

Women in mining: engaging men in the dialogue

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Abstract

For decades women have battled for a place in the mining industry. In South Africa, the newly elected democratic government (1994) initiated a number of actions to redress injustices of the past. Among others, new mining legislation was introduced and enforced, which demands of employers to meet specific targets towards recruiting a workforce that reflects the country's demographic make-up. Various studies have aimed to reveal the barriers and challenges experienced by women regarding their integration into the traditional 'harsh male-dominated' labour force. However, very few studies endeavoured to investigate the challenges experienced by male co-workers in this regard; hence, this research aimed to determine such challenges experienced by male co-workers.

A qualitative research design was followed. Data were collected by means of individual and group interviews. From the research it is evident that the integration of women into the core business of mining poses unique challenges to male co-workers. Therefore, top management should embrace and support a clearly articulated vision for gender diversity.

It is of utmost importance to involve male employees in the conversation about women in mining to contribute to the sustainable deployment of women in the core business of the mining industry.

Key phrases

core mining activities; key challenges; male co-workers; mining industry; women in mining

1. INTRODUCTION

For decades women have battled for a place in the mining industry. Today, women form an essential part of the global mining labour force, although still low in numbers, mainly due to equal opportunity legislation. They are employed as, among others, managers, supervisors,

geologists, electricians, fitter and turners, laboratory attendants, operators of heavy machinery and general workers.

In South Africa, the newly elected democratic government, in 1994, initiated a number of actions to redress injustices of the past. New legislation was introduced and led the way to transformation of the total labour workforce of South Africa. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa laid the foundation for a democratic society. Great emphasis was placed on equality, equal protection and benefit from the law, and government hereby aimed to promote gender justice in society and the workplace.

A comprehensive reformation of the South African labour policy took place, aiming to give effect to the various labour rights enshrined in the Constitution. Among others, the Employment Equity Act (No. 55 of 1998) (RSA 1998) was introduced and requires employers to put diversity strategies in place. Furthermore, new mining legislation, such as the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (No. 28 of 2002) (RSA 2002) and the Broad-based Socio-economic Empowerment Charter for the South African Mining Industry (RSA 2004), was enforced, which demands of employers to meet specific targets towards recruiting a workforce that reflects the country's demographic make-up.

Prior to the introduction of the new mining legislation, female representation in the mining industry was insignificant. The Broad-based Socio-economic Empowerment Charter (hereafter referred to as the Mining Charter), set a target of 10% for representation of women in the core business of the mining industry, which was due by 2009 (RSA 2004:11). The amended Mining Charter launched in 2010 set further requirements to be met by 2015. More specifically, the amended Charter requires a minimum of 40% Historically Disadvantaged South Africans representation (which include women) at executive management (board) level / senior management (exco) level, middle-management level, junior management level and core and critical skills (RSA 2010:3).

The Department of Mineral Resources (DMR) conducted a detailed assessment in 2009 and in 2014 of the progress made regarding transformation in the industry. From the data it was evident that the South African mining industry battled to actively change the demographic profile of its workforce, and achieved only a 6% representivity in 2009 (DMR 2009:Internet). Most of the women were occupied in supportive functions and less than 1% held core management positions (DMR 2009:Internet). By 2014, the overall representation of women

in the mining industry (including in supporting and core positions) had increased to 10.5% (DMR 2015:Internet). The reported data revealed that there is still a long way to go before women are fully represented in the mining industry.

Various studies have aimed to reveal the barriers and challenges experienced by women regarding their integration into the traditional 'harsh male-dominated' labour force. Some of the barriers and challenges identified are as follows: discrimination, sexual abuse and harassment, inappropriate personal protective equipment, shift work, inadequate infrastructure facilities (ablution facilities and change houses), isolation, physical capability and pregnancy issues (Australian Human Rights Commission 2013:Internet; Badenhorst 2009:Internet; Benya 2009; Botha 2013; MTS 2011; Scheepers 2013; The Guild 2014; WiMSA 2014:Internet; WiMSA 2015; Women in Mining Canada 2010:Internet).

Some of the studies conducted also revealed challenges experienced by management of mining companies with regard to the integration of women into the core business of the industry (Badenhorst 2009:Internet; Botha 2013; Fourie 2009). Many of these studies also came up with recommendations to successfully address these challenges. However, very few studies endeavoured to investigate the challenges experienced by male co-workers in this regard. The successful and sustainable integration of women into the traditional masculine mining labour force requires multi-stakeholder involvement, which includes the cooperation and contributions of male co-workers.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In light of the above background the problem statement can be outlined as follows:

First, organisations in South Africa are becoming increasingly diversified and consist of all subgroups of society. The mining industry is no exception. Therefore, diversity and the management of diversity have become important factors in all organisations.

Second, mining companies are obliged to reach the set targets of the Mining Charter. Failing to adhere to the requirements of the Mining Charter could result in mining companies losing their licences to operate.

Third, the integration of women into the core business of mining poses unique challenges not only to management and female mine workers but also to male co-workers. It is

imperative to consider these challenges and also effectively address them in order to ensure the successful and sustainable deployment of women in the mining industry.

3. PURPOSE

Based on the problem statement described above, the purpose of the article is, first, to provide global and national trends and perspectives on women in mining, second, to operationalise and conceptualise diversity and diversity management according to the literature; third, to reveal the challenges experience by male co-workers with regard to the integration of women into core mining activities; and fourth, to provide some recommendations to address the challenges experience by male co-workers.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses global and national trends and perspectives on women in mining and also operationalise and conceptualise the concepts diversity and diversity management.

4.1 Global and national trends and perspectives on women in mining

Globally, mining is viewed as a predominantly male-dominated industry, regardless of geographical location. Although there have been positive steps, worldwide, to promote women's participation in the industry, females continue to be under-represented and mining remains largely a man's domain (Kitchen & Higginson 2014:Internet). According to Eftimie, Heller & Strongman (2009:9) it is worldwide extremely rare to find any extractive industry company with higher than 10% female employment, with many being less than 5%. A study conducted by Women in Mining (United Kingdom) in collaboration with Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) revealed that globally, the level of female participation in the industry at all levels is astonishingly low (Moolman 2013:Internet).

In South Africa, women's participation in the industry has slowly risen since the introduction of the Mining Charter and related government equity legislation. According to Women in Mining South Africa (WiMSA) chairperson, Noleen Pauls, women representation in the South African mining sector grew from 7% in 1995 to 14% at the start of 2015. However, she noted that, by the end of 2015, the number of women in South Africa had decreased significantly to 10%. The decline is attributed to the high number of retrenchments and

optimisation initiatives undertaken by mining houses due to the challenging economic environment experienced in the country (Solomons 2016:Internet).

Although few in numbers, women have now globally become an essential part of the mining workforce. Lahiri-Dutt (cited in Bhanumathi, Kalpa, Ravi Shankar, Vanka & Gunavathi 2005:58) mentioned that, “[t]his is irrespective of time and space, level of development of the country or contemporary social structures of ideologies about the roles of a women”. Presently, women miners perform various roles in mining, they successfully fulfil supervisory and management positions, and are employed as geologists, engineers, metallurgists and miners, among others (Solomons 2016:Internet).

Although women’s participation in the mining industry has increased, it became evident through the literature review, that they still subjected to several barriers in the industry. The following factors, among others, pose unique challenges to women employed in the core business of mines and also contribute to the low numbers of women in the industry:

- A male dominated work culture (Botha 2013:419; Keck & Powel 2006:282; Women in Mining Canada 2010:9; Women in Mining UK 2015:6)
- Misperceptions of women’s abilities (Botha 2013:420; Keck & Powel 2006:282, Women in Mining Canada 2010:9)
- The use of sexual harassment by men to maintain masculine dominance in the workplace (Botha 2013:402; Keck & Powel 2006:282)
- Males undermining their female colleagues by refusing to help train them (Keck & Powel 2006:282)
- Resistance experienced from miners’ wives, who viewed female miners as sexual and economic threats (Mercier, cited in Lahiri-Dutt 2011:42)
- Suspicious and jealous husbands of working women (Botha 2013:338; Macintyre, cited in Lahiri-Dutt 2011:26)
- Superstitious beliefs (Yao 2006:238)
- Lack of mentors and role models in senior positions (Botha 2013:283; Women in Mining Canada 2010:9; Women in Mining UK 2015:6).
- Insufficient professional and career development (Botha 2013:284; Women in Mining Canada 2010:9)
- Difficulties in balancing work and home lives; a lack of flexible work arrangements (Botha 2013:413; Women in Mining Canada 2010:9; Women in Mining UK 2015:6).

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- Challenges regarding shift work (Botha 2013:414; Hermanus 2007:5, Keck & Powel 2006:282)
 - Lack of senior management commitment to diversity (Women in Mining UK 2015)

To ensure the successful and sustainable integration of women in the mining industry, it is of utmost importance that management is attentive to the abovementioned factors and strategies should be developed and implemented to address these challenges.

4.2 Diversity and diversity management

Transformation of the mining labour force of South Africa is endorsed in various pieces of legislation, as also indicated in the Introduction. Organisations are becoming a more heterogeneous mix of people in terms of gender, age, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation (Robbins, Judge, Odendaal & Roodt. 2009:12). One of the most important challenges currently facing organisations is adapting to people who are different (Robbins et al. 2009:12).

Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright (2012:320) maintain that diversity can be considered as any dimension that differentiates a person from another. Nel, Kirsten, Swanepoel, Erasmus, & Poisat (2012:384) refer to diversity as the full spectrum of differences represented in the general population, which encompasses more than merely race and ethnicity. It includes, among others, age, ability, gender, religious affiliation, personality, social status and sexual orientation.

According to AusIMM WIMnet (2007:Internet), “[d]iversity management accepts the need to value the contribution people from diverse backgrounds can make to productivity and international competitiveness”. The way organisations manage the changing demographics of their workers could have an effect on employees’ morale and the productivity and success of the organisation (Nel et al. 2012:387). It has also been linked to an improved public image and more creative problem solving (AusIMM WIMnet 2007:Internet). Diversity management embraces the principles of meritocracy and is not oriented specifically towards redress of endemic discrimination, but instead focuses on the benefits to the organisation from having a diverse workforce (AusIMM WIMnet 2007:Internet).

Therefore, an environment should be created in which all employees, regardless of differences, could contribute to organisational goals and could be developed. Organisations

should build an environment in which employees are comfortable working with people from different ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds (Noe et al. 2012:321).

There are various approaches to dealing with diversity in the workplace. To enhance diversity as a strategic and transformational goal, emphasis should be placed on equal opportunity, fair treatment, recruitment and compliance legislation. Furthermore, attention should be given to diversity awareness training, knowledge training and transference of diversity skills. This could for example include communications skills, building teams of diverse backgrounds and treating young and older employees as separate groups in terms of diversity training issues (Nel et al. 2012:385).

In order to successfully manage a diverse workforce, Noe et al. (2012:39) point out that it is important for managers to develop a new set of skills. These skills include the following:

- communicating effectively with employees from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds;
- coaching and developing employees of different ages, educational backgrounds, ethnicity, physical ability and race;
- providing performance feedback that is based on objective outcomes rather than values and stereotypes that work against women, minorities and handicapped persons by prejudging these persons' abilities and talents;
- creating a work environment that makes it comfortable for employees of all backgrounds to be creative and innovative;
- recognising and responding to generational issues.

If diversity is positively managed, it can lead to increased creativity, innovation in organisations and improved decision making in which different perspectives are provided. On the other hand, if not properly managed, it could lead to a high turnover of employees, more difficult communication and more interpersonal conflicts (Robbins et al. 2009:13).

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study stemmed from the phenomenology; a qualitative research design was followed.

5.1 Research participants

The research setting was limited to the following three mines: a copper mine (underground), platinum mine (underground) and a phosphate mine (open-cast). The mines were selected on an availability basis (convenient sampling).

Purposive or judgemental sampling was used to select participants. In total, seven individual interviews and twelve group interviews were conducted. The researcher aimed to gain information from various operations; therefore, the participants selected varied from various categories of employment and mining disciplines.

5.2 Measuring instruments

Qualitative data were collected by means of individual and group interviews. Both the individual interviews and the group interviews were semi-structured; an interview guide was utilised. Data collected were audio and video recorded and written notes were taken.

5.3 Research process

The researcher formally requested permission from mine management to conduct research at the three mining companies. After permission was granted, a formal appointment was scheduled with mine management to explain the nature and extent of the research.

In each research setting (mines), a contact person (human resource officer targeted with women in mining) was allocated to the researcher to provide the necessary assistance and support during the research, which included the following: selecting appropriate participants for the individual and group interviews, scheduling interviews and organising the underground field trip as well as visits to surface mining operations. Most of the individual and group interviews were scheduled between shifts in order not to interfere with the work responsibilities of the participants.

Ethical considerations, such as voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, were taken into account while conducting the research, as recommended by Babbie and Mouton (2011:520).

5.4 Analysis

Qualitative data were analysed by means of conceptual (thematic) analysis. In conceptual analysis a concept is chosen for examination and the number of its occurrences within the text is recorded. Coding choices were made according to the following eight category coding steps indicated by Palmquist (cited in Babbie & Mouton 2011:492): deciding on the level of analysis; deciding on how many concepts to code for; deciding whether to code for the existence or frequency of a concept; deciding how to distinguish between concepts; developing rules for the coding of texts; deciding what to do with the data that are irrelevant; coding the data; and analysing the results.

6. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: KEY CHALLENGES OF MALE CO-WORKERS

6.1 Mining is not a place for women

Many men hold and support the view that 'mining is not a place for women' and that 'women belong at home' where they can take care of the household and children. They regard the mining workplace as too hazardous and unsafe for women. Many male participants still believe that women should rather be employed in 'soft' office positions if they want to work and earn money.

Some participants also questioned the intention of the Department of Mineral Resources to employ women in core mining positions. According to them, people working at the Department of Mineral Resources are not necessarily familiar with the hazardous working environment of mines. It was also indicated that they feel that women are only working at the mines for the sake of money, and not to pursue a career in mining.

Some men were very outspoken, as noted in the following comments of a few male participants:

In my opinion I don't need any woman in the mine. They are better working in the office, HR department, all those work. Not underground, because even the slightest thing can injure a woman because underground is not like surface. Everything is a hazard there. I know that's our moms and sisters, but I don't think they deserve to work underground.

For the government, I think they just see things on the TV, but most of them they have never gone underground. They must go and see for themselves how are things there. Last year we had an accident of a woman dying underground. The lady was the loco-operator, as we were told, her body was cut into pieces, the head was there, the body was there.

6.2 Equality in the workplace

The male participants reported that they do not feel equally treated in terms of skills and career-development opportunities, bonuses and promotions. Some male participants were of the opinion that women have more opportunities than men due to the fact that mining companies are forced to employ 10% women in the core business of mining.

According to the participants, women are fast-tracked in mining companies and therefore it is easier for them to qualify for bonuses and promotions. The male participants also voiced the opinion that sexual favouritism often plays a role in the promotion of women. These are some of the major causes of frustration in the workplace. The following comments were made by some participants in this regard:

For example, we are five people in our working place, so we make six with her, but maybe after six months she can find a promotion. We are here three generals who are awaiting promotion, but when she comes she will get the promotion. So we don't know what is happening. The men get angry, because we work hard too.

They say come to my house. They talk about this situation. This lady says I want promotion. That man maybe says, for example, you do it for me for one, two, three and I will give you promotion. Give me your cell number, I'll call you. And then she gets the promotion. She is working a soft job, gets a promotion. Me, I work hard and I don't get a promotion.

6.3 Physical strength

According to the male participants, women are often appointed in core mining positions because of the 10% requirement of the Mining Charter, and not because they meet the requirements of the job. It was clearly indicated by the male participants that women often

lack physical strength and stamina when performing certain work activities. It was also noted that women are able to perform light duties, but experience difficulties when operating specific machinery (load haul dump machines and rubber dozers) and using heavy and/or vibrating power tools.

In situations where female employees lack physical strength male co-workers often have to support and assist them. Some male participants indicated a willingness to assist women who are willing to work, but they are negative towards women showing unwillingness to do the work that they were appointed for. Others get agitated when they have to assist women or do/complete their work for them. They assume that when female employees have completed the necessary induction courses and attended the necessary training, they have the ability to perform the work activities for which they were appointed.

It was also indicated by the male participants of the platinum mine that they are often confronted by husbands and boyfriends when their wives and girlfriends are given jobs that require physical strength. The following comments illustrate some of these points:

When [it comes] to physical ability, I don't think they have that power to work as a man, because most of the [work is] underground. You need physical strength, so if you don't have that strength you won't make it to do that job correctly, because some of them you can see that she is trying, but she doesn't have the power to do that.

Some women are trying their best, but it is just that they don't have that physical ability. Those women we try to assist, because we can realise that these people are trying their best. But there are some that are always complaining.

6.4 Achieving production targets

The mining industry is production-driven, therefore the reaching of production targets is of utmost importance. Some male participants reported that the inclusion of women in mining teams has a severe impact on productivity, mainly due to women's lack of physical strength and stamina, which causes delays. Most of the participants indicated that they prefer to work in a team comprised of men only.

Furthermore, it was reported that pregnancy also has an impact on the productivity of the team. When pregnant, women are not allowed to perform certain work activities and are employed elsewhere in the company. The company does not always appoint another team member in the place of the pregnant woman. The team therefore has to rely on fewer workers to complete the same tasks.

6.5 Distinctive treatment of women in the workplace

Divergent opinions were obtained regarding the treatment of women in the workplace. Some participants indicated that all employees, regardless of gender, should be treated equally in the workplace.

Furthermore, they believe that if women were found competent, pass the medical tests, meet the requirements of job specifications, are appointed in certain core mining positions and receive equal pay, there is no reason why they should be treated differently in the workplace. Others voiced the opinion that women should be treated differently depending on circumstances.

These participants suggested that the following aspects should be taken into consideration: physical strength and stamina; appropriate and suitable language usage; family responsibilities of female employees; and physiological aspects related to the female body, such as menstruation, pregnancy and birth. The following quotations are examples of the participants' opinions in favour of equal treatment of all employees, regardless of gender, in the workplace:

Women have the same ability than men, so there is no need to be treated differently.

If they are capable to perform their entitled job, they must be treated the same as men, because we are at the workplace to make production. No special treatment, as we earn the same salary for the same post.

The following quotations provide motivations for why women should be treated differently in the workplace:

Women must be treated differently, especially in the case of hard labour, and their strength should be taken into consideration as compared to men.

There are jobs that they cannot perform strength-wise and they are mentally unfit to work underground.

6.6 Women's attitude

It was indicated by the participants of the platinum mine that the male co-workers often experience problems with women's attitude. Although men have begun to accept women to a certain extent, several male participants complained about women's attitude in the workplace. The following concerns were raised:

Although men and women are appointed in similar jobs and receive equal salaries, it is reported that some women expect men to do the hard work in the workplace, as they are used to doing at home. According to the male participants, men and women are employed on an equal basis ('fifty-fifty'), they receive equal pay, and therefore the principle of 'equal pay for equal work' must be applied.

Male employees, more specifically older men, often feel offended by the way they are treated by their female co-workers. Traditionally, black men are used to being treated with respect. Elderly men indicated that they still want to be treated with respect at the workplace.

According to some male participants, some women do not take their work at the mine seriously; they are lazy, do not want to work and are often late for meetings. Although they acknowledge that some women are willing and capable to do the work for which they are appointed, others want to be 'treated like ladies' in the workplace.

Some male participants indicated that women are provocative in the way they dress and act. Men often feel offended and if they react, they run the risk of losing their jobs and of being accused of sexual harassment. This places enormous pressure on male employees.

The following quotations express the opinions of some male participants regarding problems they encounter with women's attitude at work:

Women still have the mentality that men have to do the hard work as at home, for example, women expect of men to carry the tools in the workplace.

The way I grew up, in my culture, we as blacks, a woman is always respecting a man. Now we are working with them, we are the same. They must think of us

that we are men and they must treat us like the way they treat their men at home, the respect they give their husbands, they must treat us in that way.

My opinion is that all the women who are working on the mine have to receive training to change their attitudes, their minds, their behaviours, to tell them how to work with a man.

6.7 Sexual favouritism

It was clearly indicated in the interviews that sexual favouritism occurs at the mines. The male participants of the platinum mine were outspoken and indicated that some female co-workers 'fall in love' with their supervisors to easily get promotions. It was also suggested that the problem is exacerbated by shift work and working overtime at night. This contributes towards the negative attitude of male employees towards women employed in core mining positions.

The following quotation provides an indication of the participants' opinions regarding the occurrence of sexual favouritism at the mines included in the study:

For them it is easy to get promotion, because they fall in love with the official and they get promotion. I've been working 10 years, but no promotion.

6.8 Misuse of sexual harassment

According to the male participants, women often misuse sexual harassment to manipulate men in the workplace, as noted in the following comment:

Some women have this attitude. I'm working, nobody can touch me, nobody can do me nothing. You touch her, you harass her. If she doesn't like you, you harass her. Slight mistake, you're gone in mining. And the company is going to follow the procedure of the mine. Even the woman can touch me, I can't say the woman has harassed me. Let me touch her, I've harassed her.

6.9 Positive experiences

Although a large number of the male participants believe that women do not belong in the core business of mining, some are not unwilling to admit to and recognise the positive contributions that women make to the industry. Furthermore, most men are not unwilling to

work with women at the mine; they admit that women can make a meaningful difference in the industry. Attitudes towards women working in core mining positions have started to change; male employees even express respect for women that are willing and able to perform mine work. The following comments were made in this regard:

With time, women proved men's perception that women do not belong at the mine wrong.

We have one woman working at our shift. She does her job well. She gives everything for her work. If she struggles, she seeks assistance.

Mining is a good career choice for a woman. They are also people and they seek the opportunities. They also want to learn, they also want the opportunities that men have. We must give women the chance.

7. DISCUSSION

From the research it became evident that not only management and female employees have to overcome barriers and challenges with regard to the integration of women into the traditional 'harsh male-dominated' work environment, but also male co-workers.

The research indicated that although perceptions have started to change and more men accept women in the mining workplace, there are still some that are of the opinion that women do not belong at the mine and that mining is not an occupation for women.

This view is also supported by recent studies conducted by Benya (2009), Fourie (2009), Women in Mining Canada (2010:Internet), MTS (2011) and Botha (2013), which indicated that some men still hold patriarchal cultures, values and attitudes, viewing mine work as unsuitable for women.

Eagly (cited in Archer & Lloyd 2002:24) postulates that "gender roles and stereotypes held in a society at any one point in time are rooted, not primarily in the society's cultural tradition, but more importantly in the society's contemporary division of labour between the sexes". This means that women and men are viewed as suited for specific social roles that they typically apply. This is known as the social role theory and suggests that if roles change, the stereotypes will also change. Therefore, it can be deducted that, as time goes by and women prove that they take their work at the mine seriously, they will prove these negative

attitudes and perceptions towards women in mining wrong and will fulfil their rightful place in the mining industry.

The research findings showed that male co-workers experience extreme difficulties when women are appointed in positions that require physical strength and stamina and if they are incapable of performing the mine work for which they were appointed. Furthermore, pregnancy also poses a challenge to male co-workers in achieving production targets. Various studies conducted revealed that women are often appointed in positions without the physical capability to cope with the requirements of the positions (Botha 2013; Botha & Cronje 2015; Fourie 2009; MTS 2011).

Schutte (2011:Internet) states that work in the mining sector is considered one of the most physically demanding occupations. Therefore, women's size and body build should be taken into consideration when appointing women in core positions (Zungu 2011:Internet).

Badenhorst (2009:Internet) postulates that a female employee can do any job that she is qualified to do, provided that she meets the requirements inherent for a specific job. However, Badenhorst (2009:Internet) emphasises that an employee should not be employed in a job or conduct tasks for which he/she is not medically fit or if he/she does not have the required physical and functional capabilities. The health and safety of the employee and co-workers should not be compromised.

The research also revealed inequality issues. Due to the requirements of the mining charter, women are fast-tracked in the mining industry, leading to frustration among some male co-workers. The participants felt that promotions, bonuses and career-development opportunities are more inclined towards female employees. Furthermore, the research revealed issues of sexual favouritism, which exacerbates the problem. According to Pons and Deale (2010:ch. 20:16), sexual favouritism exists "where a person who is in a position of authority rewards only those who respond to his/her sexual advances, whilst other deserving employees who do not submit themselves to any sexual advances are denied promotions, merit rating or salary increases".

The research also reported concerns regarding the misuse of sexual harassment complaints by female co-workers to implicate their male co-workers. Pons and Deale (2010:ch. 20:16) refer to sexual harassment as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which includes, among others, unwanted physical contact and verbal and non-verbal forms of sexual harassment.

Women and men can be victims of sexual harassment; however, research suggests that women are more likely to experience sexual harassment than men (Wharton 2005:188).

The integration of women into the core business of mining requires the introduction of policies and procedures dealing with particular aspects such as employment equity, pregnancy/maternity and sexual harassment. Policies and procedures are regarded as the elements that provide direction and regulate the activities of an organisation and its members.

Policies refer to the plans of action that set the course for achieving objectives, while *procedures* are the manner (game plan) in which the organisation will go about to achieve its objectives (Venter, Levy, Conradie & Holtzhausen 2009:20). Transparency is of utmost importance; therefore, management should implement and operationalise the policies and also communicate the details of the policies to all employees (Grobler, Wörnich, Carrell, Elbert & Hatfield 2006:14). Regular training and workshops should be offered to all employees on the content of the various policies.

Furthermore, the research revealed serious concerns regarding women's attitude towards male co-workers, including an unwillingness to perform the mine work for which they were appointed and the treatment of elder male co-workers with disrespect.

Cultural barriers pose a challenge to the integration of women into the mining workplace, which was confirmed by studies conducted by Benya (2009), Botha (2013) and MTS (2011). To be accepted in work teams, some cultures expect of women to treat elderly men with respect and also to fulfil basic household roles, such as providing men with water and food. As already indicated, sexuality is often used by some women in exchange for favours, but if failed, some women use ethnicity to approach their 'ethnic brothers' to do their jobs for them (MTS 2011:18).

The diversification of South African workplaces is a requirement of government, and the mining industry is no exception. As indicated in the literature, organisations are becoming a more heterogeneous mix of people in terms of gender, age, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation (Robbins *et al.* 2009:12). Managing this diversity includes recognising and valuing employees' differences such as cultural values, lifestyle preferences, family needs and work styles.

Managers have to shift their management practice from treating everyone alike to recognising differences and responding to those differences in a way that ensures employee retention, greater productivity and no discrimination (Robbins *et al.* 2009:13). Sensitivity training provided to managers may assist in helping to understand the needs and perspectives of different employees of organisations (Brewster, Carey, Grobler, Holland & Wörnich 2009:308).

Furthermore, as indicated in the literature, regular diversity training is the centrepiece of most diversity programmes. Its aim is to increase awareness and examine stereotypes as participants learn to value differences, promote cross-cultural understanding and also confront stereotypes (Robbins *et al.* 2009:466). According to Venter *et al.* (2009:18), every organisation is affected by the environment in which it operates. However, the mark of a good organisation is its ability to anticipate change and respond accordingly.

8. LIMITATIONS

A limitation of the study lies in the accessibility of the mining sector as a research setting. It was not an easy task to gain access to the mining companies. Several visits and correspondence took place before permission was granted for the research. In addition, the platinum mine experienced many difficulties and labour unrest during the time the research was conducted. Because of that, several interviews with management were postponed and eventually cancelled.

Furthermore, not all participants targeted for the semi-structured interviews and group interviews turned up for the meetings. Some of the participants could not stay for the duration of the interviews due to work responsibilities and emergencies. Others were drained and tired after shift work and wanted to depart for home as soon as possible to get some rest and fulfil their family responsibilities before the start of their next shift.

The researcher made use of existing skills, knowledge and networks to overcome some of these problems. Furthermore, triangulation (the use of multiple methods) was used to enhance the validity and reliability of research. This research was triangulated by means of the following: a literature review and empirical study were conducted; qualitative data were collected by means of individual and group interviews, the different research settings (mines) were visited, different mining operations (smelter, refinery, underground environment,

among others) were visited and experienced and several Women in Mining conferences were attended.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of the research the following recommendations are made:

- Top management should embrace and support a clearly articulated vision for gender diversity and the support of women in non-traditional roles. The business case and strategy for gender diversity should be communicated to all employees within the mining companies.
- Sensitivity training should be provided to managers of mining companies to help them understand the needs and perspectives of different employees.
- Regular diversity training and workshops should be conducted to build awareness of stereotypes, confront stereotypes and also create mutual understanding between both genders for each other's problems in the workplace.
- Companies should engage in regular research interventions to identify barriers and challenges among the three main parties, namely management, male and female employees, and also to measure progress in this regard.
- The research should be extended to other mining companies to further explore the challenges that male co-workers experience regarding the deployment of women in the core business of the mining industry. The buy-in of the relevant state departments (the Department of Mineral Resources, Chamber of Mines and the Mine Health and Safety Council) to the research is of utmost importance to promote access to the mines.

10. CONCLUSION

From the research it is evident that the integration of women into the core business of mining is accompanied by various challenges, not only for management and female employees, but also for male co-workers.

To inspire a diversified workforce in the mining industry, a cultural shift is needed and requires change and education at various levels, including the relevant state departments, mining executives and professionals as well as the mining workforce (including

management, male and female employees). Therefore, it is of paramount importance that management of mining companies is attentive to the various issues and challenges surrounding the deployment of women in the core business of mining, but nevertheless, they should also consider the challenges of male co-workers and involve them in the conversation about women in mining. Management should aim to create and foster a work environment in which all people's differences can be respected. This will contribute to the sustainable deployment of women in the core business of the mining industry.

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