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**THE QUALITY OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF  
THE VERTICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT  
IN ZIMBABWEAN PARASTATALS**

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## Abstract

Although more and more women are gradually entering Zimbabwe's formal labour market, the majority of them remain in the lower echelons of most organisations, including Government parastatals, involved, typically, in secretarial, administrative and clerical work or concerned with customer care or human resource management. They seldom take up technical posts or advance to senior management or board level positions. The objective of this research is to interrogate this problem with a view to unearthing its causes, its impact on women and possible ways of resolving it. This qualitative research (using amongst others, the Human Rights, Women's Law and Grounded Theory Approaches) reveals that women working in at least 5 major parastatals face various challenges which hinder their recruitment and promotion and these include attending to culturally imposed family responsibilities, direct and indirect discrimination as a result of gender stereotyping in the workplace and the failure of the government to domesticate legal instruments to enable them to enforce certain critical internationally recognised labour rights (e.g., access to child care facilities at the work place and leave to attend to sick family members). The Government of Zimbabwe, which is the employer of these women, is duty bound in terms of various Human Rights Instruments to improve their working environment in order to reduce the burdens of women at their workplaces and homes. The Government is therefore recommended to improve gender policies and programmes in order to encourage more women to ascend the parastatal ladder in all spheres including in technical and traditionally male-dominated areas; ratify certain labour instruments and implement international labour standards and also to provide friendly working arrangements for their female employees. This would allow women employees to fulfil both their economic ambitions and their family duties.

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**Declaration**

I Rudo Caroline Makunike certify that this dissertation is my original work; it is an honest and true effort of my personal research. I certify that the work has not been presented anywhere else before for any other thesis.

Signed.....  
Date.....

This dissertation was submitted for examination with my approval as the University Supervisor

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Date.....Signed.....

## **Dedication**

*This work is dedicated to my sons, Brendon, Bradley, Brett and Barry for their understanding and patience when I was unavailable to perform my motherly role. You are so special!*

*And*

*To my mom, dad and sister-in-law, (Ivon) for the love, support and encouragement throughout the entire 2011. You were there when I needed you most.*

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## **Acronyms**

CAAZ	Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MMCZ	Minerals Marketing Corporation of Zimbabwe
POTRAZ	Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZMDC	Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation



## **International and Regional Conventions cited**

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
Women's Protocol	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
C156	Convention on Workers with Family Responsibility
C111	Convention on Maternity Protection (Revised)
C183	Convention on Maternity Protection
C103	Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation

## **List of Statutes cited**

The Constitution of Zimbabwe  
Labour Act [*Chapter 28:01*]

## **Case Law**

*Peko v National University of Lesotho, 1 August 1995, LC33/95*

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## Executive Summary

Women are becoming more and more in the labour market and especially in paid work, but however, they are usually found at the bottom of the ladder in employment. Experience has shown that the women are also doing stereotypical work to do with care giving, such as, secretarial work, receptionists, customer care, clerical and human resources management. The quality of women's employment has been contributed to by the women's endowment levels, constraints, and preferences amongst other things. This research will show how women are represented in parastatals from the bottom of the ladder to the top of the ladder.

The realisation that the working class women in the formal sector were being neglected in the fight for women's emancipation, made me curious about interrogating the problem with a view to understanding exactly what sort of problems these women are facing. These women are not fairly represented in senior management positions in employment in parastatals and therefore it is the objective of this research was to (i)interrogate why women are segregated in the labour market and therefore end up occupying low ranking positions in employment, (ii) assess the impact of having few women occupying high ranking jobs in parastatals, (iii) explore the extent to which our national labour laws and policies are in compliance with best international labour standards, and (iv) recommend on both legal and non-legal strategies which can be used to address the equality and equity of men and women in the labour market.

In an effort to achieve the above objectives several pieces of literature were reviewed, so before carrying out the research, I reviewed the laws and policies on discrimination and equality between men and women in the workplace in Zimbabwe. The international instruments reviewed were C183, C103, C156, C111, the CEDAW, ACHPR, and the Women's Protocol. The domestic laws reviewed were the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Labour Act, the different Acts establishing different parastatals and the National Gender Policy. I also reviewed some publications, reports and articles on the quality of women's employment in Zimbabwe.

In order to get a clear understanding of the causes and the impact of the vertical representation of women in employment in parastatals and the quality of the employment they are doing, various research methodologies and methods were adopted to analyse, explain, describe and understand what was happening on the ground. To effectively carry out my research and collect data using the grounded theory, women's law methodology, actors and structures, and the human rights approach, I used some other methods described in Weis Bentzon et al 1989:179-189, which included amongst others, individual interviews, interviews with key informants, desk research. The reason why I used the above mentioned methodologies was to take women and their lived experiences as the starting point and it also helped me to decide what data to collect and how to interpret. There were however some limitations encountered during the research which included bureaucratic hurdles, ethical considerations, the cautious attitude of interviewees and time limits since most of the interviews were done during working hours and at the parastatals.

The research showed that women working in parastatals in Zimbabwe were facing some challenges which hindered them from advancing up the ladder, thus, there is the bottleneck type of representation of women in the parastatals. These hurdles are, firstly, segregation in the labour market which is gender biased and as a result women occupy the low ranking positions in parastatals and very few women occupy the high ranking positions. Secondly, our domestic legislation does not provide for non-discrimination in the workplace for workers

with family responsibilities and as a result the women are being discriminated against. Thirdly, women are indirectly discriminated by employers and male counterparts as a result of policies or practices that seem neutral and is applied to all employees, thus, on the face of it the employer treats its employees equally. Fourthly, women have constraints and preferences as a result of the family responsibilities that they have resulting in them occupying low ranking positions in parastatals. Fifth, employers as profit maximising agents prefer having men in the high ranking positions because women are absent from work more than men due to their gendered roles, thus, you find more women at the bottom and fewer of them as you go up the parastatal ladder. Sixth, women do not occupy high ranking positions in the workplace because of their marginalised status in society which perceive women workers as care givers and should therefore perform care work.

The last part of the research discusses the conclusions and the recommendations that will assist in increasing the number of women working in senior positions in the parastatals. The following conclusions, amongst other things, were drawn from the research findings; that positive and negative discrimination was going on in parastatals and family responsibilities are affecting the women a lot to an extent of limiting their chances of entering and advancing in the parastatals. As women are often the parent with the major responsibility for children, lack of access to affordable, reliable childcare can be a major factor in gender inequality, undermining women's ability to work and their opportunities for employment. Women are willing to occupy senior managerial posts although some are hesitant because it is their view that, the more senior the post, the more demanding it is, so they think that they will not cope since they have too much on their hands, family responsibility, being one of them. Some women are trying their very best to advance in their education so that they become competent in the labour market. There are, however, some women who are still socialised to believe that, it is the men who should occupy senior managerial posts and be the decision makers and that culturally men are the breadwinners so there is no need for the women to educate themselves and work in better paying positions since they are dependent on their husbands. The other thing is that women's sexuality is being used to lure clients thus you find the women doing the kind of work that has been traditionally been viewed as women's work, for example, receptionists and secretarial work. The Government of Zimbabwe also lacks the will to ratify international conventions like the Convention on Workers with Family Responsibility in order to practice the best labour standards, so the labour laws of Zimbabwe are lacking in that area. Finally, there are no specific policies in the parastatals which compel them to have a specific number of women in senior management and decision making positions and although there are gender focal persons in all the parent Ministries and supposedly in the parastatals no proper or no monitoring at all is being done. The other thing is that the Ministers who appoint the members in boards in parastatals are not being sensitised on gender issues.

It is, therefore, recommended that, the women should educate themselves and take on technical courses so as to empower themselves. This also has to be complemented by providing friendly working environments for the women, ratification of international labour conventions and implementation of the best labour standards by the Government of Zimbabwe, like, Sylvia Tamale (2001) puts it, "think globally, act locally". The government also has to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Women's affairs to monitor issues of gender equality and equity and make people who are responsible for the emancipation and equality of women accountable for the acts or non action. The political culture in some of the parastatals should also change and they should be run professionally.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

More and more women are entering the labour market and especially into that of paid work; sadly, however, they are usually found at the lower rungs of the employment ladder. Experience has shown that most women are doing stereotypical work involving care giving, such as, secretarial work, receptionists, customer care, clerical and human resources management. The kind of work performed by women has been attributed to their endowment levels as well as various constraints and preferences, amongst other things. This research will show how women are represented at all levels within parastatals.

To begin with the research will give a background and justification of the study, the objectives, the research assumptions and the research questions. The next chapter will discuss the theoretical framework which will touch on the feminist perspectives, the human rights instruments and other literature which informed the research. The third chapter is on the methodological framework and methods which I used to research on the vertical representation of women in employment. This is followed by the discussion on the challenges that women working in parastatals are facing and the last chapter highlights the conclusions on the findings and the recommendations on how to improve the representation of women in policy making positions in the parastatals.

#### **1.1 Background and Justification of Research**

As an employee working in the formal sector and for the Government of Zimbabwe and realising that working class women in the formal sector were being neglected in the fight for women's emancipation, I became curious about seeking to understand exactly what kinds of problems these women are facing. From my reading of other dissertations that have been written before and that are currently being written by my colleagues it has come to my attention that most people do research and write about the poor, rural, imprisoned, prostitutes, women in the informal sector and physically challenged women. From my experience, I have also noticed that in most institutions most women perform low ranking

jobs and their numbers decrease the higher one goes up the employment ladder. I decided to focus on parastatals since they are partly owned by government of Zimbabwe and the private sector. I also wanted to know what exactly contributes to the quality of women's employment after noticing that a majority of the women were doing care work and customer services.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

According to statistics there are more women than men in Zimbabwe and it is important that these women are granted rights on an equal level with the men in the country. The bottleneck type of representation of women in employment in Zimbabwean parastatals has been caused by several issues including, amongst other things, gaps in the law, education and family responsibility. Culturally, family responsibility has been the burden of women here in Zimbabwe. It is the women who has to ensure that the children are taken to and from school, the sick child and sick relative are taken to hospital, the relatives and friends who attend the family's funerals and weddings (in most cases the women) are fed and so on. It is not a problem if the men are busy and do not attend to these family and community functions but for the women she has to be in attendance or else she risks losing her marriage, if she is married, or the function will be a disaster because there will be no one to attend to those things and do the familial duties. Whilst the women have the burden of family responsibility on her it is also important for her to enter and advance in the economic field. In reality this has not been happening for the majority of women. A lot of them are being held back by issues of family responsibility. When women try to balance family interests with their economic ambitions, the latter often suffers with the result that most women end up languishing at the bottom of the employment ladder. The performance of family responsibilities has contributed in large measure to depriving women of promotion within parastatals. The fact that women continue lagging behind in employment should be given serious thought and investigated thoroughly so that practical recommendations may be implemented for the benefit of the women.

Having few or no women in the decision making positions in parastatals impacts negatively on the women employed in parastatals because the decisions made may not take into consideration the needs of the female employees. There is therefore a need to have more women in decision making positions in Parastatals so that women may be properly

represented in any decision concerning them. It is imperative that women have access to occupations that are non-segregated so that acquiring skills and upward mobility within the occupational ladder is an option (Ruwanpura, 2004). The quality of women's employment has a bearing on the women's well being. If women continue occupying the low ranking positions it will perpetuate the problems that the women face in employment.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

1. To interrogate why women are segregated in the labour market and therefore end up occupying low ranking positions in employment.
2. To assess the impact on women of their occupying few high ranking jobs and many low ranking jobs in parastatals.
3. To explore the extent to which national labour laws and policies are in compliance with best international labour standards.
4. To recommend both legal and non-legal strategies which can be used to address the equality and equity of men and women in the labour market.

### **1.4 Research Assumptions**

The following research questions informed my research:

1. Women generally occupy low ranking positions in parastatals and very few women occupy high ranking positions as a result of segregation in the labour market which is gender biased.
2. International labour standards provide for equality in employment regardless of family responsibility but Zimbabwean labour laws and policies do not provide for non-discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of family responsibility.

3. Women are indirectly discriminated against by employers and male counterparts as a result of policies or practices that seem neutral when applied to all employees, thus, on the face of it, it appears that employers treat their employees equally.
4. Women choose economic activities that reflect their educational levels, constraints and preferences resulting in their occupying low ranking positions in parastatals.
5. Employers, as profit maximising agents, prefer having men in high ranking positions because women are absent from work more often and longer than men due to their gendered roles, thus, you find more fewer women employed at the higher than the lower end of the employment ladder.
6. Women do not occupy high ranking positions in the workplace because of their marginalised status in society which perceives women workers as care givers who should only perform care work.
7. There is a need for law and policy reform to provide for equality and equity between men and women.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided my research:

1. Does the fact that most women employed by parastatals occupy more lower than higher ranking positions as a result of segregation in the labour market which is gender biased?
2. Do the Zimbabwean laws and policies not provide for non-discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of family responsibility?

3. Are women indirectly discriminated against by employers and male counterparts as a result of policies or practices that on paper seem neutral in their application to all employees but in practice favour men over women?
4. Do women choose economic activities that reflect their educational levels, constraints and preferences resulting in their occupying low ranking positions in parastatals?
5. Do employers prefer promoting men over women because women are absent from work more often than and longer than men due to their gendered roles in society?
6. Do women occupy low ranking positions in the workplace because of their marginalised status in society which perceives women as care givers who should only perform care work?
7. Is there a need for law and policy reform to provide for equality and equity between men and women?

#### **1.6 Delimitation of the Area of Study**

The study restricted itself to parastatals in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Gender Development, and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Before carrying out the research, I reviewed the laws and policies on discrimination and equality between men and women in the workplace in Zimbabwe. The international instruments reviewed were C183, C103, C156, C111, CEDAW, ACHPR, and the Women's Protocol. The domestic laws reviewed were the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Labour Act and the different Acts establishing different parastatals. I also reviewed some publications, reports and articles on the quality of women's employment in Zimbabwe.

#### **2.1 Feminist Perspectives**

##### **2.1.0 Introduction**

Before I discuss my findings and implications of my research in parastatals in the following chapters, I will explain the theoretical framework for my research. This discussion deals with the Liberal Feminist theory.

##### **2.1.1 Liberal Feminism**

According to the feminist theory of liberalism, female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that blocks women's entrance and/ or success in the so called public world (Rosa Marie Tong, 1994). The "public world" refers to the labour market, academies and the forum; the traditional male dominated environment. Society has the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and/or physically capable than men. As a result of this policy of exclusion, the true potential of many women goes unfulfilled. It is the view point of liberal theorists that if women are accorded equal opportunities as those afforded to their male counterparts they would achieve emancipation. Great gains have been made by the liberal feminist movement in terms of equal opportunity. Despite equal

opportunities legislation, and much institutional rhetoric concerning equality the sex we are assigned still has a massive impact on the shape of our lives and on our perceptions of ourselves. The research will show how efforts at protecting and promoting the interests of women working in parastatals through legislation may have been well-intentioned but limited in effectiveness precisely because of discrimination, women's subordinate status and because the legislation is applied only to women, for example, affording them maternity leave, and this makes women's labour less competitive in certain industries.

While the liberal feminist perspective is impressive in that women and men should be treated equally in accessing the economic field there are handicaps for women who find themselves being discriminated against in the parastatals that they work in. Treating things differently may be necessary in order to create equality. Positive discrimination in favour of women generally has its roots in women's weaker position and this is what one attempts to rectify through affirmative action. It is from the liberal feminist theory that feminist legal theorists in Zimbabwe influenced the Constitutional Amendment of 1997 which explicitly prohibits discrimination based on gender and in 2005 the Zimbabwean Constitutional Amendment Number 17 provided for the elimination of discrimination against women on the basis of sex, and marital status. This was enhanced by the introduction of Affirmative Action under section 23(3)(g) of the Constitution which was designed to advance the rights of any class of persons who had been previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. Women are one such class in Zimbabwe and the provision has been utilised in parastatals to claim this right.

Although I came across positive discrimination towards women during the research, instances where women were negatively discriminated against also came out. It can also be argued that positive discrimination is being practised up to a certain level in Zimbabwe and in most instances it ends at tertiary education level. When it comes to advancing or promotions in parastatals, positive discrimination disappears and other requirements are demanded. In some cases one needs to have the requisite qualifications for example a master's degree or must belong to a certain political party. At this stage it really becomes a challenge to women because this is the time when they reach their marriageable age and worry about family matters and concentrate on child bearing and rearing. Since women have a lot on their hands at this time it is difficult for them to pursue their education, and men, who do not have the same responsibilities and concerns overtake them in the workplace. Even if the woman has got the same qualifications with the man in some instances the employer when employing or

promoting will take into account these family responsibility issues which the woman has got on their hands and end up discriminating against the woman.

Although the national laws guaranteed the equal status of women, the continued existence of and adherence to customary laws perpetuates discrimination against women, particularly in the context of the family. The prevailing traditional and socio-cultural attitudes towards women contribute to the perpetuation of negative images of women, even in the workplace, which impedes their emancipation and advancement. In as much as the liberal legal theorists have managed to achieve success in effecting equality through Constitutional Amendment Number 17, culture is at the centre of the oppression, marginalisation and subordination of women in the workplace. A classical example is its premise on patriarchal lines that promote male power and dominance. Women are expected to be subservient to men even in the workplace. Culture has no boundaries and this even affects the decisions of women and their choice of employment. The research showed that some men felt that the women cannot head up parastatals and some women were of the view that once there are men at the top it meant that women cannot talk or make any meaningful contributions in a meeting.

Taking Women's Law as a feminist perspective would bring us to the argument that having equal laws does not eliminate discrimination. Men and women lead different paths in life and are affected by laws differently (Stang Dahl, 1987). There is need to take the women's lives as the starting point in our understanding of laws that is, the grounded approach which is what I did in my research. The approach to law should recognise both its potential and its limits. There are other areas which need be brought to the attention of the law.

Relational feminists argue that most of the time women are not out to satisfy their own pleasures (as noted by liberals and radicals) but are out to please and satisfy the desires of others (West, 1987). West argues that women become giving rather than liberal selves for reasons such as pregnability (biological) and training for the role of as primary care takers. During the research it turned out that women more than men live in an interdependent and hierarchical natural web with others of varying degrees of strength. Women are full of love, sympathy, patience and concern and as a result will not in most cases neglect their family responsibilities in order to join the economic field. Rather they end up burdened by both responsibilities and inevitably neglect the other. So what I am saying is that the Zimbabwean

laws should provide for workers with family responsibilities who are mostly women so that they are free to enter, participate and advance in the economic field.

## **2.2 International And Regional Instruments**

### ***2.2.0 The Human Rights Framework in relation to Family Responsibility and Employment***

Zimbabwe has signed C156 Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 which applies to men and women workers with responsibilities in relation to their dependent children or to other members of their immediate family who clearly need their care and support, where such responsibilities restrict their possibilities of preparing for, entering, participating in or advancing or advancing in economic activity (Article 1(1) and (2)). The term dependent child and other member of the immediate family who clearly needs care or support mean persons defined as such in each country either in their laws or regulations, collective agreements, work rules, arbitration awards, court decisions or a combination of these methods. In terms of Article 3(1) of C156 member states, with a view to creating effective equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers, are encouraged to make it an aim of national policy to enable persons with family responsibilities who are engaged or wish to engage in employment to exercise their right to do so without being subject to discrimination and to the extent possible, without conflict between their employment and family responsibilities.

It is my view that the term family responsibility covers paternity leave and therefore members may include it in their labour laws to refer to paternity leave. Article 4(a) and (b) also provides that measures compatible with national conditions and possibilities shall be taken to enable workers with family responsibilities to exercise free choice of employment and take into account their needs in terms and conditions of employment. Article 6 further provides for the promotion and education to the public on the principle of equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers with family responsibilities. Given the gendered roles that are given to women it would be vital to have such provisions in Zimbabwe's domestic laws so as to cater for their needs and have them freely choose the kind of employment that they really want. Family responsibility on its own is a constraint to the choice that women

want to make in employment and the preferences that they make when it comes to the quality of work they do.

Although Zimbabwe has signed this Convention it has not yet ratified it in terms of section 111B of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Thus, without domesticating it, it is a challenge to the people of Zimbabwe, to claim their rights under that Act, especially women who seem to be the most affected in the workplace by family responsibility matters. It is, however, interesting to note that countries like Lesotho have utilised the C156 in the case of *Peko v National University of Lesotho, 1 August 1995, LC33/95*. The facts of the case are as follows: the applicant, an employee, was absent from work for two weeks attending to her sick child who had an appendicitis operation. When she returned to work, the respondent, her employer (the University) suspended her and had her salary withdrawn for the month of February when she was absent from work. The Lesotho Labour legislation did not cover a case such as this involving absence as a result of the illness of a child or some other member of the immediate family of the employee. The Labour Court applied ILO C156 and held that the suspension was unlawful and ordered the Respondent to lift the suspension and pay the applicant her salary which had been withdrawn. Article 23 of Recommendation No. 165 of 1981 concerning workers with family responsibilities provides that:

*“It should be possible for a worker, man or woman, with family responsibilities in relation to a dependent child to obtain leave of absence in the case of its illness.”*

In this respect the law of Zimbabwe is the same as that of Lesotho. One solution would be for a concerned employee to apply for leave of absence in terms of his/her annual leave. This in my view would, however be an oversimplification of the problem. Complications could arise where at the time the patient falls ill the worker has no leave days left, or, having taken the leave it gets exhausted before the patient recovers. The research showed that some respondents, especially women, were deliberately not taking up senior managerial positions because of these family responsibilities. Women especially married or those with children, prefer jobs which are more flexible, which allow them to attend their kids. Taking time off to have or care for children can mean sacrificing career progression, as part time work or career gaps are viewed by employers as incompatible with ambition and promotion.

The other two Conventions which Zimbabwe has signed and but not yet ratified are the two Conventions on Maternity Protection, C183 and C103 (Revised) of 2000 and 1955, respectively. C183 applies to all employed women, including those in atypical forms of dependent work. Articles 8 and 9 provide for employment protection and non-discrimination of women during pregnancy or absence on maternity leave. Maternity should not constitute a source of discrimination in employment either at recruitment or during the employment period. Article 4 of C183 provides for entitlement to a period of maternity leave to women. Article 3 of C103 also provides for entitlement to maternity leave. It is however, important to note that these Conventions provide for maternity leave only and not paternity leave. This means that men are deprived of taking an equal part in bringing up their children. It is assumed that men should take the main responsibility for paid work-they are after all, more competitive, brave and ambitious than women (Francis, 1998). Women are absent at work during this period and they get paid while on maternity leave and the person replacing them at the workplace also gets paid. The men whose wives give birth are not affected at all or disturbed in their work since they do not go on paternity leave, and as such employers as profit maximising agents prefer having men in the high ranking positions because women are absent from work more than men due to their gendered roles. Hence one finds the number of women decrease as one ascends the employment ladder.

C111 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation provides in Article 1(b) that the definition of the word “*discrimination*” includes such other “*distinction, exclusion or preference which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation as may be determined by the Member, concerned after consultation with representative employers’ and worker’s organizations, where such exist, and with other appropriate bodies*”. A reading of this definition makes it clear that discrimination against women whether direct or indirect is prohibited under whatever circumstance in the workplace. The research showed that women were being indirectly discriminated against but the women are not able to identify it. It is only in certain circumstances that the women notice direct discrimination which is in most cases positive.

Zimbabwe has also signed and ratified several international conventions including CEDAW, ACHPR and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Women’s Protocol). CEDAW (Article 1) as well as ACHPR (Article 1) provides for non-discrimination against women in any field including the

economic field. The Women's Protocol (Article 2) provides for elimination of discrimination against women. Zimbabwe has ratified CEDAW, ACHPR and the Women's Protocol but has not incorporated the contents of the Conventions into Acts of Parliament yet. Nonetheless the conventions have a compelling force and do indicate what states should be striving to attain in relation to discrimination against women. The provisions of these conventions are obligatory to the member states. CEDAW (Article 4) provides that state parties should adopt temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between men and women. This may be done through the introduction of affirmative action and an example is where the University of Zimbabwe enrolls women with fewer points than men in its Law Faculty. This will correct the historical imbalances that have always been there that women are less educated than the men. CEDAW in Article 11(2) provides for maternity leave and non-discrimination on the basis of maternity leave. CEDAW [Article 16(1)(d)] provides for the same rights and responsibilities for men and women as parents irrespective of their marital status in matters relating to their children. It is important to note that although CEDAW provides that men and women shall have the same rights and responsibilities as parents irrespective of their marital status in matters relating to their children, it does not provide for paternity leave but provides for maternity leave only.

These international instruments however cannot protect Zimbabwean women in the manner that they are meant to because under section 111B of the Constitution of Zimbabwe they shall not form part of the law of Zimbabwe unless incorporated into the law as Acts of Parliament.

## **2.3 Domestic Laws and Policies**

### **2.3.0 The Constitution**

The Constitution of Zimbabwe (Section 23) protects against non-discrimination, however it applies only to direct and not indirect discrimination. While the Constitution provides that “*every person in Zimbabwe shall not be discriminated on the grounds of race, tribe, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed, or sex*”, this is far from the reality on the ground where women are still denied access to many political, economic and social opportunities. The research showed that for one to occupy certain senior positions in the workplace they have to be affiliated to a certain political party and come from a certain class, so social status

and politics influence these decisions but you find that women are not into politics and they come from the less advantaged classes and this poses a great challenge for women. Women in employment suffer indirect discrimination in most cases and it is the reason why you find fewer women than men as you go up the employment ladder.

### **2.3.1 *The Labour Act***

Even the Labour Act of Zimbabwe (Section 5) does not prohibit indirect discrimination. It mentions pregnancy as one of its grounds for discrimination under direct discrimination but it leaves out issues like marital status and family responsibility which factors affect women a great deal when it comes to choice of employment. The same factors also influence the decisions of the employers when they recruit and promote employees. International law goes further to prohibit indirect discrimination (see for example C111, as explained above) and that protective instrument would be helpful to women if it were incorporated in the Zimbabwe's Labour Act. Although maternity leave is provided for in the Labour Act, it is generally portrayed as a privilege.

### **2.3.2 *The National Gender Policy***

The Government of Zimbabwe came up with a National Gender Policy in 2004. One of the principles of the Gender Policy is that all government policies, the private sector, parastatals, non-governmental organizations, traditional structures and practices must recognize that women and men are guaranteed equality before the law and protected from discrimination through the Constitution. It is imperative for all policies to recognise women's multiple roles with respect to production and reproduction as they may impact on their capacity to participate effectively in parastatals. The objectives of the National Gender Policy amongst other things is to promote equal advancement of women and men in all sectors and to create equal opportunities for women and men in decision making in all areas and at all levels.

This is what my research will focus on amongst other things. Although efforts have been made to consolidate gains made to attain equality, equity and social justice in all sectors of our society and economy, a lot still remains to be done. Women still lag behind men in



political and decision making positions and in education. They continue to be marginalized in the economy and the enjoyment of legal and human rights. These disparities between women and men cannot be allowed to continue for they pose a serious impediment to sustainable development and the attainment of equality and equity between men and women. Over the years, policies implemented by the government have to a large extent failed to respond sufficiently to the needs and responsibilities of women, hence, the persistence of gender inequality and inequity (Kanyenze et al, 2011). Many of these policies have been poorly implemented for various reasons which include capacity deficits, inadequate budget allocations and poor infrastructure. I will therefore analyse how education has impacted on women's representation in the workplace, focusing on parastatals.

Government has drawn up and adopted the National Gender Policy to provide guidelines and the institutional framework to engender all sectoral policies, programmes, projects and activities at all levels of our society and economy.

Due to the traditional bread-winning status accredited to men, when it comes to access to employment, women and men usually do not operate on an equal footing. Although more Zimbabwean women are joining the labour force they are found in a limited range of occupations in low paying and low productivity jobs mostly in the informal sector (Gender Policy, 2004). Inequalities in access to education and training, inequalities in access to productive resources, reproductive responsibilities and stereotyping of gendered roles also foster occupational segregation between women and men. Some legislative instruments, though seemingly neutral, actually inhibit the attainment of gender equality. These laws indirectly discriminate women in the workplace. The National Gender Policy therefore seeks to address the issue of equality of opportunity and treatment in employment.

A central question that remains, however, is whether by enforcing the National Gender Policy and several legal amendments, the aim is to unpick slowly, as opposed to reigning in, the unequal gender power relations that are still underpinned by a deeply rooted system of patriarchal beliefs, norms and structures (Made, 2005). Although more girls are now in school and more women in business, politics and professions, they are not in levels proportionate to their numbers in the Zimbabwean population. In my research I will look at the representation of women in the managerial positions upwards and those working in

positions below the managerial positions and understand why there are few women at the top of parastatals while there are more of them at the bottom.

In some South African research it was found that resistance, generally by male employees (across the organisational spectrum), stereotyped perceptions and poor skills among female employees were cited as the main barriers impeding the progress of gender policy within the companies who had either implemented or were in the process of implementing the gender policy.

An assessment of female employees in terms of race group and job category was conducted. Results indicated that males, for the most part, held positions of power and authority, whilst female employees tended to be predominantly in administrative and junior management level positions.

Positions held by employees are mainly influenced by the criteria adopted for recruitment and promotion. These were assessed and findings indicate that criteria such as psychometric testing and other subjective and cultural biased testing are still adopted to identify incumbents for recruitment and advancement. Emphasis on skills, formal qualifications and experience is also prevalent. A paradox, thus, seems to exist where companies, on the one hand are citing a poor skills level among females to be the main barrier, but continue to include it as a criterion for recruitment and promotion. This therefore suggests that male employees would usually be the most likely incumbents.

Boserup, 1970, writes that, for various reasons, most employers prefer male labour and the women themselves (and their relatives) prefer work in home industries rather than work for wages in larger enterprises. It is often suggested that rules about obligatory benefits for women workers contribute to the preferential recruitment of male labour to large scale industries, which cannot violate the rules as easily as the smaller ones. Many developing countries have adopted the principle of paying equal wages to men and women doing identical jobs. If in addition, women get special benefits such as the right to maternity leave the result may indeed be to make it more profitable to employ men than women workers.

Nussbaum (2000) also writes that women are much less likely than men to be literate, and still less likely to have professional or technical education. Should they attempt to enter the

workplace they face greater obstacles, including intimidation from family or spouse, sex discrimination in hiring, sexual harassment in the workplace all frequently without effective legal recourse. Further, burdened with the double day of taxing employment and full responsibility for housework and childcare, they lack opportunities for play and for the cultivation of their imaginative and cognitive faculties. Unequal social and political circumstances give women unequal human capabilities.

Many people do not see the women worker as one who has multiple roles and multiple stresses beyond the work world. Their sights often do not include the women in her family and wider roles. Women are joining the workplace in increasing numbers without relinquishing their family responsibilities. The research will help the reader to see many facets of women's lives beyond the workplace and how it affects them. Women are not just family members, doing the vast majority of housework nor are they just work force employees. Women have the demanding job of combining the two roles. At the very least all professionals who serve women should acknowledge the stress inherent in women's multiple roles. The largest occupational category of employed women is administrative support or clerical. Despite the influx of women in the labour force over the past 30 years women are still less in managerial and professional posts. Women are segregated vertically within occupations preventing promotion to higher ranks, rarely achieving the inner circle of power in parastatals. Single mothers who miss work due to unreliable child care, or who do not for promotion due to family responsibilities are evaluated poorly on job performance when fathers are given no judgement for failure to support or provide care (Lundy, 1995). Thus you find women occupying administrative support staff and clerical positions mostly in parastatals and less in managerial.

Despite recent social changes, society remains gender differentiated, and women remain disadvantaged (Francis, 1998). Over the last fifteen years in Zimbabwe, females have been gradually catching up with the males in terms of educational achievement. They are now matching males in exam success in the majority of subjects, right up to university entrance level. Women are now successful as men at degree level though the genders remain fairly polarised in terms of degree subject. It is, however, sad to note that women's gradual improved educational success has not yet led to an increase in the number of woman gaining top managerial posts.

Without a change in attitude and behaviour towards women working outside the home, women will not achieve equality in the labour market (Leach, 1999). Offering training opportunities to women, in particular in the more profitable skills, will not be successful until social and cultural conventions concerning appropriate roles for men and women in society change.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In order to get a clear understanding of the impact of the vertical representation of women in employment in parastatals and the quality of the work that they were doing various research methodologies and methods were used were adopted to analyse, explain, describe and understand what was happening on the ground. In order to effectively carry out my research and collect data using the grounded theory, women's law methodology, actors and structures, and the human rights approach, I used some other methods described in Weis Bentzon et al (1989:179-189), which included amongst others, individual interviews, interviews with key informants, desk research. This chapter deals with the various methods used, the reasons for using them and some of the problems encountered.

#### **3.1 Research Methodology**

##### ***3.1.1 The Women's Law Approach***

I used the Women's Law methodology in as far as it relies on policy considerations as a way of understanding women's position in law and in society. I therefore examined the Constitution, Labour Act, the National Gender Policy and several other Acts which establish the parastatals in order to see if they address the needs of women working in parastatals and some of the problems they face in trying to climb up the ladder in employment. From a reading of the Labour Act and the policy it is clear that the people who crafted the law were not aware of the issue of workers with family responsibility and indirect discrimination which impact on women so badly that you would find them at the bottom of the ladder in the parastatals. The women I interviewed were of the view that there should be specific laws and policies in the parastatals on the number of women to occupy senior management posts. Some of the policies and practices in the parastatals indirectly discriminated against the women although on the face of it they appeared to be neutral. I was concerned that for some jobs, running was a requirement for one to qualify for the job. Females were required to run

for 10 kilometres so as to assess their fitness. Although the females would run on their own and males on their own I felt that this was discriminatory against women. There is, therefore, a need to revisit the Labour Act so as to ensure that workers with family responsibilities are catered for. This approach made it possible for me to ascertain gaps between the laws and policies that govern the right to employment in Zimbabwe. This will guide me in suggesting recommendations that will improve the position of women in the employment field.

Women's law is a legal discipline that takes women and their lived experiences as the starting point. This approach explores the reality of women's lives, from that perspective interrogates and investigates the law (Bentzon et al, 1998). This approach leads to the empirical data about their lived realities. The objective is to describe, explain and understand the legal position of women, with the specific aim of improving their position in law and society. In this research, I took the woman as the starting point. Both female and male employees and employers were interviewed and also labour experts at the parastatals, Ministries and other organisations dealing with labour matters were also visited. The lived realities through the interviews revealed that although there were some women occupying senior management positions in parastatals they were very few in number and the vast majority of the women were at the bottom of the ladder. The statement below was said by one woman in senior management:

“Whilst currently we have a balance which is most likely coincidental I think there is need for a policy which stipulates that there should be at least a certain number of women in senior management especially at board level.”

As a result of this, issues affecting the women in the parastatals were not fairly dealt with and therefore women continued occupying the low ranking jobs mostly to do with some kind of care work. Women's law therefore helped me to get empirical data on the women's experiences and the quality of work they do in parastatals and other related issues. I was able to interrogate and understand why women are occupying the positions that they are occupying as a result of their preferences, challenges and education.

I approached the women to find out about how their family responsibilities were hindering them in entering or advancing in employment and if there was any segregation going on in the parastatals due to the preference of the employer in employing males over women

because of the nature of duties that the women do at home. I interviewed women who were married, divorced, single with children and single with no children. By doing this I was trying to establish whether all these groups of women were affected at the workplace in the same way due to attending to these important issues of family responsibility and I was therefore able to do it. This approach also assisted me in understanding the specific constraints and preferences which made women stay at the bottom of the ladder in employment, including, the demands of family responsibilities. Women do not want to leave their families and work in other towns or even do shift work. This was a common response at Air Zimbabwe where women did not want to move to other airports out of Harare even if it was a promotion. One female respondent said:

“Some women are hesitant to take up jobs which take them away from the family and this usually happens when you are in top management.”

By using this approach some women admitted to having challenges in advancing with their education and that even if they advance their education it was not possible for them to be promoted in the parastatals that they worked for, so they remained secretaries or receptionists and the only way for them to occupy a higher grade was to get a job somewhere else. I felt that the women were being forced to do the kind of jobs involving the handling of clients, a category of work which had no promotional grades.

### **3.1.2 *The Grounded Theory Approach***

I used the grounded theory as the major research method throughout the data collection in this research and this theory involves an iterative process in which data theory, lived realities and perceptions about norms are constantly engaged together with others and help the researcher to decide what data to collect and how to interpret the collected data. The grounded theoretical approach encourages the use of data collected to establish whether the law under research required reform and if it did what kind of reform.

I used this approach to all my interviewees namely the women, men, human resources managers, legal advisors working in the different parastatals, labour experts, the employers, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. After

interviewing the women, they would lead me to the next person, in this case, the men because the women would blame patriarchy as a barrier to their progressing. The men led me to the human resources managers and legal personnel until I got to interview the officials in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development on how they were monitoring the implementation of the National Gender Policy when it came to the representation of women in boards of parastatals and how they sensitise the people within the parastatals on gender issues in order to ensure, as far as possible, equality and equity between men and women. The approach aided me in getting data from different angles on how family responsibility, education, laws, policies, practises, employers, discrimination, women's capacity and skills were a hurdle to women's advancement in employment in parastatals.

The women, men, legal advisors, labour experts, human resources managers were questioned in a way that allowed them to express themselves in depth on different issues which I introduced to them. I also visited the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, an organisation which is responsible for the establishment of trade unions and a representative of employees' concerns, amongst other things, to get their views on the bottleneck type of representation of women in parastatals. It emerged from the evidence of all the people that I interviewed that women were truly at the bottom of the ladder in employment in parastatals because they are burdened with many family responsibilities and that they were also not as well educated as the men, amongst other things. One woman had this to say:

“Historically women have been left out in terms of education and “*zvirimatiri*” (we believe) that men are the only ones who can take up higher positions.”

The use of the grounded theory was very useful since it led to revealing that the parastatals fell in different categories. Some are technical and therefore male dominated, some are more involved with commerce, marketing, and providing services and therefore female dominated in departments to do with customer care, sales and marketing but unfortunately very few of them are in management. I was also able to challenge the general notion that women are content with where they are as I found some women aspire to be reach senior managerial positions but encounter several challenges.



### **3.1.3 Actors and Structures**

The employers, the women and the labour experts were the actors in this approach as the persons who employ and are employed and working in the low and high ranking positions in parastatals. I used the Actors and Structures methodology which enabled me to understand the perceptions, attitudes and reactions of the human resources managers and the employers, the Ministries and the people responsible for appointing people to managerial positions. The Human Resources manager at one of the parastatals said:

“It is not possible to promote the women to managerial positions in this organisation because of the nature of the work that is done here. The structure is such that one has to have skill and expertise in mining, for them to qualify in senior management and the women here do not have those qualifications.”

I discovered that it is the structure of the parastatal that influences the decision of the actors who employ the managers. The structures in most of the parastatals are such that the employer is left with no choice but to employ or promote people with the requisite skill and experience and most of them have to be engineers of some sort. This has seen the managerial posts being occupied by the males in most cases because there are few or no women with the kind of expertise and experience required. The origin of this challenge goes back to secondary school and university where the women seldom take up science subjects. The parastatals have got their own unique identities when it comes to issues of women and work.

### **3.1.4 The Human Rights Approach**

The right to work and the right to non-discrimination against women in any field including the economic field are fundamental rights. The state is the primary duty bearer and the citizens are the rights holders. The state has the obligation to fulfill, respect, protect and promote these human rights. In doing so the state has to ratify and domesticate, in cases where domestication is a requirement, international human rights treaties and secondly, ensure that measures are put place to take into account the needs of the citizens and finally protect its citizens from infringement of those rights by third parties. In the present case, a state has to ensure that it ratifies the Convention on workers with family responsibilities and

also put measures in place which take into account the needs of workers with family responsibility and take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on the basis of equality of women and men, the same rights to the employment opportunities so as to ensure that nothing hinders the women from climbing up the ladder in the labour market.

I used international labour standards to explore the different ways of assessing and implementing compliance with international human rights by Zimbabwe. By using this approach I was able to know that although international law provides that states should not discriminate employees on grounds of family responsibility, women working in Zimbabwean parastatals are being directly and indirectly discriminated against. I was also able to understand the challenges that women face in trying to exercise their rights, that is, the fear of victimisation and the fear of losing their jobs.

## **3.2 Research Methods**

### **3.2.1 *Sample***

I carried out research in seven parastatals in the capital city, Harare. These were selected randomly depending on how easy it was for me to access them.

At five of the parastatals at least four women and at least two men were interviewed. The interviewees ranged from shop floor level to senior management. A total of twenty-eight women and fourteen men were interviewed. The table below shows the study sample.

**Table 1: Showing the Composition of the Study Sample**

Name of Parastatals	No. of Females	No. of Males	Total
Air Zimbabwe	3	5	8
CAAZ	4	1	5
Competition & Tariff Commission	4	2	6
MMCZ	6	2	8
ZMDC	4	2	6
Min. of Gender	2	-	2
Labour experts	1	2	3
Other	4	-	4
TOTAL	28	14	42

### **3.2.2 Key Informant Interviews**

Key informants were mainly chosen because of their expert knowledge on issues of labour and the operations of the parastatals in Zimbabwe. Some of these key informants were human resources managers, legal advisors at the parastatals, labour experts and gender officers in the Ministry of Women's Affairs. I targeted these informants because of their experience and knowledge in the issues affecting women and preventing their promotion within parastatals. The ZCTU official who is responsible for the workers unions and the needs of workers was also targeted for his valuable information and experience in dealing with the employees issues. This therefore enabled me to get first hand information on what was really happening on the ground.

### **3.2.3 Individual interviews**

Interviews can be used to get a persons impression and experiences (McNamara, 1999). Interviews had an advantage when I was gathering data because I researched directly from the respondent on a face to face basis and I was able to observe their body language and see their emotions. Some of the women were very emotional when they spoke. I held interviews

with women, men, labour experts and legal advisors to obtain their views concerning the bottleneck type of presentation of women in the parastatals. The interviews also assisted me in understanding the women's views on issues of discrimination in the workplace, the challenges, constraints and preferences that the women were facing and preventing them from occupying senior posts in the parastatals. I used structured interviews with all my interviewees and most of the respondents were very willing to volunteer information.

#### **3.2.4 Desk Research**

In this research study, books, documents, dissertations, policies were used as secondary sources of information. I reviewed the laws, policies, and books to understand the nature and extent of the problem. Analyses of human resources manuals for some of the parastatals as secondary sources of information were also carried out. I noticed that most of the human resources manuals derived their provisions from the Labour Act.

### **3.3 Limitations of the Research**

#### **3.3.1 Bureaucratic Hurdles**

Although I managed to interview several people in senior management it should be pointed out that I was not able to interview any board member of any of the parastatals I researched; nor did I manage to interview the Minister responsible for appointing the members of the Board. This was because the Board members are not based at the parastatals and the secretaries responsible for contacting them became a barrier to reaching them as they continuously told me that they were busy, that I could not see them or that their phones were not reachable. It was very difficult to get their telephone numbers.

#### **3.3.2 "Wasting my time"**

It was a challenge interviewing the respondents during working hours because there were so many interruptions and at times you could actually see that a person was responding in a way which told you to hurry up. The research was carried out towards the end of the year and

usually people are under pressure at the end of the year. All the parastatals except one are situated outside the central business district and during lunch hour the workers would be rushing to town and at the end of business they would be rushing for transport. Some of the respondents, however, were very co-operative and interested in the topic because they thought that the research would bring change to their lives.

### **3.3.3 *Negative Attitude***

Some of the male respondents had the chauvinistic attitude that the women were not educated and therefore it was not their problem but the women's and there was no need to even try to find out why women were not occupying senior posts within parastatals.

### **3.3.4 *Ethical Considerations***

The other challenge that I came across was that some respondents, especially those who were subordinates, feared disclosing any information which concerned their bosses' attitudes for fear of victimization. Also, those who agreed to speak to me did not want their identity to be disclosed.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4.0 CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN WORKING IN PARASTATALS**

This Chapter discusses the research findings which were based on the assumptions that I formulated at the beginning of the research.

#### **4.1 Segregation in the Labour Market is Gender Biased**

*It's all about power and the abuse of power!*

This research showed that segregation is still going on in the labour market due to gender bias. Some employers tend to have a bias against employing women as a result of the women's gendered role of giving birth, the reason being that they might get pregnant and production is affected when they go on maternity leave. This is a challenge to women because culturally when a woman gets married her in-laws expect her to fall pregnant and have children as soon as she starts staying with her husband. The longer a woman delays in falling pregnant the greater the chances of destabilising the marriage or of a divorce occurring. Sometimes a husband's family can even go to the extent of setting him up with another woman in order to bear him/them children. Culturally marriage is the joining of two people of the opposite sex. The women's reproductive rights are transferred to the husband's family with the result that the children of that union belong to the husband's lineage, and this is why a husband's family consider it important for their daughter-in-law to bear children. Thus, it becomes a dilemma for a woman who wants both to participate in the economic field and also wants to get married and bear children because society considers that marriage is more important for a wife than her working outside the home.

A male respondent in management working in one of the parastatals stated that while women in that parastatal are employed in the flight attendance department, in telephone sales, as switch board operators and in customer care services, there were very few of them in management. He said working with women in crucial departments was a challenge because two thirds may get pregnant and that department will be affected so one ends up being biased

towards employing men. He gave an example of the flight attendance department which needed to have people all the time. On the contrary, he pointed out that in the flight attendance department and other departments like customer care services, reservations and sales he preferred working with women because he thinks that:

“Naturally, ladies have a better appeal in terms of convincing customers. Further, you cannot take away the fact that you feel better if you are served by a lady (that is my observation).”

The respondent even went on further to give an example of where he and his workmates eat “*sadza*” (traditional maize dish) at lunchtime. He said that they went to Bango Restaurant which has a lot of young female waitresses. They changed to that place, he said, because where they used to have lunch, at Falcon Restaurant, an old lady served them and that did not appeal to them. There is also a man who is a waiter at Bango Restaurant but they prefer to be served by young ladies. This in my view shows how women’s bodies and voices are being used by men to lure customers and it is unacceptable. This confirms Mackinnon’s point that women’s bodies are sexualised for the sole pleasure of men (Mackinnon, 1989).

In parastatals which require expertise in some technical areas there are more women in their lower echelons and very few or none at all who occupy managerial positions. These parastatals are male dominated. Examples are Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation (ZMDC) where one requires expertise in mining engineering for them to become managers and also Postal and Telecommunication Regulatory of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) where one has to be a telephone engineer and even Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe (CAAZ) and Air Zimbabwe. At ZMDC the only women who occupy senior positions are the sister in charge at Sandawana Mine and Sabi Mine and at the Head Office there are three women out of twenty managers in total. The board has nine members of which two are women; the deputy chair is a woman. The Group Human Resources manager at ZMDC who is a male indicated that ZMDC is a mining house and for that reason most of their operations are outside Harare and because of the nature of the work they have very few women in the parastatal. Most ladies are in administration. This was corroborated by the Public Relations manager who is a woman who said that ZMDC operates in a mining environment and has only a few ladies because women are not interested in mining. The respondent also went on to say:

“The culture within the organisation is also contributory in the organisation having few women. The management is male dominated. They have a bias towards men when employing.”

Male dominance is everywhere, in the home, in the streets and even in the workplace where men and women are expected to be equal and paid equally for work of equal value. Males, for the most part, held positions of power and authority, whilst female employees tended to be predominantly in administrative and junior management level positions. Every person I interviewed at ZMDC admitted that there were few women in the parastatal and they mostly occupied secretarial positions and did administrative work due to the nature of work that was done by the parastatal. This shows that women were being discriminated against but everyone in the workplace thought that this was justified because the women could not do the kind of work that is required of them especially in management which requires expertise and skill in mining engineering.

Most respondents at CAAZ pointed out that women dominated the secretarial/receptionist/accounting assistant and customer service positions. One female respondent who was very bitter said this was so because they are low paid jobs and this organisation assumes that women are socialised to be soft, to stay in those divisions and to do just what you are told; so it is all about power and the abuse of power. In this parastatal there are 10 executive directors and only 3 of them are females. Society believes that a woman should be soft, kind, submissive, obedient, and caring among other things and this is even applied to women in the workplace.

The other problem was that was cited by a female respondent at CAAZ was that in an interview there are usually four men and one woman because there are the ones in the executive and responsible for interviewing. She thought that although there are only a few female managers they should also take part. That fact alone gave off the wrong message that women are useless. One example was where she had attended an interview and the lady panellist asked her no questions except how many children she had. She felt that there was no one to represent the women at CAAZ and there was no assurance that segregation on the basis of gender would not take place. This shows how some of the structures within parastatals foment gender inequality and inequity within the organisation. Parastatals should



therefore make it a policy that there should always be a gender balance in their interviewing panels regardless of the nature of the rest of the parastatal's structure.

A male respondent who was interviewed by one of the parastatals said when he was interviewed only women interviewed him. The respondent was surprised by the composition of the panel because he thought that men are more educated than women and that they outnumber women. What bothered him most was what kind of an organisation it was in view of the fact that it was headed only by women. This shows how the patriarchal system in Zimbabwe that has resulted in the perpetuation of gender inequalities prescribed by tradition, culture and religion. Men or people are socialised to believe that women cannot lead organisations, only men. Another respondent also thought that it was only natural that men were better leaders than women.

One female who has worked for MMCZ for ten years said that the biggest challenge in parastatals is more to do with politics and in-fighting and since women do not want to fight, they end up refusing promotion to senior posts. One male respondent at Air Zimbabwe confirmed that in management they have 3 levels (that is, accountable manager, executive manager, leadership and supervisors). Not one of these levels at Air Zimbabwe is occupied by a woman. Women are a minority. At the supervisory level, the majority of the women are in sales and marketing, finance and human resources. He also said that at Board level there were 2 women out of 8 board members. The reason he said is:

“Especially in this industry there is a technical bias. Traditionally the majority of women have not been able to do technical jobs, engineering. For one to be head of cargo, head of engineering you have to be technical, women are not able to take up leadership posts. It is probably cultural (more) than anything else because of the subservience in the management institutions. We have never had a single female Chief Executive Officer (CEO) ever since it was created. I think it is because it is more technical.”

Another woman who is a supervisor in operations said that while there were some people who worked well with women in management others looked down on them. For example, before she became a supervisor she was an Acting Administrator of Flight Operations but the General Manager and CEO had a lot to say about it [i.e., that she was a female and not

capable] until she started doing the job and then it was a different story because they realised that she was performing well.

The assumption that there were few women in high ranking positions because of segregation which was gender biased was, however, partially challenged and in some parastatals I discovered the employer is actually hunting for women. One female respondent at MMCZ admitted to having secured the job because the employer wanted a female for that position since she considered women as hard working (as men) and wanted to balance out the gender in that department which only had males. The respondent only got to know when she had been employed that the employer was actually intending to employ a woman. This vacancy was however for a middle management position which is where most women end their parastatal careers. So although there was some kind of positive discrimination which influenced the employer's decision to recruit this woman it is important to note that the position was not a senior one. It is also interesting to note that generally MMCZ has got a fairly good number of women working for them because they specialise in marketing as compared to ZMDC which is a more technical parastatal. The other finding was that in all five parastatals researched their recruitment process was not on the face of it segregatory, since most of them would advertise for applicants for the vacancy and any person was free to apply whether male or female and the best candidate would get the job.

The Human Resources Officer at Air Zimbabwe pointed out that they were practising discrimination in favour of women. Each time they recruit they try to balance the number of women and men and at times even reduce the entry requirements for women. This is a form of affirmative action. And it is also a good example of the women's law perspective where men and women are affected by laws differently, taking into consideration women's potential and their limits. She gave an example when they recruited data capturers in February 2010. The requirements for that job were five "O" levels including maths but they had to remove the maths requirement for women so that they could get more women candidates. They ended up employing 38 instead of 50 women. If they had not removed the maths requirement the number of women that qualified would not have reached 38. There were however mixed feelings about the issue of affirmative action during the field research. A labour expert in the Ministry of Labour was of the view that it was high time to abolish affirmative action because by now women should have caught up with men and the gender imbalances of the past no longer exists.

According to another female respondent, men at one of the parastatals think that the women cannot do the work. They think that if a woman becomes a manager she has slept with someone (i.e., had an affair) or she is related to someone (nepotism). Such men look down upon female bosses and, in fact, women in general.

This brings me to the next point concerning the control or influence of a father on the decisions made by the girl child on which profession to take up. Three respondents in three different parastatals said that their fathers had influenced their choice of profession. One said that she was actually forced by her father to take up a secretarial course because he said that he was dying and wanted her to take up that course because it did not take long to finish and get a job, so that she would take care of her siblings after he died. She did not want to do the secretarial course but her father even went on to register for her and she was surprised to see him coming with the course timetable. The other respondent was told by her father that she could not do journalism because according to him that profession would make her become a prostitute and die an early death. The third respondent did commercial subjects at “A” level because her father thought that it was more marketable in those days and it would be easy for her to get a job. The choices for the three respondents in these cases did not matter, what mattered was their fathers’ choice and this shows just how much control fathers have over their daughters. Patriarchy still exists and it perpetuates gender inequality. In reality even when she is a major, a young adult woman is still being treated like the minor girl child (she remains in the eyes of the patriarchal culture to which she belongs) who cannot make her own decisions despite the government’s removal of her minority status. It can be argued that law itself will not assist the women in getting their emancipation. The attitude of men has to change, their control and power over women should come to an end.

#### **4.2 Inadequacy of the Labour Laws in addressing the Plight of Workers with Family Responsibility**

*“If it should happen that when women and men are given the same educational opportunities and civil rights, few women achieve eminence in the sciences, arts and professions, then so be it.”*

(Tong,1994)

During the research it was sad to note that some of the legal people working in these parastatals were not aware of the C156. Some were even not well conversed with the Labour Act which governs parastatals on issues of maternity leave and non-discrimination in the workplace. One female respondent told a story about a secretary to a male boss working at the parastatals who was asked to bring her sick child to work and monitor the child from the office because the male boss wanted his work done. The Zimbabwean laws do not provide for leave for the purposes of attending to a sick child, thus the doctor in this case could not sanction the granting of a few days to the mother who had to tend to her sick child. When the above mentioned employee brought her sick child to work it did not go down well with the other female employees who were also secretaries and they teamed up and took up the matter to their Human Resources Manager who is a female. She promised them that she was going to look into the matter. After two weeks had elapsed the group of women followed up the matter with her and found to their utter shock that she had done nothing about it. Her reason for not taking up the matter was that she had also reported to her male boss and the men that they were dealing with were war veterans so they had to be very careful. She told the secretaries that they had to “*understand her and the situation.*” The secretaries felt shortchanged and that they were being inadequately represented by their Human Resources manageress who they thought was not confident enough and did not deserve being in that position because she was a woman who had been promoted to that position because of politics (and not on merit) and therefore she had no say at all in the parastatal. This is how politics is negatively impacting on the emancipation of women. I observed that the women themselves thought that they would be better represented by a male and were not supportive of each other. This attitude is a commonly held one among women employed by parastatals.

The Zimbabwean labour laws do not adequately cover matters on family responsibility as provided for by the international labour standards. The international labour standards encourage member states to cater for men and women workers with responsibilities in relation to their dependent children or to other members of their immediate family who clearly need their care and support, where such responsibilities restrict their possibilities of preparing for, entering, participating in or advancing in economic activity (Article 1(1) and (2)). If you read how “family responsibility” is defined above, it becomes clear that Zimbabwe is falling short in so many ways, because so far as the law is concerned at the moment, it only provides for maternity leave in terms of the international standards. Although Zimbabwe has a provision for maternity leave which applies to all parastatals, thought should

be given to the qualifying period provided for one to go on paid maternity leave. A woman should have at least served one year. In practise it is becoming a problem because it is not clear if we are referring to permanent, casual, or contract employees. Employers often discriminate against part time employees. If they get pregnant and go on maternity leave they usually go for good and this causes problems. This shows that the country's legislation lacks protection for workers with family responsibilities.

The C156 does not recognise paternity leave for male employees. Our legislation does not provide for family leave unless the employee is a woman who goes on maternity leave. Family responsibility entails many duties which are not included in our legislation. This forces employees to use their annual or vacation leave in order to attend to their family responsibilities and when these days are exhausted the employees are effectively prevented from attending to these important family matters if they wish to keep their jobs. Family responsibility affects both male and female workers but culturally women tend to have more challenges than men. They perform various forms of care work for their children, immediate and extended family as well as for the wider communities in which they live.

A state has the obligation to fulfil, protect, respect and promote the human rights of its citizens and the people are the rights holders and have to claim its rights from the duty bearer, i.e., the state. By ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights which provides for non-discrimination against women in any field including the economic field, the government of Zimbabwe has to ensure that women in their country are not discriminated against in the labour market. This means that the government of Zimbabwe has to fulfil and respect those conventions by domesticating them (i.e., incorporating them into local Zimbabwean legislation by relevant Acts of Parliament) and also it is required to protect its citizens from human rights abuses by third parties. One of the reasons for women failing to be promoted within parastatals is that the government of Zimbabwe has failed to fulfil these international obligations.

There is however a proposal by ZCTU to amend the labour laws in their campaign on "*The Harmonisation of Labour Laws to comply with international labour standards*" and in their proposal there is a provision which caters for workers with family responsibility. I found the proposal commendable. In the proposal they want family responsibility leave on full pay to

attend to: a) child care, b) family services, c) community services d) national duty, and e) trade union business. Although Zimbabwe has not yet ratified or domesticated the C156 there is nothing wrong in practising what is provided for by the international labour standards (as in the Lesotho *Peko* case summarised above) especially if such action will advance women's rights. The labour expert lawyer at ZCTU was of the view that, although some people may argue that this human right for workers with family responsibility is Eurocentric, this is not correct because when this C156 was negotiated and drafted African developing countries were represented; furthermore, member states are not expected to fulfil these obligations immediately but progressively and over time. He had this to say:

“I do not subscribe to the idea that the Convention is Eurocentric and will affect production. ILO comprises 187 countries both developed and developing of which ILO does a thorough research looking into both the needs of developing and developed countries. Application of labour standards is universal. Production must be linked to the workers mind, if that worker is at work and their minds are thinking about home, there is a problem. When we are designing legislation we have to take into account the cultural values of our society. We do not need to destroy it.”

It is therefore only prudent to engage with the employer and agree on balancing the issue of family responsibility and production at the workplace because it is important that when we are designing legislation we have to take into account the cultural values of our society. We do not need to destroy it. This is what one government employee in the Ministry of Labour had to say:

“We have not ratified C156 because it requires the ratifying state to put some things in place, for example, crèches etc which our economy cannot sustain. If we are to ratify today we are supposed to make periodic reports and there will be nothing to report on. Certain things which should be done by the employer cannot be done.”

The government of Zimbabwe alleges that it has no capacity to fulfil and respect what is provided for in that convention thus it will not ratify it any time soon. The government also says that the employer is required in to take part financially in providing measures that enable workers with family responsibilities to work without family worries on their minds, and in the current depressed economic environment the government does not envisage employers being able to make such commitments.

### 4.3 Policies and Practices in Workplaces Indirectly Discriminate Against Women

During the research it emerged that there were some policies and practices which were being carried out by the parastatals under investigation which *prima facie* seemed neutral and were applied to all employees but in actual fact these policies discriminated against women. One such practice was evident in all the parastatals I did research on, and this practice was to ask candidates for a job interview certain questions such as:

- Are you married?
- How many children do you have and what are their ages?
- Are you able to work after hours, during weekends, or holidays?
- Do you have any commitments which will require you to take leave within the first twelve months from the date of employment? (For example, maternity leave.)

The respondents from all the parastatals thought that they were justified in asking these questions since some of them required workers to perform shift work, to work often under pressure and sometimes finish work at 10 at night, to come to work during weekends and after hours in the case of emergencies.

One respondent at MCAZ said the reason for asking such questions is in order to maintain continuity in the workplace and make planning for the parastatal easier. A thorough scrutiny of these questions, although asked of all employees, male and female, really relate to women because they are all concerned with the extent to which their family responsibilities would affect their productivity as employees. Several male respondents thought that there was nothing wrong with these questions since the employer's intention was, maybe to them, to understand the background of the person they were employing. The male respondents did not think that it would influence the decision of the employer to employ a particular person. In my view the questions asked are very detrimental to women because it is the woman who is most affected by issues to do with family responsibility. Women, as West (1987) argues, "*most of the time are not out to satisfy their own pleasures but are out to please and satisfy the desires of others.*" She argues that women become giving rather than liberal selves for reasons such as pregnability (biological) and training for the role of as primary care takers. This is unacceptable to the liberal and radical feminists.

An example was one where one female candidate who applied for a job at ZMDC for a certain post in November 2010. Her story goes like this:

“I applied for a job at ZMDC to be employed as a legal advisor in November 2010 but I believe I did not get the job because in the interview I was asked that since I was married was I going to be able to work overtime/till late because during that time the company was working under pressure. **I was also asked on what my husband would say if I got home late.** A male candidate got the job and I felt that the questions I was asked were very discriminatory and that it was automatic that I would not get the job since I was married. I was not surprised when I was advised that I had not made it.”

The panellists in this case made life very difficult for the woman because in my view it is very difficult for a woman to know what her husband would say if she came home late because although a woman would come home late from work she would still be contributing to the financial keep up of the family, which is a good thing. These panellists would certainly not ask the same question of a male candidate. Since both male and female panellists realise the great importance of the role of child bearing and rearing to women in our culture, they make a point of asking about these issues when conducting interviews.

A Commission secretary working at one of the parastatals and who usually sits as a panellist in interviews had noted that the question, “*How many children do you have?*”, is usually asked of women and she was convinced that the fact that the question is asked of women is proof that it contributes to the decision whether or not to employ that person.

Women are also being discriminated as a result of age limits which are set by the parastatals when recruiting or when having training courses. There are some training courses which are being offered by the employers for their employees to attend but they set an age limit for one to qualify to attend. An example is the training course for security which was offered at CAAZ in Korea and it required people between the age group of 30 to 45 years. The training was meant for senior security officers. The issue of setting an age limit indirectly discriminates against women because you find that women in that age group would not have achieved as much as men in that age group and thus they are automatically disqualified. This period (30-45 years old) is one in which a woman is concentrating a great deal on her family. As a result of their commitment to family responsibilities, some women will not even reach



senior posts. In most Boards also one has to be over 35 years for them to be appointed and for most parastatals, I researched on, you also have to be politically affiliated to a certain political party. In one of the parastatals one is also required to be a war veteran to be in senior management. The age requirement to be appointed into boards is indirect discrimination because most women in that age group are not as well educated as the men because of the imbalances that were there 30-40 years ago which disadvantaged women a lot. Thus you find more men in boards than women. Commenting on the political aspect where one is appointed to be a board member in parastatals depending on their affiliation, Mr Zacheyo Mutimutema, a labour law expert said:

“The political, social environment is bad. In Boards most appointments are political and you find that women are not into politics. The women you find in politics are the one’s “*wekongonya*” (the dancers) at the bottom of the ladder. Women tend to say “*itai henyu vanozyigona*” (*do it those who are able to do it*) because politics is violent (bad environment for women).”

Some policies however are in favour of women like, for example, adverts for some job vacancies specify that “*females are encouraged to apply*”. (See Appendix 1). This has been done by MCAZ for a temporary vacancy at the workplace but the question still remains if they will do the same for a permanent job. An Officer in the Ministry of Labour had this to say commenting on this kind of advertisement:

“The Labour Act in section 5 provides for non-discrimination when advertising for a post to treatment at the workplace and that particular section is in line with Convention 111 which we have ratified, one of the core conventions of ILO. It is very discriminatory, why would you perpetuate affirmative action thirty years after independence you should not expect to find those adverts, no more affirmative action.”

The C111 referred to in the quotation is the Convention Concerning Discrimination In Respect of Employment and Occupation and Article 1 of that Convention provides for the definition of the term discrimination as any distinction, exclusion or preference.

At the Competition and Tariff Commission, the Human Resources Manager confessed that for the job vacancy for a driver they have always specified that they want males because they want someone who is available all the time, who can also attend to minor faults to the car if

they get stuck on the road. This is clear evidence of stereotyping because they think that only men and not women can be drivers.

#### **4.4 Women Capacity and Skills**

##### **4.4.1 Education**

*Education, education and more education!*

It has long been argued by various UN agencies that the critical determinant of women's socio-economic status is education or that "*education, education, and more education*" (as the former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair put it) is the key to achieving social development by improving the well being of girls and women thus promoting gender equity (Eade, 1999). There were different views on how education is contributing to the positions that women occupy in parastatals, mostly the low ranking (secretarial and administrative posts). The government of Zimbabwe has tried its level best to try and make the playing field level in terms of education, as the liberal feminists fight for, for both the girl child and the boy child. Although girls are getting more and more educated and even more educated than the men here in Zimbabwe it was surprising to find out that some women are still not interested in advancing with their education. A number of males interviewed were of the view that women did not want to educate themselves because they have got spouses who take care of them. One male respondent in management commented that:

“Women get content with their jobs and positions because some of our employees here do not want to advance in their education. When we compare women to men it is different because competition for men is high. There is a lady here we were telling to go to school and she said “*vana wangu vakura*”(my children are grown up) and my husband is getting enough to take care of us. It became an issue. **Women get content with their positions and they depend more on their husbands or boyfriends.**”

The other challenge goes back to the secondary school where the girl child is not taking science subjects and automatically they do not qualify for any engineering courses at University level. An example, is the Flight Safety Department at Air Zimbabwe where they employ retired people from the air force because they are so few qualified people available in

the market. At secondary school there is a drop off in girls' educational performance, particularly in mathematics and the sciences. But now it is no longer acceptable simply to attribute this to biology (the argument that girls reach intellectual maturity sooner than boys, and that boys overtake them in adolescence since men are, by nature, intellectually superior to women) other causes had to be identified (Leach, 1999). Professor Julie Stewart in one of the lectures (Wednesday 8 February, 2012) narrated a story on how her female grandchild when enrolling in Form 1 at a certain high school in Harare could not do metalwork which she had wanted to do because all the Form 1 girls were expected to do food and nutrition and all the form 1 boys were expected to do wood work and metal work because these interests assumed to suit their gender roles. Her attempt to advise the Headmaster that the school's policy was discriminatory was fruitless because he did not see any discrimination since, he said, the students could make a choice later when they were in Form 3. This was so despite being led to believe by the school that doing these subjects was not based on sex or gender.

Culturally, society is socialized to believe that women can only perform certain roles like cooking and any other work which is physical can only be done by men. Women aspire to be promoted to high ranking positions but they do not have the qualifications. When they advertised for the vacancy of Chief Finance Officer at Air Zimbabwe very few women applied because of lack of qualifications.

“Educational qualifications are limiting women but a number of ladies in our parastatal are working towards having a masters degree for them to get promotion.”

The above statement was said by a female respondent who occupies a senior position in one of the parastatals which is commercial.

Although some women wish to advance with their education they have challenges in their homes and unlike men they cannot continue with their education. They have the will to advance but there but there is no avenue for them to do so. A female economist at Competition and Tariff Commission had this to say:

“Generally women are less educated than men; that is why you find more women at the bottom. In terms of advancing with education it is difficult because I'm now married and have to attend to family duties

and children but husbands cannot do that, they do not care (about) leaving their children behind. It requires sacrifice.”

Access to education and training for women is not sufficient to increase their participation in the labour market on equal terms with men. While training may sometimes improve women's skills expectations of the impact of training on work opportunities for women are unrealistic. As long as gender discrimination continues to exist in the labour market in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy, women will be disadvantaged in their search for work and they need additional support in order to succeed in obtaining a greater share of worthwhile jobs (Leach,1999).

At ZMDC all senior management posts involve technical work, for example, mining, geology, metallurgy, business development, mechanical and electrical engineers. The female respondents at that parastatal have been to the mines and have noticed that very few women occupy the work they offer. One respondent attributes this to the biological make up of women, that is, women are weaker than men and jobs related to mining are very physical for example underground managers etc, it is quite demanding.

A secretary working for CAAZ said that women really aspire to take up higher positions but with the mentality that prevails within the parastatal they do not get to the top. She said the positions that most women occupy are in the low ranking positions and have no promotional grades. You start as a secretary or in customer service and that is the position in which you die. Ambitious women who wish to improve their qualifications need to look for a job elsewhere so that they can advance outside and not within the organisation. The men within the parastatal occupy the well paid jobs with lots of benefits. I noted that almost everyone at CAAZ is improving their educational qualifications but the question is whether they will help them within the organisation. Whereas some executives do not have Masters degrees in Business Administration, there are some managers who do.

Within the CAAZ, 25% are females and 75% are males. They give equal opportunities to all men and women when it comes to recruiting and promoting. The women, however, fail the air traffic control aptitude test. Fire and security duties require physical fitness so part of the interview process requires the candidates to run for ten kilometres and there is usually a low turnout of female candidates. The research also revealed that experience is more important

than educational qualifications for most of the senior CAAZ positions; there is more emphasis on educational requirements at management level.

The Senior personnel officer in one of the parastatal was of the view that the reason why they had only a few women in management is because it requires skill in engineering and that the problem goes back to secondary school where the girl child does not take up science subjects and by the time there is a job vacancy there are no female applicants because they do not qualify. She said:

“Most of the staff is in operations and there are lots of women. We have few female managers. This is so because aviation is technical and there are very few women with those requirements. It requires science subjects and most women do not have science subjects at entry level for example, fire department- each time we do interviews we find one woman out of fifteen candidates. Recently we held interviews and we got two women out of twenty-two recruits. Aviation is a closed industry, a few that have relatives and friends who work there know about aviation.”

At CAAZ women in management are mainly in the legal and Human Resources departments and a lot of them are in non-managerial positions. There are four female directors out of a total of twelve. The reason could be, according to a respondent in the legal department, that when recruitments are carried out it is on the basis of merit and girls drop out at secondary level and we are automatically outnumbered by the men. The subjects required for this kind of work are the sciences and women do not take up those subjects at high school.

#### **4.4.2 Constraints**

Despite certain gains, women continue to be prevented from realising their full potential because of patriarchal structures and institutions which constrain them, and because of prejudices about their proper station in life (Francis, 1998).

A respondent working at CAAZ admitted that women were being limited by several factors, family responsibility being one of them, in getting high skilled jobs. She said:

“Although we have equal opportunities for all in job vacancies here, with patriarchy now there is a problem because there are jobs which require someone to come during the night. It’s the women who are not taking up those jobs. In interviews they ask questions like, do you have children, are you married, are you able to work during odd hours or to be transferred to another airport. Probably that is where most of the women are losing out (so family constraints are a hinder).”

Marriage was also a major constraint to women in taking up senior positions. Marriage, Although things are now changing marriage is considered very important by society and if a woman is not married she is culturally considered to be a prostitute. You, therefore, find that a number of women strive to get married even though by doing so marriage creates an obstacle to their career ambitions. It came out of the research that although men had families they were not affected in the same way the women were affected. The Public Relations Manager at CAAZ said that:

“Women are affected by marriage. Aviation is global and you travel all the time and it is difficult for women. The General Manager travels a lot. Society comes into play also. I will not apply for General Manager post because you leave work at 9/10 p.m three times a week.”

The Public Relations Manager at one of the parastatals said that at times she feels she cannot do some of the trips that her work requires because she thinks about the children at home and who will pick them up from school etc. This is a married woman but she cannot even conceive of her husband doing some of her duties (as a mother) because culturally it is believed that it is only the woman who takes care of the children. There are, however, some irresponsible men who hide behind this aspect of culture.

One of the male managers working at CAAZ said that the women in their parastatal did not want to apply for some senior posts and he was not sure why but was convinced that family responsibilities could be the reason. He said they have 8 airport managers and of those only 2 are females. The biggest Airport is being run by a woman (cash cow). He also said they have very few women in senior positions and that in their Regulatory Division they have only 1 woman. Most women occupy positions in Human Resources, Customer Services and Public Relations. They have less women in the operations than in the support service. At one time the parastatal advertised for five managerial posts; there were only two female internal

applicants and 1 of them got the job. He said that there were other women within the organisation who could have applied but did not do so; may be, he said, they thought they could not do the job it but he did do not really know why. The man pondered:

“Maybe the women did not want to move to the other airports because of family responsibilities.”

Females were also having a challenge to work in some of these parastatals because they do shift work. A male respondent had this to say:

“It’s shift work at our operations so in interviews we ask if one has a family, is able to work night shift or out of Harare. **Some responses we get are that some women do not want shift work especially (if they are) married. Most single women are comfortable and can work anywhere. A few individuals cite their religion, especially seventh day Adventist or those that observe the Sabbath.** The company asks because they want to know the history of the person. It does not influence the decision to employ. Most questions relate to the job.”

Religion also came into play and it was affecting both males and females. A certain employee took up a job at Air Zimbabwe but eventually quit the job because he was required to come to work on Saturdays and could not do so because of his religion.

A personnel assistant at Air Zimbabwe blamed family responsibilities amongst others as contributing to the choices that women make at workplaces. She said:

“To some extent culture (and) family responsibility affect the decisions women make but I think if you are in management you are better off because you delegate duties. I have worked in the GCEO’S office and I don’t want to go back there because it is too demanding. You go to work early and leave late. I even had to stop studies because I could not to balance work, house work and studying. So at times you forgo the post because of the nature of the work.”

#### **4.4.3 Preferences**

Preferences also contribute to positions that women occupy.

“The more demanding the job the lesser the women take it up. Women have a lot on their hands, you have to work extra hours if you are in management. Most of the time during the day is taken up by meetings, workshops, hearings, queries, investigations and you can only do your work after hours or at home so for males its easy but for a mother you have to leave early to pick up children and do housework. For me it’s different because I’m a single woman and I’m not answerable to anyone if I get home late.”

The implications of the above statement which was said by a very senior respondent in one of the parastatals is that for men the sky is the limit. Women, on the other hand, stay in their lower paid jobs or take up posts whose work does not take much of their time or cause them to neglect their family responsibilities. No one, including his wife, will dare ask a man why he comes home late from work, whilst men ask their wives such questions and sometimes even stop them from working. I interviewed the Human Resources Manager at one of the parastatals and she recited an incident which happened at their workplace. In this incident a woman had been promoted to a higher grade and as one of her benefits she was given a car. The husband of that woman called the Human Resources Manager that he did not want the woman to continue working because she was now being pompous and disrespectful of him. This shows how the African men have been socialised to believe that women should not drive and should be dependent on and subservient to them. Men always want to dominate women.

In Operations at CAAZ they have three main divisions and the directors are all male. Flight Safety is the kind of job which has more males. It could be about preferences because the higher you go the more the pressure there is. The Head of Airport Managers said that his Manager at Prince Charles is a single lady and at times she leaves work at midnight and for a married woman it is a bit difficult for her.

The Human Resources Manager at another parastatal indicated that she was happy working in that parastatal and had no intention to change jobs because the job allowed her to do all she wanted to do. She admitted that the parastatal had more women than men and that there was actually a high male staff turnover. She attributed this to the low salaries that the parastatal offers and thought that since men are traditionally, the providers or breadwinners in their



families, the salaries are not enough for them, whereas the female employees supplemented their salaries with their husbands'. She also said single women with responsibilities did not last long in the parastatal. She said:

“As for me I am happy as a Human Resources Manager here because I have time to take care of my children, 11yrs and 8yrs and time to do homework with them and collect them from school that is why I am hanging around. I don't think I will be able to do that with other organisations, it is flexible here and this is the time my children need me most. Women are more here because it is a stable environment but the salaries are not attractive for men. More men leave and staff turnover for men is high. When we recruit we try and balance. Both men and women can do the work-it is more analytical and pharmacists. The salaries are not enough for men with the kind of responsibilities they have even single women with responsibilities might not cope.”

There was one woman working at MMCZ who thought that although women are facing challenges back home and in the community, they do not reject the offer to work in senior posts. She thought that the women were jealous of each other and once at the top of the ladder in a parastatal they harass their subordinates especially if the subordinate is better off than them materially. So the issue of class also comes into play as a contributing factor which affects the kind of positions women occupy in parastatals. The respondent had personally experienced that with her boss who is female.

It was found that generally you find women at supervisory level and below because some people are not very ambitious enough; they are comfortable with their positions, do not further their education and fear the increased workload if they seek promotion.

#### **4.5 Do Employers Prefer Having Men in High Ranking Positions?**

Although this assumption was partially challenged I was disturbed by the fact that there were still some employers who still think that you can only have men as the leaders because women have got challenges in their lives and may not cope with the pressures at the workplace. These employers did not openly admit to that but they were indirectly doing it and some did not even realize that they were doing it. Although education, constraints, preferences, the law, and discrimination contributed to the positions that the women occupied

in parastatals it became very clear that the employer himself, especially in parastatals where the work is technical, they preferred employing males to females. The employers also did so in regard to those critical positions which demand the full time attendance of an employee. The employers admitted that it was difficult to find a replacement for jobs which require expertise since they were few in the market. You cannot just go to an employment agency and say you want an aircraft engineer and get one immediately.

Employers think more of production and the negative effects of absenteeism on production and end up favouring the employment of men over women. The Public Relations Officer of ZMDC had this to say:

“Employees think that women have so many responsibilities and are absent from work (so often) and distract their performance and end up employing men over women. It is difficult to say it has happened here. Men are resistant to change and they think they are better than women.”

This respondent who is a procurement officer thought that women should not be in senior management because they are not able to make decisions on their own and they tend to personalise things.

The Finance Manager at ZMDC, who is male, admitted that his employer prefers employing men to women because of the nature of the work and it also depends on the recruiter. He actually prefers women to men because women are tidier and more obedient. It seems that this man wants control the people he works with and he wants to exercise power over women. The men went on to say that for the interviews that he has set as a panellist he observed that women prefer employing males and *vice versa*.

A respondent in the legal department at one of the parastatals said that in her experience her employer has always had male CEOs and most of them are sceptical about working with women because they think that they are incompetent. In a way this is indirect discrimination. Another respondent thought that there could be discrimination going on at her parastatal because they had recently demoted a female manager and put a male in her position. The respondent could not disclose to me the reasons for the demotion.

Some employers did not mince their words when it came to their preference for employing males rather than females because to them it seemed obvious that only men can do certain kinds of work. The other reason given was that it would be difficult to get a replacement in certain departments if an employee, especially a woman went on leave, especially maternity leave, which takes three months because there were no experts for that job in the market. The manager in Avianics, Maintenance, Planning and Productivity at Air Zimbabwe admitted that:

“In my department we prefer men. We used to have women at the hangars and at one time half of the women got pregnant at the same time and it affected production. It was difficult to find replacement because you can't go to labour and say I want workers. So at the hangars [where aeroplanes are repaired] I want men and line maintenance (receiving incoming flights and despatching them) I also want men.”

This male respondent had this to say:

“Every employer is worried about employing the women and because at Air Zimbabwe we work 24 hours and if one has to go on maternity leave, in as much as we want our women to come and work for us you end up looking for those things.”

Another woman was convinced that the women do not want their work to infringe on their personal life and that another reason could be that top management thinks that males are better off than women; at one point a retrenchment exercise demoted all women from management to supervisory positions. That is why so many women were at the lower echelons of the employment ladder in that particular parastatal.

At Air Zimbabwe it was the view of some employees that any one can do the work but the trend is that they employ more men than women maybe because of the current disruptions causing the late arrival of employees at their workplace might end up coming to work late and during weekends and for women it is difficult. This shows the extent to which family responsibility can influence the decision to employ some one even though the decision is being treated as an obvious and simple issue which does not require government's intervention. The men are hesitant to promote women because women are affected by social issues and can get easily stressed at work.

The top management directors at NSSA are all males and it was disappointing to hear that some directors thought that working late was more productive. There are 35 managers at NSSA and there are less than 10 women managers. This female respondent narrated how she got irritated by the questions that she was always asked by her male boss:

“We knock off at 4.30 and one director is always asking “you guys I always leave work at 6.30p.m and all the cars will be gone in the basement, what time do you leave work”. The director thinks that working late is more productive when in actual fact the men spent the whole day playing in their offices and only work after hours.”

She went on to give an example of when she was working for the City Council of Harare and one of her male bosses refused that she acted in a certain senior position because he said she left work at 5 p.m. every day. The woman would leave the workplace at that hour every day because her husband would come at that time to take her home and disliked being kept waiting. So here is an example of how a woman is dominated by men both at work and at home. If this woman had been a single woman the story would have been different; because of this the radical feminist theorists believe that it is the patriarchal system that oppresses women and is “...*a system that cannot be reformed but only be ripped out root and branch*” (Tong, R. 1994).

Even in the parastatal boards you find that there are more men than women and these board members are appointed by the Minister responsible for that specific parastatal. Among all the parastatals in which I carried out my research the ministers are male except one. These Ministers appoint these board members in consultation with the President. Table 2 below shows the gender composition of the members of the Boards of all the parastatals investigated.

**Table 2: Showing the Gender Composition of the Boards of the Parastatals investigated**

Name of Parastatal	No. of female Board Members	No. of male Board Members	Total
AIR ZIMBABWE	3	6	9
CAAZ	0	7	7
Competition & Tariff	3	7	10
MCAZ	6	6	12
MMCZ	2	6	8
POTRAZ	Currently no Board		
NSSA	2	7	9
ZMDC	2	5	7

The Gender Officer in the Ministry of Women’s Affairs said that they have tried to influence the composition of Boards for parastatals but the women are not forthcoming and do not behave professionally. There is one disappointing case in which one of only two females of a 9-member board failed to attend a single board meeting during the whole of last year. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs have created a database of professional, skilled women and in doing so they have consulted with Proweb (an organisation which works and promote women in business and professional women) to locate suitable professional women to work in parastatals. The Ministry has been consulted and has recommended candidates to professional bodies. In the past when the Ministry had been approached by Ministers to give them the names of suitable women they found it difficult to do so because they did not have a database. But since it now has a database the Ministry is able, up to a point, to influence the decision of a Minister in the selection of females as candidates for various parastatal Boards; the final decision is, however, theirs.

#### **4.6 Are Women Perceived as Care Workers?**

*It's not a perception, it's a reality!*

In all the parastatals researched, the departments dominated by women all had something to do with care work, even in the senior posts. Senior in this case means middle management because this is typically the highest level attained by women in parastatals. Women occupied secretarial, clerical and administrative posts and as well as the positions of human resources and public relations managers. All these posts have something to do with attending to peoples' needs within the parastatal.

One respondent in management at one of the parastatals stated that women in that parastatal are more involved in posts involved with flight attendances, telephone sales, the telephone switch board and customer care services. He thought that the way in which people are socialised by society partly explained why women worked in the care industry. He gave an example of the work of flight attendants which is performed by more women than men. He said it had something to do with women being better than men at attending to the needs of customers and serving them food.

For some of the posts for example, secretarial work, the parastatals never get any male applicants for the job, so they are left with no choice but to employ the women. There was one male who applied for a secretarial job in one of the parastatals but was discouraged by most of his workmates because they said it was a female job and that he would not get the job anyway and, if he did, he would not last. He had been working for the parastatal as a clerk and had done a secretarial course while he was working there.

#### **4.7 Is Law Reform a Necessity?**

Everything on this earth has a beginning. By themselves, affirmative action laws cannot increase the number of women occupying more top managerial positions in parastatals, but, in combination with other reforms, legal reform may assist them in this ultimate goal. It was the view of most of the respondents that laws to cater for workers with family responsibility should be passed. None of the respondents, however, really wanted paternity leave to be

included, because they thought that the men would abuse it. The men themselves also did not think it was necessary to have paternity leave because they would not even apply for it since they believe that it is the duty of the wives to take care and nurse their babies with the help of other women such as their mothers-in-law or their own mothers.

Another woman in senior management and responsible for co-ordinating board meetings at NSSA thought that having laws in place which provided for leave for workers with family responsibility would not really solve the problem that women were facing because even if an employee takes leave, work can follow an employee home. She said that she had difficulties when she went on maternity leave because work was brought to her at home. Her boss is male. She said the boss sort of understands and sympathises but still emphasises that he wants her at work. The labour experts in the Ministry of Labour and ZCTU want law reform.

Some lawyers and workers in some parastatals think that there should be specific policies in each parastatal on gender equality. The National Gender Policy is not enough. The Ministry of Women Affairs lobbied for 50 % representation for women in decision making positions in the draft Constitution and are yet to find out if that has been incorporated. Even the Affirmative Action Policy is not good enough; it is only practised by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Service, and the Ministry of Lands and this is not enough. We need a National affirmative Action Policy which applies to all areas.

Having few women in management has an impact on the decisions made concerning conditions of service and anything relating to employment which affects women in the parastatals. Therefore, it is very important to have women represented in boards and this can be achieved by having policies which make it compulsory to have a certain minimum number of women in those posts. Although it does not automatically follow that having women on the boards of parastatals or in senior management means that women's interests will be catered for, it is, in my view, better to have them in place and then to see what happens rather than not having them in place at all. This was said by one male manager:

“Save for very isolated issues women tend to derive more satisfaction than men. The women in meetings no matter how senior, if there is a problem they say *“Ah isusu I don't think I will give an opinion because ndozvatakapiwa naMwari”*(I will not give an opinion because God meant it to be).”

Another one also said that women have a problem that if they take a position it is difficult to change them and they end up sticking together in groups and we men end up saying, "*Pano patowa nemadzimai eruwadzano/echechi (We now have a church ladies union).*"

The other challenge is that even if we have the women represented on parastatal boards and in their senior management their views are not heeded by their male counterparts. This female respondent was bitter and she said that her work environment was so much male dominated and even if she was in management she felt that she was being discriminated against. She said:

"Discrimination goes on towards women here. When you say something they look at you as a woman and do not consider your facts especially in meetings."

It is in view of the above sentiments that I think it is necessary to have laws and policies in place which make it compulsory for parastatals to have equal gender representation in Boards, senior management and in all decision making positions.



## CHAPTER 5

### 5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Conclusions

This chapter discusses the conclusion of the research and the recommendations emanating from it that will help to increase the number of women working in senior positions in the parastatals. The following conclusions were drawn from the research findings.

- Women make up a very small percentage of those occupying senior positions in parastatals and the majority of them languish at the bottom of the ladder in employment in parastatals thus you have a bottleneck type of representation. The women do jobs which have traditionally been seen as women's work in the areas of secretarial, administrative and clerical practice as well as in customer care service. A small number of women are in the technical, senior positions and boards. Although Affirmative Action has created space for females to attain degrees they remain concentrated in non-technical programmes such as arts and commerce; few choose science subjects. This is however influenced by the non-scientific subjects that are offered to girls at secondary school.
- Although to a lesser extent, women are still being limited by education in advancing in the workplace, some women are willing to advance with their education. Some, however, do not have the financial capacity to do so while others do not have time to pursue further studies because they are married and have a lot on their hands and balancing work, family responsibilities and school is a challenge to them. Some women are content with their level of education and are not ambitious. This is because they hold the cultural stereotypical belief that men are the breadwinners upon whom women depend; women can only do so much and their husbands should do the rest.
- Women are being used as tools to attract or lure customers in some of the departments that they work in, like customer care services, ticket sales, reservations, receptionists

and secretarial. Their voices and their feminine look is what the employer uses to ensure continuity and increase in the number of customers that visit the institution.

- Where there is a will there is a way. Government has alleged that it has got a challenge in ratifying the C156 because it has got financial implications and they do not have the requisite financial capacity and even the human resources to establishment childcare facilities at the workplace; the employer is also required to contribute. Government is not willing to ratify and implement the C156 simply because it does not prioritise issues affecting women, especially in the economic field. I say so because where government has no capacity ILO can intervene if that government requests for such help. An example was what was done with the Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948. Our government did not have money and money was requested from ILO and it trained judges in 2010 and was also given an ILO technical assistance package.

- The labour laws in Zimbabwe are lacking in terms of protecting the women or making the plain field level for both men and women in the economic field especially when it comes to issues of family responsibility. Family responsibility is an issue which cannot be avoided in the African context. As one of the respondents said:

“Production must be linked to the workers mind, if that worker is at work and their minds are thinking about home, there is a problem.”

- The question is, who are you valuing here, production or the producer? Industry needs a workforce now and in the future; but, if its employees (i.e., mainly its women) are not given the right to attend to the critical issue of family responsibilities (for example, be given the right to go on maternity leave or to take leave to care for sick close relatives), the same industry is going to collapse.
- There has not been adequate gender sensitisation nor monitoring of the gender focal persons in the parastatals although an effort was made to train the gender focal persons in all the parastatals and in the Ministries responsible for those parastatals. Even the Ministers who are responsible for appointing members of all their parastatal

boards have not been actively sensitised on gender equality and equity, thus you find all parastatal boards are dominated by men.

- There are no specific policies for parastatals to make it compulsory for them to have an equal number of men and women on their boards. The National Gender Policy is not adequate and some people do not even know about it.
- The International Labour standards are a challenge for most developing countries to implement because they require financial and human resources and I am of the view that the rights are more Eurocentric than African. Developing African countries should therefore come up with their own Labour standards which suit their own capabilities and needs.

## **5.1 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made for the employers, employees and legal persons at the parastatals to better the status of the women so that they become more and more up the employment ladder since the research has shown that it is not only the problem of the employee, employer or the law but a combination of all the three and other things.

- We have to empower the women by encouraging them to get educated and the girl child to take up science subjects and technical courses at secondary schools and tertiary education. We also have to change the attitude of the parents and society so that they give their children (male and female) equal educational opportunities.
  - *Activities* - Put in place measures to allow women to do so, for example, giving them educational loans as incentives at the workplace and giving the girl child career guidance/ development which focuses on technical courses.
  - *Targets* - This can be achieved by targeting the girl child, the teachers and headmaster at the secondary schools and even the lecturers at the universities and colleges to give lectures on career guidance.

- *Challenges* - They can however be challenges on societal resistance or lack of concern on the issue from the society and the responsible authorities.
  
- Providing friendly working arrangements for the females which allow them to attend to work and family responsibility at the same time. This on the part of the employer increases loyalty to organisation lessens absenteeism and tardiness and encourages productivity and boosts morale. This also lowers personal financial expenses, improves job satisfaction, and decreases stress on the employee.
  - *Activities* - Employers should organise for their employees transport and a driver to take children to and from school and for those who can afford establish childcare centres at the workplace so that the woman will reduce commuting time to go and attend their nursing role.
  
  - This can be done through discussions and consultations between the employer and the employee. Both the employer and employee can contribute to the establishment of the child care centres and transport. I would suggest that the employer contribute 70% towards the transport and child care facility while the employees contribute 30%, for those in the better paying grade and 15% for the low paid employee. Non parents can also contribute. The employer can even contribute everything and make the employee pay a small monthly fee for the day to day running of the transport and childcare centre.
  
  - Employers can also arrange for part time work which does not necessarily take away the benefits that the employee is entitled to.
  
  - *Targets* - The employers in Parastatals and the government of Zimbabwe.
  
  - *Challenges* - The major challenge could be resistance from the employer since there are financial implications to the whole thing considering the challenges that the Zimbabwean economy is currently facing. So it will be difficult for the duty bearer, the state, to implement such recommendations.

- Ratification and domestication of the international human rights instruments concerning labour matters so that workers will have somewhere to start from to claim that right.
  - *Target* - the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.
  - *Challenges* - Lack of political will.
  
- All policies must include issues on gender even the national budget.
  - *Activities* - Parastatals should come up with policies specific on gender and even introduce quota systems Monitoring and evaluation should be done as frequent as possible. There should be 50/50 representation in management and boards and making it compulsory from the board members to attend meetings. At one of the Parastatals there was a concern that one female board member is usually absent in board meetings attending to the husband's needs because the husband is a politician but she is good at representing employees.
  - *Targets* - Legal advisors in the Parastatals and the Ministry of Finance. The legal advisor for CAAZ pointed out that:
 

“It would be possible to have a gender policy in the organisation because policies emanate from our office.”
  
- Strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Women's Affairs to monitor and put up mechanisms to make strategies to make Parastatals accountable not only to Ministry but also to the national gender machinery in terms of their composition of boards and all.
  - *Activities* - capacitating staff and institutional development.

- *Targets* - The government of Zimbabwe as a whole and in particular the Ministry of Labour and social welfare and the Ministry of Women's Affairs.
  
- Ensure that those who wield power and make decisions affecting women's lives are held accountable for those decisions. For this they need to be aware of the constraints which inhibit women from participating actively in the social, economic and political development of their country.
  - *Activities* - gender sensitization.
  
  - *Targets* - The Ministers for Women's Affairs, the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Education and NGO's.
  
- The political culture in some of the Parastatals should change so as to allow the women to participate freely.

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## Appendix 1: Advertisement for A Job Vacancy



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### TEMPORARY JOB VACANCY

The MCAZ is inviting qualified, dynamic, self-motivated and experienced applicants for the following post

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Reporting to the Finance Manager, the incumbent will be responsible for:

- Reconciling assigned suppliers and debtors' ledger accounts
- Correcting any errors or omissions to account balances
- Costing of services

#### Requirements

- Accounting Diploma or Part one ACCA, CIS or CIMA
- Experience 2yrs
- Knowledge in Pastel Software added advantage
- Ability to work under pressure
- Problem solving & creativity

The MCAZ is an equal opportunity organisation. Females are encouraged to apply.

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