

**The role of tourism accommodation facilities in promoting gender equality and empowerment of workers in Maseru rural, Lesotho**

**By**

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**Declaration**

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I, Rehauhetsoe Ann Ntlele, declare that “The role of tourism accommodation facilities in promoting gender equality and empowerment of employees” is my work and that I have acknowledged all the sources used in my work.

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## **Abstract**

Gender equality and empowerment have been a major problem not only in household but in the workforce as well globally. This dissertation aimed to explore the role of tourism accommodation facilities in promoting gender equality and empowerment among employees in Maseru rural, how employees were provided with economic empowerment, which training programs were implemented to promote gender equality and empowerment and lastly how employees were provided with social and psychological empowerment.

**Methods:** Qualitative approach was employed using face-to-face in-depth interviews for eight participants in Maseru rural. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

**Results:** The findings showed that empowerment and gender equality for employees in accommodation facilities in Maseru rural did not disseminate equally for employees. The accommodation facilities in Maseru rural were mostly dominated by women than men. Since Lesotho is a patriarchal country even in accommodation facilities women still do housekeeping related jobs while men engage in hard labour jobs with a few of them engaging in unisex jobs. Some felt economically empowered while others felt economically dis-empowered. Training was mostly given to the newcomers while old workers were given occasionally and training offered was both on-job and out-jobs training. It was also found that employees felt socially and psychological empowered by working in accommodation facilities.

**Recommendations:** The government should collaborate with accommodation facility owners to offer training and education programs on gender equality and empowerment and implement policies that encourage the promotion of women to leadership positions within establishments.

Both the government of Lesotho and accommodation facility owners should initiate support networks which promote gender equality and empowerment in accommodation facilities.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: Introduction to the Study**

### **1.1 Introduction and Background**

Since the early 20th century, feminist researchers have raised the subject of gender equality and empowerment and in the contemporary world international views and avenues have been opened to deal with gender issues such as the Beijing platform, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and International Labor Organization (ILO) (Kabeer 2005; True & Parisi, 2013). Through a process called gender mainstreaming, several nations have encouraged programs and projects to guarantee that gender equality is implemented throughout all industries (True & Parisi, 2013). In recent years it has been found that there are countries and nations which have worked hard to combat gender inequality and disempowerment such as the Nordic nations, leading to their attainment of the highest levels of gender equality globally in terms of economic participation, opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. However nations in the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa still have been shown to have the highest levels of gender inequality (Riman et al., 2023).



Because gender inequality persists in all cultures, achieving gender equality and empowerment is a top priority on the international agenda advocating that men and women should have equal opportunities, rights, and responsibilities in all spheres of life (Bayeh, 2016). This could promote decision-making autonomy for both sexes and eliminate harassment and gender-based violence at work and at home (O'Brien et al., 2017).

In recent years, promoting gender equality and empowerment of employees has gained significance across various sectors including the transport sector (Singhai & Singhai, 2021), textile sector (Mamum, 2018) and the tourism industry (Zhang & Zhang, 2020) among others. As people travel from one place to another, there is a need for lodging facilities such as lodges, hotels and guesthouses. It is well known that establishment of accommodation facilities contribute to community development world-wide. Neuman, (2018) conducted a study in Thailand which shows that community-based tourism initiatives that focus on accommodation facilities and related services contribute to the economic and social development of the community. Also in Lesotho lodging establishments provide employment chances for Basotho in both urban and rural locations. Lesotho's hospitality sector contributes to creating job opportunities employing over 2717 people as of 2018.

Though tourism has the potential to empower women and narrow the gender equality gap in Lesotho through job creation, changing the mindsets and other activities, little research has been conducted to investigate how this sector contributes to gender equality and empowerment (Tlali & Musi) 2021). Tlali and Musi (2021) investigated the contribution of ecotourism to gender equality and empowerment, but the study only focused on one rural tourism enterprise suggesting that more and more studies are needed to explore this sector. Other studies

concerning gender equality and empowerment in Lesotho have focused mainly on other sectors such as politics (Ntho, 2021), education and health (O'Brien et al., 2017).

Despite these research and government measures, gender inequality and the under-empowerment of other groups continue to be a problem in Lesotho. Tourism facilities located in rural areas could contribute towards gender equality and empowerment because they operate in places where cultural norms, lack of knowledge and lack of development in general hinder progress towards gender equality and empowerment.

After the World Health Organization's (WHO) declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, over ninety percent of the global community was confronted with massive restrictions due to the lockdown of countries (Hosainne, 2022). One of the industries which were severely hit due to the lockdown was tourism and hospitality. COVID-19 has made workers and owners of accommodation facilities think in a different way in terms of promoting gender equality and empowerment. Tlali and 'Musi (2021) conducted a study at Malealea lodge using qualitative exploratory design, the findings showed COVID-19 exposed their vulnerability in all aspects of life including loss of jobs, poverty, deepening gender inequality and increased incidents of violence suggesting that the world and different sectors of the economy should rethink about life and issues of equality and empowerment beyond the workplace to home place as well. Though the pandemic brought challenges and benefits as Tlali and 'Musi (2021) argue it has shown that some sectors like tourism are more vulnerable to pandemics than others. The latter suggests that employers and employees need to be empowered to deal with effects of pandemics like COVID-19, an issue which has been given inadequate attention in the scholarship about tourism and policy arena in Lesotho

The government of Lesotho has implemented measures to rectify the gender imbalance which include not only ratified gender-based accords, but it has also domesticated them (Kali, 2020). It has amended the legislation so that women who were previously prohibited from owning land can now not only access it but also exert power over it (Fogelman, 2016). The government also employed the Independent Electoral Commission to impose gender quotas on political parties, culminating in a steady increase in the number of women in Lesotho's parliament, cabinet, and local government. The government has created a ministry dedicated to women affairs.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Although there is progress in various sectors in terms of gender equality and empowerment, through the government of Lesotho and its development partners' intervention, there is a persistent gap in ensuring equal opportunities and rights for male and female workers in accommodation facilities in Maseru rural. The prevailing gender norms and stereotypes perpetuate an unequal distribution of tasks and responsibilities within accommodation facilities in Maseru rural; hence reinforce gender inequalities and limits capacity for empowerment of workers. Thus this brings the need to examine the role of accommodation facilities in promoting gender equality and empowerment amongst workers in Maseru rural. Also little has been investigated concerning the contribution of the tourism sector in promoting gender equality and empowerment.

## **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of tourism accommodation facilities in promoting gender equality and empowerment among employees in Maseru rural in Lesotho.

## **1.4 Research questions**

### **General research question:**

- a. How gender equality and empowerment is promoted amongst workers in accommodation facilities?

### **Specific research questions:**

- b. How is gender equality and economic empowerment promoted amongst workers in accommodation facilities?
- c. Which training programs are provided to workers in accommodation facilities to promote gender equality and empowerment?
- d. How is gender equality and social and psychological empowerment promoted amongst workers?

## **1.5 Objectives**

### **General objective:**

- a. To explore how gender equality and economic empowerment is promoted amongst workers in accommodation facilities.

### **Specific objectives:**

- b. To assess how gender equality and economic empowerment in accommodation facilities is promoted amongst workers.

- c. To investigate which training programs are provided to workers in accommodation facilities promote gender equality and empowerment.
- d. To examine how gender equality and social and psychological empowerment is promoted amongst workers in accommodation facilities.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

Globally, gender equality and empowerment issues have required scholarly attention. The recent COVID-19 has demonstrated that workers in all sectors are vulnerable and powerless which becomes worse in sectors that are female-dominated such as tourism. Hence the study may contribute to show the extent to which employees in this sector are vulnerable and identify areas in which they could be empowered and could face gender equality. The study may contribute to literature since there is little research on the role of accommodation facilities in empowering workers and promoting gender equality in Lesotho. Additionally the study may also help the owners of accommodation facilities to know the importance of empowering employees and why it is empirical to provide workers with training programs.

Moreover, the study may identify the benefits of promoting gender equality and empowerment of workers in the tourism sector thus the policy-makers may find that it is vital for empowerment and equality policies to be implemented especially in accommodation facilities. Both employers and employees may realize how empowerment and gender equality significantly contribute to their everyday life.

### **1.7 Outline of the study**

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter one presents the background, purpose of the study, problem statement, research questions, objectives, significance of the study, Justification of the

study and methodology. Chapter two consists of the theoretical framework and literature review. Chapter three focuses on methodology, the research approach, design, population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection and analysis. Chapter four will present the findings while chapter five will focus on conclusion and recommendations.

### **1.8 Chapter summary**

This chapter offered background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, objectives, significance of the study, Justification of the study and methodology.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews literature on gender, gender inequality and different forms of empowerment that can be incorporated to eradicate inequality that exist between males and their female counterparts. It starts with presenting the theoretical framework that informs those who study. Following the presentation of the theoretical framework, the chapter presents thematic areas in gender equality and empowerment as informed by the theory and the objectives of the study.

### **2.2 Theoretical framework**

This study will undertake Empowerment theory. Empowerment theory is a social psychology paradigm that stresses the significance of providing individuals with the tools, resources, and support they need to take charge of their life and achieve good changes (Zimmerman, 2000; Feste & Anderson; Zharekhina & Kubacki, 2015). This idea is based on the idea that individuals are more likely to take action to improve their own lives and the lives of others around them when they feel empowered. The empowerment theory provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation that depicts how organizations build a favorable environment which inspires employees to actively engage in activities to achieve work-related goals (Wu et al., 2021). Moreover, unlike other researchers Kamin et al., (2022), claims that empowerment theory is based on the idea that people's actions are influenced by interpersonal power dynamics, battles

for dominance, and attempts to impose influence or control. Thus, it makes the assumption that not everyone has the same opportunities, capacities, or interests to behave in a certain, advised manner, regardless of how socially desirable such behavior may be.

The goal of empowerment theory is to better understand how people, groups, and communities may take charge of their life and increase their degrees of autonomy, self-determination, and decision-making (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). The empowerment theory's primary principle is to enable individuals to take ownership of their lives, make informed decisions, and participate actively in bringing about change in their communities (Spreitzer, 1995). It asserts that people and communities must have access to the tools and opportunities they require in order to develop their capacities, accomplish their objectives, and make their voices heard. Education, job training, social networks, political clout, and access to cash are a few examples of these resources (Spreitzer 1995).

Empowerment theory has been used in a variety of sectors, including social work, where Tuner (2011) did research on Social work treatment using empowerment theory and it has been shown that empowerment theory to equip social workers with knowledge, beliefs, and abilities that promote human rights and social justice. Similarly, Pigg, (2009) employed empowerment theory in his research of three faces of empowerment in community development. Furthermore, Kiral, (2020) studied the relationship between the empowerment of teachers by school administrators and organizational commitment of teachers using empowerment theory. The findings showed that the highest empowerment was in the administrative support dimension and the teachers indicated that administrators exhibited empowerment in the administrative support dimension at most. In healthcare, Al Bazroun et al., (2023) did research on Strategies to Empower Diploma Nurses in the Eastern Health Cluster-Saudi Arabia. The findings indicate that nurses holding



diploma certificates showed that they gained confidence through experience which enabled them to manage any patients, even critical ones requiring complex care. It has been used to promote social change, improve the well-being of individuals and communities, and increase the efficacy of social programs and services (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). This theory has also been applied in the field of tourism, (Eluwole et al., 2022) conducted a study at Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe to establish Understanding residents' empowerment and community attachment in festival tourism using lenses of empowerment theory. The findings highlighted the importance of psychologically, sociologically, environmentally, and politically empowering to residents in festival host communities. This study is different from other scholars because it looks into how gender equality and empowerment is promoted economically, through training and, psychologically and socially amongst employees in accommodation facilities.

The empowerment theory is used so that the researcher determines literature which is the empowerment of employees in accommodation facilities (Wu et al., 2021). Empowerment theory will help in data collection and analysis since the researcher will be guided to collect relevant data to the research topic and the theory itself. For this theory employees in accommodation facilities have to be equipped with tools, resources and support from their employers to make a positive change in their lives (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

Empowerment theory will be used in this study because tourism accommodation facilities operate within unique contexts which have specific dynamics, challenges and opportunities when it comes to promoting gender equality and empowerment (Spreitzer 1995). By using empowerment theory the researcher will gain insights into the specific contextual factors that hinder or facilitate workers' empowerment in these facilities. It promotes a workplace where gender equality and individual empowerment are respected and actively encouraged (Eluwole et

al., 2022). Thus the theory will help the researcher to explore the role of accommodation facilities in promoting gender equality and empowerment of workers. Moreover, COVID-19 has really shown the workers in accommodation facilities that they needed the tools which are skills and knowledge that employees are equipped with which they can use within the workplace and beyond.

### **2.3 Gender equality and empowerment: Global perspective**

Gender equality and empowerment have been an issue for millennia, with major progress beginning in the United States of America and expanding around the world (Mackie, 2003, ;Heywood, 2006 ; Lorber, 2010). According to (Lorber, 2010), the ideology of gender equality that nineteenth-century feminists utilized in their campaign for women's rights arose from liberal political philosophy, which stated that all men should be equal before the law and that no one should have special advantages or rights. Many practitioners began to acknowledge the need to assist women in the 1970s (Batliwala, 2007; Jane et al., 2002). The term "women's empowerment" started to be used in the 1980s and 1990s to describe a radical strategy aimed at changing power dynamics in favor of women's rights and more equality between men and women (Batliwala, 2007). The new strategy, which emphasizes the need for women to become empowered so that they may oppose patriarchal and political empowerment, was the topic of discussion among activists and thinkers by the late 1980s, mostly from the South but also to a lesser extent from the North (Jane 2002). In 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was convened. Its goal was to promote gender equality and women's empowerment all over the world. According to Jane (2002), empowerment was viewed as a process of evolving shifts in consciousness and communal power. In order to feel empowered, one must first acknowledge power imbalances, claim their rights, and take action to advocate for and bring

about structural change that will lead to more equality (Cornwall, 2016). According to Dahles & Movono (2017), one of the main effects of gender equality and empowerment is that men's duties are shifting and now encompass care-giving, which was previously (and mostly) a woman's job. However in a 2014 review, it was discovered that implementation of Beijing Platform for Action has been slow and limited in terms of progress in different countries (Debusscher, 2015).

Globally there is an observation among scholars that there were flaws when constitutions were drafted to exclude certain segments of the society (Ali et al., 2023; Heywood, 2006; Mackie, 2003). Women were shown to get less economic, social, political, and psychological views than males (Mackie, 2003). In a study conducted by Ali et al., (2023) in Pakhtun ethos (Pakistan), the findings highlighted that politically there was gender bias, it was established that females had controlled mobility and they were not permitted culturally to appear in public spaces such as politics. It is a cultural acceptance that women are to be controlled and ruled and should not be given any role in leadership. Economically, in the labor market the gender pay gap worldwide are reinforced mainly affecting women (Ellay et al 2022; Lorber 2016; Molebatsi 2006); Posholi 2012); Wirth (2001). According to Lorber (2016), women often face barriers to development, particularly in higher positions, and are frequently paid less for doing the same or equal job. The majority of the salary gap between men and women is caused by working moms, according to statistics, which show that males earn on average 25 percent more than women worldwide. These statistics are confirmed by what happens in some European countries as Wirth (2001) asserts that in 2001 senior women managers and middle managers in Italy were paid, respectively, 7.7percent and 5.2 percent less than men, while in the United States of America women earned, on average, 76 percent of men's pay. Socially, in households in terms of communication women

are compelled to listen to their significant other and husband's decision is final. For example, in India women are required to obey the rules formulated by their counterparts (Kapur, 2022).

Gender equality and empowerment is currently regarded as a sensitive issue, and as a result, most companies, including the hospitality industry, are taking action by pledging to attain gender balance (Colaiani 2009; Fabbri 2020). According to Colaiani (2019), the greatest gap between male and female employees occurs at the highest levels of management, such as senior management positions. Women make up more than half of the worldwide hospitality workforce, yet, the majority of them work in entry-level roles (Fabbri 2020). A survey conducted by Segovia-Perez and Figueroa-Domecq (2014), in 5 star hotels in Spain revealed that management positions were clearly masculinised and certain jobs stereotyped; only 6.8% of the women in the industry hold such positions, compared to 10.79% of the men. In examining the narratives of tourism managers in Portugal, findings suggest that gender inequality in the tourism sector continues to exist. More specifically, gender wage gap in the industry was found to persist given various issues including the dominance of men in hierarchical positions, horizontal segregation, among others (Ellay et al 2022). In a study conducted by the International Labour Office (ILO 2008), it is reported that of every euro that a Portuguese man earns, a woman earns just 78 cents. In Turkey women faced insufficient experience and time for friends and relatives, low wages and the difficulty of getting a promotion as few of the barriers while working in the hospitality industry, there were also less promotion opportunities and a non-clear functional description of job (Abdelmaboud et al 2019). Despite the growing number of women participating in the industry, women believed that there are gender appropriate jobs in the industry. Research shows that Africa, like other countries, is still faced with inequality in the tourism sector. Kattara, (2005) affirm that in Egypt, women were unable to advance to senior

management positions at five-star hotels owing to workplace discrimination, interpersonal interactions, and a lack of mentor assistance. Similarly Nathaniel, (2015), conducted a study in Nigeria asserting that gender inequality is high in Nigeria hospitality industry and seventy percent of the respondents indicated that gender inequality was in favour of men. However Murni et al., (2020), affirm that in Nusa Dua Tourism Area Indonesia the case was different. The findings indicate that there were equal opportunities to occupy positions, all positions in the hotel were granted to both men and women depending on their skills, knowledge and attitudes.

Due to COVID-19 many lodges have experienced reduced bookings and travel restrictions, resulting in reduced working hours and pay for employees leading to economic dis-empowerment (Tlali & 'Musi 2021). This lack of control over earning potential created financial stress and insecurity thus results in psychology dis-empowerment. Furthermore, pandemics such as COVID-19 could increase an uncertain future which leads to anxiety to employees working in accommodation facilities. This uncertainty adds to the anxiety and powerlessness experienced by employees as they grapple with the unknown.

#### **2.4 Gender equality and empowerment: perspectives from Lesotho**

The issue of gender inequality and empowerment has always been a major problem in Lesotho (Molapo, 2005; The World Bank 2021). Traditionally, Lesotho is a patriarchal society in which men hold most of the power and authority and women are expected to play subservient roles and are largely excluded from decision-making processes (The World Bank 2021). Within households women are allowed to make minor decisions but the major ones, like the marriage of a child or dealing with cattle, were handled by their husbands (Molapo, 2005). At work, the majority of decisions are made by their male counterparts since they hold better positions than women.

Moreover, Mukurunge, (2019) asserts that women are not trusted with higher positions due to tradition and that women in Lesotho are fully aware of abnormalities in gender representation in different sectors and are not doing anything to mitigate that issue. This is because women are reluctant to engage in leadership since women themselves are not keen to follow other women either because they are not empowered to do so or they are simply unaware of how they could gain power.

Furthermore, there is a wage gap between males and females in different sectors in Lesotho. Molebatsi, (2006), mentioned that when conducting research at the Queen Elizabeth II Government Hospital in Maseru, the study revealed that female managers earned far less than their male peers earned.

Despite the bleak picture about women's position concerning equality and empowerment, history documents that there were incidents when women held powerful positions and leadership in Lesotho. Mantsopa was one of powerful leaders, she was a religionist, healer and rainmaker and diviner. Mantsopa was a diviner, healer, and practitioner of religion. She also served as King Moshoeshoe I's counselor. Before leaving, King Moshoeshoe I had to confer with her. Hermans & Berg (2020) state that she was also well-known for her prophecies, which peaked in 1851 when she accurately prophesied the outcome of the Battle of Viervoet between the British army headed by Major Warden and the Basutos.

Mantsebo is also regarded as powerful leaders she was the first and only woman to hold the position of Paramountcy for two decades. She was chosen to serve as the regent by the Sons of Moshoeshoe in the absence of the heir apparent, who was just five years old in 1939 when her husband, Paramount Chief Seeiso Griffith, passed away. The British colonial authorities, who

were pursuing the chieftaincy Reforms that regrettably endangered Basotho chieftaincy, posed a significant challenge to Chiftainess Mantebo as regent. Nevertheless, she made efforts toward the socioeconomic and political empowerment of Basotho people in general as well as Basotho women. Most significantly, she fought against Basotho's inclusion in the Union of South (Ntsane-Mosebo, 2021).

To combat inequality and disempowerment of women, Lesotho has become a signatory to many treaties and protocols including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which was ratified on the 22 August 1995, Beijing Platform, Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and many other gender protocols (African Partnership Forum 2007). It also established the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sport and Recreation in 2002 (Kali 2018).

In parallel scholars have observed that Lesotho is making progress in many areas and sectors ensuring gender equality and empowerment (Matlosa, 2008; Shale, 2012). Afrol News, (2010) highlighted that in Lesotho, the proportion of women in parliament increased from 5 percent in 1990 to 30 percent in 2010 (Shale, 2012). Moreover one-third of ministers were women, while almost half of the senior civil servants were women. Furthermore, the Government of Lesotho initiated gender mainstreaming concerning the laws to empower women in which Section 30 of the National Assembly Act of 2011 mandates political parties registered with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to facilitate the full participation by women in all political activities (National Assembly Act, 2011). All political parties in the country that contest for elections are required under proportional representation by the National Assembly Electoral Act 2011 to submit “zebra” party lists to IEC; Section 47 (2) (b) states that political parties are supposed to ensure that they arrange candidates in terms of sex so that after every male or female is the

opposite sex in the party list and (c) include equal numbers of women and men” (National Assembly Act, 2011). To this end, some political parties inter alia, like Lesotho Democratic Congress (LCD) has adopted a policy which ensures that at least 30% of the members of its central committees on all other levels are women (Government of Lesotho, 2006:12). However (Nyane & Rakolobe, 2021) assert that after the 2017 national elections the representation of women in Government has dropped to 23% from 27% in 2012 and this shows that the Zebra policy is not as active as it should.

Likewise, the Government of Lesotho has passed other laws and policies to combat inequality between men and women concerning the sharing of inheritances (Fogelman, 2016; Metsing, 2015; Posholi 2012). The Ministry of Local Government and Chieftain Affairs began in 1994 to initiate the decentralization process. Even though the decentralization process has begun, women still face inequality of not being appointed as chiefs. (Metsing, 2015) states that under the customary law a woman can only act as a chief until the rightful heir (son) assumes the throne but cannot assume the position of a chief on a permanent basis. Also daughters are not granted to succeed chieftainship even if they are the first-born children of their parents, the case of Senate Masupha who did not succeed chieftainship because she is a girl-child. In addition, another law passed was that of the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act No. 9 of 2006, which removed the minority status of married women (Posholi 2012). The Land Act worked in conjunction with the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act to make sure that married couples rather than only the husband should be listed on leases and that women may hold leases and inherit leases where they are the next-of-kin of the deceased (Fogelman, 2016).

The achievements of women have also been greatly aided by the work of civil society groups, like the Christian Council of Lesotho and the Transformation Resource Centre, among others.



They contributed to the awakening and education of women about their rights (Kali 2018). For the purpose of eradicating gender stereotypes in society, they used the media, particularly radio stations. To cement the empowering effort, however, more has to be done. The groups have not reached the local level and scarcely ever make it to the far-flung regions of the nation where the radio stations have little chance of broadcasting.

However, some academics contend that Lesotho's empowerment initiatives are a mirage since the country's leadership is deceived by the fallacy of inversion, as described in (Longwe 1990). Longwe (1990) indicates that if the administration is truly committed to empowering women, it might have long since modified the constitution to do so. According to Brody (2009), laws and regulations must clearly define the roles of men and women in society and address the disparities between the sexes' demands, goals, and responsibilities as well as their uneven access to economic and social power. The Lesotho constitution is also insensitive to gender since it tends to disregard women and utilizes language that is more masculine (Kali 2018).

## **2.5 Gender equality and economic empowerment**

Economic empowerment gives individuals more control over their resources and life decisions, enabling them to look beyond their urgent daily needs. They can choose for themselves whether to invest money to raise their income in this way (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010).

Scholars have shown that tourism through accommodation facilities promotes gender equality and economic empowerment of all individuals by providing them with employment and income (Ayuningsasi et al., 2023; Nopiyane & Wirawan, 2021). New employment options can improve the possibility that women own property and benefit from a workload that is less physically taxing than traditional agricultural pursuits, in addition to generating cash (Nopiyane &

Wirawan, 2021). Aghazamani et al., (2020), affirm that with the income that women get through tourism, they reinvest it to establish groups which are meant to increase respect, raise social status and for fundraising gender-empowered activities for women. Concurrently, Matilda, (2017), asserts that women earn salaries which improve their livelihoods and that of their families as well as for their communities. Matilda, (2017) in his study asserts that women who work in accommodation facilities in Taveuni mentioned that with salaries they earn they were able to cover household needs such as food and children's welfare.

Equally important, tourism also supports entrepreneurial opportunities. Ellay et al., (2022) and Besra et al., (2018), assert that through tourism women are able to engage in self-employment activities that create income. Ellay (2022) affirmed that women involved in Kokoda track in Papua Guinea established micro-enterprises by participating in tourism. In parallel Besra et al., (2018) states that women in Mukono Uganda obtained work prospects for the first time through the Bwindi Advanced Market Gardeners Association Vegetable program, Community Walk Initiative, and Buhoma Community Rest Camp program. Additionally, they own handcraft businesses and engage in native cultural manifestations (Besra et al., 2018).

On the contrary, literature indicates that tourism has a negative impact economically on women. In Central America, many female workers indicated that the tourism sector has empowered them personally and economically (Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2016). Furthermore, Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2016) indicates that women felt that their participation and involvement in various tourism activities reduced male control over household income. In parallel Ellay et al (2022), asserts that women involved in community-based tourism initiatives in Western Cape, South Africa gained significant economic benefits, which also influenced their social status in their communities.

Moreover, women are more prone to engage in occupations that are specifically reasoned low-skilled, low-paid, with little supervisory role (Araujo-Villa et al., 2021; Casado Diaz et al., 2020 Dashper, 2020; Upadhayaya et al., 2013). Studies show that though the accommodation sector is a female-dominated sector, it hardly empowers women as in managerial positions are dominated by men (Baum, 2013). Women's role in accommodation facilities is engaging in housekeeping responsibilities which further marginalized them (Baum, 2013; Jackman, (2022). Women are perceived as being physically unable to participate to the tourist industry, especially adventure tourism. Women are victimized by gender prejudice in the tourist sector since they are assigned roles based on their gender (Dashper, 2020). Women are assigned inferior positions as cleaners, servers, and assistants in this profession, where men have the highest offices and key tasks. There is still not a totally supportive atmosphere for women's involvement and their responsibilities in tourism because of many social, cultural, and religious superstitions. Some of the main obstacles to women having a legitimate presence in the tourist industry include a lack of sufficient education, superstitious culture, family impediment, and a lack of women's self-confidence (Upadhayaya et al., 2023).

In Brazil, Blake et al., (2008), investigated how tourism affected various socioeconomic groups. The distributional advantages brought forth by tourist growth continue to favor the wealthy more than the poor. Similar to this, Rivera et al., (2017) looked at how Ecuador's income distribution might change if tourism expenditure increased. The authors discovered that the disadvantaged benefited most from an increase in tourism expenditure after using a social accounting matrix model. Additionally, Njoya & Seetaram, (2017), simulated the impact of rising tourism on the poverty rate while conducting a study in Kenya using a dynamic computable general equilibrium analysis. The authors calculated the headcount, gap, and degree of poverty. They discovered that

tourism helps to alleviate poverty. Furthermore, the authors' data revealed that poverty was most influenced by tourist expansion, followed by poverty severity, and poverty headcount was least affected.

Wattanukuljarus & Coxhead, (2008), on the other hand, used applied general equilibrium analysis to study the influence of tourist expansion on income distribution in Thailand. They discovered that while tourist expansion helped all family classes, it exacerbated income inequality. According to the authors, the nature of the effect is due to the country's tourist sector being less labor demanding. Studies conducted in Southern Africa present mixed feelings concerning the role of the tourism sector in empowering the poor. In South Africa, Saayman et al., (2012) found that the poor barely profit from tourism, and if they do, the advantage is extremely minimal. As a result, the authors concluded that tourism did not benefit the impoverished in South Africa arguing that the trickle-down impact of tourism on the poor through economic growth does not hold. Interestingly, a previous research by Akinboade & Braimoh, (2010), which also employed South African data; found that the tourism-led economic growth theory is correct. According to the results of Akinboade & Braimoh, (2010), tourism benefits the impoverished. Muchapondwa & Stage, (2013) also analyzed data from three Southern African countries: Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa. They used social accounting matrices to evaluate the data and discovered that in the selected nations, the impoverished segment of the population profited the least from tourist development.

Despite the evidence that tourism has a potential to economically empower women hence promote gender equality, there are fewer studies in Lesotho to our knowledge that have given an anecdotal information to this effect, Tlali & Musi, (2021) justifying that more and rigorous information about the role of tourism in empowering women should be investigated.

## **2.6 Gender equality, empowerment and training programmes**

Training programs help promote gender equality and empowerment worldwide and in Lesotho regardless of the industry (A-Mzary et al., 2015; Yamoah, 2013). According to Balyan & Malik 2018; Haydar & Halwi; 2018), and Malonza & Walaba; 2016), training is the act of improving a worker's abilities to do a certain task. According to Balyan & Malik, (2018), training is the process that equips workers with the information and skills necessary to function within the framework and guidelines established by management. Additionally, it is a planned action that is intended to raise the effectiveness of current managers in order to satisfy organizational needs in the future (Balyan & Malik, 2018).

Companies prioritize giving employees' opportunity to improve both general and specialized skills when establishing training programs so as to support gender equality and give employees more life empowerment across all employee ranks (A-Mzary et al., 2015). The courses are designed to provide training in a variety of areas, including sales, technical support, communications, organizational development, management development, career development, and supervisory development. The training is given to managers and supervisors as well as lower-level staff, according to (Valle et al., 2009). Additionally, management training is made available to managers, supervisors, and lower-level staff who are slated for promotions in order to improve their abilities (Halawi & Haydar, 2018).

According to some academics, training gives employees of lodging facilities enhances skills and knowledge for employees hence they feel empowered (Chikandiwa & Mzimbela, 2017; Xiao, 2010). According to Chikandiwa and Mzimbela, (2017), training procedures are intended to make sure that workers have the information and skills necessary to achieve the organization's present and long-term goals. This suggests that any organization's performance is dependent on

the caliber of its workforce, necessitating ongoing updating of employees' knowledge, skills, and competencies (Chikandiwa & Mzimbela, 2017). The training itself provides skills and enthusiasm to help participants provide amazing customer service and great customer experiences which lead to service acceptability (Malonza & Walaba, 2016). Employees get ongoing knowledge and experience via a well-organized training and development program. Ensuring that all employees have consistent information also contributes to ensuring that jobs are finished on time and without problems, and that no queries regarding how things should be done arise. Similarly, Xiao (2010), states that the degree of service quality is determined by the characteristics of the personnel. The attributes concern information, abilities, and concepts that contribute to the accommodation's survival and development. As a result, staff training is critical in many ways; it boosts productivity while providing employees with professional knowledge, experience, and valid ideas. Concurrently, Gazija, (2011) found that training provided by Hotel Dukagjini provides staff with information and abilities that enables them to provide quality service in accordance with international standards. Gazija, (2011) goes on to say that training increases employee performance and develops workers so that they may meet their own objectives as well as the hotels. Furthermore, Ali et al. (2022) state that an employee's performance is determined by elements such as knowledge, skill, and abilities, and that training and development bridge this gap by giving the necessary knowledge, skill, and abilities to execute the job (Ali et al 2022).

Furthermore, Gazija, (2011) and Lapeyre, (2010), affirm that training in lodging facilities increases communication skills, hence empowering personnel. Workers interact with individuals from all over the world, learn about their cultures, and share their perspectives. Their English language and communication abilities significantly increase on the job. Around 60% of the

personnel at Hotel Dukagjini do not speak, write, or read English, a language that is considered an international language and is necessary for visitor communication (Gazija, 2011). Furthermore, Gazija, (2011) reveals that job learning and thorough training extend their networks and so open up new options to find other employment in tourism or other industries, both inside and outside the area. In the Renaissance Shanghai Yuyuan Hotel, English classes are held once a week (Xiao, 2010). Speaking, reading, and listening skills are developed there, and the majority of the themes are related to hotel business (Xiao, 2010). Role playing is also a part of the English training program. One of the guides, for instance, was hired as a guide by Wilderness Safaris, the largest safari and lodging provider in Namibia and southern Africa, after being approached by the Museum of Namibia in Windhoek to fill a position there on the basis of skills acquired and motivation displayed in participating in the project (Lapeyre, 2010). This was done as a result of the guide's participation in a three-month workshop on rock arts and archaeology in Tanzania and other opportunities.

Training has been shown to motivate workers (Samwel, 2018; Elnaga & Imran, 2013). Employees often perform better when they are provided enough and appropriate training programs that encourage them and help them to meet their needs (Elnaga & Imran, 2013). Samwel, (2018) noted that training is important not just to boost productivity but also to excite and inspire employees by emphasizing the significance of their duties and providing them with all the knowledge necessary to carry them out. According to Myles (2000), a business that prioritizes its workers' training, development, and performance rewards motivates people to work more and remain loyal to the organization. Similarly (Xiao, 2010) indicates that staff training also motivates and inspires workers by providing employees all needed information in work as well as helping them to recognize how important their jobs are.

According to Ahmad & Manzoor 2017; Gallie et al. 2009; Jones & Jones 2011; Rohan & Madhumita 2012, training enables employees make decisions and operate as a team. As a way to strengthen their knowledge and develop their professional abilities, managers are giving employees more team tasks nowadays across a variety of firms (Ahmad & Manzoor, 2017). Employees are better able to work together, develop their own talents, and give useful feedback when they are working in teams since there is little room for disagreement amongst team members (Jones & Jones, 2011). Working in teams allows team members to develop their skills, knowledge, and talents, which impacts the performance and effectiveness of the company (Kumari & Majumder, 2021). Teamwork is therefore a crucial approach for ensuring the smooth running of the business. According to (Jones & Jones, 2011), an employee who works with others in a team is likely to be more productive as compared to other peers. It is widely accepted that teamwork is not only the key foundation of successful management, but also an important tool for improving overall organizational productivity. (Gallie et al., 2009) revealed that teamwork increases employee productivity and it leads to greater levels of organizational commitment. Through teamwork, each employee would have the opportunity to share with others how to perform a certain task masterfully. Moreover, the team environment provides employees with opportunities to mutually share their knowledge and learn from others, and this as a result increases their productivity and overall team performance. An individual that collaborates with others in a team is probably more productive than their counterparts, according to Jones & Jones (2011). It is commonly recognized that working together as a team not only serves as the cornerstone of effective management, but also serves as a valuable tool for increasing total organizational productivity. According to (Gallie et al., 2009), collaboration boosts worker productivity and promotes organizational commitment. Working as a team would



provide each employee the chance to teach others how to complete a particular activity expertly. Additionally, the team setting offers employees the chance to learn from one another and share their experience, which boosts productivity and overall team performance. Therefore, it is believed that by adopting team members' collaboration, the opportunity for shared learning and productivity will be higher.

Various lodging establishments teach their staff using various techniques. First, they employ a lecture style, followed by job-playing and rotation (Malonza & Walaba, 2016; McShane & Von Glinow, 2018; Saxena, 2019). A variety of training approaches are allegedly often utilized in training, according to Malonza & Walaba (2016). These are crucial for comprehending the many training methods, including both on-the-job and off-the-job training methods that trainees can choose from. The respondents noted that lecturing represents 40.3% was the most prevalent mode of facilitation used throughout their training and 33 percent of the respondents claimed that they received their training through demonstrations. According to the findings of the investigation above, the hotel industry places a high value on the use of lecture and presentation tactics. The role-playing technique is an additional approach. It is a useful method for instructing staff members at lodging facilities including hotels, resorts, and other hospitality enterprises (McShane & Von Glinow 2018).It entails developing a simulated environment where employees play out real-life scenarios they could experience at work. Employees may hone their communication and problem-solving abilities through role-playing in a secure setting (Fernando, 2019). They further employ employment rotation. It is the management development approach that is most frequently employed. This method is predicated on the notion that people may develop to their fullest potential by having the chance to do a wide range of various occupations as part of their training or development. It may be a useful strategy for creating a versatile

workforce that is able to handle a variety of tasks (Saxena, 2019). Saxena (2019), further indicate that job rotation may be very helpful in the hospitality sector for training staff in various hotel departments, including front desk, cleaning, food and beverage, and maintenance.

According to research, training is crucial in other businesses as well (A-Mzary et al., 2015; Samwel, 2018). According to a survey done in Tanzania, 52.1% of drilling businesses provide safety training, 30.1% provide general drilling training, and 11.4% provide leadership and supervisory skill development (Samwel, 2018). Even while just 6.4% of drilling businesses have provided labor law training, this suggests that drilling companies are placing more of an emphasis on technical and safety training than management, such as labor laws (Samwel, 2018).

However, some academics contend that while though training programs are crucial, some tourism-related businesses fail to teach their staff, much alone empower female employees. According to Kulsvan (2003), there is very little evidence of orientation and training for new and current personnel, especially at management level, outside of a few large-scale and multinational firms in the tourist hospitality industry. According to Kulsvan (2003), companies are hesitant to spend money on training because of high employee turnover, limited funds, and temporary staff. In their study in Kenya utilizing mixed methodologies, Malonza & Walaba, (2016) discovered that 72.5% of the hotel sector personnel in Kisumu city claimed that they had not engaged in any training at all. A minority 27.5% indicated that they had been trained.

Women who run hotels also confront a lot of difficulties. Additionally, it was discovered that women found it extremely challenging to maintain this business due to a lack of training (Yasin et al., 2019). Women have less confidence to make timely judgments and lack the capacity to take risks due to a lack of access to education, incorrect and inadequate skills, and training

connected to tourism. As a result, relatively few women work in this field due to a lack of knowledge and experience in the field (Sapkota et al., 2013). Despite the fact that the majority of researchers emphasize the value of training, much of what has been published has concentrated on how training benefits employees at work rather than demonstrating how it empowers and promotes gender empowerment to them outside of the workplace.

## **2.7 Gender equality and Social and psychological empowerment**

Many studies in tourism and other industries have underlined the need for employee's social and psychological empowerment, stating that employees require psychological empowerment to handle complex and unpredictable processes of creative company behavior (Cobanoglu & Della Corte 2021). In the hotel business, psychological empowerment is viewed as a managerial gesture to include staff in decision-making, authority, and duties during client interactions, hence providing incentive to focus on this subject (Klidas, 2002). Lucy et al., (2008) indicate that women who are hotel/homestay entrepreneurs in Nepal are allowed to participate in household decisions, particularly those concerning finances or expenditures, have made more contributions to family income than those with less administrative autonomy. At the same time, tourism has increased access to forms of education and involvement in social organizations, which leads to further empowerment of women's abilities to participate in decision-making (Aghazamani & Hunt, 2017). Workers in seven European nations' accommodation facilities, for example, said that their bosses encouraged them to deal with client complaints on their judgment and backed their judgments (Klidas 2007). Similarly, Blayney & Blotnick, (2010) assert that lodging establishments such as the Ritz Carleton empower their workers by granting them the authority to make financial decisions worth up to US\$300.00.

Employees develop psychological empowerment through increasing their self-esteem. Various academics claim that working in lodging facilities increases women's self-esteem (Bibi 2017; Ma et al., 2020; McMillan et al., 2011). Equal involvement in decision making may be useful in instilling a sense of pride and ownership among employees. Employees take ownership of their jobs when they are given the authority to act. Tourism has the ability to boost women's self-esteem, identity, and independence, as well as inspire initiatives for future personal development (Ma et al., 2020).

Accommodation facilities aid in the development of confidence in women (Al-Makhadmah et al., 2020; Besra et al., 2018; Bibi 2017). According to Besra et al., 2018, engaging with tourists helps women strengthen formal and informal communication skills, which boosts confidence and psychological empowerment. According to (Al-Makhadmah et al., 2020), persons with a high sense of self-confidence can handle customer requests, solve current difficulties quickly, provide excellent service, and display a determination to identify the best ways and alternatives to complete their assignment. In a qualitative research study which Bibi (2017) conducted in Taveuni the findings show that women working in the tourism industry have substantially increased their confidence, notably in their English ability. Individuals with a great feeling of self-confidence can handle consumer requests, successfully solve current challenges, and provide an excellent service, as well as a readiness to discover the most effective techniques and options for completing their assignment (Al-Makhadmah et al., 2020).

Psychological empowerment also motivates individuals to establish a work atmosphere conducive to self-development aspirations. It increases people's motivation to improve their conduct toward clients in order to attain personal and organizational goals (Al-Makhadmah et al.,

2020). Individuals that are empowered are completely prepared and accountable in the job, and their reaction to customer demands is immediate and professional (Al-Makhadmah et al., 2020).

There are other scholars who believe that tourism can lead to social dis-empowerment. According to Hidayat et al., (2017), tourism generates discord and societal decline in rural communities. Many people in the community adopt outside values and lose regard for traditional culture and elders. Marginalized groups for example women bear the weight of the challenges related with tourist projects and gain fairly from them. Individuals, families, ethnic or socioeconomic groups compete for the perceived advantages of ecotourism rather than collaborating (Tian et al., 2023). Moreover, Hidayat et al., (2017), indicates that resentment and jealousy are prevalent emotions.

Though studies show the importance of social and psychological empowerment, little attention has been given to the tourism sector and whether the gained empowerment could be utilized beyond the workplace into the home environment. In the case of Lesotho, Tlali & Musi, (2021) provided anecdotal evidence that during COVID-19, participants working in the tourism sector used skills and knowledge acquired in tourism to handle situations beyond the sector. However, other studies that have ventured into the area of empowerment in Lesotho (Berry et al., 2013); Kali, 2018; Mofuoa, 2022), have focused on other sectors other than the tourism sector and have exclusively focused on the empowerment of women at the neglect of men hence this study investigates a terrain little explored hitherto.

## **2.8 Chapter summary**

This chapter has looked into theoretical framework and it has also reviewed literature to the study. The chapter has examined justification and arguments on how accommodation facilities

promote gender equality and empowerment of employees. The literature has informed this study that workers in some of accommodation facilities are provided with economic, psychology and training programmes while others do not globally.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents methodology which was used for this study. This chapter discussed the research approach, research design, study area, target population, sample and sampling technique, data collection methods and tools and lastly ethical considerations.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

A qualitative research methodology was used in this study. In-depth interviews, focus groups, observations, content analysis, visual methods, and life histories or biographies are just a few of the research techniques that can be used in a qualitative approach to examine people's real-life experiences in detail (Bailey et al., 2020). Various stakeholder views are presented in qualitative research to deepen our understanding, and they also provide justification for how accommodations facilities might empower employees (Ozawa & Pongpirul 2013).

### **3.3 Research design**

According to Akhtar, (2016), a research design is a strategy for conducting an inquiry to find solutions to specific research problems. The study's methodology was phenomenology. Phenomenology is the study of different kinds of experiences that result from perceptions, thoughts, memories, imagination, emotions, volition, embodied action, and social interaction (Klenke, 2016). According to Creswell et al. (2007), phenomenology studies collect the opinions of many individuals. In this study the phenomenon studied was working in rural accommodation facilities in Lesotho in which the main idea was to learn about it on two aspects: one as it improved gender equality and two as it promoted empowerment of employees.

### **3.4 The study area**

The study was conducted in accommodation facilities which were situated in the Southeast of Maseru. Maseru rural refers to rural areas surrounding the city of Maseru. This includes the countryside and villages outside the urban center. Maseru rural starts from the South starts at Masianokeng and extends to Semonkong which is 101.2 km from Masianokeng to Marakabei which is 92.9km.

### **3.5 Population**

Population is a set of all units which findings of the research are applied to (Shukla, 2020). The target population for this study was formally employed workers and owners of accommodation facilities in Maseru rural and 24 accommodation facilities in rural areas of Maseru formed part of the study.

### **3.6 Sampling techniques and sample size**

To choose the sample for this investigation, non-probability sampling approaches were employed. The participants in this study were picked on purpose; hence a purposeful sampling method was utilized. According to Rai and Thapa (2015), "Purposive sampling" is a type of non-probability sampling in which the researcher chooses which people to include in the sample based on a variety of factors, such as their capacity and willingness to participate in the study or their expert knowledge of the research topic. In order to choose a sample from a vast population for a particular research goal, sampling is a process (Bhardwaj, 2019).8 key informants were selected as the sample, 3 of whom were from highland guesthouses and 5 from lowlands, for this study. The sample size was reached at the point of saturation



### **3.7 Methods of data collection**

The systematic method of gathering information is known as data collection, according to (Mwita, 2022). Due to their ability to provide the researcher with highly individualized information from the source, one-on-one interviews were chosen for this study. This was done so that the interviewer and the interviewee should diverge in order to investigate the phenomenon in greater depth. Semi-structured interviews consist of a few essential questions that assist outline areas to be pursued. Employers and owners of lodging facilities talked about how gender equality and empowerment was promoted in accommodation facilities in rural areas of Maseru during semi-structured interviews, which helped the researcher to collect all the data by eliciting thoughtful replies and further inquiry from the participants. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to be flexible in the administration of interviews, examine themes in-depth, and provide the richest data (Alhabsyi et al., 2022). They also allowed the researcher to explain questions to increase the possibility of relevant replies. Data has been collected via interviews and recording devices.

### **3.8 Methods of data analysis**

According to Taherdoost (2020), "data analysis methods" refers to the procedures used to examine and evaluate the information gathered for the study, including descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, qualitative analysis, and content analysis.

Thematic analysis was used for this investigation. Thematic analysis is a technique for finding, examining, and reporting data patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Six steps of coding were used to undertake thematic analysis in order to discover clear patterns. The following stages are involved: becoming familiar with the data, creating preliminary codes, examining themes,

identifying and labeling themes, and preparing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis helped to gain the insight on the role of accommodation facilities in empowering workers in Maseru rural areas since the researcher will be trying to find out the workers' and owners' views, opinions and experiences.

### **Validity**

The term "validity" describes how well a technique measures what it is supposed to measure. According to Middleton (2022) high validity research is defined as producing findings that are consistent with the actual traits, characteristics, and variations seen in the physical or social reality. To perform this research and establish validity, various lodging facilities in Maseru Rural were visited (Basuo & Don-Solomon, 2018). The viability of this investigation was assessed through pilot testing.

The researcher increased validity by making sure informants were very clear on the nature of the research, by first establishing a trust-relationship with the subjects, by interviewing the same informant on multiple occasions and making observations more than once and over time, by keeping accurate and detailed field notes to note the variations in responses over the course of the study (Basuo & Don-Solomon, 2018).

### **Reliability**

The consistency with which a method assesses something is referred to as reliability. The measurement is regarded as trustworthy if the same outcome can consistently be obtained by applying the same techniques under the same conditions (Middleton, 2022).The researcher increased dependability by using a transparent and comprehensive study design that includes a complete explanation of the research methodology, data gathering techniques, and analytic

processes. This contributed to making the study process visible and simple for others to duplicate. Error-free will be applied. Atlas.ti was used to create codes and themes linked to the study topics in order to assure validity and reliability of the data collected.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

The rules and regulations that regulate the handling of human participants or the usage of sensitive data in the research study are referred to as ethical concerns. Research should be carried out in accordance with the ethical principles of respect for the individual, knowledge, democratic ideals, and the standard of educational research (Bartlett & Burton 2017). Ethics, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were all upheld in this study.

#### **3.9.1 Anonymity and confidentiality**

In research, it's crucial to protect participant privacy and the confidentiality of whatever information the interviewee divulges (Kang & Hwang, 2023; Oliver 2003). It is crucial for the researcher to protect participants by maintaining anonymity regarding their identity. Since knowing who disclosed particular information may have adverse impacts, the researcher in this study made sure that all participant personal information was hidden.

#### **3.9.2 Voluntary participation**

The most important promise of social research ethics is that it must be voluntary (Babbie, 2013). According to Barbie (2013), study participants should not feel compelled to take part. All participants in this study were given enough information about the research, and the researcher made sure they didn't feel coerced into taking part. The study's participants were also told by the researcher that they may leave at any moment. The participants' verbal agreement was sought

before interviews could start, and they were informed that they might choose not to participate in the interview at any point without suffering any repercussions.

### **3.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented methodology employed in this study. The research approach, design, target population, study area, sample, sampling technique and ethical considerations.

## Chapter four: Data analysis and interpretation

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from participants employed in accommodation facilities in Maseru rural in Lesotho. The first section of the chapter presents the socio-demographic characteristics of participants. Then a table which presents a summary of themes and categories which emerged from the data analysis follows. The third section provides detailed presentations, analysis and interpretation of each theme. Lastly this chapter provides a chapter summary.

### 4.2 Participants

There were nine participants who were labeled as P1-P9 for confidentiality. The age of participants varied from twenty-five to sixty years. The highest education certificate obtained among the participants was the first degree. One of them obtained COSC/LGCSE while one obtained JC.

**Table 4.1 Demographic profile of the key participants**

Participants	Position	Age	Sex	Highest education
P1	Manager	35-40	M	Degree
P2	Waitress	25-30	F	COSC
P3	Tour guide	25-30	M	JC
P4	Assistant	30-35	F	Degree

	Manager			
P5	Chef	35-40	F	JC
P6	Bartender	35-40	M	Degree
P7	HR	30-35	F	Degree
P8	Receptionist	20-30	F	Degree
P9	Owner	50-60	F	Degree

Source: Interview data 2023

### **4.3 Themes and categories**

During data analysis, several codes and categories emerged under each predetermined theme related to the role of accommodation facilities in enhancing gender equality and empowerment. The three major themes that emerged were related to how accommodation facilities promoted gender equality and empowerment through economic empowerment training programs, social and psychological empowerment.

#### **4.3.1 Gender equality and Economic empowerment**

The findings revealed that in most of the accommodation facilities in Maseru rural, there were more female than male employees thereby suggesting that in terms of numbers gender equality was not being promoted in accommodation facilities. Several participants, who were owners of the facilities, indicated that one reason for gender imbalance was that there was no official policy in terms of hiring and promoting gender balance in Lesotho. The data revealed that in addition to

the imbalances in gender employment, accommodation facilities in Maseru Rural extended patriarchal roles in which males were hired for positions which needed hard labour such as gardening and very few of them worked in the kitchen while women were still hired to do housekeeping chores. Other respondents explained that besides the lack of policy, they personally preferred to work with more women than men. Some of the respondents explained that as human resource managers they personally preferred to hire females as receptionists since they were the initial point of contact for clients and that they did not see males as receptionists portraying a good image for the facility. Similarly several participants indicated that in the kitchen department they preferred women more than males stating that: *“since we are a form of a patriarchal society, we are used to females in the kitchen so I prefer them in the kitchen not that we do not hire male chefs but I prefer females.”* (P7).

However, in few accommodation facilities which practised rural tourism, there was almost gender balance concerning the number of employees. Different responses and reasons were given explaining why gender was balanced, unlike those that offered only accommodation. The findings revealed that in some that is because they had a tour guide department where many male employees were tour guides. Moreover the participants indicated that there were activities such as donkey festival and horse-riding which were led by male employees. It was also indicated that to promote gender equality and empowerment even in those departments female employees were given opportunities to be part of the team which led these festivals even though majority of them were afraid to be part of the team.

Another category which emerged concerning economic empowerment was the issue of salaries. Different viewpoints emerged on whether employees felt economically empowered with the salaries and whether such salaries promote gender equality at the workplace and at home.

Several participants stated that they did not feel empowered economically by working in accommodation facilities. The participants showed that the salary was too little and they could not afford a lot of basic items. They stated that they felt he worked on the basis of hand-to-mouth and did not even afford to join financial societies in the community. However, some participants, especially in management, claimed that they felt empowered through the salary, bonuses and incentives. They stated that they supported themselves, their families and invested in their future. Some participants, particularly females, said that they felt empowered by the wage they received because it allowed them to fully engage in financial planning, made decisions, and had their views heard in their families. One of the participants claimed that because she had financial resources she felt economically empowered and her husband treated her with respect and recognized her contributions and value.

The findings further revealed that employment in accommodation facilities provided employees financial inclusion. Several participants highlighted that they accessed financial services such as bank accounts and microfinance opportunities. This enabled them to save, invest and build asserts, contributing to their economic empowerment. One of the participants stated:

*At home I am able to sit with my husband and plan how we are going to use money and this is not something I would do back then while I was not working. Since he was the one working, he would not sit down with me to plan the money, he would buy things without consulting me and I did not have a say (P2)*

Another category that emerged was that of employees being economically empowered by establishing income generating projects at home with the salary they earned by working in accommodation. Several participants conveyed that they could not establish income



generating projects. This is because they did not have time, they were always at work. They revealed that those which they had established with skills acquired by working in accommodation facilities could not last long because they could not monitor. Moreover they also asserted that the salary was just too little to start projects.

*At the current moment I do not have an income generating project. Working at hotels is very difficult because I have to spend a lot of time here. Yes, I was still producing wedding cakes and baby showers, but our profession can be stressful at times. When you go home, you're exhausted. A wedding cake takes around two weeks to prepare, and during that time you may find that at work, I have a course to attend for a week. And I need about two weeks to build a great cake. Also as a wife and a mother I still have other household to do and it becomes difficult to invest fully on the project. (P5)*

Another category which emanated was that of challenges imposed by COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war. The participants revealed that COVID-19 and Russia-Ukraine war had imposed a negative impact on rural facilities promoting gender equality and empowerment. Both the employees and workers were concerned about the impact of the pandemic and war on accommodation facilities. Participants highlighted that they were paid half of the salary because they had to go to work in shifts which negatively impacted their economic empowerment. They indicated that they were no longer able to afford even their basic needs. Some of the participants indicated that their insurance policies lapsed because they could not pay for them since they were paid half-salary. Some participants highlighted that due the pandemic and war, their co-workers were laid off disrupting their financial empowerment. In the same manner, others argued that though they did not lose their jobs, gender equality was threatened while in some cases it was

worsened, explaining that; “We were home, not working and clashes with our partners escalated resulting in physical and verbal abuse” (P5).

Furthermore, several participants who managed and owned accommodation facilities declared that during the total shut-down, there were no customers and business was bad. They indicated that they were not economically empowered was not promoted. They also indicated that they had not recovered from the COVID-19 total-shut down and also that due to the war between Ukraine and Russia, it was difficult for them to run accommodation facilities. One participant declared that immediately after the opening of their lodge, COVID-19 started and because of the total shut-down they could not hire staff. After COVID-19 they would go a month without having customers so they found it unnecessary to hire staff negatively affecting their vision to empower workers and promote gender.

*It has always been my husband and I working here. Also, after COVID-19 we are now experiencing inflation caused by the war between Ukraine and Russia. Most people no longer come and spend money in lodges like they used to and this has made us suffer a lot as accommodation owners. As you can see, even now there are no customers. Once in a while they would come and other times someone will come just to ask us how we operate and leave (P9)*

The participants further indicated that the pandemic and war had a devastating impact on attempts to employ workers stating “*In terms of training we wish to hire staff and offer training on how to handle customers and themselves, but we do not know when we will do so because the business is bad*”.(P9)

The findings on this theme presented conflicting feelings about the role of accommodation facilities in promoting gender equality and empowerment reflecting much of what the literature review showed. It seems females and males working in accommodation facilities in Maseru rural are mostly allocated jobs according to their gender. Traditionally, Lesotho is a patriarchal country where females are expected to take care of household chores such as cooking and housekeeping hence, most female employees do the same chores at work and males are expected to do manly duties such as gardening and being a bartender. This is different from other countries such as India and Pakistan where most of the job is done by males. The findings show that for employees in accommodation facilities in Maseru rural, gender was not balanced in terms of hiring, however in accommodation facilities which practiced rural tourism the case was different because gender was balanced. Employees felt financially dependent, they were able to afford basic needs and they were able to participate in financial planning and make decisions in their household, hence they felt empowered and this resonated with Bibi (2017). His study found that salaries earned by employees in accommodation facilities were able to cover basic needs such as food and children's welfare. On the contrary, Nopiyani (2021) indicates that women who are employed in accommodation facilities were able to engage in entrepreneurial activities while the findings of the study showed that employees were unable to establish any income generating projects because they lacked time to establish and look after them. The findings also showed that both employees and owners encountered challenges due to COVID-19 whereby employees earned half-salary and that the owners were unable to generate income. The prevailing war between Russia and Ukraine contributed to inflation and they experienced low customer base and they are going through a rough patch financially.

### **4.3.2 Gender equality and Empowerment and Training programs**

One of the objectives of the study was to find out whether accommodation facilities in Maseru rural had training programmes that would promote gender equality and empower all workers. The findings revealed that in most of the accommodation facilities different methods of training to empower employees such as job rotation, lecturing and hiring of interns were used. They indicated that they learnt to do all the chores within the facilities through job rotation. They further indicated that being able to do all the chores regardless of their gender within the facilities had empowered them because they were given the opportunity to learn different things in different departments. One participant stipulated that she was hired as an assistant manager but she learnt how to cook because sometimes she worked with the chef in the kitchen and she felt empowered and a complete person when she got home because with the training and experience she could do many tasks while at home. Furthermore, the participants indicated that job rotation had not only empowered them but had promoted gender equality in the workplace. They indicated that even though they were hired for a certain position, they did all the jobs within the facility. One participant showed that he held a managerial position however when he was needed in the house department he would go and make beds without a feeling of doing women's jobs.

In addition, the data revealed that some accommodations provided workers with on-the-job training in which workers learned from experienced fellow workers, helping them to acquire many skills such as ability to work with fellow workers. A participant from one accommodation facility explained that before she started working where she was hired, she was taken to another accommodation facility to learn how the staff in that facility worked and handled situations. She

indicated that it was a one week training program in which she learned by doing and watching fellow experienced workers.

*“We learn from others by watching them when we are interested in acquiring skills in other departments and learning new things makes us feel empowered. This has become my lifestyle even in the community, I have become eager to learn from others. (P4)*

*Another participant added:*

*Since I work with horses on a daily basis I have gained a lot of knowledge about them and even in the community I educate other community members on how to feed them and nurse them. (P8)*

The feeling of empowerment through training was common among the workers working in tourism facilities that participate in rural tourism. Participants from these facilities felt greatly empowered from the workplace and they were able to translate their empowerment to their communities and families. They stated that they were trained to preserve nature because their livelihoods depended on tourists who came to enjoy it, explaining “as a result of the training on preserving nature, we now know better about its importance to livelihoods. We are now training our communities to protect it.”(P1).

The data further showed that accommodation facilities also used off-the-job training to empower their employees with the aim of promoting gender equality. The findings showed that several accommodation facilities were outsourced to formal training programs. Several key participants highlighted that they worked with consultancy firms which offered training to the employees at least two times in a year. The consultancy offered training on recycling soaps and removing

stains. The participants indicated that they were able to recycle soaps and remove stains even in their households and also had taught their neighbors how to recycle soaps and remove those stains. Several participants further indicated that they felt empowered because they had acquired cooking skills stipulating that they were able to use those skills at home. One of the participants indicated he had been empowered by acquiring cooking skills and he was able to help his wife with cooking which reduced gender roles and promoted equality in his household. *“I use skills I have acquired here at home like I have enhanced my cooking skills and I am able to cook at home and help my wife thus breaking gender roles and promoting gender equality.” (P6)*

Similarly, several participants added that they had been empowered by working in accommodation in facilities because they acquired communication skills. They indicated that they knew English before they worked at accommodation facilities but they were not fluent. However working at the accommodation facilities had contributed to them to speak fluent English because they met people of different races, some only communicating in English. Several participants indicated that acquiring communication skills had empowered them because they were able to navigate through difficult conversations with their colleagues and community members in a respectful manner. One of the participants said

*As a tour guide I have become fluent in English because most people who come here are English people. So, having to enlighten them about this place I have to speak English and I have become very fluent even though I dropped out of school at grade 10. (P3)*

The findings for this study show that employees believed that training which they were given had motivated them hence they would like to be given more of the training programs. One

participant also added that training, which included all of the staff, was needed especially when they had new staff in the facility because sometimes as a chef it was hard to teach another new chef who just started working. She indicated that it was better if the training was done by those in management. She stated:

*Yes, since I arrived here, it has happened once and I have requested my manager to host another one because we have a new employee in the kitchen. You know, when you keep telling someone how to do things and he does get formal training, it might be very difficult for him to understand. (P5)*

However, some participants indicated that they felt they were given little training which helped them in promoting gender equality and empowerment both at work and home. They also indicated that there was an unequal distribution of training opportunities since other departments were given training more than others hence they felt not equalizing and empowering to all of them.

The findings conveyed that in terms of decision making, the majority of accommodation facilities in Maseru rural, those who have power to make them were those holding managerial positions while those in non-managerial positions were still not granted that opportunity. These findings are similar to what the literature reviewed indicated (Chikandiwa & Mzimela 2017; Klidas 2016; Lee 2006; Xiao 2010) which showed that training in accommodation facilities improves employees skills and knowledge which contributed to promotion of gender equality and empowerment. Moreover, the findings were similar to that of Gazija 2011; Lapeyre 2010 which indicates that some accommodation facilities do not offer training to employees and those that offer it only do it once in a while because it is expensive. This resonates with the findings

with this study because in several accommodation facilities training was only offered to new staff members while once in a while for old staff members. Participants stated that they would like to be given training often because they needed it.

#### **4.3.3 Gender equality and Social and Psychological empowerment**

The last objective of the study was to investigate whether working in accommodation facilities promotes gender equality and empowerment at the workplace and whether such processes improved the lives of the participants to their home environment through social and psychological empowerment. Many participants recounted how they felt socially and psychologically empowered from working in accommodation facilities in Maseru rural areas. Employees in accommodation facilities which offered only accommodation and those in rural tourism had varied experiences helping them to be social and psychologically empowered. In terms of social empowerment, several participants indicated that they had team building activities which were led by a male and female and all the employees were given an opportunity to lead. They also showed that through team-building activities, they learnt to cooperate with each other and to respect others both at work and at home. They indicated that they learnt to be patient and to be calm because they came across different customers with different personalities and this helped them even in their communities hence they felt empowered. One participant declared that

*I feel empowered because before working here, I would exchange harsh words with my neighbors whenever there was a misunderstanding. Also working at the accommodation facility has contributed to me to gain respect, patience and remaining calm when I have to address difficult issues with my neighbors (P8).*



The same sentiments were shared by the participants engaged in guiding tourists over the mountains and with their overnight trips explaining that they had to be mentally prepared and patient to work with tourists of different characters and abilities. As Participant 3 put it *‘some tourists are physically challenged traversing the mountain but all the experience has helped me socially and psychologically and to be a better citizen in the community and family (P3).*

Furthermore on the issue of psychological empowerment, different viewpoints existed regarding the category of decision-making. The viewpoints of those who held non-managerial jobs and those in managerial positions were completely opposite. Participants in non-managerial positions asserted that they did not feel empowered because they had to talk to their bosses before making decisions in order to hear their supervisors' perspectives. In circumstances when they had to make decisions, they did so, but they still had to report to the supervisors at a later time.

*If I want to make a decision I have to enquire with the management on whether I am making the right decision. This makes me feel less confident with my judgment even at home when I do simple things. I have to consult with someone close to me just to be sure I am doing the right thing because I am used to doing so here at work. (P2)*

On the contrary, those in managerial positions indicated that they were given the opportunity to make decisions on most of the things that happened within the facility. One participant indicated that since she was a manager and her position required her to make decisions, she showed that being granted the opportunity to make decisions at work helped and that even at home she made decisions without having to wait for her husband. She stated that before working there she was not confident enough to make decisions without confirming with her husband. On the other hand, she indicated that since she had to order her fellow colleagues what to do, she was failing

to balance her position as a manager at work and her position as a wife because she would command her husband and it had a negative impact on her marriage.

The findings revealed that several participants gained self-confidence, one of the elements embodied in the empowerment theory. They indicated that since they were opportunity to rotate while working to promote gender equality made them gain self-confidence. They also conveyed that they were also able to participate in community gatherings of which it was something they would not do back then because they were shy. One of the participants added that learning from others had contributed to her gaining-confidence. She indicated that even during social occasions in the community, she helped with cooking and that most community members trusted her cooking skills. Furthermore, another participant added that she gained more experience than self-confidence because of working.

*I would say I have gained experience by working here and gaining experience has helped me to gain more confidence. Even at home they would say that I should help with menus for different occasions because they are confident that I have skills and knowledge to do so and that has made me gain more confidence. (P8)*

Although most of the findings are similar to what other scholars in the literature found, it is clear that gender equality and empowerment in accommodation facilities in Maseru rural was not fully promoted socially and psychologically for those who hold non-managerial positions. (Al-Makhadmah et al 2020; Bibi 2017, Mohanty 2018) showed that employees in accommodation facilities were able to make decisions, similar sentiments were shared with some of participants especially in the managerial positions but those in non-managerial positions indicated that they

were not allowed to make decisions without consulting their supervisors and they indicated that they would like to be given opportunity to make decisions especially in their line of work.

#### **4.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter began with the presentation of demographic profile of the participants engaged in the study followed by presentation of the findings using thematic analysis. Supported by information categorized from data and extracts from participants, the themes and categories from the findings were presented, showing three themes emerging. The first theme showed how employees were economically empowered. The second theme revealed how training promoted gender equality and empowerment amongst employees in accommodation facilities in Maseru rural. The last theme unveiled how employees were socially and psychologically empowered both at work and outside the workplace.

## **Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary of the key findings, conclusion and recommendation

### **5.2 Summary of key findings**

In terms of economic empowerment, findings from the study revealed that there was a gender imbalance, with more women than men working in a number of lodging facilities in Maseru rural. In addition, a number of participants who did not hold management positions claimed that they did not feel economically empowered, in contrast to those who did. The participants claimed that they could not start income-generating initiatives since they did not have the time because they spent too much time at work.

The data showed that numerous lodging establishments offered training through lecturing and job-rotation to their employees and that they also outsourced training, which helped them develop their skills and expertise. The findings revealed that new employees were often given training opportunities on their arrival but as for the old staff it was done infrequently. Moreover, the participants expressed a need for more consistent training that would empower them both within and outside of the job.

The findings demonstrate that the participants received social and psychological empowerment. The data derived from the participants conveyed that they were able to interact with others in a more respectful manner with their co-workers even at home and the community at large. They were also able to make decisions and they gained self-confidence.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The conclusion of the study addresses the research questions which provide insights into the economic empowerment, training programs and social and psychological empowerment initiatives strategies implemented by accommodation facilities to promote gender equality and empowerment amongst employees. In conclusion the study revealed that accommodation facilities in Maseru rural promote gender equality and empowerment amongst workers and owners but there are challenges like not all of them perform. Not all employees felt economically empowered and it has been discovered that rural accommodation facilities seem not empowering lower level employees. Also since they spent much time at work, they were unable to launch income-generating initiatives and operate such businesses. Based on the findings of the study it was found that accommodation facilities in Maseru rural implemented several training programs to promote gender equality and empowerment amongst employees. These programs addressed stereotypes and biases and provided skills and knowledge.

Accommodation facilities implemented measures to provide emotional support, promote work-life balance and ensure a safe and respectful workplace. These facilities also encouraged mentorship and leadership development programs enabling employees to grow professionally and gain self-confidence in their abilities.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

The government should collaborate with accommodation facility owners to offer training and education programs on gender equality and empowerment. This can help raise awareness and sensitivity towards gender issues and equip workers with necessary skills and knowledge to challenge gender stereotypes and biases both at work and outside workplace. Accommodation

facility owners should employ the strategy of balancing gender when hiring. Employees should be granted equal opportunities in terms of making chores and making decisions so that they may feel empowered. The government and the owners of accommodation facilities should employ strategies of promoting gender equality and empowerment of workers because this study shows gender equality and empowerment are promoted in some accommodation facilities while in some they are not.

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