
Post-Covid crisis and the gender gap in tourism: what is going to happen
in
South Africa?



Dr. Azzurra Rinaldi

Dr. J. Chipumuro

Dr. Radu Mihailescu



Background: The South African tourism sector

- ❖ Prior the Covid-19 pandemic the Tourism Sector in South Africa supported over 1.5 million jobs across the economy with 70 % being on paid employment and 60.2% being employed on permanent basis (Maluleke, 2020).
- ❖ The sector is regarded as the livelihood for many micro and small enterprises, often being the only economic activity in rural and remote areas which creates employment for many across the country (Mthembu and Mtambara, 2018)
- ❖ The tourism sector employees one in ten people worldwide and in South Africa women constitute 70% of the employees in the sector (Baum and Nguyen, 2020).
- ❖ Despite the number of women employees in the sector, they [Women] hold less than 40% of all managerial positions, less than 20% of general management positions and less than 8% of Board positions (Baum & Cheung, 2015; WTTC, 2017).
- ❖ The United Nations Sustainable goal no 5 aims to achieve gender equity and empowering women and girls. If the goal is to be achieved, then the conversation around the gender gap in Tourism in South Africa especially post Covid-19 crisis becomes imperative

Working in the Tourism sector in South Africa

- ❖ Working in the Tourism sector in South Africa is regarded as almost synonymous with;
- ❖ Subsistence level pay and very poor working conditions often considered as dirty work.
- ❖ Overworking including night work and holiday work
- ❖ Reduced education levels and Lower education returns
- ❖ Occupational segregation, exploitation and regarded as modern-day slavery in some contexts
- ❖ Employment is influenced by seasonality culminating in part time work
- ❖ The jobs command high levels of insecurity, can be anti-social in demands, low status, and limited desirability.
- ❖ Semi-skilled and unskilled women tend to work in the most vulnerable positions such as cleaners, waiters, bar tenders and others where they experience poor working conditions, inequality of opportunities, treatment, violence, high levels of stress and sexual harassment.
- ❖ # Dishearteningly, most employees in the sector cannot afford the luxury they offer to their clients, and the wage rate is not only lower, in some instances employees are paid less than the minimum wage especially for women (Baum, 2018; French, 2018)

Gender disparity in the South African tourism sector

- ❖ A review of the gender disparity pre-lockdown shows that the South African Tourism and Hospitality industries were already significant.
- ❖ The disparities between male and female employees in these industries were already apparent due to economic and cultural factors. A divergence between qualifications and workplace realities is observable for women.
- ❖ There is overwhelming evidence of a “glass ceiling” blocking women from progressing preventing women from entrance into high paying executive positions in the sector.
- ❖ Research has found gender to have a negative effect on women’s income which can not be attributed to hours worked, educational level or organisational structure. Furthermore, women have been found to hold lower quality jobs compared to men and the gap widens as you go up.
- ❖ There is under representation of women in leadership positions in the sector with some justifying this by highlighting that women employees may disrupt their working lives due to preference for marriage and caring for children. This is magnified by the occupational aspects of the job such as long hours of work, handling alcoholic beverages and high mobility rate.
- ❖ Work family conflict and the “old boys network” have also created invisible blockages for women career advancement in the sector.

Covid-19 crisis and the South African tourism sector

- ❖ UNWTO (2020) predicts huge negative impact on employment in the Tourism sector in general and female employment in particular, which might worsen gender inequalities and widening the gender gap as South Africa ranked 17 on the Global Gender Gap Report of 2019.
- ❖ COVID-19 pandemic forced firms to reduce staff with some firms making some staff redundant.
- ❖ While South Africa is one of the world's most popular destinations, it is estimated that the sector had lost R54,2 billion in output and 438,000 jobs by the end of May alone. This economic impact of the pandemic is expected to be particularly significant for women in the country because few women in tourism are employed in positions which can be undertaken remotely. This has aggravated existing vulnerabilities and forced women to rely greatly on informal employment which in some cases has resulted in gender Based Violence.

South Africa: economic performance and the tourism sector

- ❖ The South African economy was on a positive growth path during the years from 2003 to 2008
- ❖ Yet, the country suffered from the effects of the 2008 global economic and financial crisis. And even before the Covid-19 crisis, the economy did not recover: indeed, employment in the country still didn't return to its pre-crisis levels. This resulted in a further increase in overall economic inequality.
- ❖ There are several South African studies that report that gender wage gap between men and women holds even after accounting for education and age (Muller 2009; Casale & Posel, 2011).
- ❖ The South African government developed legislation aimed at addressing inequality in the work place. Despite that, in South Africa women (and especially black women) continue to be paid less than men (Bhorat & Goga, 2013; Mosomi, 2019), and are more likely to be employed in precarious and low-paid jobs (Gradín, 2018).
- ❖ In the tourism industry, women represent more than 60% of the workforce. Despite that, they hold less than 40% of all managerial positions (Baum & Cheung, 2015; WTTC, 2017)

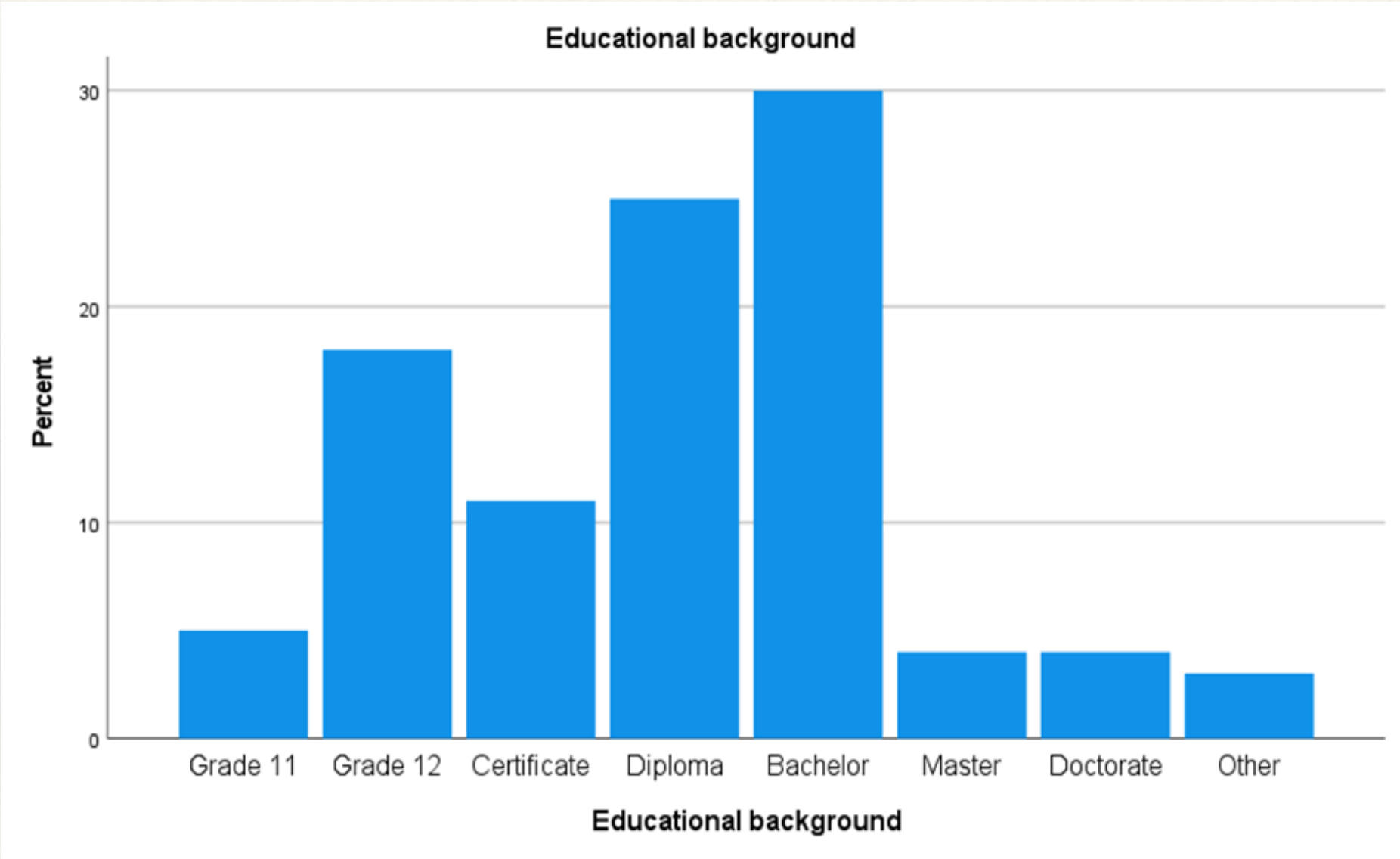
The scope of the study

- ❖ The research had as objective the testing of the following hypotheses:
- ❖ Hypothesis 1 – If unemployed, female employees are likely to have a higher level of uncertainty regarding the possibility of finding employment in South African hospitality sector in the next six months.
- ❖ Hypothesis 2 - If employed, female employees are likely to have a higher level of uncertainty re-garding job security in South African hospitality sector in the next six months.
- ❖ Hypothesis 3 – Female employees consider gender discrimination as being one major factor in in-fluencing current and future chance for employability in hospitality

Descriptive analysis of the sample

- ❖ An online survey conducted amongst 101 hospitality professionals explored the work security and perceived opportunities of people working in Hospitality in South Africa. The sample of the survey included all types of employees in the sector starting from waiters and including upper management.
- ❖ The sample used in the research consisted of 54 percent female and 46 percent male respondents. The average age of the respondents was 32 years old.
- ❖ Slightly more than half of the respondents, specifically 51 percent, were employed at the time of the interview. From these, 82.2 percent were employed full-time, 17.8 percent were employed on a part-time basis

Educational Background of the Sample



Gender responses regarding factors influencing employment opportunities in Hospitality in South Africa

Differences in perception between genders on job prospects and job security

	If not employed, what is the likelihood that you will be able to find a job in the next 6 months?	If employed, what is the likelihood that you will be able to keep your job in the next 6 months?
Kruskal-Wallis H	4,050	3,973
Df	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	,044	,046
a. Kruskal Wallis Test		
b. Grouping Variable: Gender		

Ranks				
	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Factor Gender	0	32	33,19	1062,00
	1	46	43,89	2019,00
	Total	78		
Factor Age	0	32	39,13	1252,00
	1	45	38,91	1751,00
	Total	77		
Factor Education	0	31	37,50	1162,50
	1	44	38,35	1687,50
	Total	75		

Test Statistics ^a			
	Factor Gender	Factor Age	Factor Education
Mann-Whitney U	534,000	716,000	666,500
Wilcoxon W	1062,000	1751,000	1162,500
Z	-2,154	-,042	-,172
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,031	,966	,863
a. Grouping Variable: Gender			

Main findings

- ❖ COVID-19 is going to amplify the unequal intra-household allocation of unpaid work (Del Boca et al., 2020)
- ❖ According to our hypothesis n. 3, uncertainty is higher for unemployed women who would like to find a job in the hospitality sector in South Africa.
- ❖ When dealing with the future scenarios and future job opportunities, gender seems to be an explanatory factor, much more than age and education
- ❖ Our findings confirm that South African women feel more uncertainty about their occupational future and are more afraid that they won't find a job within the tourism sector, even though it is one of the sectors where female employment is higher.

Recommendations

- ❖ In South Africa (like in other African countries), there is a special need for policies and legislation that may support the rights of women to equal treatment (Amine & Staub, 2009; Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016) and equal opportunities. As the data shows, the proposed measures need to take into consideration the part of the female population that is currently unemployed and uneducated. In this context, many opportunities should be created in establishing skills developing programs which can see a strong support and co-operation between educational institutions and private sector.
- ❖ The success of any economic recovery of the Tourism sector is paramount in the contribution of a meaningful reduction in the levels of unemployment in South Africa. A further reinforcement of the gender status quo experienced before lockdown could possibly have a large negative effect on the market for labour supply in the Hospitality sector.
- ❖ We recommend that the South African public authorities further develop policies in which funds and incentives are provided and such partnerships are developed. The study was limited by the lack of literature regarding impact on gender disparities due to lockdown and the relative short period of time during which the data was collected. We recommend that future research should measure long-term effects of Covid -19 pandemic on this issue.
- ❖ The Covid-19 lockdown has created a situation in which to ensure a sustainable and consistent development of the South African vital tourist sector, gender equity labour policies should be efficiently implemented. Failing to take advantage of this opportunity is a situation that the South African economy cannot afford.