fears in being associated with certain feminised job roles rather than the lack of interest in them. Not even the salary was a major contributor to males not being represented. In the context of the new masculinities as referred to in literature, this may mean men ought to be intentional about resisting the traditional interpretations of masculinities that are compelling them to adhere to certain masculinity norms in terms of job roles.

5.3.1.7 Gendered Job Titles

Participant responses showed that the job title "secretary", according to society norms about gender roles, is associated with the female gender and is usually assumed to mean 'a woman'. This was accepted as how things have always been by most. The responses of the male administrators as men themselves reflected that men did not wish to be associated with the job title of 'secretary' or anything perceived as feminine as a means of preserving their identity as men in society. This response by the male administrators was interpreted as a way of conforming to masculinity norms from a masculinities theoretical perspective.

According to literature, the concept of 'masculinities' incorporates certain behaviours and practices existing in specific cultural and organisational locations which culturally define a man as not feminine (Council of Europe 2022: para. 3 line 4). This is perceived as a means of men protecting their masculinity from being questioned based on the acceptable masculinity norms. The male administrators' responses, however, unanimously indicated that in terms of their personal beliefs, outside of social identity, they perceived gender as irrelevant, stating it did not matter which gender was assigned the job title of secretary. This response by males makes it clear that pressure to conform to the masculinity framework exists and has influence. This is related to literature that points to the existence of dominant codes within masculinities which put pressure on men and create an expectation around

them (Kleinsorge 2019). This, therefore, means that men may act in ways to conform to societal expectations of them even though this may not be their personal views.

It was observed in the study survey results that the job title of 'secretary' was promoted more for application to women than to men by the secretarial administrative support staff in general (**Table 4.10**). Furthermore, the job title of 'administrator' was promoted more for use to refer to men rather than women and the indecisiveness of assigning the job title of 'administrator' was less prevalent when applied to males compared to females (**Table 4.12**).

This means that the secretarial administrative support staff, including the male administrators themselves as men, did not deem it appropriate for a male to be referred to as 'secretary', however, were more inclined to find it appropriate for a female to be referred to as a 'secretary'. The job title of secretary was therefore deemed as female gendered. In contrast, the job title of 'administrator' was appropriated to both males and females equally as the difference in results was negligible. Results in respect to 'receptionist' as another role perceived as female gendered reflected similar results. The secretarial administrative support staff in general were resolved that women may be given a job title of 'receptionist' but were indecisive whether the same could be applied to men (**see Table 4.14**). The stereotype held by the secretarial administrative staff, including male administrators, was therefore that secretarial jobs are for women.

5.3.1.8 Not Seeing Other Males in Secretarial Roles

Male administrators mentioned that not seeing other male staff taking up jobs as secretaries also discouraged them as men from pursuing the job roles. In various contexts in literature, it is shown that in feminised fields, men are conscious to identify whether there are any persons of the same gender as them represented around them in the field in fear of being misplaced in a 'female' domain. Male office management students observed a lack of balance and inequality reflected in their study material in terms of gender representation of males in the secretarial field (Ferreira and van Antwerpen 2012: 258).

The issue of the lack of male role model representation was observed to be a barrier not only in the secretarial occupation, but in other occupational domains also. Kronsberg *et al.* (2018: 47) revealed in their study that male nursing students are at risk of dropping out of nursing programmes due to experiencing isolation as a gender minority and the lack of male role models or mentors.

5.3.2 Job Challenges

The participants in their responses also reported other challenges that they experienced in relation to their jobs.

5.3.2.1 Degradation on the Job

The challenge that was common to secretarial administrative support staff of both genders was that of being demeaned or exploited on the job by bosses or other senior colleagues.

According to the literature, men are subjected to the pressures of conforming to the dominant ideas of being a man, and if they do not, are typically subordinated and socially marginalised (Khumalo *et al.* 2021: 7-8; King *et al.* 2021: 1; Roper and Tosh, 2021: 1). In the current study and in context of men in particular, participants' reports of being looked down upon in the context of the masculinities lens may be interpreted as a way in which they are socially marginalised for not being gender congruent with masculine ideals and associating with femininity in their job. There are numerous discussions in literature on how 'hegemonic masculinity' is sustained through privilege and maintained through the subordination of other masculine and feminine identities (Wojnicka 2021: 200; Bishop 2018; Salazar *et al.* 2020: 2; Messerschmidt 2019: 85). In the current study, what men and women in support roles may be experiencing, therefore, could be hegemonic masculinity from colleagues that seeks to maintain itself through subordination of other colleagues perceived as deviant of masculine ideals or feminine identities.

5.3.2.2 Lack of Autonomy on the Job

Specific challenges experienced by male secretarial administrative support staff included the desire to work independently. Male administrators expressed that they prefer not to be micromanaged on the job as is done with secretarial jobs. This collaborates with the description of the administrative jobs by managers as being more autonomous and is consistent with literature which lays out that hegemonic masculinity ideals suggest that a 'real man' must be dominant (Bishop 2018; Wojnicka 2021: 200; Messerschmidt 2019: 85). This may further explain why men are more represented in administrative jobs where they can be more assertive and less subservient compared to secretarial jobs.

5.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES THREE AND FOUR

(Objective 3: To identify the attitude of managers towards the role of secretarial administrative support staff within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal)

(Objective 4: To identify the critical barriers, preventing the representation of men in secretarial jobs at the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal)

5.4.1 Bias Informed by Personal Experiences

(Sub-Theme 1: Contribution to Gender Equity)

In terms of the working relationships and in relation to the job role of 'secretary' specifically, some managers indicated that they preferred women to be in a secretarial role while others did not have a personal preference for either gender in the role. The managers who preferred women to be secretaries alluded to their own positive experiences with women in this role. They described their preference for women secretaries as stemming from the qualities of nurturer which they associated with femininity. In the literature, a study conducted by Kang, Tse and Toh (2019: 1) provided evidence of how occupations are reliably stereotyped according to the measurement of warmth and competence whereby women are more visible in jobs that require high warmth and low competence. In contrast, the manager who indicated a preference to work with a male secretarial administrator appraised men as more efficient and professional than women.

It was noted that all the managers who indicated a personal preference for a specific gender in a certain support role did harbour some bias with relation to one gender in favour of another. This was evident in the stereotypical beliefs that they stated as reasons for their personal preference. For instance, managers who indicated a preference for women secretaries held the stereotypes that:

- Women are nurturing.
- Women are warm and approachable.
- It is easier to communicate a problem to a woman than a man as they are more understanding.
- Women are more patient than men.
- Women are more adaptable to office challenges and are more equipped to solve them.
- Women are mature enough to solve conflicts in an office environment compared to men.

This preference in a practical context as stated in the qualitative response results of the managers could be linked to the availability of a female secretary to make tea for the manager. In consideration that a male as indicated in the results can never be seen making tea for their boss, this could mean that other factors which are linked to gender and are not related to the job factor into determining one's value on the job.

This nurturing role from the perspective of a support staff member may be perceived as a form of exploitation and make the job less appealing to someone who is considering pursuing a job in a support role. For a man, this may project the job as female gendered and linked to the nurturing or subservient roles women take on at home outside of work. As such, these secretarial jobs would go against their masculine beliefs as a man. Some responses from the support staff did compare the role of a secretary to one of a woman at home and made examples of how they make tea and pick furniture, something that according to societal norms is not associated with men. This perception is consistent with the results of this study in relation to the attitudes of secretarial administrators whereby they indicated that such jobs are a better suited for women.

The manager who indicated a preference to work with men in secretarial administrative roles held the stereotypes that:

- Men are more approachable as they do not act like gate keepers as women often do.
- Women have mood swings.
- Women are often engaged with other responsibilities.

In literature, three studies by Zell *et al.* (2016: 287) revealed that psychological differences between genders are often exaggerated due to underlying sexist ideologies. Verniers and Vala (2018: 2) caution that gender differentiation is a component of sexism in particular and may be related to gender discrimination in the workplace because the maintenance of power asymmetry through traditional gender roles is at the core of this component. In the current study, the stated stereotypes served to affirm the responses by the secretarial administrative support staff who pointed out that challenges existed in their jobs and that there were sometimes accompanying biases further linked to unfair treatment at work. The support staff relayed their own experiences of how individuals within the organisation perpetuated various stereotypes verbally in what they said or implicitly in their behaviour towards them as support staff resulting in unfair treatment. The personal preferences indicated by the managers in

the current study were perceived as the potential gap where the stereotypes resulted in inequitable opportunities for the genders in secretarial administrative support roles.

In literature, the economics and quarterly review report by Thirusanku and Singh (2021: 210) revealed differential treatment which is evidence of how discrimination in the workplace extends as far as recruitment, remuneration and restrained development practices of an organisation. It was, therefore, concerning that managers, who are at the forefront of recruitment and development to a certain extent, harbour gender stereotypical beliefs as potentially affects gender representation. A research study by González *et al.* (2019: 187) revealed that gender bias in recruitment results from employer's stereotypes and prejudices. The study by Rice and Barth (2016: 1) attests to this by demonstrating stereotyping of genders where men and women are differentiated according to their traditionalist gender roles by evaluators during hiring. It is argued in the current study that these outlooks towards specific genders in the form of biases contribute to perpetuating the hegemonic dominance of men by validating gender roles. Linking femininity to the role of a secretary may put men at a disadvantage as they may be perceived as job incongruent when applying for such jobs.

5.4.2 Results Oriented Position

(Sub-Theme 2: Potential for Inclusivity)

Despite their subjective personal preferences, the managers in their responses acknowledged that it should not matter which gender is assigned the role of 'administrator' or 'secretary' in the office. They further observed that the job titles of 'secretary' and 'administrator' or other support roles should be aligned with the nature of the job that one does, and not one's gender. They clarified, therefore, that even a man who does secretarial duties should be referred to as a 'secretary'.

The managers that did not agree with this view offered a different perspective that irrespective of one's gender, the job title of 'administrator' was more suited to the nature of both secretarial and administrative jobs. They observed that the nature of the support jobs such as that of secretaries, administrators, administrative assistants, personal assistants and others has become almost identical. They perceived that the job title of 'administrator' was more career enriching and developmental compared to one of 'secretary'. They hence deemed it more appropriate in describing the value a secretarial administrator's responsibilities brings to the organisation. The managers were generally more interested in

meeting office targets and, hence, were more concerned about the competency of an individual in a role rather than traits associated with their gender.

Managers in their responses generally distinguished the role of a secretary from that of an administrator by highlighting that secretaries are often responsible for taking care of the general office needs of their bosses and at times that of the entire office. Administrators were described as responsible for taking care of the needs of an office or a particular clientele in relation to a specific portfolio responsibility. They were said to exercise their ability to interpret and implement policy, and, independently, administer complex responsibilities with minimal supervision. When it came to the job role of administrator, the managers unanimously indicated a personal preference for either gender.

They, however, did observe that they had never come across a female or male boss who was assigned a male secretary, and that secretaries are always women. In the literature, a respondent in a study conducted by Galizzi, McBride and Siboni (2023: 14) on male and female roles in the work environment indicated that “the boss is a man and the secretary is a woman”. In relation to the current study, this appears to be the case as well where the women are always carrying the title of ‘secretary’ and always the ones to be in a subservient position in office dynamics, and not a men.

The title of ‘secretary’ may, in fact, assist to perpetuate particular forms of exclusionary and privileged subject positions where men maintain their privileged position in general society by ensuring that they are not seen in a subservient role of ‘secretary’. This as a means of asserting their higher status in society in comparison to women.

The manager’s responses indicated that they perceived that there were gaps in the conceptualisation of the job title ‘secretary’ that was influenced by one’s personal background in terms of cultural norms and beliefs. They observed that at times these societal norms and beliefs caused the job title of ‘secretary’ not to resonate with men in particular.

5.5 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The key findings in the study reveal that at the university under study, there were no male secretaries and that all secretaries were females in 2024. The title of ‘secretary’ therefore

contributed to promoting forms of gendered exclusionary and privileged positions. In general, the study revealed that there exists a significant gender imbalance in the secretarial administrative support jobs in that: throughout all age groups, women were persistently the predominant gender. Secretarial roles were overall perceived as more suitable for women, and men avoided these jobs precisely due to this stereotype which in turn influenced their concept of self. This coincides with literature which reveals one's attitude and concept of self can be a barrier to workplace inclusion (Rezai *et al.* 2023: 59). Perceptions of administrative roles, however, were notably associated with gender neutrality and males were represented more frequently in jobs incorporating gender neutral job titles such as "administrator", "officer" and "co-ordinator".

The findings further reveal that long established gender bias and stereotypes still prevail even today and are major factors discouraging men from pursuing secretarial positions. The barriers identified as significant to men's representation were internalised beliefs about female preference for secretarial roles and the perceived role incongruity stemming from societal belief that the job is better suited for women. Findings of the study identified the following barriers to the entry of men in secretarial jobs:

- *Companies' preference for women*
- *Gendered job roles*
- *Gender bias*
- *Societal belief that the secretarial job is better suited to women*
- *Stereotypes relating to personal attributes on the job*
- *Stereotypes relating to sexual orientation*
- *Gendered job titles*
- *Not seeing other males in the secretarial roles*
- *Bias informed by personal experiences*

The secretarial administrative support staff as well as management generally perceived gender stereotypes to be regulating factors of men's career preferences and hence their entry into jobs as secretaries.

Table 5-1 Critical Barriers Preventing the Representation of Men in Secretarial Jobs:

Key Study Findings

Compromised Gender Diversity		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no (0%) male secretaries, even though some had the required skills. • All (100%) secretaries were female. • Females were the preferred gender for secretarial positions. • There was significant gender imbalance: Female pre-dominance in secretarial administrative support jobs • Males were represented more frequently in jobs with gender neutral job titles of "administrator", "officer", "co-ordinator" <p><i>*Males whose job titles incorporated the title of 'secretary' all had the title 'administrator' incorporated to make 'administrative secretary' positioning them for broader prospects for career growth. * The job title of 'administrator' was perceived as more career enriching and developmental compared to one of 'secretary' as it allowed one to autonomy to implement policy and independently administer complex responsibilities with minimal supervision.</i></p>		
	Gender Stereotypes as Barriers	Attitudes
Contribution to Gender Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Companies' Preference for Women • Gendered Job Roles • Gender Bias • Society Belief that the Secretarial Job is Better Suited for Women • Stereotypes relating to personal attributes on the job • Stereotypes relating to sexual orientation • Gendered Job Titles • Not seeing other males in the secretarial roles • Bias informed by personal experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males anticipated a preference for women in the secretarial administrative job roles informed by gender biases individuals in organisations were perceived to have • Stereotypes harboured in relation to the job: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Females were more suited for secretarial roles than men ○ A female is what people expected to see in the role of secretary ○ Men cannot be referred to as 'secretary' • Stereotypes harboured in relation to the job: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Related the secretarial position to a female ○ Perceived that men generally avoided secretarial jobs • The belief secretarial jobs are suited for women and are not gender congruent with men. • Competencies in the role of secretary, namely: reception, multitasking, patience, to mention a few were associated with the female gender and were isolated as traits men did not generally possess • The belief/fear that pursuing a secretarial job may attract a men's sexual orientation to be questioned and be perceived as homosexually oriented. • The job title 'secretary' was usually assumed to mean 'a woman' • The lack of role model representation was observed to be discouraging men from taking up jobs as secretaries • Gender discrimination: Harbored bias with relation to one gender in favour of another - A personal preference for a specific gender in a certain support role
Potential for Inclusivity	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observed that the job titles of 'secretary' and 'administrator' or other support roles should be aligned with the nature of the job, not gender. Even a male who does secretarial duties should be referred to as a 'secretary'. • When it came to the job role of administrator, the managers unanimously indicated a personal preference for either gender.

	Job Challenges as Barriers	Attitudes
Contribution to Gender Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degradation on the Job • Lack of Autonomy on the Job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men are subjected to the pressures of conforming to the dominant ideas of being a man • Men's preference to be more assertive and less subservient in a job - hegemonic type masculinity ideals
Potential for Inclusivity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support jobs such as that of secretaries, administrators, administrative assistants and personal assistants and others has become almost identical.

5.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FIVE

Chapter five presented the key findings of the study in line with the set objectives which were discussed thematically employing the 'masculinities' and 'post-structural feminism' theoretical frameworks. In reference to the university under study, key findings revealed a significant gender imbalance in the secretarial administrative support jobs, as there were no (0%) male secretaries and all (100%) secretaries were women. The job title of 'secretary' was appropriated more to a woman than a man. Gender-neutral job titles of 'administrator', 'officer' and 'co-ordinator' were where men were more equitably represented in the domain. The participant responses further revealed that the job position of 'secretary' was perceived as stagnant and that males were mostly linked to gender neutral titles instantly positioning them for better prospects for career growth.

Also, a key finding was that men do not lack interest in job titles of 'secretary' however gender biases and stereotypes are critical factors that discourage men from entering the secretarial administrative domains. Lastly, findings indicate that the barriers significant to

men's representation are mostly internalised. They include the belief that companies prefer female secretaries and the perceived role incongruity in men pursuing the secretarial roles due to the societal belief that the job is for women. The next chapter will show how the aims and objectives of the study have been met in the findings.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five presented the key findings of the study and discussed them in line with the objectives and emerging themes of the study. The underpinning theoretical frameworks served the objectives of the study by illuminating the underlying gendered nature of the issues brought forth by the identified themes.

This chapter serves to relate the initial aims and objectives of the study to its findings as discussed. The study further delivers its conclusion, submits recommendations for the identified issues and acknowledges the limitations of the study. Suggestions for future research are also presented.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study was to investigate men's representation and perceptions of men and selected employee participants of secretarial administrative support roles in the selected university in KZN and towards the title of "male secretary".

The following objectives were established to meet the aim of the study:

Objective 1: To determine gender representation within the secretarial administrative staff population at the selected university in KZN in the year 2024.

Objective 2: To identify the attitude of secretaries towards their roles within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal.

Objective 3: To identify the attitude of managers towards the role of secretarial administrative support staff within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal.

Objective 4: To identify the critical barriers preventing the representation of men in secretarial jobs at the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal.

6.2.1 Key Literature Findings

The literature review chapter interrogated the intricacies underlying men's representation in feminised secretarial administrative support roles driven by masculinities and post-structuralism feminism theories of gender. It was observed that a literature gap existed in addressing the status of men's representation in feminised jobs, particularly as "male secretaries". Through the adopted theoretical frameworks, the literature assisted to unveil the local and global trends of men's representation in the roles and the potential interpretation of the literature from masculinities and post-structuralism theoretical perspectives. Light was shed on the various topics that served to explain some aspects of the phenomena observed. The particular literature topics reviewed included: male entrance into feminised professions, the barriers involved, discrimination against men, and gender role congruity. Through the literature reviewed, it was demonstrated how gender was compromised in the secretarial administrative support roles globally. Contribution to gender equity and potential for inclusivity of all genders was explored in relation to affirming literature.

Regarding the entrance of males into feminised secretarial administrative support jobs, it was evident in the literature that in various countries, women are generally the predominant gender in these roles. This trend was observed in countries such as the United Kingdom (Careersmart 2020b), Australia (State Government of Victoria 2022), and the United States of America (Zippia, 2021b). Moreover, it was noted that South Africa is no exception as in South Africa, women are also more likely to be employed in clerical jobs than their male counterparts. In fact, clerical jobs are where most women are employed in the country after the elementary occupation (Department of Statistics South Africa 2024). It was therefore worthwhile narrowing this observation down by investigating whether the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal, as the immediate surroundings, mirrored this global trend of gender disproportions in the administrative field. Further, also obtain what this implies when viewed through the chosen theoretical lenses. Additionally, the literature showed how self-identity and stereotypes contribute to gender equity and the potential for inclusivity of all genders in the administrative field. The review of literature delved into the possible reasons why men are generally not seen taking up jobs as 'male secretaries' or other feminised jobs.

The question of why males are not entering the female dominated spheres was also raised by Delfino (2021) with reference to possible barriers to their entry. The study by Ferreira and van Antwerpen (2012) revealed that males who pursue the secretarial profession generally

perceive the profession negatively. Male students' qualitative responses revealed barriers relating to discrimination against males which discourage them from pursuing the secretarial profession. Examples of barriers involved include men's uncertainty about their success in the female domains, and the anticipation of preference for female employees in female domains (Delfino 2021). Yavorsky and Dill (2020) state two reasons why men avoid female-dominated jobs: firstly, they generally pay less, and secondly, they do not want to be perceived as challenging masculine ideals. Moreover, Forkuor *et al.* (2020) state that men are sometimes even ridiculed for undertaking female dominated jobs. Women, on the other hand, have cemented their presence in the secretarial field and have evidently embraced these job positions in numbers as observed in the statistical accounts.

6.3 ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This section discusses how the aim of the study, as well as its objectives, were met with reference to literature and the empirical findings of the study.

6.3.1 Objective 1: To determine gender representation within the secretarial administrative staff population at the selected university in KZN in the year 2024

The objective was formulated firstly to determine how many men and women were employed as secretarial administrative support staff at the selected university in KZN in 2024. Secondly, to determine the various job title categories of support staff and their representation per gender per category. In alignment with the aim of the study which partly sought to investigate men's representation, the information obtained through this objective assisted to validate the existence of a problem of disproportionate representation of men in the secretarial administrative support roles at the university.

According to Alavi *et al.* (2018: 527), researchers risk designing flawed studies if their theoretical framework and its components are not linked to research methods. Therefore, in attaining this objective, the research design and theoretical framework of the study are discussed alongside the findings of the study. To strengthen the rigour of the study, strong evidence of answers to the research questions that is able to convince users of the acceptability of the findings (Asenahabi 2019: 87) was required. Data on male representation was collected from multiple sources to strengthen the study rigour by providing strong evidence of the existence of the problem of gender disproportionality. The

mixed method flexibility facilitated qualitative and quantitative data collection (Leavy 2022: 21) from the following diverse sources: (a) documentary analysis of HR database, (b) survey responses of secretarial administrative staff in general, (c) individual interviews with purposefully selected male administrators and (d) individual interviews with purposefully selected managers.

6.3.1.1 Documentary Analysis of the Human Resources database

A documentary analysis of the HR database was conducted to determine the number of men and women employed as secretarial administrative support staff at the university, their various job title categories and representation per gender and per category. The results shown in Chapter Four reflect that, according to the analysis of the university's HR database, a majority of the secretarial administrative support staff were employed in the top three job categories of: officers (29%), administrators (21%) and administrative secretaries (14%). In most of the secretarial administrative categories, women were the most represented gender. The categories that were an exception were the administrative assistants with equal number per gender, co-ordinators composed more of men than women and a switchboard operator with a man and no woman represented. This meant that at the university under study, there were no males employed under the job title 'secretary' and therefore all secretaries were female. The results of this study objective were consistent with literature in various ways. The finding of this study showing females as the predominant gender supported literature reflecting similar patterns in South Africa (Department of Statistics South Africa 2024) and various other countries like the United Kingdom (Careersmart 2020b), Australia (State Government of Victoria 2022), and the United States of America (Zippia 2021b). With further reference to literature, the numeric disproportion in male minority representation in the current study's results could be understood on the bases of factors identified in the study by Moskos (2020: 532) that contribute to men's aversion to feminised jobs that do not support essentialist visions of masculinity. Moreover, the current study's results showing increasing representation of men in gender neutral job titles could be evidential of the retitling of jobs as explained by Moskos (2020: 532) to disassociate from femininity. The study makes this observation from a post-structuralism feminism perspective where language is used to enforce patriarchal concepts (Agarwal 2018: 424).

6.3.1.2 Survey responses of secretarial administrative staff in general

A survey was conducted to determine the gender proportionate representation of secretarial administrative support staff at a selected university in KZN based on the personal

observations of the university secretarial administrative support staff in general. The support staff were required to indicate the gender of secretaries that they generally come across in the university. The survey results shown in Chapter Four reflected that a significant number, 106 (98.1%), of participants, of whom the majority, 83 (98.8%), were women and the minority, 23 (95.8%) men, perceived the secretarial jobs to be female dominated. These findings were consistent with the findings of the HR documentary analysis which also showed that at the university under study, there were no males employed under the job title 'secretary' and therefore all secretaries were female. The survey's responses were also affirmed by the findings of Fric and Galli da Bino (2018: 7) in their study in which they tested for gender discrimination in recruitment. In the study, statistically significant discrimination against men was found in the 'female occupation' 'secretary'. This shows that men are generally not considered to be 'secretaries' nor seen represented in job titles of 'secretary'. This is perceived to be the case even though according to the current study documentary analysis results, men do have some minority representation in other job titles, namely: as officers (29%), administrators (21%) and administrative secretaries (14%) to mention the top three jobs where they were represented.

6.3.1.3 Individual interviews with purposefully selected male administrators

The male administrator interview results in Chapter Four revealed that male administrators, based on their personal observations regarding the gender distribution in the job title of "secretary", believed that the gender of the secretaries in the university was predominantly female. These findings are consistent with the findings from the HR documentary analysis and that of the general secretarial administrative support staff survey. The results from the male administrators are not found to be deviant from the literature as the study by Moskos (2020: 532) showed, in support of the study's findings, that men do have an aversion to employment within female dominated jobs due to their negative past experiences with the work and unfavorable working terms. 'Secretary' in the context of the current study was deemed the utmost female dominated job title since the study results reflected that (100%) of the secretaries at the university were female.

6.3.1.4 Individual interviews with purposefully selected managers

The management interview results in Chapter Four were consistent with that of the HR documentary evidence, secretarial administrative support staff surveys and individual interviews with male administrators. They reflected that management, based on their personal observations regarding the gender distribution in the job title of 'secretary' believed

that the gender of the secretaries in the university was predominantly female. These findings align with literature in the study by Moskos (2020: 534) where interviews with managers pointed at existing processes that work to exclude men or limit their access to feminised jobs. The study revealed how these processes were aligned with essentialist visions of masculinity. When viewed from a masculinities perspective, masculinity codes on what is an acceptable job for a man is seen to impact on male representation. The lack of representation of males as secretaries whilst being represented in other support job titles shows, from a post-structural feminist view, how linguistic means in the form of job titles have bearing on which genders are represented in which job titles and the numbers thereof. Women are perceived suitable for secretarial jobs that are generally linked with stifled growth, but not men.

6.3.2 Objective 2: To identify the attitude of secretaries towards their roles within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal

The discussions presented here emanate from the survey and interview responses of secretarial administrative staff.

A study by Rezai *et al.* (2023: 59) found that barriers relating to one's attitude were the most reported barriers to workplace inclusion. This objective therefore was formulated to obtain the point of view of secretarial administrative support staff as key actors in the secretarial administrative support domain to reveal the attitudes of both genders on their support roles. Further, with reference to findings, it aimed to expose the disadvantaged position of both men and women in the secretarial administrative domain. It demonstrate through stereotyped responses how some job titles are gendered in how they are associated with a particular gender to the disadvantage of another. In attaining this objective, personal experience narratives of secretarial administrative support staff, including male administrators, in a form of qualitative survey and interview responses were employed. This was for the purpose of revealing the negative effects of gender biases on the secretarial administrative support jobs.

6.3.2.1.1 Attitudes of male and female support staff

It was revealed from the responses of both the male and female support staff that the secretarial administrative job was a subservient role with job challenges that were generic to both genders. The challenges alluded to various instances of exploitation on the job, degradation in terms of class and qualification, demeaning treatment, including being issued

menial tasks to do, and, particularly for men, the lack of job autonomy among others. Despite this observation, the support staff deemed secretarial administrative jobs, and in particular the 'secretarial jobs' to be more suited for the female gender and were unresolved and mostly doubtful that this role should be extended to males in the domain. This gendered position was even more prominent in male support staff responses who sternly believed that 'secretary' was not an appropriate job title to refer to a man. Moreover, this view was upheld strongly by both genders. The secretarial administrative support staff therefore differentiated between support job titles that may be assigned to males or females. This was evident in how job titles of 'secretary' and 'receptionist' were used more for females than for males by both male and female respondents in secretarial administrative support. Moreover, they associated the job title 'administrator' with males, however, were less likely to associate males with the role when the job title was 'administrative secretary' which incorporates the feminised title of 'secretary'.

Support staff responses revealed that men did not believe they were on equal footing in applying for 'secretarial' jobs and were often discouraged from applying. Gender segregation by jobs or job titles as the norm led men to feel misplaced in secretarial administrative support roles in general. The support staff were, however, more forth coming for the gender-neutral job title of 'administrator' being assigned to a male, even though females remained the preference. Rather than a lack of interest, men were generally perceived to exhibit avoidance of such jobs as they believed they were better suited for women and that women were the preferred gender. Key results revealed that, according to males, the following were the three significant factors discouraging them from pursuing the secretarial administrative jobs in order of prioritisation: (a) companies' perceived preference for female secretaries, (b) perceived role incongruity and (c) lack of role models in the same feminised positions.

Interview responses of male administrators indicated that in their job positions, they were presented with relevant growth opportunities for their current jobs as well as future senior jobs. This was through exposure to working intimately with the organisation's policies and procedures, various developmental programmes including managerial short learning programmes and on the job mentoring by shadowing their seniors on the job.

6.3.3 Objective 3: To identify the attitude of managers towards the role of secretarial administrative support staff within the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal

The objective was developed to ascertain the position of managers on the role of secretarial administrative support to serve the main goal of the study in determining the representation of males in secretarial administrative support jobs. The perspective of the managers was deemed important as they were often involved in staffing and monitoring, and worked alongside secretarial administrative support staff in daily office operations. From a staffing perspective, to a certain extent, they were positioned to influence the gender balance in secretarial administrative support, and in their monitoring role were able to observe closely and compare the performance of both genders in support roles. With reference to the findings, the objective aimed to show through stereotyped responses of the managers, based on their on-the-job experiences, how some support job titles were linked to a specific gender. Achieving this objective was made possible by conducting individual interviews to find out experiences of each manager to obtain a true reflection of their experiences with support staff without the influence of the experiences of others on the same.

It surfaced from results from managers in Chapter Four that, when it came to secretarial administrative jobs, there existed a preference for women from managers, more especially bosses. This was concerning as results from a study by Zhang (2020: 1) showed that the relationship between gender diversity and performance depended on how well that diversity has been accepted as an organisation's norm and regulatory factor. The observed preference for female secretaries by some bosses demonstrated that diversity in the secretarial jobs had not been fully embraced as the organisation's norm. The results in the current study further revealed that when it came to obtaining secretarial administrative support at work, the primary interest of the role of managers was mainly in the competency of an individual to meet the set goals in the office. The managers firmly asserted that they were guided by policy and adhered to it consistently. When asked about their individual preferences with regards to a specific gender being placed in certain secretarial administrative support roles, stereotypical views were however traceable in their responses. The stereotypical views projected in their responses did not demonstrate an acceptance of an inclusive culture in terms of job allocation in support roles. The apparent individual preferences in their responses revealed being in personal favour of one gender over another, mainly informed by their personal experiences at work or in their personal lives. This showed that although managers had an awareness that diversity and inclusion as a

factor guided their organisational staffing decisions, these were in some way conflicted with their personal preferences.

From their experiences, some managers indicated that they specifically preferred women in secretarial job positions rather than men. They further pointed out that while they perceived women to be appropriate for administrator job titles, they acknowledged that men were more appropriate to the title of administrator rather than that of secretary. This response by some managers corroborates that of the survey results of secretarial administrative support staff whose majority indicated that secretaries should preferably be women and administrators be men. The gender-neutral job titles such as 'administrator' that were seen as appropriate to men were considered by managers as advantaged. Managers described the job of 'administrator' as having increased responsibility and independence and being a job rich in terms of knowledge on policies and reporting. The job role was described to be at times a level higher than that of a secretary with greater possibility of development unlike a secretarial job that was perceived as limiting in terms of career growth. An argument was put forth by some managers challenging the gender stereotypes that caused some secretarial administrative support job titles not to be associated with a particular gender. They raised the question why a job title for an individual should change because of their gender and why certain jobs in the secretarial administrative domain were only reserved for a particular gender when the focus was on the job deliverables. This argument was deemed justified as it was shown in the findings that 100% of secretaries in the whole university were women. It was particularly concerning that women were appropriated to the secretarial jobs and said to have limited growth prospects while men were associated with job rich jobs of administrator and similar roles. These job types exposed the men intimately to policies and procedures, specialised software programmes to implement the processes and generally setting them up for greater prospects for career growth. In literature, a metaphoric concept of "Man is up, Woman is Down" described by Rustamov (2022: 29) during conference proceedings in the context of middle management assists to explain the issue identified in the current study. They described the phenomenon of a 'frozen middle' whereby a women's progress up the corporate ladder slows down or halts at middle management level while men ride past women to the top to more senior roles. This concept sums up the core issue in the current study whereby men are set up to speed past women in the secretarial administrative domain as women battle barriers such as positioning in stagnant secretarial roles while men are in the more job versatile roles of administrators, officers and coordinators where they are most represented and most likely to progress in their careers.

6.3.4 Objective 4: To identify the critical barriers preventing the representation of men in secretarial jobs at the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal

In reference to literature, Rezai *et al.* (2023: 59) underscore the need to understand the drivers and obstacles to workplace inclusion better to achieve equitable representation at work. This current study's objective was therefore formulated as a means of bringing to light and understanding the critical barriers that prevent men from being represented in the secretarial administrative domain for address. It focused closely on their representation in feminised secretarial jobs to address the issue from the perspective of the chosen theoretical frameworks of masculinities and post-structural feminism. To attain this objective, the survey responses of administrative secretaries and individual interviews of male administrators and that of managers were integrated during discussions in Chapter Five. This was with the intent of identifying in the findings common issues raised as possible barriers to the entry of men in secretarial jobs.

With reference to findings from Chapter Four, it was observed from responses obtained that the factors mentioned in the study as discouraging men from pursuing secretarial jobs were not linked to men's lack of interest in the secretarial administrative jobs. This was especially affirmed by the responses of the male administrators who did not indicate a lack of interest but rather pointed to various factors that acted as barriers to their entry into the jobs. It was noted that a few participants indicated that they did not perceive any issues with representation in the secretarial administrative support. This, on its own, was deemed an issue since the quantitative results presented females as the overwhelmingly predominant gender in secretarial administrative support. It was therefore important to have an awareness of the existence of the problem so that it is understood and duly addressed. Furthermore, qualitative results affirmed the existence of various other underlying issues that contributed to the identified gender inequalities. All these issues when summed up acted as barriers to the representation of men in secretarial administrative jobs. In identifying the barriers, the objective served to address the critical aspect of the study regarding the inequitable representation of men to determine what could be compromising their entry into the jobs.

6.3.4.1 Barriers: Negative Personal Experiences of Bias and Stereotypes

Results of a study by Zhang (2020: 1) indicate that the acceptance of diversity as an organisation's norm and regulatory factor determines how well an organisation performs.

Despite this, based on the reported negative personal experiences of bias and stereotypes in secretarial administrative support jobs, especially as experienced by males, gender diversity was still not fully normalised in the support jobs in the university under study. As cautioned by Bareket and Fiske (2023: 637) in their study, the role played by sexist attitudes did indeed contribute to inequalities in the workplace. These gender biases and stereotypes consequently translated into barriers to the proportionate representation of men in the secretarial administrative job field. In the current study, male support staff indicated that not seeing other males taking up feminised support jobs discouraged them from pursuing the jobs themselves. They indicated the preconceived notion that companies prefer women as their primary barrier. This might also be a result of them not seeing other men employed in particular support jobs or job titles like that of 'secretary'. Heckler (2022: 85) in their study asserted that we should firmly work towards mitigating masculinity as it is at play and has significant impact in public organisations. This impact in the current study findings is observable in that certain aspects of the secretarial administrative jobs were deemed incongruent with what a man is understood to be in a social context, hence the incurrence of biases and stereotypes against males in certain support jobs. How some of the jobs, including job titles such as 'secretary' or 'receptionist', were generally perceived in turn resulted in men's reduced interest in the jobs. In support of this, the results of the study by Moskos (2020) showed that there are various factors that reduce men's willingness to pursue and retain employment within female dominated occupations which further limit men's entry into gender atypical jobs. The identified factors were men's aversion to employment in female dominated jobs, negative experiences in a female dominated work environment, unfavourable labour market, essentialist ideas about certain jobs for men and women, preference for females, the belief women are more appropriate for the roles and labour market segregation. When analysed, the said factors directly or indirectly relate to biases and stereotypes held by males in relation to feminised jobs. Although the study on organisation biases conducted by Sultana, Cavaletto and Bosu (2021) was in the context of biases experienced by women in a male dominated field of computing, in the current study of a female dominated context, similar patterns of biases were observable against males. The similar biases included firstly 'task selection' whereby men were not appropriated to certain tasks, however, this was implemented in a form of job title assignment where men were not appropriated to 'secretarial' or 'receptionist' jobs or job titles. Secondly, harassment using humour or gestures that negate one's gender identity in relation to the job. This was particularly evident in the current study findings where males indicated this as the fourth prominent factor that discouraged them from wanting to pursue jobs as secretaries. In

support of these quantitative findings, one of the male administrators during interviews responded indicating that this was one of their biggest fears.

According to the general responses of the secretarial administrative staff in the current study, and in order of prominence, the following factors acted as barriers by discouraging men from entering secretarial jobs:

Factors discouraging men from wanting to be secretaries: Secretarial administrative Staff Perceptions		
Order of Prominence	Responses by Female Secretarial administrative Staff	Responses by Male Secretarial administrative Staff
1	a sense of shame as the general society believes the job is better suited for women and not men	perception that companies prefer women secretaries
2	perception that companies prefer women secretaries	a sense of shame as the general society believes the job is better suited for women and not men
3	most people think of male secretaries as being gay	men not seeing other men taking up jobs as secretaries'
4	men not seeing other men taking up jobs as secretaries'	most people think of male secretaries as being gay
5	being perceived as an assistant for someone else and not the boss	being perceived as an assistant for someone else and not the boss
6	salary of a secretary	salary of a secretary
7	they identify as men	they identify as men

From the responses of the secretarial administrative staff, it was noted that there was a slight misalignment between what female secretarial administrative staff perceived to be barriers versus what their male counterparts perceived. It was noted that all the managers who indicated a personal preference for a specific gender in a certain support role did harbour some bias with relation to one gender in favour of another perceived as a form of benevolent sexism. This was due to the subjectively negative or subjectively positive attitudes held towards a particular gender, however, this was noted to be in fulfilment of the masculinities agenda of keeping women in certain jobs and job titles. This was particularly noted to be achieved through linguistic means. Further, this was evident in the stereotypical beliefs that they stated as reasons for their personal preference. For instance, managers who indicated a preference for women secretaries held the stereotypes that:

- Women are nurturing.
- Women are warm and approachable.

- It is easier to communicate a problem to a woman than a male as they are more understanding.
- Women are more patient than men.
- Women are more adaptable to office challenges and are more equipped to solve them.
- Women are mature enough to solve conflicts in an office environment compared to males.

The manager who indicated a preference to work with men in secretarial administrative roles held the stereotypes that:

- Men are more approachable as they do not act like gate keepers as women often do.
- Women have mood swings.
- Women are often engaged with other responsibilities.

The stated gender stereotypes perceived are supported in the literature with Morando (2023) stating that other means by which gender stereotypes manifest are through the sexist assumptions which result in gender inequalities.

a) Degradation on the job

The findings in the study reveal how men were socially marginalised by colleagues in the workplace for not adhering to masculine ideals by undertaking certain support roles or job titles that were feminised. This social marginalisation manifested in how they were at times disrespected or even exploited in their job roles. This type of degradation on the job contributes to making the secretarial administrative support job unattractive to men.

b) Lack of autonomy on the job

Men generally preferred not to be micromanaged at work hence their aversion to jobs such as that of 'secretary' where they have to consistently take instructions from their boss. Jobs such as those of 'officer', 'administrator' or 'co-ordinator' did allow them some degree of freedom hence their gravitation towards such jobs.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The main study theme “Compromised gender diversity” and sub themes “Contribution to gender equity” and “Potential for inclusivity”, as well as the study findings were given serious consideration and the following recommendations were derived:

6.3.5 To establish a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) to address the gender imbalance

The key findings of the study indicate a significant gender imbalance in the secretarial administrative support jobs with women being the predominant gender.

It is recommended that a gender equality plan (GEP) be established by the selected university in KZN as a strategy to promote gender equality within the secretarial administrative support domain. This should lay out an actionable plan on how men can be included and be visible in feminised support jobs. The visibility of men in the feminised jobs is important as the study’s findings show that males are, in part, discouraged by the perception that companies prefer women in the positions and by not seeing other males undertaking the jobs. Through the Human Resources, Transformation as well as the Communications and Media Division offices, a collaborative publicity effort to show males in feminised jobs e.g. university handbooks, website, faculty videos etc. can be actioned. Furthermore, the university should design practical ways of measuring gender disproportionate representation in the secretarial administrative jobs going forward that are feasible to monitor as well as evaluate. Ultimately the university should achieve gender diversity in all jobs and job titles in the secretarial administrative support jobs.

6.3.6 To mitigate the impact of biases and stereotypes

The key findings in the study indicated that gender biases and stereotypes still prevail and are the overarching factor that discourages men from pursuing secretarial positions thus playing an influential role in determining men's career path.

It is recommended that the selected university in KZN partner with its transformation office to collaborate in promoting gender diversity and inclusivity in the workplace as a strategy to mitigate the impact of biases and stereotypes. This should ideally start very early and at vocational level with a pool of prospective students as the initial pool or future human resources e.g. at university annual open day events etc. Students in the lecture rooms should also be familiarised with gender neutrality when lecturers are relating to jobs in their career’s field. Even learning materials should reflect this accordingly, e.g. not use only ‘he’

or 'she' for particular jobs. This should assist graduates to have an open mind when seeking employment and not feel limited to certain jobs because of their gender.

With regards to staff members, policies that are already in place to promote gender diversity and inclusion in the university should be implemented. Ethical conduct on the part of management should be held in high regard when it comes to hiring practices, e.g. bosses should not be given an opportunity formally or informally to indicate their gender preferences for a job candidate. During hiring and employment, prospective employees or employees should feel safe, respected, fairly considered and empowered. Empowerment of employees should include early career pathing of all staff members, including secretaries. This should involve monitoring personal and professional goal setting, motivation and feedback on progress made over a period of time. All these actions should be documented. Moreover, transgression of policies on diversity and inclusion by any staff member should be dealt with formally by the university.

6.3.7 To promote gender neutrality of the secretarial role

The key findings of the study indicate that the barriers significant to men's representation in secretarial administrative roles are mostly internalised. This includes the belief that companies prefer female secretaries as well as the discomfort in the role incongruity in pursuing the secretarial roles due to the societal belief that the job is better suited for women.

It is recommended that the selected university in KZN pursue ethical business operations with zero tolerance of management interference in hiring as many indicated in the responses that women were often preferred and at times suggested as the favourable choice. Gender quotas, specifically for secretarial jobs should also be implemented and closely monitored.

Based on the probability sampling method adopted implying all units had a chance of being included in the population sample, a sampling size of 108 administrative secretaries and a response rate with a confidence level of 95% with a five percent margin of error, the sample was deemed representative of the entire population of 269 secretarial administrative staff. The confidence level obtained on the survey results allows for the generalisability of the findings to similar contexts in the secretarial administrative field in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

6.4 LIMITATIONS

The research was conducted at the main campus of the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Other campuses of the university did not form part of the study's geographical location.

There are two main theoretical delimitations of the study bound within the secretarial administrative field, namely: (a) masculinities and (b) post-structuralism feminism. In the masculinities theoretical lens, focus was not placed on any specific aspect of masculinities, but rather, the study was based on the masculinities framework in general. In the feminism lens, the focus of the study was particularly on post-structural feminism with the exclusion of the broader spectrum of the feminism theoretical framework.

The limitations experienced during the administration of the questionnaire at data collation phase included:

- An important aspect that could not be obtained during data collection phase due to ethical implications was the sexual orientation of the males that were employed in the secretarial administrative jobs. Homosexuality is at times linked to feminine traits which leaves the possibility that among the few males who are employed in the support job roles, some are only able to do so because they identify as feminine.
- The majority of respondents did not respond to the questionnaire link until they were personally visited by the researcher. This was due to cases of phishing emails that employees were cautioned about making a lot of respondents wary of random emails that required them to click on a link.
- Respondents who, due to work commitments, took longer time frames than anticipated to respond.
- Respondents who were not easy to locate, especially due to office renovations that were taking place at the time. Routine follow ups were a challenge for the researcher as some of the participants were deployed in temporary offices and

hard to trace.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

6.5.1 Comparative study of other universities

The findings of this study showed that barriers exist that contribute to the disproportionate representation of males in the secretarial administrative support jobs. It is recommended that this study be expanded into a comparative study with multiple universities in South Africa to determine any possible trends and similarities or differences in responses.

6.5.2 Varying impact of salary on different personnel levels

The study analysis revealed a significant relationship between the salary of a secretary and the personnel level within the office. Junior staff members considered salary a significant factor, highlighting its importance at entry-level positions. On the contrary, middle managers did not view salary as a significant concern, suggesting that other factors might be more critical at their level. Future research might consider looking more in-depth into this aspect of the findings and investigate the varying impact of salary on different personnel levels to determine the relevant strategies organisations can use to attract and retain talent at different level positions.

6.5.3 Career pathing for secretaries

The findings of this study revealed that secretarial jobs were stagnant in nature, usually at junior levels, and had limited prospects for career growth. It is recommended that research be conducted to define the secretarial role of today, how the job can be enriched and allow growth into other more senior positions in an organisation. Possible career development planning strategies can be explored and succession planning structured. Investigating how other countries operate is recommended as part of the exploration.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to investigate the representation of men in secretarial administrative support jobs and the attitudes of men and selected employees of the selected university in KZN towards the title of “male secretary”. This was with intention of contributing a framework for ethical, equitable hiring and workplace practices, designed to

strengthen organizational gender equity plans. The study aimed to foster gender equality in secretarial administrative roles, redefine perceptions of men in traditionally female-dominated jobs, and provide actionable, transformative strategies. The results of the study show a significant gender imbalance in the secretarial administrative support jobs. This was based on the fact that across all age groups, females were consistently the majority.

A strong perception exists among the secretarial administrative support staff and management that gender stereotypes significantly influence men's career choices, especially in roles traditionally viewed as female oriented. It is apparent that traditional gender stereotypes are still prevalent, potentially discouraging men from pursuing secretarial positions. The dominant perception is that secretarial roles are seen as more suitable for women, and men are likely to avoid these jobs due to this stereotype. Significant trends towards gender neutrality in perceptions of administrative job roles are, however, observed. While traditional gender biases persist, particularly in roles like secretary and receptionist, there is a noticeable shift towards viewing these positions as appropriate for both men and women. It is, therefore, critical to address and challenge gender stereotypes to promote a more inclusive workplace.

A significant majority of secretarial administrative support staff do not view identifying as men as a primary reason for avoiding these positions and are not discouraged by the salary associated with secretarial jobs. However, the barriers that are significant to men's representation are the belief that companies prefer female secretaries, and the sense of shame felt by men due to the societal belief that the job is better suited for women. Additionally, some think that most people perceive male secretaries as gay or are discouraged by the perception that secretaries are assistants rather than bosses. These perceptions indicate that societal and cultural stereotypes significantly influence men's reluctance to take up secretarial roles, despite other factors such as salary being less influential. The overall implication is that societal and cultural stereotypes heavily influence men's reluctance to pursue secretarial roles, reinforcing gender biases in the workplace. These perceptions, more than practical concerns like salary, deter men from these positions. Addressing these stereotypes is, therefore, crucial for promoting gender diversity and inclusivity in administrative roles.

The study, therefore, underscores the need for addressing and challenging gender stereotypes in the workplace to promote a more inclusive environment. While there are

emerging trends towards gender neutrality in administrative roles, traditional biases still significantly influence career choices and perceptions of job title appropriateness. Organisations should implement strategies to foster a more inclusive work environment by promoting gender diversity and challenging societal stereotypes.

6.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER SIX

Chapter Six, as the concluding chapter, sought to determine whether the aims and objectives of the study have been realised. It provided an overview of the study and concluded by highlighting the need to address gender stereotypes and achieve gender neutrality at work. It further offered recommendations in line with the findings and put forth the role of policy in facilitating gender transformation.

Referencing

- Abdullah, S. S., Arifin, S., Ramley, F., Mohamad, Z., Ismail, M. S. and Mustapa, K. 2023. An empirical exploration of factors contributing to Malaysian men becoming involved in a feminine career: A case study of male nurse and Pak and Am. *Asian Academy of Management Journal*, 29(1): 205-227.
- Abulela, M. A. and Harwell, M. M. 2020. Data Analysis: Strengthening Inferences in Quantitative Education Studies Conducted by Novice Researchers. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 20(1): 59-78.
- Acharya, A. S., Prakash, A., Saxena, P. and Nigam, A., 2013. Sampling: Why and how of it. *Indian Journal of Medical Specialties*, 4(2): 330-333.
- Adeoye-Olatunde, O .A. and Olenik, N. L. 2021. Research and scholarly methods: Semi-structured interviews. *Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy*, 4(10): 1358-1367.
- Agarwal, V. 2018. Taking Care, Bringing Life: A Post-structuralist Feminist Analysis of Maternal Discourses of Mothers and Daughters in India. *Health Communication*, 33(4): 423-432.
- Ahmed, A., Granberg, M. and Khanna, S. 2021. Gender discrimination in hiring: An experimental reexamination of the Swedish case. *PloS One*, 16(1): 1-15.
- Aithal, A. and Aithal, P. S. 2020. Development and validation of survey questionnaire & experimental data—a systematical review-based statistical approach. *International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences (IJMTS)*, 5(2): 233-251.
- Almeida, F. 2018. Strategies to perform a mixed methods study. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 5(1): 137-151.
- Ames, H., Glenton, C. and Lewin, S. 2019. Purposive sampling in a qualitative evidence synthesis: A worked example from a synthesis on parental perceptions of vaccination communication. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 19: 1-9.
- Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. 2019. *Men and Masculinities*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.
- Arceo-Gomez, E. O., Campos-Vazquez, R. M., Badillo, R. Y. and Lopez-Araiza, S. 2022. Gender stereotypes in job advertisements: What do they imply for the gender salary gap?. *Journal of Labor Research*, 43(1): 65-102.
- Asenahabi, B. M. 2019. Basics of research design: A guide to selecting appropriate research design. *International Journal of Contemporary Applied Researches*, 6(5): 76-89.
- Azuike, M.A., 2020. Cultural patriarchy and mythical stereotypes about women in African literature. *Journal of Arts and Contemporary Society ISSN, 2277*, p.0046.
- Baczor, L., 2022. Female Leadership in the Workplace: Building a workplace culture of gender-balance and inclusivity. *Roffey Park Institute*, 1-14.
- Bain & Company, Inc. 2017. Gender (dis)parity in South Africa: Addressing the heart of the matter. *Demographic Research*, 1(1), 1–32.

- Baker, M., Ali, M. and French, E. 2019. Effectiveness of gender equality initiatives in project-based organizations in Australia. *Australian Journal of Management*, 44(3): 425-442.
- Bareket, O. and Fiske, S. T. 2023. A systematic review of the ambivalent sexism literature: Hostile sexism protects men's power; benevolent sexism guards traditional gender roles. *Psychological Bulletin*, 149: 637–698.
- Bennett, R. V. 1943. The nurse-secretary. *The American Journal of Nursing*, 43(4): 360-363.
- Bhaskaran, J. and Bhallamudi, I. 2019. Good secretaries, bad truck drivers? occupational gender stereotypes in sentiment analysis. *arXiv preprint arXiv, 1906: 1-7*.
- Bishop, J. 2018. What Is Hegemonic Masculinity and The Different Types of Masculinities? *Bishop's Encyclopedia of Religion, Society and Philosophy*. Available: URL <https://jamesbishopblog.com/2018/11/21/what-is-hegemonic-masculinity-the-different-types-of-masculinities/> (Accessed 14 May 2022).
- Bishu, S. G., and Headley, A. M. 2020. Equal Employment Opportunity: Women Bureaucrats in Male-Dominated Professions. *Public Administration Review*, 80(6): 1063–1074.
- Blunden, A. 2021. Bourdieu on Status, Class and Culture. In: *Hegel, Marx and Vygotsky*. Brill, 387–401.
- Bovin, M. 2016. Occupational titles and supposed gender-neutrality: A corpus-based diachronic study on gender-neutral occupational titles in American English. Bachelor's Thesis, Stockholm University.
- Bos, J. 2020. *Research ethics for students in the social sciences*. Springer Nature.
- Breda, T., Jouini, E., Napp, C. and Thebault, G. 2020. Gender stereotypes can explain the gender-equality paradox. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(49): 31063-31069.
- Buschle, C., Reiter, H. and Bethmann, A. 2022. The qualitative pretest interview for questionnaire development: outline of programme and practice. *Quality & Quantity*, 56(2): 823-842.
- Campero, S. and Fernandez, R. M. 2019. Gender Composition of Labor Queues and Gender Disparities in Hiring. *Social Forces*, 97: 1487–1516.
- Careersmart. 2020a. Occupations. *Careersmart*. Available: <https://careersmart.org.uk/occupations> (Accessed 24 December 2021).
- Careersmart. 2020b. Which jobs do men and women do? Occupational breakdown by gender. *Careersmart*. Available: <https://careersmart.org.uk/occupations/equality/which-jobs-do-men-and-women-do-occupational-breakdown-gender> (Accessed 24 December 2021).
- Cardno, C. 2019. Policy Document Analysis: A practical educational leadership tool and a qualitative research method. *Educational Administration: Theory & Practice*, 24(4): 623-640.
- Carey, S. 2017. The importance of gender-neutral language in the workplace [WWW Document]. *Totaljobs*. Available: URL <https://www.totaljobs.com/advice/the-importance-of-gender-neutral-language-in-the-workplace> (Accessed 05 June 2022).

Casteel, A. and Bridier, N. L. 2021. Describing populations and samples in doctoral student research. *International Journal Of Doctoral Studies*, 16(1): 339-362.

Chanen, J. S. 1999. Beyond the Typing Pool: A legal secretary must be a computer whiz, law clerk, receptionist and confidant. *ABA Journal*, 85(1): 74–75.

Chikwe, D. C. K. and King-Agboto, D. F. 2022. Identifying the Errors of Validity for Improvement of Test and Evaluation: Meeting the Needs of Contemporary Society. *Journal of Education and Society*, 12(2): 2555-21566.

Christofidou, A. 2021. Men and masculinities: A continuing debate on change. *Norma*, 16(2): 81-97.

Cislaghi, B. and Heise, L. 2020. Gender norms and social norms: differences, similarities and why they matter in prevention science. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 42(2): 407-422.

Connor, S., Edvardsson, K., Fisher, C. and Spelten, E. 2021. Perceptions and interpretation of contemporary masculinities in Western culture: A systematic review. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 15(6): 1-17.

Consultores, B. 2021. Axiology in Research. *Online Tesis*. Available: <https://online-tesis.com/en/axiology-in-research/> (Accessed 24 December 2023).

Cortina, C., Rodríguez, J., and González, M. 2021. Mind the Job: The Role of Occupational Characteristics in Explaining Gender Discrimination. *Social Indicators Research*, 156(1): 91–110.

Council of Europe. 2022. Masculinities. *Council of Europe*. Available: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/masculinities> (Accessed 04 January 2023).

Crossman, A. 2020. Understanding Stratified Samples and How to Make Them. *ThoughtCo*. Available: <https://www.thoughtco.com/stratified-sampling-3026731> (Accessed 02 January 2023).

Data USA. 2021. Secretaries & administrative assistants. *Data USA*. Available: <https://datausa.io/profile/soc/secretaries-administrative-assistants> (Accessed on 01 February 2022).

Davies, M. W. 2004. Women clerical workers and the typewriter: The writing machine. In: Kramarae, C. ed. *Technology and Women's Voices*. Taylor & Francis, 34-43.

Davis, S. N. and Hattery, A. 2018. Teaching feminist research methods: A comment and an evaluation. *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 15(15): 49-60.

Delfino, A. 2024. Breaking gender barriers: Experimental evidence on men in pink-collar jobs. *American Economic Review*, 114(6): 1816-1853.

Department of Cooperative Economics and Management, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Nigeria, G, E., O, A., Department of Cooperative Economics and Management, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Nigeria, C, N., and Department of Business Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Nigeria. (2020). Strategic agility and performance of small and medium enterprises in the phase of Covid-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Financial, Accounting, and Management*, 2(1): 41-50.

Department of Statistics South Africa. 2024. Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2:2024 (Quarterly Survey), (QLFS) Q2:2024. Available: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/Presentation%20QLFS%20Q2%202024.pdf> (Accessed 1 November 2024).

Di Stasio, V. and Larsen, E. N. 2020. The racialized and gendered workplace: Applying an intersectional lens to a field experiment on hiring discrimination in five European labor markets. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 83(3): 229-250.

Dicke, A. L., Safavian, N. and Eccles, J. S. 2019. Traditional gender role beliefs and career attainment in STEM: A gendered story?. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10: 1-14.

Dosunmu, M. M., Bukki, A. O. and Akintola, O. A. 2018. Influence of office automation on secretarial administrators effectiveness in Ogun State-owned universities. *NIU Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(3): 57-64.

Drolet, M. J., Rose-Derouin, E., Leblanc, J. C., Ruest, M. and Williams-Jones, B. 2023. Ethical issues in research: Perceptions of researchers, research ethics board members and research ethics experts. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 21(2): 269-292.

Du, H., Xiao, Y. and Zhao, L. 2021. Education and gender role attitudes. *Journal of Population Economics*, 34(2): 475-513.

Etikan, I. and Bala, K. 2017. Sampling and sampling methods. *Biometrics & Biostatistics International Journal*, 5(6): 00149.

European Institute for Gender Equality. (2022). European Institute for Gender Equality. *European Institute for Gender Equality*. Available: <https://eige.europa.eu/> (Accessed 04 January 2023).

Fernandez, T., Godwin, A., Doyle, J., Verdin, D., Boone, H., Kim, A., Benson, L. and Potvin, G. 2016. More comprehensive and inclusive approaches to demographic data collection. In: *123rd ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition*. New Orleans, United States, 26-29 June 2016.

Ferrary, M., Déo, S. 2023. Gender diversity and firm performance: When diversity at middle management and staff levels matter. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 34(14): 2797–2831. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2022.2093121>

Ferreira, E. and van Antwerpen, S. 2012. Barriers experienced by male office management students in a traditionally nonmale environment: A comparative study. *Africa Education Review*, 9: 249–269.

Firdaus, F., Zulfadilla, Z. and Caniago, F. 2021. Research methodology: types in the new perspective. *Manazhim*, 3(1): 1-16.

Fisher, A.N. and Ryan, M.K. 2021. Gender inequalities during COVID-19. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 24(2): 237-245.

Flemmen, M. P., Jarness, V. and Rosenlund, L. 2019. Class and status: On the misconstrual of the conceptual distinction and a neo-Bourdieuian alternative. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 70(3): 816–866.

- Flory, J. A., Leibbrandt, A., Rott, C. and Stoddard, O. 2021. Increasing Workplace Diversity Evidence from a Recruiting Experiment at a Fortune 500 Company. *Journal of Human Resources*, 56(1): 73–92.
- Foley, M. and Cooper, R. 2021. Workplace gender equality in the post-pandemic era: Where to next? *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 63(4): 463–476.
- Forkuor, J. B., Buari, M. A. and Aheto, C. K. A. 2020. Breaking barriers: The experiences of women in male dominated informal sector occupations in urban Ghana. *Gender Issues*, 37(1): 25-43.
- Fox, L. B. and Barth, J. M. 2017. The Effect of Occupational Gender Stereotypes on Men's Interest in Female-Dominated Occupations. *Sex Roles*, 76(7): 460–472.
- Fric, K. and Galli da Bino, C. 2018. *Discrimination against men at work: Experiences in five countries*. Europe: Publications office of the European Union.
- Froehlich, L., Olsson, M. I., Dorrough, A. R. and Martiny, S. E. 2020. Gender at work across nations: Men and women working in male-dominated and female-dominated occupations are differentially associated with agency and communion. *Journal of Social Issues*, 76(3): 484-511.
- Funk, K. 2019. If the shoe fits: Gender role congruity and evaluations of public managers. *Journal of Behavioral Public Administration*, 2(1).
- Galizzi, G., McBride, K. and Siboni, B. 2024. Patriarchy persists: Experiences of barriers to women's career progression in Italian accounting academia. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 99: 1-19.
- Gani, A., Imtiaz, N. and Krishnasamy, H. N. 2020. A pilot test for establishing validity and reliability of qualitative interview in the blended learning English proficiency course. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(05): 140-143.
- Garcia Martinez, M., Zouaghi, F. and Garcia Marco, T., 2017. Diversity is strategy: the effect of R&D team diversity on innovative performance. *R&D Management*, 47(2): 311-329.
- Garg, S. and Sangwan, S. 2021. Literature review on diversity and inclusion at workplace, 2010–2017. *Vision*, 25(1): 12-22.
- Giani, M., Hope, D. and Skorge, Ø.S. 2022. Household education gaps and gender role attitudes. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 10(4): 823-830.
- Gill, S. L. 2020. Qualitative sampling methods. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 36(4): 579-581.
- Golding, J. 1986. Some Problems in the Concept of Secretary. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 16(1): 94–111.
- González, M. J., Cortina, C. and Rodríguez, J. 2019. The role of gender stereotypes in hiring: A field experiment. *European Sociological Review*, 35(2):187-204.
- Gordon, E. and True, J., 2019. Gender stereotyped or gender responsive? Hidden threats and missed opportunities to prevent and counter violent extremism in Indonesia and Bangladesh. *The RUSI Journal*, 164(4): 74-91.
- Gottzén, L., Mellström, U. and Shefer, T. 2019. *Routledge international handbook of masculinity studies*. Routledge.

Gunbayi, I. 2020. Knowledge-constitutive interests and social paradigms in guiding mixed methods research (MMR). *Journal of Mixed Methods Studies*, 1: 44-56.

Hajjar, S. T. 2018. Statistical analysis: Internal-consistency reliability and construct validity. *International Journal of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods*, 6(1): 27-38.

Hamjediers, M. 2023. Gender-Atypical Learning Experiences of Men Reduce Occupational Sex Segregation: Evidence From the Suspension of the Civilian Service in Germany. *Gender and Society*, 37(4): 524–552.

Han, T. Y. 2021. Asymmetry of Non-traditional Gendered Decisions: Gender Beliefs and High School Curriculum Track Decisions in Taiwan. *Gender Issues*, 38(1): 25–46.

Hancock, A. J., Clarke, H.M., and Arnold, K.A. 2020. Sexual orientation occupational stereotypes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 119: 1-22.

Harrison, R. L., Reilly, T. M. and Creswell, J. W., 2020. Methodological rigor in mixed methods: An application in management studies. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 14(4): 473-495.

Hartford Courant. 2022. Hartford, Connecticut Breaking News, Sports & Entertainment - Hartford Courant [WWW Document]. Available: URL <https://www.courant.com/> (Accessed 04 June 2022).

Hayes, A. F. and Coutts, J. J. 2020. Use Omega Rather than Cronbach's Alpha for Estimating Reliability. But.... *Communication Methods and Measures*, 14(1): 1–24.

Hays-Thomas, R. (2016). *Managing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion: A Psychological Perspective*. Routledge.

He, J. C., Kang, S. K., Tse, K. and Toh, S. M. 2019. Stereotypes at work: Occupational stereotypes predict race and gender segregation in the workforce. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 115: 1-17.

Heckler, N. 2022. Managing masculinity in public organizations. In: *Handbook on gender and public administration*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 85-102.

Hegtvedt, K. A. 1988. Social Determinants of Perception: Power, Equity, and Status Effects in an Exchange Situation. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 51(2): 141–153.

Hennink, M. and Kaiser, B. N. 2022. Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social Science and Medicine*, 292: 1-10.

Hentschel, T., Heilman, M. E. and Peus, C. V. 2019. The Multiple Dimensions of Gender Stereotypes: A Current Look at Men's and Women's Characterizations of Others and Themselves. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10: 1-19.

Hentschel, T., Heilman, M. E. and Peus, C. V. 2019. The multiple dimensions of gender stereotypes: A current look at men's and women's characterizations of others and themselves. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10: 1-19.

- Hirschi, A. and Koen, J. 2021. Contemporary career orientations and career self-management: A review and integration. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 126: 103505.
- Hooke, R. 2016. In support of medical secretaries. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 352: 1-4.
- Horolets, A., Stodolska, M. and Peters, K. (2019). Natural Environments and Leisure among Rural-to-Urban Immigrants: An Application of Bourdieu's Concepts of Habitus, Social and Cultural Capital, and Field. *Leisure Sciences*, 41(4), 313–329.
- Hossan, D., Dato'Mansor, Z. and Jaharuddin, N.S., (2023). Research population and sampling in quantitative study. *International Journal of Business and Technopreneurship (IJBT)*, 13(3), 209-222.
- Iliyasu, R. and Etikan, I. 2021. Comparison of quota sampling and stratified random sampling. *Biom. Biostat. Int. J. Rev*, 10(1): 24-27.
- International Labour Organization. 2021a. Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Africa. Available: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_737670.pdf (Accessed 2 January 2023).
- International Labour Organization. 2021b. *Home—ILOSTAT - The leading source of labour statistics*. ILOSTAT. Available: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>
- InterQ. (2022). Home—InterQ Project. <https://interq-project.eu> (Accessed 2 January 2023).
- Jarman, J., Lambert, P. and Penn, R. 2021. Social stratification: Past, present, and future. *Contemporary Social Science*, 16(3): 271–279.
- Jordan, L. 2022. *Critical Qualitative Multiple Case Study: Quest for Women of Color Gaining Equal Employment Opportunity - ProQuest*. ProQuest. Ph.D. Phil., University of Arizona.
- Kalemba, J. 2016. "It's Uncomfortable for Us to be Called Sisters": An Exploratory Study Into the Experiences of Male Nurses in a Johannesburg Hospital, South Africa. Ph.D., University of the Witwatersrand.
- Kallivayalil, R. A. 2019. WPA Secretariat: Keeping pace with changing times! *World Psychiatry*, 18(2): 239.
- Karlsson, E., 2020. The backlash theory: A reason for political concern or fake news? MA, Uppsala University.
- Kennelly, I. 2002. "I Would Never Be a Secretary": Reinforcing Gender in Segregated and Integrated Occupations. *Gender and Society*, 16(5): 603–624.
- Khumalo, S., Mabaso, M., Makusha, T. and Taylor, M. 2021. Intersections between masculinities and sexual behaviors among young men at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *SAGE Open*, 11(3): 1-10.
- Kim, G., Kim, J., Lee, S. K., Sim, J., Kim, Y., Yun, B. Y. and Yoon, J. H. 2020. Multidimensional gender discrimination in workplace and depressive symptoms. *Plos One*, 15(7): 1-13.
- Kim, J. Y., Hsu, N., Newman, D. A., Harms, P. D. and Wood, D. 2020. Leadership perceptions, gender, and dominant personality: The role of normality evaluations. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 87: 1-9.
- Kimmons, R. 2022. Mixed methods. *Education Research*, 63(5): 631-641.

King, N., Calasanti, T., Pietilä, I. and Ojala, H. 2021. The Hegemony in Masculinity. *Men and Masculinities*, 24: 432–450.

Kiradoo, G., 2022. Diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace: strategies for achieving and sustaining a diverse workforce. *Advance Research in Social Science and Management*, 1: 139-15.

Kleinsorge, T. E. J. (2019). *Council of Europe (CoE)*. Kluwer Law International B.V.

Knott, E., Rao, A. H., Summers, K. and Teeger, C. 2022. Interviews in the social sciences. *Nature Reviews Methods Primers*, 2(1): 73.

Koburtay, T., Syed, J. and Haloub, R. 2019. Congruity between the female gender role and the leader role: A literature review. *European Business Review*, 31(6): 831-848.

Kotronoulas, G., Miguel, S., Dowling, M., Fernández-Ortega, P., Colomer-Lahiguera, S., Bağçivan, G., Pape, E., Drury, A., Semple, C., Dieperink, K.B. and Papadopoulou, C. 2023. An overview of the fundamentals of data management, analysis, and interpretation in quantitative research. *Seminars in Oncology Nursing*, 39(2): 151398.

Kräft, C. 2021. It's a Man's World? Gender Spillover Effects on Performance in a Male-Dominated Industry. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 6: 1-12.

Kriesi, I. and Imdorf, C. 2019. Gender segregation in education. In: *Research Handbook on the Sociology of Education*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 193–212.

Kronsberg, S., Bouret, J. R. and Brett, A. L. 2018. Lived experiences of male nurses: Dire consequences for the nursing profession. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 8(1): 46-53.

Lawson, R. 2020. Language and masculinities: History, development, and future. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 6(1): 409-434.

Leavy, P. 2022. *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. 2nd Ed. New York: Guilford Publications.

Leotti, S. M., Sugrue, E. P. and Wings-Yanez, N. 2022. Unpacking the worlds in our words: Critical discourse analysis and social work inquiry. *Qualitative Social Work*, 21(2): 260-276.

Li, D., Xi, W., Jia, Z. and Zhang, X. 2019. *Information Literacy and Team Building of University Administrative Secretary*, 6: 290-295.

Lingel, J. and Crawford, K. 2020. “Alexa, tell me about your mother”: The history of the secretary and the end of secrecy. *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience*, 6(1). 1-22.

Lips, H. M. 2020. *Sex and gender: An introduction*. Waveland Press.

Listermann, K. and Salinas Jr, C., 2024. “Underpaid” and “Undervalued”: The Experiences of Women Administrative Assistants in US Higher Education. *Journal of Education Human Resources*, 42(2), pp.257-277.

Luong, K. T., Knobloch-Westerwick, S. and Niewiesk, S. (2020). Superstars within reach: The role of perceived attainability and role congruity in media role models on women's social comparisons. *Communication Monographs*, 87(1), 4–24.

Luong, K. T., Knobloch-Westerwick, S. and Niewiesk, S. 2020. Superstars within reach: The role of perceived attainability and role congruity in media role models on women's social comparisons. *Communication Monographs*, 87(1): 4-24.

Lynam, T., Damayanti, R., Rialine Titaley, C., Suharno, N., Bradley, M. and Krentel, A. 2020. Reframing integration for mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 14(3): 336-357.

Maclaran, P. and Stevens, L. 2019. Chapter 10: Thinking through feminist theorising: poststructuralist feminism, ecofeminism and intersectionality. In: *Handbook of Research on Gender and Marketing* [WWW Document]. Available: <https://www.elgaronline.com/view/edcoll/9781788115377/9781788115377.00015.xml> (Accessed 06 June 2022).

Makwana, D., Engineer, P., Dabhi, A. and Chudasama, H. 2023. Sampling methods in research: a review. *Int. J. Trend Sci. Res. Dev*, 7: 762-768.

Mambo, L. 2022. Knowledge, skills, and work styles of executive secretary as perceived by the industries. *JMBI UNSRAT (Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Bisnis dan Inovasi Universitas Sam Ratulangi)*, 9(3): 1348-1358.

Martin, A. 2022. Male administrative pros are a relatively rare species, but those in the business are no quiet minority. [WWW Document]. Monster Career Advice. Available: <https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/the-few-the-proud> (Accessed 04 June 2022).

Mayeza, E. and Bhana, D. 2021. "Other" Boys Contesting Hegemonic Masculinities and Violence in the Primary School. In: Bhana, D., Singh, S. and Msibi, T. (Eds.), *Gender, Sexuality and Violence in South African Educational Spaces, Palgrave Studies in Gender and Education*. Springer International Publishing, Cham, 47–67. Available: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69988-8_2 (Accessed 2 January 2023).

Mazhar, S. A., Anjum, R., Anwar, A. I. and Khan, A. A. 2021. Methods of data collection: A fundamental tool of research. *Journal of Integrated Community Health*, 10(1): 6-10.

Mehta, C. M. and Smith, K. R. 2019. "As You Grow up the Divide Still Tends to Happen": A Qualitative Investigation of Gender Segregation in Adulthood. *Gender Issues*, 36(2): 176–200.

Meredith, M. J. 1955. "Mimeo Minnie," "Sadie, the Office Secretary," and Other Women Office Workers in America. *American Speech*, 30(4): 299–301.

Mesquita, A., Oliveira, L. and Sequeira, A. 2019. The Future of the Digital Workforce: Current and Future Challenges for Executive and Administrative Assistants. In: Rocha, Á., Adeli, H., Reis, L. P. and Costanzo, S. eds., *New Knowledge in Information Systems and Technologies*, 930, Cham: Springer, 25–38.

Messerschmidt, J. W. 2019. The Saliency of "Hegemonic Masculinity." *Men and Masculinities*, 22(1): 85–91.

- Mirmirani, P., 2020. It's time to stop calling our office staff "the girls". *International Journal of Women's Dermatology*, 6(4): 346-347.
- Mogalakwe, M. 2006. The use of documentary research methods in social research. *African Sociological Review/Revue Africaine De Sociologie*, 10(1): 221-230.
- MONSTER. 2022. MONSTER | ABOUT US [WWW Document]. Available: URL <https://www.monster.com/about/> (Accessed 04 June 2022).
- Moran, M. 2018. What is a Representative Sample? *Statistics Solutions*. Available: <https://www.statisticssolutions.com/what-is-a-representative-sample/> (Accessed 28 August 2022).
- Morando, M. 2023. Disentangling workplace sexism in age generations: A multi-group analysis on the effects on job satisfaction and task performance. *Administrative Sciences*, 13(9): 1-15
- .
- Moskos, M. 2020. Why is the gender revolution uneven and stalled? Gender essentialism and men's movement into 'women's work'. *Gender Work and Organization*, 27: 527–544.
- Mousa, M. 2021. Does gender diversity affect workplace happiness for academics? The role of diversity management and organizational inclusion. *Public Organization Review*, 21(1): 119-135.
- Mthuli, S., Ruffin, F. and Singh, N. 2022. 'Define, Explain, Justify, Apply' (DEJA): An analytic tool for guiding qualitative research sample size. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 25(6): 809–821.
- Muis, N., and Thenikusuma, K. 2019. *Work Ethics Office Secretary*. Social Science Research Network. 1-10.
- Nakazawa, M. 2011. Examining the advantages and disadvantages of pilot studies: Monte-Carlo simulations. PhD, The University of New Mexico.
- Napier, J. L., Suppes, A. and Bettinsoli, M. L. 2020. Denial of gender discrimination is associated with better subjective well-being among women: A system justification account. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 50(6): 1191-1209.
- Nawi, F. A. M., Tambi, A. M. A., Samat, M. F. and Mustapha, W. M. W. 2020. A review on the internal consistency of a scale: the empirical example of the influence of human capital investment on Malcom Baldrige quality principles in TVET institutions. *Asian People Journal (APJ)*, 3(1): 19-29.
- Neville, F. G., Templeton, A., Smith, J. R. and Louis, W. R. 2021. Social norms, social identities and the COVID-19 pandemic: Theory and recommendations. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 15(5): 1-12.
- Nguyen, T.D., Shih, M.H., Srivastava, D., Tirthapura, S. and Xu, B. 2021. Stratified random sampling from streaming and stored data. *Distributed and Parallel Databases*, 39: 665-710.
- Nye, J. S. 2020. Countering the Authoritarian Challenge: Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, and Sharp Power. *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, 15: 94–109.

- Nyimbili, F. and Nyimbili, L. 2024. Types of Purposive Sampling Techniques with Their Examples and Application in Qualitative Research Studies. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 5(1): 90-99.
- O'Loughlin, E. 2020. *How To... Calculate Cronbach's Alpha in Excel* (online video). Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hgf22LMcOHc> (Accessed 04 January 2023).
- O'Lynn, C. E. 2004. Gender-based barriers for male students in nursing education programs: Prevalence and perceived importance. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 43(5): 229-236.
- O'Neill, A. 2021. Global unemployment rate up to 2020 [WWW Document]. Statista. Available: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/279777/global-unemployment-rate/> (accessed 04 January 2022).
- Odusina, A. O., Dasaolu, O. A. and Agbonna, R. O. 2022. Secretarial skills, motivational tools and secretaries' job effectiveness in private organizations. *Sapientia Foundation Journal of Education, Sciences and Gender Studies*, 4(1): 65-76.
- Oh, S. 2023. Does identity affect labor supply?. *American Economic Review*, 113(8): 2055-2083.
- Oladeji, D. A. D. and Afolabi, O. A. 2021. The Challenges and Prospects of Secretarial Profession in this Modern Technology Era in Oyo State Nigeria. *The Pacific Journal of Science and Technology*, 22(2): 137-144.
- Omarjee. L. 2021. SA's jobless number grows to 7.2 million as unemployment rate breaches new record [WWW Document]. *Fin24*. Available: URL <https://www.news24.com/fin24/economy/sas-jobless-grows-to-72-million-as-unemployment-rate-breaches-new-record-20210223> (Accessed 10 January 2022).
- Opong, C. 2023. *Female and male in West Africa*. Taylor & Francis.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2021. Unemployment - Unemployment rate - OECD Data [WWW Document]. *theOECD*. Available: <http://data.oecd.org/unemp/unemployment-rate.htm> (accessed 02 January 2022).
- Ozomenam, N. P. and Asogwa, S. O. 2023. Secretary's competencies coverage as hubs for optimum performance in contemporary offices. *Journal of Professional Secretaries and Office Administrators*, 30(1): 88-97.
- Pardede, P. 2019. Mixed Methods Research Designs in EFL. In: Proceedings of EED Collegiate Forum 2015-2018, Jakarta, July 26, 2019. United Kingdom: UKI Press. <http://repository.uki.ac.id/933/>, 230-243.
- Patel, S. K., Santhya, K. G. and Haberland, N. 2021. What shapes gender attitudes among adolescent girls and boys? Evidence from the UDAYA Longitudinal Study in India. *PloS One*, 16(3): 1-20.
- Patterson, T. H. 1980. Library Skills Workshops for Support Personnel. *RQ*, 19(4): 351-353.
- Pearson, N., Naylor, P. J., Ashe, M. C., Fernandez, M., Yoong, S. L. and Wolfenden, L. 2020. Guidance for conducting feasibility and pilot studies for implementation trials. *Pilot and Feasibility Studies*, 6: 1-12.

- Perneger, T. V., Courvoisier, D. S., Hudelson, P. M. and Gayet-Ageron, A. 2015. Sample size for pre-tests of questionnaires. *Quality of life Research*, 24: 147-151.
- Perry, G. L. W., Richardson, S. J., Harré, N., Hodges, D., Lyver, P. O., Maseyk, F. J. F., Taylor, R., Todd, J. H., Tyljanakis, J. M., Yletyinen, J. and Brower, A. 2021. Evaluating the Role of Social Norms in Fostering Pro-Environmental Behaviors. *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 9: 1-7.
- Prospect. 2021. Who are Prospect and what do we do? *Prospect*. Available: <https://prospect.org.uk/about/who-are-prospect> (Accessed 24 December 2021).
- Prowell, A. N. 2019. Using post-structuralism to rethink risk and resilience: Recommendations for social work education, practice, and research. *Social Work*, 64(2): 123-130.
- Puzio, A. and Valshtein, T. 2022. Gender segregation in culturally feminized work: Theory and evidence of boys' capacity for care. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*, 23(3): 271-284.
- Quintão, C., Andrade, P. and Almeida, F. 2020. How to improve the validity and reliability of a case study approach?. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education*, 9(2): 264-275.
- Rai, J.K. 2021. Illustrating the Dominant-Subordinate Relations: A Gramscian Analysis of Vikal's Abiral Bagdachha Indraavatee [Indravati Flows Constantly]. *JODEM: Journal of Language and Literature*, 12(1): 59-71.
- Rather, A. 2022. Is Gender Discrimination Still Alive In the 21st Century. *Journal of Women Empowerment and Studies (JWES)*, 2(04) 2799-1253. Available: <https://doi.org/10.55529/jwes.24.11.17> (Accessed 24 December 2023)
- Ravinder, E. B. and Saraswathi, A. B. 2020. Literature review of Cronbach alpha coefficient (A) and McDonald's omega coefficient (Ω). *European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine*, 7(6): 2943-2949.
- Reem, A. and Haifa, A. N. 2020. Do Saudi academic women use more feminised speech to describe their professional titles? An evidence from corpus. *Training, Language and Culture*, 4(3): 9-20.
- Reeser, T. W. 2020. Concepts of masculinity and masculinity studies. In *Configuring masculinity in theory and literary practice*. Brill, 11-38.
- Reichelt, M., Makovi, K. and Sargsyan, A. 2021. The impact of COVID-19 on gender inequality in the labor market and gender-role attitudes. *European Societies*, 23(sup1): S228-S245.
- Rezai, M., Lindsay, S., Ahmed, H. and Vijayakumar, A. 2023. Workplace inclusion: A scoping review of the qualitative literature. *WORK*, 75(1): 59–73.
- Rice, L. and Barth, J. M. 2016. Hiring decisions: The effect of evaluator gender and gender stereotype characteristics on the evaluation of job applicants. *Gender Issues*, 33: 1-21.
- Rommelspacher, A. 2024. 'Truly a three-dimensional job': The feminisation of clerical work in Cape Town, 1900–1960. *Gender & History*, 36(2): 544-564.
- Roper, M. and Tosh, J. 2021. *Manful assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*. Routledge.
- Rostini, R., Souisa, W., Masmarulan, R. and Yasin, N. 2021. Competitiveness development, learning orientation, entrepreneurial commitment and business performance in the silk industry. *Management Science Letters*, 11(3): 903-908.

Rustamov, I. T. 2022. On the Conceptual Metaphor: MAN IS UP, WOMAN IS DOWN. In: Proceedings of International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies. Presented at the International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies. E-Conference Series, Paris, November 2022. France: 28–31.

Ryttberg, M. and Geschwind, L. 2019. Professional support staff in higher education: Networks and associations as sense givers. *Higher Education*, 78: 1059-1074.

Salazar, M., Daoud, N., Edwards, C., Scanlon, M. and Vives-Cases, C. 2020. PositivMasc: masculinities and violence against women among young people. Identifying discourses and developing strategies for change, a mixed-method study protocol. *BMJ Open*, 10(9): 1-7.

Sánchez, G. S., Bezhold, G. A. and Farnós, I. A. 2023. Research ethics: From principles to practical aspects. *Anales de Pediatría (English Edition)*, 99(3): 195-202.

Sarker, M. and AL-Muaalemi, M. A. 2022. Sampling techniques for quantitative research. In *Principles of social research methodology*. Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 221-234.

Sasson-Levy, O. 2007. Contradictory consequences of mandatory conscription: The case of women secretaries in the Israeli military. *Gender and society*, 21(4): 481-507.

Schaerer, M., Du Plessis, C., Nguyen, M. H. B., Van Aert, R. C., Tiokhin, L., Lakens, D., Clemente, E. G., Pfeiffer, T., Dreber, A., Johannesson, M. and Clark, C. J. 2023. On the trajectory of discrimination: A meta-analysis and forecasting survey capturing 44 years of field experiments on gender and hiring decisions. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 179: 1-26.

Schock, A. K., Gruber, F. M., Scherndl, T. and Ortner, T. M. 2019. Tempering agency with communion increases women's leadership emergence in all-women groups: Evidence for role congruity theory in a field setting. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 30(2): 189-198.

Schoonenboom, J. and Johnson, R. B. 2017. How to construct a mixed methods research design. *Kolner Zeitschrift fur Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 69: 107-131.

Schrepp, M. 2020. On the Usage of Cronbach's Alpha to Measure Reliability of UX Scales. *Journal of Usability Studies*, 15(4): 247-258.

Scott, J. W. 2018. Deconstructing equality-versus-difference: Or, the uses of poststructuralist theory for feminism. In: Hermann, A. C. and Stewart, A. J. eds. *Theorizing Feminism*. New York: Routledge, 254-270.

Seguro, B. 2017. I'm A Male Secretary, People Don't Get It – Hartford Courant [WWW Document]. Available: <https://www.courant.com/opinion/op-ed/hc-op-fresh-talk-seguro-i-am-a-male-secretary-its-great-0705-20170703-story.html> (Accessed 04 June 2022).

Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R. 2020. *Research methods for business: A skill building approach*. 8th ed. Chennai: John Wiley & Sons.

Sheldon, C. H. 1981. Law clerking with a State Supreme Court: Views from the perspective of the personal assistants to the judges. *The Justice System Journal*, 6(3): 346–371.

Seo, H. 2022. *Gender matters: Feminisation of labour market outsiders across Europe and the role of family policy*. Ph.D., University of Kent. Available: <https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/01.02.93626> (Accessed 24 December 2023).

Shan, Y. 2022. Philosophical foundations of mixed methods research. *Philosophy Compass*, 17(1): 1-12804.

Shrestha, N. 2021. Factor analysis as a tool for survey analysis. *American Journal of Applied Mathematics and Statistics*, 9(1): 4-11.

Sidhu, J. S., Feng, Y., Volberda, H. W. and Van Den Bosch, F. A. J. 2021. In the Shadow of Social Stereotypes: Gender diversity on corporate boards, board chair's gender and strategic change. *Organization Studies*, 42(11): 1677-1698.

Siregar, Y. B. 2018. The Changing roles of administrative professionals in the office of the future. *Jurnal Administrasi Dan Kesekretarisan*, 3(1): 29-39.

SmartPA. 2023a. *Our Origin: SmartPA*. Available: <https://www.smart-pa.com/uk/about-us/our-origin/> (Accessed 02 January 2024).

SmartPA. 2023b. The Difference Between an Admin Assistant and a Secretary. *SmartPA*. Available: <https://www.smart-pa.com/uk/blog/the-difference-between-an-admin-assistant-and-a-secretary/#> (Accessed 02 January 2024).

Smith, B. N., Hornsby, J. S., Benson, P. G. and Wesolowski, M. 1989. What is in a name: The impact of job titles on job evaluation results. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 3(3): 341–351.

State Government of Victoria: Commission for gender equality in the public sector. 2022. Recruitment and promotion practices. State Government of Victoria. Available: <https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/baseline-audit-report-2021/recruitment-and-promotion-practices> (Accessed 1 November 2024).

Statista . 2021. Statista—The Statistics Portal. Available: [Statista. https://www.statista.com](https://www.statista.com) (Accessed 1 November 2024).

Statistica. 2022. South Africa: unemployment rate by age group 2022 [WWW Document]. *Statista*. Available: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1129482/unemployment-rate-by-age-group-in-south-africa/> (Accessed 05 February 2023).

Statistics South Africa. 2021. Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) – Q3:2021 | Statistics South Africa. Available: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=14957> (Accessed 05 January 2022).

Steeh, A., Höffler, T., Höft, L. and Parchmann, I. 2021. First steps toward gender equity in the chemistry Olympiad: Understanding the role of implicit gender-science stereotypes. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 58(1): 40-68.

Sullivan, M. L. 2015. Who Will Make the Cut? Gender Bias and Contrast Effects in Hiring Behavior. Honours, College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University.

Sultana, S., Cavaletto, L. A. and Bosu, A. 2021. Identifying the Prevalence of Gender Biases among the Computing Organizations. *ACM Celebration of Women in Computing: womENCourage*.

Tabuena, A. C. and Hilario, Y. M. C. 2021. Research data analysis methods in addressing the K-12 learning competency on data analysis procedures among senior high school research courses. *International Journal of Recent Research and Applied Studies*, 8(3): 1.

Taflaga, M. and Kerby, M. 2020. Who does what work in a ministerial office: Politically appointed staff and the descriptive representation of women in Australian political offices, 1979–2010. *Political Studies*, 68(2): 463-485.

Taherdoost, H. 2022. What are different research approaches? Comprehensive Review of Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method research, their applications, types, and limitations. *Journal of Management Science & Engineering Research*, 5(1): 53-63.

Taherdoost, H., 2021. Data collection methods and tools for research; a step-by-step guide to choose data collection technique for academic and business research projects. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)*, 10(1): 10-38.

Temizhan, E., Mirtagioglu, H. and Mendes, M. 2022. Which correlation coefficient should be used for investigating relations between quantitative variables. *Acad. Sci. Res. J. Eng. Technol. Sci.*, 85(1): 265-277.

Teresi, J. A., Yu, X., Stewart, A.L. and Hays, R. D. 2022. Guidelines for designing and evaluating feasibility pilot studies. *Medical Care*, 60(1): 95-103.

The British Medical Journal. 1971. The Medical Secretary. *The British Medical Journal*, 4(5788): 676–677.

The Michigan Law Review Association. 1918. Libel: Publication: Dictation to Typist. *Michigan Law Review*, 17(2): 187–189.

Thirusanku, J. 2021. Equal opportunity within the workplace. *Economics and Business Quarterly Reviews*, 4(3): 208-220. Available: <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3925971> (Accessed 04 January 2023).

Thomas, F. B. 2022. The role of purposive sampling technique as a tool for informal choices in a social Sciences in research methods. *Just Agriculture*, 2(5): 1-8.

Totaljobs Group. 2020. Who we are. Available: <https://www.totaljobsgroup.com/who-we-are> (Accessed 04 January 2023).

Turale, S. 2020. A brief introduction to qualitative description: A research design worth using. *Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research*, 24(3): 289-291.

Turhan, N. S. 2020. Karl Pearson's Chi-Square Tests. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 16(9): 575-580.

Turk, K., 2014. Labor's Pink-Collar Aristocracy: The National Secretaries Association's Encounters with Feminism in the Age of Automation. *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, 11(2), pp.85-109.

Turner, D. P. 2020. Sampling Methods in Research Design. *Headache: The Journal of Head & Face Pain*, 60(1).

UNCTAD Prosperidad para todos. 2021. Gender and unemployment: Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic | UNCTAD [WWW Document]. Available: <https://unctad.org/es/node/32595> (Accessed 07 January 2022).

UNICEF South Asia. 2017. Glossary of Terms and Concepts. In: *Gender Equality*. Available: <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/reports/gender-equality> (Accessed 21 December 2021).

United Nations Population Fund. 2021a. How we work. *United Nations Population Fund*. Available: <https://www.unfpa.org/how-we-work> (Accessed 24 December 2021).

United Nations Population Fund. 2021b. *Technical Brief: How Changing Social Norms is Crucial in Achieving Gender Equality - World*. ReliefWeb. Available: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/technical-brief-how-changing-social-norms-crucial-achieving-gender-equality> (Accessed 23 December 2021).

University of Zululand. 2024. Human Resources Database. Empangeni: KwaDlangezwa.

Verhagen, T., Hooff, B.V.D. and Meents, S. 2015. Toward a better use of the semantic differential in IS research: An integrative framework of suggested action. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 16(2): 1.

Verniers, C., and Vala, J. 2018. Correction: Justifying gender discrimination in the workplace: The mediating role of motherhood myths. *PLOS ONE*, 13(7): 1-23.

Vu, T. T. N. 2021. Understanding validity and reliability from qualitative and quantitative research traditions. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 37(3).

Waling, A. 2019. Problematising 'toxic' and 'healthy' masculinity for addressing gender inequalities. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 34(101): 362-375.

WallStreetMojo Editorial Team. 2021. Stratified Sampling. *WallStreetMojo*. Available: <https://www.wallstreetmojo.com/stratified-sampling/> (Accessed 28 August 2022).

WallStreetMojo Editorial Team. 2022. About WallStreetMojo. *WallStreetMojo*. Available: <https://www.wallstreetmojo.com/about-us/> (Accessed 28 August 2022).

Wambugu, L. (n.d.). Dr._lydiah_wambugu__cv.pdf. Available: https://profiles.uonbi.ac.ke/lydia_nyaguthii/files/dr._lydiah_wambugu__cv.pdf (Accessed 28 August 2022).

Wambugu, L. 2021. Lesson 32 - Stratified random sampling: definition & steps of conducting stratified random sampling. University of Nairobi. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89Jg4YfpAgI> (Accessed 28 August 2022).

- Wang, J. C., Markóczy, L., Sun, S. L. and Peng, M. W. 2019. She'-EO compensation gap: A role congruity view. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 159: 745-760.
- Wiedman, C. 2020. Rewarding collaborative research: Role congruity bias and the gender pay gap in academe. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 167: 793-807.
- Williamson, S., Carson, L. and Foley, M. 2020. Representations of new public management in Australian public service gender equality policies. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 39(2): 235-250.
- Wojnicka, K. 2021. Invisible yet significant: The case of complicit masculinities' transparency in power. *NORMA*, 16(4): 200-204.
- World Population Review. 2023. Unemployment by Country 2023 [WWW Document]. Available: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/unemployment-by-country> (Accessed 05 February 2023).
- Yadav, C. 2021. Difference Between Administrative Assistant and Secretary (blog). *Askanydifference*. Available: <https://askanydifference.com/difference-between-administrative-assistant-and-secretary/> (Accessed 2021, May 31).
- Yang, Y. 2020. What's Hegemonic about Hegemonic Masculinity? Legitimation and Beyond. *Sociological Theory*, 38(4): 318–333.
- Yavorsky, J. E. 2019. Uneven patterns of inequality: An audit analysis of hiring-related practices by gendered and classed contexts. *Social Forces*, 98(2): 461-492.
- Yavorsky, J. E. and Dill, J. 2020. Unemployment and men's entrance into female-dominated jobs. *Social Science Research*, 85: 1-20.
- Yilmaz, B. K. and Sürgevil, O. 2020. Gender based tokenism: A qualitative research on female-dominated and male-dominated professions. *Istanbul Management Journal*, 88: 85-125.
- Young, M., Varpio, L., Uijtdehaage, S. and Paradis, E. 2020. The spectrum of inductive and deductive research approaches using quantitative and qualitative data. *Academic Medicine*, 95(7): 1122.
- Zell, E., Strickhouser, J.E., Lane, T.N. and Teeter, S.R. 2016. Mars, Venus, or Earth? Sexism and the exaggeration of psychological gender differences. *Sex Roles*, 75: 287-300.
- Zhang, L. 2020. An institutional approach to gender diversity and firm performance. *Organization Science*, 31(2): 439-457.
- Zimmerman, L. A., Koenig, L. R., Pulerwitz, J., Kayembe, P., Maddelena, M. and Moreau, C. 2021. The intersection of power and gender: Examining the relationship of empowerment and gender-unequal norms among young adolescents in Kinshasa, DRC. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 69(1): S64-S71.
- Zippia. 2021a. Administrative Assistant Demographics and Statistics 2023: Number Of Administrative Assistants. *Zippia, Inc*. Available: <https://www.zippia.com/administrative-assistant-jobs/demographics> (Accessed on 30 January 2023).
- Zippia. 2021b. Secretary Demographics and Statistics 2021: Number of Secretary's in the US. *Zippia, Inc*. Available: <https://www.zippia.com/secretary-jobs/demographics> (Accessed on 30 January 2023).

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A – Letter of Request to Conduct Research at a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal

Monday, 12 June 2023


██████████
The Registrar
██████████

Request to Conduct Research –DUT Student BO MASHIYANE,20354124-(██████████ Staff Member)

Dear Mr Mothillal

My name is Miss Banikele Olivia Mashiyane, ID No. 8501011385084, student number 20354124, a Management Sciences in Administration and Corporate Management student at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Masters dissertation involves "An investigation of men's representation and perceptions in administrative secretarial support roles". The study will offer a glimpse into the issue of representation of men in secretarial support positions for future rectification.

I am hereby submitting my request to conduct a case study research of the ██████████ campus. Among other stipulations of the POPIA, ██████████ reserves the discretion not to publish its identity, and that of its members of staff as areas of study interest. I have obtained the DUT's ethics training certificate and an ethics approval letter as preliminary permission to conduct research pending gatekeeper's approval from ██████████.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal including an ethics checklist completed, copies of the data collection tools and consent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the ethics training certificate as required (*Ethics Training Certificate*  Training BO Mashiyane).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at cell no. 083 5593 871 or email: 20354124@dut4life.ac.za , or my supervisor Dr Saroj Bala at 083 785 6235, email: sarojbl@dut.ac.za .

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Ms BO Mashiyane (20354124)
Masters Student
Durban University of Technology

APPENDIX B – Letter of Approval to Conduct Research

Our ref: Permit: 26/2023
Your ref:

PERMIT TO COLLECT DATA

The University of [REDACTED] hereby permits BO Mashiyane to conduct research and collect data in accordance with the provisional Ethics Clearance Certificate IREC 039/23 issued by DUT on 14/06/2023, and the [REDACTED]'s POPI Declaration and Indemnity form dated 14/06/2023.

The Researcher may commence with data collection once a valid Ethical Clearance Certificate has been issued. This permit is valid for 12 months from the date of issue, subject to the research being conducted in terms of a valid ethical clearance certificate.

[REDACTED] retains the right to withdraw or amend this permit if:

- Any unethical conduct is revealed or suspected.
- Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented.
- Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require.
- The conditions contained in the Declaration have not been adhered to.

[REDACTED]
REGISTRAR

APPENDIX C – Ethical Clearance Certificate issued by DUT



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Barwin Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375

Email: lavithad@dut.ac.za

http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

15 August 2023

Ms B O Mashiyane
P.O Box 03
KwaDlangezwa
3886

Dear Ms Mashiyane

An investigation of men's representation and perceptions in administrative secretarial support roles

I am pleased to inform you that Full Approval has been granted to your proposal.

The Proposal has been allocated the following Ethical Clearance number **IREC 039/23**. Please use this number in all communication with this office.

Approval has been granted for a period of **ONE YEAR**, before the expiry of which you are required to apply for safety monitoring and annual recertification. Please use the Safety Monitoring and Annual Recertification Report form which can be found in the Standard Operating Procedures [SOP's] of the DUT-IREC. This form must be submitted to the DUT-IREC at least 3 months before the ethics approval for the study expires.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the DUT-IREC according to the DUT-IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the DUT-IREC as outlined in the DUT-IREC SOP's.

It is compulsory for a student or researcher to apply for recertification on an annual basis. The failure to do so will result in withdrawal of ethics clearance. It is the responsibility of the researcher and the supervisor to apply for recertification.

Please note that you are required to submit a Notification of Completion of Study form together with an abstract to the **DUT-IREC** office on completion of your study.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: DUT-IREC

ENVISION2030

transparency • honesty • integrity • respect • accountability
fairness • professionalism • commitment • compassion • excellence



APPENDIX D – Survey Letter of Information and Consent Form

LETTER OF INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

Good Day!

I am a **Masters student at the Durban University of Technology (DUT)** doing research for my Management Sciences in Administration and Corporate Management degree.

I would like to invite you to participate in the research.

The questionnaire will take approximately 7minutes to complete.

You are welcome to ask as many questions as you wish, may discuss the study with your family and friends, and are under no obligation to commit at this stage.

Persons to contact:

The researcher: Ms Banikele O Mashiyane

Contact Details: (Email) 20354124@dut4life.ac.za (Cell No.) 083 5593 871

Supervisor: Dr S Bala (PhD)

Contact Details: (Email) sarojb1@dut.ac.za (Cell No.) 083 785 62 35

IREC Admin contact details: Lavisha Deonarian

(Email) lavishad@dut.ac.za (Contact No.) 031 373 2375



Choose ▼

PLEASE READ LETTER OF INFORMATION HERE...

Nature of the study: Addresses the issue of gender roles in the field of administration.

Aim: To investigate representation and attitudes of men in administrative secretarial support jobs.

You are not obliged to participate nor required to disclose your personal identity.

Data obtained from you will not disclose your identity and will be for research purposes only.

You are not compelled to answer any questions you find risky or which you find uncomfortable.

You may stop the proceedings any time should you not wish to continue with participation.

The research may be terminated early in special circumstances.

Participation Benefit: Contribution to advancing knowledge on gender in the corporate setting.

The electronic data will be kept in encrypted files not easily accessible to the public.

Computer hardware and software accessible only through a secret password for 5 years then deleted.

The data will be made accessible only to the researcher and the supervisors.

The hardcopy data collection instruments will be submitted to the faculty research office to store.

The hardcopy instruments will be permanently destroyed after 5 years through a shredder.

The results of the study will be disseminated online and via hard copies to all participants.

Questionnaires may be completed at your own convenience.

Questionnaire responses to be submitted to: oliviamresearch@gmail.com

Results of the study can be made available to you upon request.

Risks: No high physical risk and caution has been taken to ensure no emotional discomfort.

I HAVE READ THE INFORMATION

CLOSE MENU

Please Agree to Participate *

I Agree

I disagree

Back

Next

Clear form

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google. - [Terms of Service](#) - [Privacy Policy](#)

Does this form look suspicious? [Report](#)

Google Forms

APPENDIX E – Research Interview Letter of Information



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study : An investigation of men's representation and perceptions in administrative secretarial support roles

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: MASHIYANE, Banikele Olivia
Master of Management Sciences in Administration and
Information Management

Supervisor/s: Dr S Bala/ Dr M Ngibe

RESEARCH INTERVIEW

Dear

I. INTRODUCTION

I am a **Masters student at the Durban University of Technology (DUT)** doing research for my Management Sciences in Administration and Corporate Management degree.

I would like to invite you to participate in the research on "An investigation of men's representation and perceptions in administrative secretarial support roles".

You are welcome to ask as many questions as you wish to assist you in understanding the nature of the study and process prior to engagement. You are entitled to discuss the study

with your family and friends and are under no obligation to commit at this stage. For this purpose, a copy of the Letter of Information document is given to you to take home.

2. NATURE OF THE STUDY

The nature of the study addresses the issue of gender roles in the field of administration. The aim of the study is to investigate the representation of men in administrative secretarial support jobs and the attitudes of men and selected employees of the University of [REDACTED] towards the title of "male secretary".

The objectives of the research are:

Objective 1

- To determine gender representation within the secretarial administrative staff population at the University of [REDACTED] in year 2023.

Objective 2

- To obtain the attitude of secretaries on their roles within the University of [REDACTED]

Objective 3

- To obtain the attitude of management on the role of secretarial support within the University of [REDACTED]

Objective 4

- To identify the critical barriers, preventing the representation of men in secretarial jobs at the University of [REDACTED]

3. PARTICIPATION ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the participant, you will be required to answer a series of questions in a form of an interview. Interviews will be conducted either via an online meeting or a face-to-face meeting, at your convenient meeting time and/or office location. **Whilst maintaining utmost confidentiality**, data provided will be analysed to find answers to some questions relating to gender representation in the administrative secretarial field. **An interview session is estimated to take 15 or less minutes of your time.** Results of the study can be made available to you upon request.

Please be informed that you are not under any obligation to participate in this study. As a participant, you have the right to indicate any discomfort during the proceedings and are **not compelled to answer any questions you find risky or which you find uncomfortable.** You may **stop the proceedings any time** should you not wish to continue with participation. Please note that the research may be terminated early in special circumstances such as non-compliance, ill health, and other adverse situations.

4. BENEFITS TO PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

The benefit which you will obtain from participating in the study is the knowledge that you have made an **invaluable contribution to advancing knowledge** which is internally **fulfilling and an honorable experience.** The results of the study will go a long way in setting right gender issues in the corporate setting.

As a participant, you are not expected to cover any costs towards the study.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROTECTION OF PRIVATE INFORMATION

The electronic data will be kept in encrypted files not easily accessible to the public in personal computer hardware and software accessible only through a secret password for 5 years and deleted after that. The data will be made accessible only to the researcher and the supervisors. The hardcopy data collection instruments are to be given serial numbers and submitted to the faculty research office to store and after 5 years be destroyed with a shredder when no longer needed for the study.

As a participant, **you will not be required to disclose your personal identity** such as your name and will ensure that you are not identifiable to other persons. **Data obtained from you will not disclose your personal details** before, during or after

participation and will not be used for any other reason either than for the research purposes.

6. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The results of the study will be disseminated online and via hard copies to all participants who require the information. Any significant new findings will be shared with participants on email.

7. RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

The research does not have high physical risk and caution has been taken to ensure that the research instruments do not cause emotional discomfort to any participant.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

The researcher: Ms Banikele O Mashiyane

Contact Details: (Email) 20354124@dut4life.ac.za (Cell No.) 083 5593 871

Supervisor: Dr S Bala (PhD)

Contact Details: (Email) sarobj1@dut.ac.za (Cell No.) 083 785 62 35




Co-supervisor: Dr. M. Ngibe (PhD)

Contact Details: (Email) musawenkosin1@dut.ac.za

Complaints can be reported to the Acting Director: Research and Postgraduate Support on researchdirector@dut.ac.za

APPENDIX F – Interview Letter of Consent

PLEASE KINDLY COMPLETE THE FORM



CONSENT

Full Title of the Study:
An investigation of men's representation and perceptions in administrative secretarial support roles

Names of Researcher/s: MASHIYANE, Banikele Olivia
Master of Management Sciences in Administration and
Information Management

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Banikele Olivia Mashiyane, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: **IREC 039/23**.
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant	Date	Time	Signature / Right
Thumbprint			

DUT Student Ms BO Mashiyane (20354124) – Provisionally Approved Proposal (Ref: IREC 039/23)


I, _____ (name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher **Date** **Signature**

Full Name of Witness (If applicable) **Date** **Signature**

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable) **Date** **Signature**

APPENDIX G – Survey Questionnaire for Secretarial administrative Staff



CONFIDENTIAL


SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR OFFICE PERSONNEL

SECRETARIAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

SECTION A. PERSONAL DETAILS

Please put a cross (x) in the appropriate box

1.1	Gender	
	• Male	
	• Female	
	• Other	
1.2	Age	
	• 18 -30 years	
	• 31 – 40 years	
	• 41 – 50 years	
	• 51 or more	
1.3	Race (voluntary)	
	• Asian	
	• Black	
	• Coloured	
	• White	
	• Other	
1.4	Personnel Level of Position in the office	
	• Top Management	
	• Middle Management	
	• Supervisor	
	• Junior Staff Member	
1.5	Kindly indicate whether you are permanent or non-permanent staff member	
	• Permanent	
	• Non-permanent	
1.6	Kindly indicate the university office unit you belong to	
	• Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	
	• Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law	
	• Faculty of Education	
	• Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering	
	• Office of the Vice-Chancellor	



CONFIDENTIAL

	• Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellors	
	• Facilities Management Division	
	• Finance Division	
	• Human Resources Division	
	• Institutional Planning	
	• HEMIS	
	• Institutional Support Division	
	• Office of the Registrar	
	• Research and Innovation Division	
	• Teaching and Learning Division	

CONFIDENTIAL

SECTION B. PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER REPRESENTATION

2.1

Please indicate with a cross (x) whether you find the following general definition of a secretary accurate:

"Secretaries ensure organisations run smoothly by attending to organisational tasks such as: records management, managing appointments, organising meetings, minute taking, travelling arrangements and other tasks"

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	State:
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	

2.2

Please indicate with a cross (x) whether you 'agree' or 'disagree' with the following statement:

'Secretaries' and 'administrators' generally require similar skills to carry out their jobs in the office and sometimes have similar roles in the office with the main difference being the job titles.

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Please put a cross (x) in the appropriate box

2.3 The gender of secretaries that I come across in the university offices is generally:

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Specify:
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Equal number of Males and Females	<input type="checkbox"/>	
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	

CONFIDENTIAL

2.4

Please put a cross (x) in the appropriate box

I generally think of secretaries as being of the following gender:

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Male and Female Equally	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Specify:

2.5

Please choose one (1) job title below which you believe is the most suitable job title for a female whose job is secretarial, and state why:

Secretary	<input type="checkbox"/>	Specify Why?
Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/>	Specify Why?
Administrative Secretary	<input type="checkbox"/>	Specify Why?
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Specify Why?

2.6

Please choose one (1) job title which you believe is the most suitable title for a male whose job role is that of an office secretary, and state why:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Secretary	Specify Why?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Administrator	Specify Why?

CONFIDENTIAL

	Administrative Secretary	Specify Why?
	Other	Specify Why?

2.7

Rate your level of agreement with each statement

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2.7.1 'Secretary' is an appropriate job title for a woman					
2.7.2 'Secretary' is an appropriate job title for a man					
2.7.3 'Administrator' is an appropriate job title for a man					
2.7.4 'Administrator' is an appropriate job title for a female					
2.7.5 'Receptionist' is an appropriate job title for a woman					
2.7.6 'Receptionist' is an appropriate job title for a man					

SECTION C. IDENTIFYING GENDER BARRIERS

2.8

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

2.8.1 Men generally avoid secretarial jobs as they believe they are better suited for women.

Strongly Agree	
Agree	
Neutral	
Disagree	

CONFIDENTIAL

Strongly disagree

2.9




Please tick the choices which you believe discourage men from wanting to be secretaries.
There is no limit to the number of choices.

They identify as men	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salary of a secretary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Companies prefer women secretaries	<input type="checkbox"/>
Men do not see other men taking up jobs as secretaries	<input type="checkbox"/>
A sense of shame as the general society believes the job is better suited for women, and not men	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most people think of male secretaries as being gay	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being perceived as an assistant of someone else and not the boss	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.10 Please provide your additional comments about gender representation in administrative secretarial support jobs, or your personal experience about it.

Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX H – Interview Schedule for Male Administrative Staff

CONFIDENTIAL

Appendix H

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

MALE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

SECTION A. PERSONAL DETAILS

1.1	Gender	
	• Male	
	• Female	
	• Other	
1.2	Age	
	• 18 -30 years	
	• 31 – 40 years	
	• 41 – 50 years	
	• 51 or more	
1.3	Race (voluntary)	
	• Asian	
	• Black	
	• Coloured	
	• White	
	• Other	
1.4	Personnel Level of Position in the office	
	• Top Management	
	• Middle Management	
	• Supervisor	
	• Junior Staff Member	
1.5	Kindly indicate whether you are permanent or non-permanent staff member	
	• Permanent	
	• Non-permanent	
1.6	Kindly indicate the university office unit you belong to	
1.7	Work experience in the university	
	• 1 – 5 years	
	• 6 – 10 years	
	• 11 – 15 years	
	• 16 years and above	

CONFIDENTIAL

SECTION B.
2. SECRETARIAL JOB, SKILLS & RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 What job position do you hold within the organisation?
- 2.2 What are your main responsibilities?
- 2.3 What do you understand by the term 'secretary'?
- 2.4 What do you understand by the term 'administrator'?
- 2.5 What are your main qualifications obtained in the administration field?
- 2.6 Do you believe a 'secretary' and 'administrator' require similar job skills?

SECTION C.
3. GENDER POWER RELATIONS AND ATTITUDES ON GENDER REPRESENTATION

- 3.1 In your general observation, what gender do you believe most secretaries to be in the university and the reason for this?
- 3.2 In your opinion and experience, does it matter which gender is assigned the job title of "administrator"?
- 3.3 In your opinion and experience, does it matter which gender is assigned the job title of "secretary"?
- 3.4 In terms of your experience, explain whether you have ever been assigned a boss of the same gender as yourself whilst in an administrative/secretarial job role and discuss whether this arrangement was a suitable one from a gender perspective?
- 3.5 Have you ever been assigned a boss of the opposite gender? If yes, discuss whether this arrangement was a suitable one from a gender perspective?
- 3.6 In your own experience, how often do you come across a boss with a secretary of the same gender as themselves? State their gender relations and discuss from your perspective whether this

CONFIDENTIAL

work arrangement was a suitable one.

3.7 In your own experience, how often do you come across a boss with a secretary of the opposite gender as themselves? State their gender relations and discuss from your perspective whether this work arrangement was a suitable one.

3.8 Discuss briefly how you have experienced development and empowerment in the secretarial administrative job roles up to this point. Discuss both positives and negatives if any.

SECTION D.
4. GENDER ROLES

4.1 In your opinion, do you think society beliefs about gender encourage men to become secretaries?

4.2 Does the way in which the job title of 'secretary' is advertised and understood in general encourage men to apply for jobs as secretaries?

4.3 Would you say any of the following prevent men from pursuing secretarial work? Select any number of choices from the following options provided:

Salary of a secretary	
Companies prefer women secretaries	
Men do not see enough men taking up jobs as secretaries	
A sense of misplacement as the general society believes the job is better suited for women, and not men	
Most people think of male secretaries as being gay	
Being perceived as an assistant of	

CONFIDENTIAL

someone else and not the boss		
Other		

SECTION E
5. IDENTIFYING GENDER BARRIERS

5.1 What gender related challenges are faced by male secretarial administrators? What are possible solutions?

5.2 What gender related challenges are faced by female secretarial administrators? What are possible solutions?

5.3 What is your view on the perception that men view secretarial work as better suited for women?

5.4 What is your view on the perception that women view secretarial work as better suited for women?

5.5 What is your view on the perception that personnel at work view secretarial work as better suited for women?

5.6 What is your view on the perception that the human resources department views secretarial work as better suited for women?

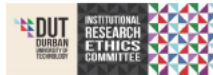
5.7 What is your view on the perception that men avoid the job title of 'secretary' to protect their social identity as men?

5.8

Any additional comments:

Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX I – Interview Schedule for Managers



CONFIDENTIAL

Appendix I

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

MANAGEMENT

SECTION A. PERSONAL DETAILS

1.1	Gender	
	• Male	
	• Female	
	• Other	
1.2	Age	
	• 18 -30 years	
	• 31 – 40 years	
	• 41 – 50 years	
	• 51 or more	
1.3	Race (voluntary)	
	• Asian	
	• Black	
	• Coloured	
	• White	
	• Other	
1.4	Personnel Level of Position in the office	
	• Top Management	
	• Middle Management	
	• Supervisor	
1.5	Kindly indicate whether you are permanent or non-permanent staff member	
	• Permanent	
	• Non-permanent	
1.6	Kindly indicate the university office unit you belong to	
1.7	Work experience in the University	
	• 1 – 5 years	
	• 6 – 10 years	
	• 11 – 15 years	
	• 16 years and above	

CONFIDENTIAL

SECTION B.
2. SECRETARIAL JOB, SKILLS & RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 What do you understand by the term 'secretary'?

2.2 What do you understand by the term 'administrator'?

2.3 Do you believe a 'secretary' and 'administrator' require similar job skills? Please elaborate on your response.

SECTION C.
3. GENDER POWER RELATIONS

3.1 In your general observation, what gender do you believe most secretaries to be in the university and the reason for this?

3.2 In terms of your preference, does it matter which gender is assigned the job title of "administrator"?

3.3 In terms of your preference, does it matter which gender is assigned the job title of "secretary"?

3.4 In terms of your experience, explain whether you have ever obtained/been assigned an administrator/secretary of the same gender as yourself and discuss whether this arrangement was a suitable one from a gender perspective?

3.5 Have you ever obtained/been assigned a secretary of the opposite gender? If yes, discuss whether this arrangement was a suitable one from a gender perspective?

3.6 In your own experience, how often do you come across a boss with a secretary of the same gender as themselves? State their gender relations and discuss from your perspective whether this work arrangement was a suitable one.

3.7 In your own experience, how often do you come across a boss with a secretary of the opposite gender as themselves? State their gender relations and discuss from your perspective whether this work arrangement was a suitable one.



CONFIDENTIAL

3.8 Discuss briefly how you perceive administrators/secretaries whom you have obtained/been assigned to be experiencing development and empowerment in the secretarial administrative roles over time. Discuss both positives and negatives if any.

**SECTION D.
4. PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER REPRESENTATION**

4.1 In your general observation, what gender do you believe most secretaries to be in the university and the reason for this?

4.2 In your opinion, is 'Secretary' an appropriate job title for a woman? Why?

4.3 In your opinion, is 'Secretary' an appropriate job title for a man? Why?

4.4 In your opinion, is 'Administrator' an appropriate job title for a man? Why?

4.5 In your opinion, is 'Administrator' an appropriate job title for a woman? Why?

**SECTION E.
5. GENDER ROLES**

5.1 In reference to your experience, do you find men to be equitably represented compared to women in job interviews for job advertisement of title 'secretary'. Explain whether you believe men find these job opportunities appealing?

5.2 In your opinion, do you think society beliefs about gender encourage men to become secretaries?

5.3 Does the way in which the job title of 'secretary' is portrayed and understood in general encourage men to apply for jobs as secretaries?

5.4 Would you say any of the following prevent men from pursuing secretarial work? Select any number of choices from the following options provided:

Salary of a secretary	
-----------------------	--

CONFIDENTIAL

Companies prefer women secretaries	
Men do not see enough men taking up jobs as secretaries	
A sense of misplacement as the general society believes the job is better suited for women, and not men	
Most people think of male secretaries as being gay	
Being perceived as an assistant of someone else and not the boss	
Other	

SECTION F.
6. IDENTIFYING GENDER BARRIERS

6.1 What is your view on the perception that men view secretarial work as better suited for women?

6.2 What is your view on the perception that women view secretarial work as better suited for women?

6.3 What is your view on the perception that personnel at work view secretarial work as better suited for women?

6.4 What is your view on the perception that the human resources department views secretarial work as better suited for women?

6.5 What is your view on the perception that men avoid the job title of 'secretary' to protect their social identity as men?

6.6

Any additional comments:

CONFIDENTIAL

Thank you for your cooperation.

Male	ASSETS OFFICER	Officer
Male	ASSISTANT BURSARY OFFICER	Officer
Female	ASSISTANT EXAMINATION OFFICER	Officer
Male	ASSISTANT EXAMINATION OFFICER	Officer
Male	ASSISTANT EXAMINATION OFFICER	Officer
Female	ASSISTANT LOANS OFFICER	Officer
Male	ASSISTANT LOGISTICS OFFICER	Officer
Female	ASSISTANT TIMETABLE OFFICER	Officer
Female	ASSISTANT TRAVEL COORDINATOR	Co-ordinator
Female	BUDGET OFFICER	Officer
Female	BURSARY OFFICER	Officer
Male	CHIEF EXAMINATION OFFICER	Officer
Female	CHIEF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	Officer
Female	COMMITMENTS OFFICER	Officer
Male	COMMITTEE COORDINATOR	Co-ordinator
Female	COMMITTEE COORDINATOR	Co-ordinator
Male	COMMITTEE COORDINATOR	Co-ordinator
Male	COMMITTEE COORDINATOR	Co-ordinator
Female	COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER	Officer
Male	CONTRACT PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR -CLINICAL	Administrator
Female	CONTRACTS ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Male	CONVOCATION OFFICER	Officer
Female	CO-ORDINATOR RESIDENCES	Co-ordinator
Male	CO-ORDINATOR SCIENCE CENTRE	Co-ordinator
Male	COORDINATOR: DISABLED STUDENT UNIT	Co-ordinator
Male	COORDINATOR: LEGAL AID CLINIC	Co-ordinator
Female	CO-ORDINATOR: PSYCHOLOGY	Co-ordinator
Female	CREDITORS CLERK	Clerk
Female	CREDITORS CLERK	Clerk
Female	CREDITORS CLERK	Clerk
Female	DATA CAPTURER	Data Capturer
Female	DEBT COLLECTION OFFICER	Officer
Female	EVENTS COORDINATOR	Co-ordinator
Male	EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Male	EXAMINATION OFFICER	Officer
Female	EXECUTIVE SECRETARY	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	FACULTY OFFICER	Officer
Male	FACULTY OFFICER	Officer
Male	FACULTY OFFICER	Officer
Female	FILING CLERK	Clerk
Female	FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Female	FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATION OFFICER	Administrative Officer
Male	HEALTH PROMOTION OFFICER	Officer
Female	HELP DESK ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Male	HR ADMINISTRATOR: PAYROLL & BENEFITS	Administrator
Female	HR ADMINISTRATOR: PAYROLL AND RECORDS	Administrator
Male	HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Female	HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Female	HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Male	INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OFFICER	Officer

Male	LOANS OFFICER	Officer
Male	NRF ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Male	OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Female	OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Female	OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Female	OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR:ENROLMENT	Administrator
Female	OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR:STUDENT ADMIN	Administrator
Female	OFFICE COORDINATOR	Co-ordinator
Male	ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Female	PAYROLL OFFICER	Officer
Male	PAYROLL OFFICER	Officer
Female	PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO THE VC	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	PROCUREMENT OFFICER	Officer
Female	PROCUREMENT OFFICER	Officer
Male	PROCUREMENT OFFICER	Officer
Female	PROCUREMENT OFFICER	Officer
Female	PROCUREMENT OFFICER	Officer
Female	PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT COORDINATOR	Co-ordinator
Female	PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Female	PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR - UCDP GRANT	Administrator
Female	PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR-EFFICIENCY GRANT	Administrator
Male	PROJECT ADMISTRATOR	Administrator
Female	PROJECT COORDINATOR	Co-ordinator
Male	PROJECT OFFICER	Officer
Male	PROPERTY CO-ORDINATOR	Co-ordinator
Female	PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER	Officer
Female	PUBLICATIONS OFFICER	Officer
Female	RECORDS CLERK	Clerk
Female	RECORDS OFFICER	Officer
Female	RECOVERIES OFFICER	Officer
Female	SECRETARY	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY TO DEAN	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY TO DEAN	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY TO DVC: RESEARCH & INNOVATION	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY TO EXEC DIRECTOR:HR	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY TO THE DEAN	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY TO THE DIRECTOR	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY TO THE DVC - T&L	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SECRETARY TO THE EXEC DIRECTOR:FINANCE	Secretary/ Personal Assistants
Female	SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	Administrator
Male	SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR: PG AND ETHICS	Administrator

Female	SENIOR ADMISSIONS OFFICER (ENROLMENT)	Officer
Male	SENIOR ASSET OFFICER	Officer
Female	SENIOR EXAMINATION OFFICER	Officer
Female	SENIOR FINANCIAL AID OFFICER	Officer
Female	SOCIETIES ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Male	STORES ISSUE CLERK	Clerk
Male	STUDENT ACADEMIC SUPPORT PRG COORD	Co-ordinator
Female	STUDENT ACCOUNTS OFFICER	Officer
Male	STUDENT ACCOUNTS OFFICER	Officer
Female	STUDENT ACCOUNTS OFFICER	Officer
Male	STUDENTS ACCOUNTS SYSTEM ADMINISTRATOR	Administrator
Female	STUDENTS RECORD OFFICER	Officer
Female	SUNDRY PAYMENTS OFFICER	Officer
Male	SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR	Switchboard Operator

APPENDIX K – Certificate of Editing



St Charles College,
Harwin Road,
Scottsville
Pietermaritzburg 3201
Tel: 083 593 2855
admin@kznlanguageinstitute.com
www.kznlanguageinstitute.com

Registration number: 131 804 NPO

Certificate of editing

29 October 2025

Name: Banikele Olivia MASHIYANE

Title: An investigation of men's representation and perceptions in administrative secretarial support roles

This serves to confirm that the above document was edited substantively by members of the KZN Language Institute's professional English language editing team. The document was returned to the author with tracked changes and comments intended to correct errors and to clarify meaning. It was the author's responsibility to attend to these changes.

J. Kerchhoff

Director of the KwaZulu-Natal Language Institute

KZN Language Institute - Transforming Words