THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT POLICIES, EMPLOYMENT LEVELS AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE OF POLOKWANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

by

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THESIS

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DECLARATION

I, Chungu Mamahlodi Mashabela, declare that the thesis titled "**The Relationship Between Employment Policies, Employment Levels and Local Development in South Africa: A Case of Polokwane Local Municipality in Limpopo Province, South Africa**" submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree Doctor of Administration in Public Administration is my original work and has not been previously submitted for a degree or other qualification at this or other institutions. I further declare that the sources and material used have been duly acknowledged in the list of references.

10 September 2025

Chungu Mamahlodi Mashabela **Date**

DEDICATION

I dedicate this journey to my entire family, my first and greatest teachers. My deepest gratitude flows to the generations before me, my great-grandparents and grandparents, for planting the seeds of curiosity and resilience that have blossomed into this work. To my incredible parents, your strength and love have been my guiding light. Thank you for every sacrifice, every word of encouragement, and every lesson in perseverance. To my extended family, my aunts, uncles, and cousins, thank you for being my loudest cheerleaders and my safe harbour. Your belief in me has been a constant source of strength. And to my siblings, Kgolane and Makgwaile Mashabela, I hope this stands as a testament that, any dream is within reach. This is for you.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between employment policies, employment levels, and local development in South Africa, using the Polokwane municipal area as its case study. The objectives of the study were to analyse the employment legislative framework and its influence on employment growth in South Africa; examine the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa; examine the impact of employment policies on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality; analyse the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality and to develop a local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development in South Africa. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected through structured interviews and questionnaires, with sampling conducted using both probability and non-probability techniques. Data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel 2010 for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses.

The study found that employment policies influence employment growth. While some regulations aim to protect workers' rights and promote fair labour practices, overly rigid regulations can sometimes discourage hiring and increase labour costs, potentially leading to lower employment levels. Conversely, flexible regulatory frameworks enable businesses to adapt more efficiently to market fluctuations, potentially stimulating job creation. Additionally, the study identified challenges in policy compliance among employers, as well as enforcement difficulties faced by the Department of Labour. These compliance and enforcement gaps undermine the effectiveness of employment policies, limiting their potential to drive meaningful employment growth. Furthermore, the findings indicate that both employment policies and employment levels exert considerable influence on local development. On one hand, well-structured employment policies foster an inclusive labour market, enabling broader workforce participation.

On the other hand, persistently high unemployment exacerbates socio-economic disparities, increasing reliance on government welfare programmes. This dependency reduces municipal revenue streams, constraining service delivery and impeding local development. To address these challenges, the study recommends regulatory

streamlining and simplifying complex labour regulations, which could enhance compliance and reduce administrative burdens on businesses. This can make it easier for companies to navigate the legal landscape and focus on creating jobs. Additionally, the study recommends investment in skills development, bridging the skills gap through targeted education and vocational training programmes, which is critical to improve workforce employability.

Moreover, the study recommends supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and fostering an entrepreneurship culture. SMMEs are significant job creators in many economies. Assisting SMMEs by providing access to financial resources, business development services and streamlined regulations can help them grow and create more jobs. This can significantly improve employment levels and ultimately enhance local development in South Africa. The study underscores the pivotal role of employment policies and employment levels in shaping local development outcomes. Higher employment rates correlate with increased household incomes, greater local expenditure, and strengthened municipal revenue bases, which contribute to sustainable economic growth. By implementing the proposed recommendations, policymakers can foster a more dynamic labour market, ultimately advancing both employment and local development in South Africa.

Keywords: Employment policies, Employment levels, Local Development, South Africa

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, problem statement, aim and objectives, research questions, research design and methodology, data analysis, validity and reliability, ethical considerations and significance of the study. The relationship between employment policies, employment levels, and local development in South Africa is complex and interconnected (Kingdon & Knight, 2007). Employment policies play a crucial role in shaping employment levels and local development (Kingdon & Knight, 2007). Depending on their design and implementation, these policies can either facilitate job creation and economic growth or hinder them (Padayachee & Zarenda, 1996). Furthermore, the level of employment in a country significantly impacts local development (Kingdon & Knight, 2004). High employment levels can contribute to enhanced living standards, reduced poverty rates, and greater economic stability within local communities (Kingdon & Knight, 2004).

South Africa has encountered numerous obstacles in addressing unemployment and promoting economic development since 1994 (Meyer, 2014a). Structural issues such as high levels of inequality, a mismatch between job opportunities and skills, and informal employment practices also impact the ability of employment policies to generate sustainable employment and contribute to local development effectively (International Labour Organisation, 2019). These challenges have been attributed to a variety of factors, including the historical legacy of apartheid, restricted access to education and skills training, and a lack of inclusive economic policies (McCord, 2005).

The government has enacted various employment policies to address these issues and foster local development (Glen & Mearns, 2021). However, despite these efforts, challenges persist, and a comprehensive approach that addresses the systemic causes of unemployment and underdevelopment is crucial for achieving sustainable progress. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the success of these employment policies in addressing unemployment and promoting local development in South Africa (McCord, 2005).

One of the employment policies in South Africa is Skills Development Act, which seeks to seeks to provide individuals with the essential skills to take part in the economy and contribute to local development by improving access to education and training (Aigbavboa, at al. 2016). The government has prioritised skills development and education through programmes like the National Skills Development Strategy, aimed at enhancing the skill set of the South African workforce. The other one is the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), which aims to provide temporary employment opportunities to alleviate poverty. The EPWP focuses on labour-intensive projects in areas such as infrastructure development, environmental conservation, and social services, thereby creating job opportunities and contributing to local development (Mashau, 2017).

High unemployment levels can hinder local development, leading to socioeconomic disparities and a lack of opportunities for individuals and communities (Kingdon & Knight, 2004). Therefore, South Africa must develop and implement employment policies that prioritise job creation, particularly in sectors with significant growth potential and innovation (Meyer, 2014b). Most countries have experienced periods of low employment levels in their history (Ventura, 2024). Like many other nations, South Africa has faced low employment levels and is among the countries with the highest unemployment rates globally (Aguero & Fasola, 2022).

The South African unemployment rate is four times greater than that of other sub-Saharan countries (World Bank, 2020), recording a rate of 33.9% (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2023:9a).Regions in South Africa experience high unemployment, with Limpopo province reporting a 49.6% unemployment rate, a 31.8% expanded unemployment rate, and only a 48.7% labour force participation rate (Stas, SA, 2022:22). Polokwane Local Municipality, despite having a low unemployment rate of 18.1%, records a labour force participation rate of just 36.6% (City of Polokwane, 2022:225). This raises a serious concern that requires immediate government attention (National Planning Commission, 2012). The unemployment problem can be alleviated by developing sound employment policies that effectively utilise South Africa's labour resources.

Every government seeks to implement sound employment policies and achieve employment growth (Sa'idu & Muhammad, 2015). According to Brada et al. (2014),

employment policies are key determinants of unemployment. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2022) states that employment policies aim to create job opportunities, preserve and retain jobs, reintegrate people into the labour force, and facilitate job search. Meidani and Zabihi (2011), argue that sound employment policies are vital for increasing employment levels and should be a priorityin countries with high unemployment rates. Guzman (2014) asserts that sound employment policies can significantly reduce unemployment.

Raifu and Afolabi (2022) argue that high unemployment rates suggest policymakers are failing to effectively manage and influence the labour force. Employment policies are crucial in promoting local development and economic growth (Fox & Murray, 1990). By implementing effective workforce development programmes, governments can create a deep pool of qualified workers, which fuels economic growth and innovation. These programmes help attract and retain skilled individuals, increasing the overall pool of talent available in a region.

This, in turn, enhances the prospects for local development, as businesses are more likely to invest and expand in areas with a skilled and productive workforce (Garmise, 2009). The distribution of economic activities and resources also plays a significant role in shaping local development (Worku, 2015). Therefore, by comprehensively assessing labour markets and workforce systems, governments can identify the major challenges and opportunities for fostering employer growth and enhancing individual potential (Sleezer & Denny, 2008). By aligning the needs of the community with the demands of industries in the area, employment policies can effectively address the skill requirements of different sectors and locations.

This analysis highlights the importance of integrating workforce system elements across policy, governance, and foundation systems to ensure the success of employment policies in promoting local development (Sleezer & Denny, 2008). Moreover, employment levels play a vital role in local development, as lower employment levels contribute to a higher indigent rate and an eroded municipal revenue base (Bureau for Economic Research (2021). This leads to South African municipalities experiencing undesirable service delivery and development (Murimoga & Musingafi, 2014). Furthermore, low employment levels exacerbate local development socio-economic hardships that result in poor living standards.

This study investigates the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local development in South Africa. It does so by analysing the employment legislative framework and its influence on employment levels in South Africa, examining the relationship between employment policies and employment levels, assessing the impact of employment policies on local development and evaluating the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality. Additionally, this study aims to develop an employment-based local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The South African government has made efforts to eradicate unemployment and alleviate dire socio-economic conditions post-1994. However, unemployment and other socio-economic conditions persist to this day. Although there has been a significant change in the South African labour force since 1994, these changes have not resulted in sufficient employment levels (Bhorat, & Jacobs, 2019). The South African government has established and implemented several employment policies to increase employment levels and promote an inclusive labour force post-1994. Despite these efforts, employment levels in South Africa continue to decrease, indicating that government intervention has not been effective in addressing the issue. The decline in employment levels suggests that employment policies are limited in their ability to increase employment and preserve jobs in South Africa. Hence, Womack (2020) argues that there is a problem with the implementation of employment policies in SouthAfrica, considering the ongoing challenges in improving the employment levels.

Employment policies are meant to regulate the South African labour markets and ensure high labour utilisation, yet labour force participation remains low. As outlined in the National Development Plan, the majority of South Africans should be economically active by 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2012). However, the country currently records a 33.9% unemployment rate, a 44.1% extended unemployment rate, and only a 58.9% labour force participation rate (Stats SA, 2022:9a). Unemployment is significantly higher among younger people compared to

older age groups. In addition, the unemployment rate is notably high for those with and without a matric certificate but relatively low for those with tertiary education (Stats, 2022).

Low employment levels hinder local development as unemployed people rely on indigent programmes in local municipalities, which strains the municipal revenue base (Ruiters, 2018). Unemployed people are subjected to poor socio-economic conditions, which further impede local development within their communities. Mzizi (2017) conducteda study on the impact of unemployment in Mazakhele, Kwa-Zulu Natal, and found that unemployment leads to socio-economic conditions that negatively affect individuals and their families.

Mzizi (2017) also found that unemployed individuals often resort to crime, violence and substance abuse, among other psychological effects. Unemployment also hinders economic development, as unemployed individuals spend less money and contribute less to the economy (Ganong, & Noel, 2019). Nwankwo and Ifejiofor (2014) carried out a study on the effects of employment levels on economic development in Nigeria and found that low employment levels hinder economic growth.

Unemployment further exacerbates poverty and inequality in the country (Meyer, 2013). South Africa has the highest level of inequality globally and ranks number 1 among 164 countries in the World Bank's global poverty statistics (The World Bank, 2022). Inequality hinders inclusive development (The World Bank, 2022), as unemployed individuals struggle to meet their basic needs, widening the gap between the wealthy and the impoverished. Nearly 69% of the South African population lives in poverty, with 25% experiencing food poverty (The World Bank, 2020). Inequality in South Africa persists, despite years of democracy (Francis & Webster, 2019).

The South African government aims to achieve a high rate of economically active individuals by 2030, yet the country remains among the nations with the highest unemployment globally. The high unemployment rate indicates that current employment policies are limited in achieving the country's employment goals. Gaps in employment policies contribute to high unemployment, leading to socio-economic conditions that threaten local development. Therefore, this study assumes that

increasing employment levels through sound employment policies can improve socioeconomic conditions and enhance South Africa's local development. Although the government has attempted to change the country's socioeconomic conditions, the status quo has remained relatively unchanged. Against this background, the study aims to examine the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local development in South Africa.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Aim of the study

The study investigates the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local development in South Africa. This study seeks to develop a local development model that has the potential to increase employment and enhance local development in South Africa.

1.3.2 Objectives of the study

- To analyse the employment legislative framework and its influence on employmentgrowth in South Africa.
- To examine the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa.
- To examine the impact of employment policies on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality.
- To analyse the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality.
- To develop a local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development in South Africa.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the employment legislative framework, and how does it influence employmentgrowth in South Africa?
- What is the relationship between employment policies and employment levels inSouth Africa?
- How do employment policies impact local development in Polokwane Local Municipality?
- How do employment levels impact local development in Polokwane

Local Municipality?

- What local development model has the potential to increase employment and enhance local development in South Africa?

1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

This section provides definitions of the study's key concepts in this study. The following are the definitions of key concepts:

- **Employment policies**

An employment policy is a plan and vision designed to achieve a country's employment goals (International Labour Office, 2015). Employment policies are the guidelines and rules an organisation establishes to govern the employment relationship between the employer and employees (Prasetya *et al*., 2021). These policies outline both parties' expectations, rights, and responsibilities, and serve as a foundation for consistent and fair decision-making within the workplace (Elrayah & Semlali, 2023). Effective human resource policies are crucial for maintaining harmonious relationships between employers and employees, as they provide a framework for addressing various aspects of the employment contract, such as compensation, benefits, performance management, and disciplinary procedures (Manchaiah *et al.,* 2020). Employment policy refers to Human Resource Management rules that govern how a company handles human resource issues (NSW Industrial Relations, 2022). For the study, employment policy refers to rules regulating the recruitment process and workplace relations within the labour force.

- **Employment levels**

Employment levels represent the number of individuals currently employed in a specific region or industry (Khayitov & Tukhtayeva, 2020). This concept is closely tied to the broader notion of employability, which encompasses an individual's ability to gain and maintain meaningful employment in the labour market (Harten *et al*., 2020). Employability is generally defined as a person's likelihood of securing employment in both formal and informal labour markets (Harten *et al.,* 2020). Employment levels refer to the extent to which available labour is used (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development - OECD, 2022). A rising employment level typically indicates a healthy economy, while declining levels may suggest an

economic downturn (Rahmadhani, and Suryati, 20). For the study, employment levels refer to the number of individuals employed in the labour force, serving as a snapshot of active participation in the labour force.

- **Local development**

Local development refers to improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of a particular geographic area, such as a town (Jia, 2021). It involves harnessing endogenous factors, such as local entrepreneurship, human capital, and natural resources, to stimulate growth and enhance the well-being of the local community (Cabras *et al*., 2023). Local development also refers to using available resources to initiate economic growth and improve people's standard of living (Rabie, 2016). According to Pike, *et al*., (2017) local development is the process of utilising national resources to enhance the quality of life for all citizens, focusing on improving employment, equality and social justice. For this study, local development refers to transforming and improving socio-economic conditions in local communities.

- **Relationship**

The term "relationship" refers to the connection, association, or linkage between two or more entities, whether individuals, groups, organisations, or concepts (Doumas *et al*., 2022). Relationships can take various forms, such as causal, where one entity's occurrence leads to the occurrence of another entity; hierarchical, where entities are arranged in a specific order or structure; spatial, involving the physical location or positioning of entities; temporal, concerning the timing or sequence of entities, or functional, relating to the roles or purposes of entities (Yang *et al*., 2021). For this study, relationship refers to the connection and linkage between concepts.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study aims to investigate the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local development in South Africa. It also seeks to develop a local development model that has the potential to increase employment and enhance local development in South Africa. The study focuses on the following objectives: examining the nature of employment policies and the legislative

framework and their influence on employment growth in South Africa; exploring the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa; assessing the impact of employment policies on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality; analysing the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality and developing a local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development in South Africa.

The study seeks to assess the extent to which employment policies affect employment levels and how both employment policies and employment levels impact local development. However, focusing on numerous employment policies may be too broad and complex for the scope of the study. Moreover, the Department of Labour does not evaluate the impact of employment policies on employment growth, which limits the study's ability to fully determine the extent to which employment policies impact employment levels. In essence, the study relies on policy analysis to determine the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The study examines the connection between employment policies, employment levels, and local development in South Africa. It aims to achieve the following objectives: to analyse the employment legislative framework and its influence on employment growth in South Africa; to examine the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa; to assess the impact of employment policies on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality; to analyse the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality and to develop a local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development in South Africa.

The study employs a research design and methodologies that inform both the data collection and analysis. It contributes to knowledge development in the field and can assist policymakers and other stakeholders involved in employment policy formulation and implementation. Thus, the study contributes to both theoretical and empirical literature, offering new insights and adding novelty to the field of study.

- **Contribution to the theoretical literature**

The study does not develop a new theory but relies on existing theories to make predictions. Therefore, the study reviews and engages with existing theoretical literature, using theory as a foundation, a guide, and a point of comparison, ultimately contributing to the ongoing development of knowledge in the field of the study. By identifying gaps in employment policies and employment levels, the study uses theories to address these gaps, thereby advancing knowledge in the field. According to the International Labour Office (2015), an employment policy is a plan and vision seeking to achieve a country's employment goals. South Africa has employment policies in place, however, unemployment persists, highlighting a gap that needs to be addressed.

The study uses the identified gap to explore the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local development. The planning theory was used to identify gaps in employment policies that hinder optimal employment levels and local development. This theory also guided the researcher in developing meaningful employment policies that lead to optimal employmentlevels and local development. Therefore, the study contributes to policymaking by addressing the gap between employment policies, employment levels and local development in South Africa. The study proposes policy intervention measures that can assist policymakers in realising effective employment policies that promote optimal employment levels and local development in South Africa.

- **Contribution to the empirical literature**

The results of this study add to knowledge development in the field of Public Administration and other related disciplines. The insights gained in the study will assist researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders in the field of Public Administration. Through its examination and interpretation of data, the study contributes to the development of evidence-based policies and practices. By providing evidence-based insights, the study can inform decision-making in the field, leading to more effective interventions and policies. Data analysis can reveal patterns

and relationships between variables that were previously not apparent, which could lead to new insights and contribute to the development of a new model in the study.

Moreover, the study seeks to validate the literature reviewed in answering the research questions. Employees from the Department of Labour, as well as public and private sector employers in Polokwane Local Municipality, senior employees in the municipality and local residents provided information to help the researcher verify the literature. The verified data will assist practitioners and policymakers in addressing shortcomings in employment policies and legislative frameworks. This can help alleviate lower employment levels and enhance local development in South Africa. The study findings will be particularly valuable to the Department of Labour in reshaping its policy approach and to Polokwane Local Municipality in realising its local development goals.

- **Contribution to novelty**

The persistent unemployment crisis in South Africa has led to socio-economic conditions that threaten local development. This study seeks to develop a new employment-based local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development across the country. The model is designed to improve development in South African communities by addressing existing gaps in employment policies that hinder employment growth.

The study assumes that sound employment policies, which align with the realities in the labour market, can drive employment growth, ultimately contributing to both employment levels and local development. The model will assist policy makers in identifying weaknesses in existing employment policies and formulating effective intervention measures that will significantly reduce unemployment. The implementation of revised employment policies will support and promote local development within South African municipalities. The objectives of this study will guide the development and refinement of the model.

1.8 CHAPTER LAYOUT

This section provides a summary of the chapters, briefly discussed as follows:

- **Chapter One: Introduction and background**

Chapter One encapsulates the core elements that lay the groundwork for the dissertation. It introduces the research topic and provides background information, explaining the broader context of the study. It presents a concise overview of the research, setting the stage for the detailed investigations in subsequent chapters. This chapter includes the study background, problem statement, aim, objectives, research questions, research and significance of the study. In essence, it is the foundation upon which the rest of the thesis is built, and provides the reader with the necessary context to understand and appreciate the research that follows.

- **Chapter Two: Literature review**

Chapter Two comprises both empirical and theoretical literature. The empirical literature entails an extensive review of studies related to the study's objectives, and the theoretical literature discusses the theories underpinning the research. This chapter enables the study to remain focused on the main points and avoids unnecessary details.

- **Chapter Three: Research design and methodology**

Chapter Three outlines the detailed research design and methodology employed to achieve the aim of the study. It discusses the study area, population, and the techniques used to collect and analyse data in answering the research questions. It also justifies the choice of research design and methods used and discusses the ethical considerations guiding the study.

- **Chapter Four: Research findings, data analysis and interpretation of results**

Chapter Four presents the research findings based on the data collected in the study area. It discusses the interpretation of the data gathered through interviews and questionnaires. Moreover, the objectives of the study guided the data collection, and

the interpretation of the findings seeks to answer the research questions of the study.

- **Chapter Five: Summary, recommendation and conclusion**

This chapter discusses the summary, recommendation and conclusion the of the study. The summary provides a brief overview of each chapter. The recommendations are drawn from the findings of the study and contribute to the ongoing development of knowledge in the field. The recommendations can help policymakers, researchers and other stakeholders in implementing changes based on the research evidence.

1.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter provided an overview of the research, including the introduction and background of the study, problem statement, objectives, and research questions. It also defined of the key concepts, discussed the limitations and outlined the significance of the study. Additionally, the chapter introduced the study's design and the layout of the chapters of the thesis. This chapter provided the context and justification of the study, laying the foundation for the research and constructing the study's framework. The following chapter presents the theoretical framework within which the study seeks to address its objectives and research questions.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided the introduction and context for the study, laying the foundation for the study. This chapter discusses the theoretical literature, policy and legislative framework and empirical literature. The theoretical literature provides the foundational theories that underpin the study, including the planning theory, which is used as a lens to examine employment policies, and the social justice theory, which helps shape discussions around fairness and equity in the context of employment. The policy and legislative framework section outlines the policies and legislative frameworks that regulate employment practices in South Africa.

The legislative and policy framework ranges from the Constitution of South Africa to the Labour Relations Act. The empirical literature discusses the objectives of the study, which include analysing the employment legislative framework and its influence on employment growth in South Africa; examining the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa; examining the impact of employment policies on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality; analysing the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality and developing a local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development in South Africa.

2.2 THEORETICAL LITERATURE

This section discusses the following theories that ground the study: planning theory, and social justice theory. The study uses planning theory to view employment policies and social justice theory as lenses to view local development in South Africa. Therefore, these theories address the variables of the study. The purpose of theory is to solve a problem (Banugire, 1977); thus, the study uses these theories to potentially come up with a solution for poor employment growth that will ultimately improve employment levels and local development in South Africa. The theories are discussed and applied below.

2.2.1 The planning theory

Planning theory is a field of study that focuses on the principles and concepts behind effective planning processes (Fischler, 2011). It seeks to understand how planning decisions are made, what factors influence these decisions, and how they may be improved to attain intended results (Yiftachel, 1989). Planning theory delves into various aspects of planning, including urban development, environmental conservation, and resource management (Neuman, 2005). It seeks to explore the complexities involved in creating sustainable and inclusive plans that accommodate the diverse needs of communities. This field of study also examines the role of stakeholders, politics, and economics in shaping planning decisions (McGuirk, 2001). By analysing historical and contemporary case studies, planning theory seeks to provide insights into the obstacles and prospects that arise in the planning process.

Grasping the nuances of planning theory is crucial for policymakers, urban planners, and decision-makers as it equips them with the knowledge to navigate the intricate landscape of planning in a rapidly changing world (Dalton, 1989). Furthermore, the intersection of stakeholders, politics, and economics in planning decisions underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of planning theory (Yiftachel, 1989). As planners strive to create policies and regulations that address diverse community needs and protect the environment, the foundational knowledge provided by planning theory becomes invaluable (Galloway & Mahayni, 1977).

Planning theory also recognises the importance of context in shaping effective planning processes (Yiftachel, 1989). Each community and region have unique characteristics, challenges, and resources to consider when crafting plans. Therefore, planning theory emphasises the need for a localised approach that considers the specific needs and aspirations of different communities. This understanding is supported by the case studies of municipal planning practice, which highlight the continuity in the lessons drawn about effective planning. These case studies reveal that successful planners possess certain qualities and abilities, such as effective communication, collaboration, and a deep understanding of the communities they serve (Fischler, 2000). Additionally, planning theory acknowledges the dynamic nature of urban environments and the need for continuous adaptation (Yiftachel, 1989).

Planning theory refers to the framework and principles that inform the practice of rural and urban planning (Mathieson, 1972). It encompasses various approaches, methods, and concepts that help planners understand and shape the physical, social, and economic aspects of communities (Fainstein, 2005). Planning theory systematically explains the relationships between land use, infrastructure, social dynamics, and economic development. In the context of employment policies, planning theory can be applied to analyse and tackle the intricate interactions among economic forces, institutional factors, and the labour force to formulate effective strategies for enhancing job creation, improving employment outcomes, and addressing worker protection issues.

This study uses planning theory to explain optimal employment policy in South Africa. The planning theory explains optimal public policy planning and implementation models (Madanipour, 2015). The theory is based on the observation that public and private sector planning does not match reality (Banugire, 1977). Therefore, the theory will assist the study to propose measures to alleviate bottlenecks in employment policies that subsequently lower employment levels in South Africa. Theemployment levels reflect gaps in the process of designing and implementing employment policies in South Africa.

According to Faludi (1973), planning theory falls under procedural and substantive theory. The former is perceived as a planning activity, and the latter is perceived as an area of concern in planning activity (Allmendinge, 2017); Muller, 1987). Faludi (1973) believes planners encounter a range of problems within their line of work. Some planners are concerned with land use, while others are concerned with people. The planners set goals and implementation processes to achieve their goals. Faludi further asserts that planning focuses on the most effective methods for achieving results, and argues that one of the problems that planners face is that of systematically improving planning institutions and their planning procedures. Faludi refers to this process as meta planning. Meta planning is a strategy used to generate ideas to enhance organisational procedures (Wilensky, 1981). Thus, Allmendinge (2017) argues that the rationale of planning theory is that planning promotes human growth through rational processes of ideas and action.

The essence of planning theory lies in the use of rational thought to consistently enhance and improve human life (Faludi,1973). Growth denotes the utilisation of learning capacity to enhance a system's openness and improve its ability to respond effectively to environmental changes (Deutsch, 1966). Planning theory can assist in developing new frameworks of understanding and reinterpreting planning challenges (Schön & Rein, 1993). Planning theory provides a wide range of perspectives for examining planning practice (Harris, 2000).

Planning theory is analysed using the rational planning process and the model of planning agency (Faludi, 1973). The rational planning process comprises principles that guide the planning methodology, along with data that identifies, defines, and delineates the steps involved in the planning process (Taylor, 2005). According to Faludi (1973), the objective of rational planning is to produce optimal solutions for given problems. The planning process of a rational planner entails a plan and planning process that focuses on delivering tangible results (Olesen, 2018). Planning theory answers the following questions: “what constitutes good planning” and “what constitutes a good planning process?” (Alexander, 1992; Yiftachel, 1989). Procedural rationality improves decisions by defining who makes decisions and how they are made.

Numerous scholars present principles that guide the rational planning process. Dluhy (1986) believes that the rational planning procedure involves a dedication to the belief that all problems originate from a technical root and can be resolved through technical remedies provided by duly qualified professionals. According to Alexander (1992), rational planning entail numerus stages that connect ideas with implementation. Alexander (1986) further states that it establishes relationship between objective and methods. Kaiser *et al*. (1995) assert that the rational planning process is a well-structured and methodical approach that involves goal formation, implementation and evaluation.

The planning theory can guide the advancement of employment policies that align with the specific needs and resources of different countries, considering factors such as levels of development, endowments, demography, and institutions. Additionally, planning theory can provide insights into balancing the need for adaptability in the labour market with worker protection, particularly when resources are scarce, and

informality looms large. By understanding planning theory, policymakers can design employment strategies that promote job creation, enhance workers' skills and labour market exposure and improve employment outcomes. Through a systematic study of the labour market impact of employment training programmes, planning theory offers a critical analysis and evaluation of their effectiveness. Planning theory can also shed light on the systemic factors contributing to unemployment, the excess of low-skilled and unskilled labour, and the influence of government skills growth strategies, all of which are important considerations when formulating employment policies.

Planning theory plays a vital role in shaping employment strategies by providing valuable insights into policy development, labour market analysis, job creation, and overall strategic planning. By integrating planning theory into employment policies, policymakers can develop a thorough understanding of the factors affecting employment growth and make informed choices on how to effectively tackle unemployment and encourage job creation. Furthermore, using planning theory can help policymakers identify and enact suitable policy responses customised to the unique needs and attributes of various countries.

These policies can range from implementing labour reforms that balance adaptability with worker protection, to addressing issues of informality and scarce resources. By using planning theory as a foundation, employment policies can be developed with a focus on achieving a vibrant private sector, promoting skill development and training programmes and ensuring the efficient delivery of public services. Overall, planning theory provides a comprehensive framework that considers the various factors influencing employment and allows for the development of targeted and effective policies. Given the sources provided, it can be concluded that planning theory is essential in shaping employment strategies and policies. It aids policymakers in grasping the unique characteristics of a region, including the composition of local labour markets and the arrangement of institutional factors, which subsequently affect the formulation and execution of employment policies.

2.2.1.1. The planning process of planning theory

The planning process of planning theory involves various stages and considerations in order to develop a comprehensive framework for professional city and regional planning (Mathieson, 1972). Some of the key steps in the planning process include setting objectives, developing plans, integrating these plans into the decision-making process, and adjusting the plans according to environmental changes. Additionally, the planning process should include research, analysis of resources and methods, and consideration of relevant information (Tang & Brody, 2009).

There are also several scholars who present the rational planning process. Taylor (1998) outlies the following five steps of rational planning:

- Definition of the problems and/or goals

Clearly articulating the issue or desired outcome. This is the foundation of the planning process. Stating the problem one intends to solve.

- Generation of all possible solutions

Brainstorming and developing a wide range of potential solutions to address the defined problem or achieve the stated goals. This stage encourages creativity and exploration of various options.

- Evaluation of alternative plans/policies/ generate objective assessment criteria

Assessing the potential solutions against a set of criteria. This involves analysing each option's feasibility, costs, benefits, and potential impacts. Objective criteria help in making informed decisions.

- Implementation of plans/policies

Putting the chosen plan into action. This stage involves allocating resources, assigning responsibilities, and establishing timelines.

- Monitoring of effects of plans/policies

Tracking the progress and impact of the implemented plan. This includes gathering data, analysing results, and making necessary adjustments to ensure the plan's effectiveness.

This systematic approach to planning helps planners assess plans in terms of business area, strategy, finance, and risk (Mathieson, 1972). The planning process of planning theory is a systematic approach that involves setting objectives, developing plans, integrating these plans into the decision-making process, and adjusting them to account for environmental changes. This ensures that the planning process is comprehensive and considers various factors and considerations. Furthermore, the planning process also considers the specific goals and objectives of individuals, families, companies, industries, associations, or states (Ramanujam & Venkatraman, 1987).

This approach guarantees that the planning process is customised to meet the unique needs and priorities of the organisation conducting the planning (Davidson, 2016). The planning process should prioritise the involvement of stakeholders at every stage, ensuring that the plans developed are comprehensive and inclusive of diverse perspectives and needs. Involving stakeholders, including local communities, businesses, environmental organisations, and government agencies, can offer invaluable insights that enhance the planning process.

Furthermore, the planning process of planning theory should incorporate an evaluation stage where the effectiveness of the plans is continuously monitored and assessed (Tang & Brody, 2009). This assessment aids in pinpointing any deficiencies, enabling the improvement of plans to more effectively meet the changing needs and challenges of the community or region. In addition, ethical considerations and sustainability principles should be integral components of the planning process (Fischler, 2000). Planners should carefully assess the proposed plans' social, environmental, and economic impacts, ensuring that they align with ethical standards and enhance the long-term welfare of the communities they serve.

By incorporating these elements into the planning process, planners can create more robust, responsive, and socially responsible frameworks for city and regional planning,

effectively addressing the complex and interconnected challenges of urban development and environmental sustainability (Ochoa, *et al*., 2025).

While the planning process of planning theory emphasises the importance of setting objectives and involving stakeholders, Innes (2018) argues that this systematic approach can be too rigid and inflexible. She contends that extensive planning often leads to delays in decision-making and implementation, especially in rapidly changing urban environments.

Moreover, Innes and Booher (2010) assert that the reliance on comprehensive frameworks and long-term plans may overlook the need for agile and adaptive strategies to address immediate and evolving challenges. They advocate for a more flexible and iterative approach to planning that allows for quick adjustments and responsiveness to changing environmental, social, and economic factors. Innes and Booher (1999) argue that stakeholder engagement in the planning process has potential limitations, expressing concern that it can lead to competing interests and conflicts, ultimately hindering the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning outcomes. They argue that excessive consideration of diverse perspectives may result in diluted and compromised plans that fail to address the community's or region's most critical needs (Innes & Booher, 1999).

Additionally, Aghaegbuna, at al., (2020) questions the feasibility and practicality of incorporating ethical considerations and sustainability principles into every aspect of the planning process. Lawrence (2000) argues that while these principles are important, they may add complexity and ambiguity to the decision-making process, potentially leading to conflicts between ethical ideals and practical implementation. While the planning process of planning theory has its merits, it is essential to consider the opposing arguments and the need for flexibility, adaptability, and efficient decision-making in addressing the complex challenges of urban and regional planning.

2.2.1.2. The relevance of planning theory in today's world

In the present day's complex and ever-changing world, the significance of planning theory cannot be underestimated. Planning theory provides a framework for understanding and navigating the numerous variables and uncfertainties in various contexts. It helps planners make informed decisions, anticipate potential challenges,

and devise effective strategies. Additionally, planning theory offers insights into the integration of values, ethics, and postmodern perspectives, allowing for a more holistic and inclusive approach to planning (Galloway & Mahayni, 1977). Planning theory is also crucial in promoting sustainable development and addressing urgent global issues such as climate change, urbanisation, and social inequality.

In today's rapidly changing world, planning theory holds even more significance as it provides a robust framework for addressing the multifaceted challenges planners face (Khakee, 2019). By delving into the nuances of planning theory, professionals can better understand the interconnected systems and complexities that govern modern society. This insight facilitates the creation of more flexible and resilient strategies that can effectively address unexpected disruptions and complexities (Fischler, 2000). Planning theory helps planners navigate through the uncertainties and complexities of today's world, enabling them to make informed decisions and develop effective strategies (Galloway & Mahayni, 1977).

One area where planning theory excels is in its ability to integrate ethical considerations and postmodern perspectives into the planning process (Allmendinger, 2002). By incorporating diverse values and perspectives, planners can create more accessible and fair strategies that address the needs of disparate communities and stakeholders. This approach is crucial in addressing social inequality and fostering sustainable and harmonious development.

Overall, planning theory remains relevant today as it provides a comprehensive framework for addressing the complex challenges of urban development, promoting sustainability, and integrating various factors. While planning theory certainly offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing complex challenges, McGuirk (2001) argues that it may also be restrictive and inflexible (McGuirk, 2001).

Sagasti (1973) points out that planning theory often relies on standardised models and assumptions, which may not accurately reflect local communities' diverse and unique needs. This could lead to a uniform approach to planning that neglects the specific cultural, social, and economic contexts of different regions. In turn, this could potentially exacerbate social inequalities and hinder truly sustainable and inclusive development. It is important to consider these opposing perspectives to understand the complexities surrounding planning theory and its applications in today's world.

2.2.1.3. Application of planning theory in South Africa

When applying planning theory in practice it is crucial to consider the distinct needs and challenges of every community or region (Haghani *et al*., 2023). This requires a comprehensive understanding of planning theories and their application in different contexts (Yiftachel, 1989). Planning theory provides a theoretical foundation for environmental planning. This study aims to develop a robust conceptual framework for measuring key factors that influence the quality of local environmental plan. Planning theory is a vast and dynamic field that requires a deep understanding of various theoretical frameworks and their practical application. A myriad of factors such as social, economic, and environmental changes, have influenced the evolution of planning concepts.

In planning, theoretical frameworks provide a lens through which planners can analyse and address complex urban challenges. By delving into the key theoretical frameworks, planners gain valuable insights into how to navigate the complexities of urban development, community engagement, and sustainable resource management. Understanding these frameworks is crucial for formulating effective strategies and policies that can adapt to the ever-changing urban landscape.

Applying planning theory in practice involves more than just understanding the theoretical underpinnings; it requires a keen awareness of the needs and obstacles of every region. This necessitates a holistic method that accounts for socio-economic disparities, environmental concerns, and cultural differences. Moreover, the dynamic nature of urban environments calls for continuous adaptation and innovation in planning processes.

As one explores the fundamentals of planning and delves into the evolution of planning concepts, it is vital to critically analyse the various conceptual frameworks that underpin planning practice. By deeply understanding these theories, one is better equipped to apply planning theory in practice and contribute to creating resilient, vibrant, and inclusive urban spaces that accommodate the diverse needs of our rapidly evolving world.

The emergence of democracy in South Africa highlighted the need for effective macroeconomic and labour policies to address elevated levels of unemployment. Taking this into consideration, planning theory can play a critical role in formulating employment policies that address the unique challenges faced by South Africa (Worku, 2015).

Implementing planning theory can provide a framework for identifying and addressing the root causes of unemployment in the nation. Through a comprehensive analysis of the current labour market, planning theory can help policymakers understand the factors contributing to unemployment, such as limited job opportunities and mismatch between skills and available jobs (Meyer, 2014b). By applying planning theory, policymakers can formulate targeted strategies to generate more job opportunities and ensure a better alignment between the workforce skills and the skills required in the labour market.

This may include measures such as promoting entrepreneurship, improving education and skills training programmes, implementing labour market reforms to reduce regulations and increase flexibility, and creating an enabling environment for business and economic development (McCord, 2005). Through the application of planning theory, policymakers can also consider the social and economic context of South Africa in formulating employment policies.

This includes considering the impact of policies on marginalised and vulnerable populations, addressing income disparities, and promoting inclusive growth. Additionally, planning theory can assist in effectively implementing and evaluating employment policies. By incorporating principles of monitoring and evaluation, policymakers can assess the efficacy of employment policies and enhance them to achieve desired outcomes.

Overall, the application of planning theory in formulating employment policies in South Africa can help address the structural nature of unemployment, promote skills development, and aid in alleviating poverty and reducing inequality in the country. Planning theory can aid in the formulation of employment policies by identifying the

root causes of unemployment, developing targeted strategies considering the socio-economic context of South Africa, and ensuring effective implementation and evaluation (Meyer, 2014b). In summary, the implementation of planning theory can provide a framework for identifying and addressing the unique challenges faced by South Africa in terms of unemployment.

While planning theory provides a framework for understanding and shaping employment policies, it is crucial to consider how this theory is applied in practice. These processes can include conducting thorough analyses of the local labour market, assessing the needs and resources of the region, engaging with key stakeholders such as local businesses and community organisations, and incorporating feedback and input from these stakeholders in policy development (Knell, 1993). By following these processes, policymakers can ensure that employment policies are tailored to the specific context and address the unique challenges and opportunities present in a given region.

Furthermore, planning theory emphasises the importance of collaboration and coordination among different government departments and agencies involved in employment policy implementation. This collaborative approach ensures that policies are comprehensive, coherent, and effective in addressing the complex nature of employment issues (McCord, 2005).

Furthermore, the application of planning theory requires an ongoing monitoring and evaluation process to assess the effectiveness of the implemented employment policies. Policymakers can make informed decisions about future initiatives by systematically studying the labour market impact of employment training programmes and evaluating their effectiveness. This ensures that the policies remain relevant and responsive to the changing dynamics of the labour market.

In the South African context, the principles of planning theory can be specifically adapted to tackle the systemic nature of unemployment, the surplus of low-skilled and unskilled labour, and the impact of government skills development strategies. By integrating these considerations into the policy development processes, South Africa can align its employment policies with the country's specific needs and resources.

Overall, the processes of planning theory provide a systematic and comprehensive approach to formulating, implementing, and evaluating employment policies. By following these processes, policymakers can ensure that the policies are well-informed, targeted, and responsive to the distinctive obstacles and prospects in South Africa's labour market. The study applies planning theory in the South African context. The following is the application of the theory in the South African labour market.

2.2.1.3.1 Definition of the problems

The gaps in employment policies in South Africa are evident in various areas. The following is the definition of the problems identified in employment policies.

- Skills mismatch

Policies often lack alignment with the evolving demands of the labour market. This leads to a discrepancy between the skills offered by education and training programmes and the skills required by employers (Samuel & Thakhathi, 2012). For example, there may be an oversupply of graduates in certain fields while critical sectors face shortages. This mismatch leads to underemployment and perpetuates the cycle of unemployment as individuals struggle to find suitable employment that matches their qualifications and abilities (International Labour Organization, (2019). This can lead to high unemployment even when there are job openings. For example, there may be a shortage of software developers (Breaux & Moritz, 2021) while there is an oversupply of workers in other fields.

The demand for highly skilled labour is rising, whereas the need for unskilled labour is declining. South Africa's unskilled labour market faces several challenges, leading to gaps in employment policies (Kang'ethe & Mafa, 2014). These challenges include limited availability of education and training opportunities for unskilled workers, a lack of job security and decent working conditions in the informal sector, and a historical legacy of inequality and discrimination that continues to affect the employment prospects of certain demographic groups. This mismatch leads to underemployment and perpetuates the cycle of unemployment as individuals struggle to find suitable employment that matches their qualifications and abilities.

- Insufficient focus on skills development

While job creation is a priority, policies often do not adequately address skills development (Allen, at al., 2021). Learnerships, for instance, may prioritise placing young people in employment over equipping them with the advanced skills needed for long-term career growth and economic advancement.

- Unemployed graduates

One gap in employment policies is the lack of effective strategies to address the barriers faced by unemployed graduates. These include limited research on the reasons for graduate unemployment and a lack of comprehensive support systems for them (Oluwajodu *et al*., 2015). These factors have created challenges in matching the skills of the workforce with the needs of the labour market (Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2020).

The scope of unemployment issues in South Africa extends beyond just the lack of job opportunities for graduates. The overall unemployment rate in the country has remained persistently high, affecting not only graduates but also non-graduates and skilled as well as unskilled labour (International Labour Office, 2024). The current employment strategies in South Africa exhibit several shortcomings that contribute to the perpetuation of the unemployment problem and exacerbate the challenges faced by the workforce. One of the notable shortcomings is the lack of inclusive and targeted policies to address the precise needs of unique demographic groups, particularly those previously disadvantaged due to the legacy of apartheid (Akcigit & Van Reenen, 2023).

The unemployment challenge in South Africa includes the persistent challenges of unemployed graduates (Mahadea, 2012). Although the unemployment rate among graduates is relatively low due to the strong demand for skilled labour, some groups of graduates continue to face challenges in securing employment (Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2020). This indicates that there are gaps in employment policies and systemic issues that need to be addressed. Graduates frequently encounter obstacles such as a lack of skills and limited job opportunities. Many graduates struggle to find

employment because they lack the skills in demand in the job market (Graham *et al*., 2019).

Moreover, the formal sector in South Africa cannot provide enough employment opportunities to meet the demand (Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2020). The limited collaboration between academia and industry has resulted in a disconnect between the skills acquired through education and the actual requirements of the job market, leading to a mismatch that hinders employability (Meyer, 2014a). This often creates a cycle where individuals cannot find employment due to the lack of experience, but they cannot gain experience without getting a job (Mahadea, 2012).

- Informal employment

Furthermore, the informal sector has a substantial impact on South Africa's overall unemployment rate. Many individuals, unable to find formal employment, resort to informal sector activities, which often lack job security, decent working conditions, and social protection. The informal sector comprises a significant portion of the South African workforce and is often left out of formal employment policies. This neglect leaves a large portion of workers without access to social protection and economic opportunities, perpetuating poverty, and insecurity (Madzivhandila, 2014).

- Youth unemployment

One of the major gaps in South African employment policies is the low employment level among the youth. The youth population faces particularly high unemployment rates, compounded by limited access to education and training opportunities. The problem remains a significant challenge despite the efforts by the South African government to alleviate unemployment, especially among the youth (Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2020). Despite efforts to address this issue, such as implementing various employment policies, the gap between job opportunities and young jobseekers persists (Festus *et al*., 2016).

- Geographic disparities

Another gap in employment policies is the limited focus on rural areas and the disparities in job availability and economic opportunities between urban and rural

regions (de Lannoy *et al*., 2020). The legacy of apartheid continues to manifest in spatial inequality, making it hard for individuals in particular areas to access job opportunities. Policies need to address these spatial barriers and improve access to transportation and infrastructure. Specific demographic and geographical groups, notably Africans, those with lower levels of education, and individuals residing in rural areas, face disproportionate levels of unemployment (de Lannoy *et al*., 2020). Unemployment policies and initiatives have been implemented to tackle this pressing issue, but the disparities in access to job opportunities continue to widen. The specific challenges faced by certain demographic and geographical groups highlight the need for targeted and comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of unemployment.

- Incompliance of unskilled labour sector

One of the shortcomings of South African employment policies is the saturation of unskilled labour by foreign workers. This situation makes it challenging for South African citizens, particularly those with lower levels of skills and education, to find employment opportunities (Mubangizi, 2021). The saturation of the unskilled labour market by foreign workers in South Africa indicates deeper systemic issues and socioeconomic factors contributing to unemployment. This influx underscores the challenges faced by South African citizens with lower levels of education and skills, who already struggle to find employment opportunities (Kang'ethe & Mafa, 2014). This points to gaps in employment policies and sheds light on the broader socioeconomic disparities within the country.

These factors underscore the need for a more comprehensive approach to address unemployment in South Africa, one that encompasses not only policy reforms, but also social and economic interventions aimed at fostering inclusive growth and reducing inequalities. It is imperative to delve deeper into the systemic issues that perpetuate unemployment and to comprehend the interconnected nature of socioeconomic challenges in South Africa. By addressing not only the immediate gaps in employment policies, but also the broader societal and economic disparities, it becomes possible to implement more effective and sustainable solutions to the unemployment problem.

- Ineffective labour market regulations

Some regulations, while intended to protect workers' rights, can create rigidity in the labour market and discourage hiring (Meyer, 2014b). This can particularly affect SMMEs, which are crucial for job creation.

- Lack of coordination and implementation

Even when well-intentioned policies are in place, their effectiveness can be hampered by poor coordination and implementation (Meyer, 2014b). This can involve issues such as bureaucratic delays, lack of resources, and insufficient monitoring and evaluation.

- Inadequate support for entrepreneurship

Policies may not sufficiently support entrepreneurship and the growth of small businesses (Mahadea, 2012). Entrepreneurship is a vital catalyst for job creation, and policies should foster an enabling environment for new businesses to flourish.

- Limited focus on labour-intensive growth

Policies may fail to prioritise labour-intensive growth sectors, which have the potential to absorb a larger share of the unemployed workforce (Kgwale, 2021). This can lead to jobless growth, where the economy expands without a corresponding increase in employment.

2.2.1.3.2. Generate all possible solutions

To tackle these policy gaps, a holistic and collaborative approach is needed, engaging government, the private sector, and civil society. South Africa’s social and historical context also contributes to the complexity of the unemployment issue. Focusing on skills development, labour market flexibility, support for entrepreneurship, and addressing spatial inequalities is crucial for promoting sustainable employment growth in the country. Several solutions can be enacted to tackle this issue and bridge the gaps in employment policies. The government, businesses, and other stakeholders must come together and establish a common goal for job creation (Nattrass, 2014).

Collaboration among different stakeholders in South Africa will ensure that the gaps in employment policies are closed and high unemployment is curbed. The following are the proposed possible solutions for the identified problems in employment policies:

2.2.1.3.2.1. Aligning education and training with market needs

The scope of unemployment issues in South Africa encompasses many challenges beyond just policy gaps (Duval & Shibata, 2021). These challenges include skills mismatch, the role of the informal sector, historical and social disparities, and regional variations in job opportunities (Statistics South Africa, 2021). Tackling these intricate issues necessitates a thorough and inclusive approach that extends beyond mere employment policies (International Labour Office, 2024).

The discrepancy between the skills held by job seekers and the requirements of the labour market is a critical issue contributing to South Africa's high unemployment rates (Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2020). The current education and training systems do not sufficiently equip individuals with the skills demanded by employers (Beukes *et al*., 2017). As a result, comprehensive reforms in education and training are necessary to bridge this gap. Government initiatives should strengthen vocational training and technical education to equip individuals with practical and relevant skills. The following measures can be implemented to align education and training with market needs:

- Enhancing collaborations between educational institutions and businesses

Strengthening partnerships between educational institutions and businesses is essential for fostering collaboration that meets industry demands. This collaboration can take various forms, including the development of curricula and training programmes that are directly informed by industry needs. Involving employers in curriculum design is a critical step, as it ensures that the educational content is relevant and aligned with the skills required in the labour force. Thune and Storen (2015) highlight the importance of graduate students' interactions with work organisations during their studies, suggesting that such collaborations can enhance employability and better prepare students for the labour market.

Moreover, integrating industry experts into the educational process can significantly enhance the learning experience. Otache (2021) emphasises that the involvement of industry professionals as guest lecturers not only enriches the curriculum but also transforms students into active participants in their learning, thus improving their employability prospects. Riebe *et al*. (2013) note that guest speakers close the gap between academic learning and real-world expectations, reinforcing the curriculum and providing students with insights into the skills that employers value.

In addition to curriculum development, offering internships and apprenticeships is a vital component of this partnership. Chen *et al*. (2014) argue that collaboration between higher education institutions and industry can lead to shared resources and complementary capabilities, which are crucial for reduction of the costs and risks linked with research and development. This collaborative approach not only benefits students through practical experience but also helps businesses by creating a pipeline of skilled graduates who are ready to meet industry demands.

Furthermore, the integration of industry feedback into educational programmes is essential for continuous improvement. Stakeholder participation in curriculum review processes can enhance the quality and relevance of educational offerings, thereby improving students' employability (Tagulwa, 2023). Jappie (2022) emphasises the need for higher education institutions to design curricula that are responsive to both community and industry needs, particularly in the context of evolving labour market demands.

- Promoting vocational and technical education

Promoting vocational and technical education is crucial for addressing skills shortages in specific sectors. Encouraging enrolment in vocational and technical programmes can be achieved through various strategies, including providing financial incentives, raising awareness about career opportunities, and improving the quality and relevance of vocational training. One effective approach is to raise awareness about the career opportunities available in vocational fields. Students with a strong understanding of career options can significantly influence their decision-making regarding future career paths (Ramadhany, 2022). Vocational awareness is essential for individuals,

particularly those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, to make informed career choices that can impact their future (İşeri, 2019).

Additionally, improving the quality and relevance of vocational training is paramount. Ernawati (2021) highlights that enhancing the learning processes and optimising industrial training can significantly improve the competencies of vocational graduates, thereby making them more employable. A supportive learning environment can lead to better career readiness (Kuijpers *et al*., 2011). Financial incentives can also play a key role in advancing vocational learning. Targeted programmes aimed at expanding access to vocational training can help create a more diverse talent pool in technical careers, which is essential for meeting industry demands (Byars-Winston, 2014). Moreover, providing scholarships or financial aid specifically for vocational programmes can encourage more students to enrol and complete their training.

- Committing to lifelong learning and retraining initiatives

Committing to lifelong learning and retraining initiatives is essential for supporting workers in adapting to changing labour market demands. Programmes that help individuals acquire new skills and upgrade existing ones can take various forms, including online courses, access to training facilities, and career guidance services. One significant aspect of promoting lifelong learning is the availability of online courses. Online courses enable individuals to take control of their educational journeys and pursue skills relevant to their careers (Ossiannilsson, 2022). This self-directed approach to learning is crucial in a quickly changing labour force, where people should constantly update their skills to continue to be competitive.

Moreover, the role of human and social capital in promoting participation in lifelong learning cannot be overlooked. Knipprath and Rick (2014) emphasise that individuals with higher qualifications are more likely to participate in lifelong learning events linked to their jobs, but they also note that low-qualified adults are motivated to upgrade their skills, particularly when provided with the right support and resources. This highlights the significance of creating inclusive programmes that accommodate various educational backgrounds.

Access to training facilities is another critical component of reskilling initiatives. Non-formal lifelong learning plays a vital role in different economic contexts, suggesting that providing accessible training opportunities enables workers to invest in their skills at various stages of their careers (Herrero & Prado, 2018). This is particularly relevant in sectors experiencing rapid technological changes, where continuous learning is necessary to keep pace with industry demands. Financial support for reskilling programmes is also essential. Organisations that implement reskilling and upskilling policies can significantly enhance their workforce's adaptability to digital transformations (Winarni, 2024). By investing in employee training, companies not only improve their operational efficiency but also enhance the general resilience of the labour market.

2.2.1.3.2.2. Enhancing skills development

Investing in quality education and vocational training programmes can equip people with the necessary knowledge and skills to enter the labour force and make meaningful economic contributions. Initiatives aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and small business development can also empower individuals to create their own employment opportunities. Improving education and skills training is essential to address gaps in employment policies in the South African labour market (Kraak, 2005).

Enhancing the quality of education and providing relevant skills training programmes equips individuals with the necessary qualifications for employment, increasing their chances of finding sustainable work. This can be accomplished through various measures, such as: 1) Investing in quality education at all levels, from primary to tertiary education, to ensure that people are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge for meaningful employment (Nattrass, 2014). 2) Promoting vocational training and apprenticeship programmes to provide individuals with the practical skills required in the labour force. 3) Creating partnerships with industries and businesses to develop a curriculum aligned with industry needs. 4) Providing opportunities for work-integrated learning.

The following measures can be taken to improve education and training:

- Integrating skills development into all levels of education

Integrating skills development into all levels of education is crucial for ensuring that individuals acquire foundational skills early on and develop more specialised skills as they progress through the education system. This method not only improves employability but also enables students to meet the demands of a rapidly changing labour market. Embedding skills development components into primary, secondary, and tertiary education curricula can significantly impact students' long-term career prospects. Azevedo *et al*. (2013) argue that improved access to education must be coupled with enhancements in skills development to address inequality in labour markets. The educational system should strengthen its capacity to develop skills that are valued in the labour market, thereby making quality education and skills essential for reducing inequality (Azevedo *et al*., 2013). This foundational approach ensures that students are equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in their future careers.

At the primary and secondary levels, integrating skills development can take various forms, such as introducing critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills into the curriculum. Ojo (2024) highlights the importance of entrepreneurship education in fostering skills acquisition among university undergraduates, suggesting that similar principles can be applied at earlier educational stages to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset and skill set from a young age. This early exposure can help students recognise and seize business opportunities, thereby enhancing their employability and adaptability in the workforce.

As students transition to tertiary education, the focus can shift towards more specialised skills relevant to their chosen fields. Wang and Wong (2011) note that foreign direct investment (FDI) increases the demand for high-skilled labour, which underscores the importance of equipping students with specialised skills that align with industry needs. Tertiary institutions provide advanced training and education that prepares students for high-skilled positions in the labour force.

Moreover, the integration of skills development into the education system should also encompass soft skills, such as teamwork, leadership, and emotional intelligence. These skills are increasingly recognised as essential for success in the workplace. Celik (2021) emphasises that educational acquisitions, including key competencies and basic skills, are necessary for personal fulfilment, employability, social inclusion, and functioning citizenship. By embedding these skills into the curriculum at all

educational levels, institutions can better prepare students for the complexities of modern work environments.

- Expanding access to quality early childhood development programmes

Expanding access to excellent Early Childhood Development (ECD) initiatives is crucial for providing children with a strong foundation for future learning and skill acquisition. Investing in ECD not only enhances children's cognitive and social development but also sets the stage for lifelong learning and success. This investment can take various forms, including improving access to preschool education, providing nutritious meals, and supporting early childhood development centres.

One of the primary benefits of expanding access to preschool education is its positive impact on primary school completion rates. Earle *et al*. (2018) conducted a global study that found a strong association between free pre-primary education and primary school completion. Their findings suggest that quality early childhood programmes, characterised by favourable child-teacher ratios, trained teachers, and appropriate curriculum, contribute significantly to children's readiness for primary education.

Moreover, parental attitudes play a critical role in children's access to early childhood education. Ghosh and Steinberg (2022) highlight that parents with positive attitudes toward early childhood education and care (ECEC) are more likely to seek out preschool opportunities for their children. This finding emphasises the need for community awareness programmes that educate parents about the benefits of ECD and encourage their involvement in early education initiatives. By fostering a supportive environment, communities can enhance participation rates in preschool programmes, particularly among disadvantaged families (Ghosh & Steinberg, 2022).

Furthermore, providing nutritious meals as part of early childhood programmes is vital for children's overall growth. Black *et al*. (2017) emphasise the significance of integrating health and nutrition into early childhood development initiatives to promote optimal growth and learning. By ensuring that children receive nutritious meals, ECD programmes can enhance their physical and cognitive development, thereby improving their readiness for school (Black *et al*., 2017).

Supporting primary childhood development centres is also key for expanding access to quality ECD programmes. By investing in the infrastructure and resources of early childhood centres, governments and organisations can create environments conducive to learning and development (Ganhao, 2021).

- Strengthening apprenticeship and internship programmes

Strengthening apprenticeship and internship programmes is vital for providing young people with practical training and skills. Expanding and improving these programmes can significantly enhance the employability of the youth. This can involve creating incentives for businesses to offer apprenticeships, establishing quality standards for apprenticeship programmes, and providing support and mentorship to apprentices.

One of the key strategies for enhancing apprenticeship programmes is to create incentives for businesses to participate. Abdou (2017) indicate that while there is a growing recognition of the value of degree and higher-level apprenticeships, the uptake remains low due to various challenges faced by stakeholders. Abdou (2017) argue that financial incentives, such as subsidies and tax breaks for companies that offer apprenticeships, can encourage more businesses to engage in these programmes, thereby increasing opportunities for young people. By reducing the financial burden on employers, these incentives can lead to a more robust apprenticeship ecosystem.

Establishing quality standards for apprenticeship programmes is also essential to ensure that participants receive meaningful training and support. According to Lalioti (2019), quality assurance mechanisms should be implemented to monitor and evaluate apprenticeship programmes, ensuring that they meet industry standards and provide valuable experiences for apprentices. This includes setting clear expectations for the skills and competencies that apprentices should acquire during their training. By maintaining high standards, apprenticeship programmes can enhance their credibility and attractiveness to both employers and potential apprentices.

Mentorship plays a crucial role in the success of apprenticeship programmes. Effective mentorship can significantly impact the experiences of apprentices, providing them with guidance, support, and valuable insights into their chosen fields (Jacobs, 2018).

Mentors can help apprentices navigate challenges, develop professional networks, and gain confidence in their abilities. Establishing structured mentorship programmes within apprenticeships can enhance the overall effectiveness of these initiatives, leading to better outcomes for participants.

Furthermore, the integration of mentorship into apprenticeship programmes can also address issues related to the impostor phenomenon, where individuals doubt their accomplishments and fear being exposed as frauds. Halgas (2024) highlights that mentorship can help alleviate these feelings by providing support and validation, ultimately leading to increased career satisfaction and advancement for apprentices. By fostering a supportive environment, mentorship can enhance the overall effectiveness of apprenticeship programmes and contribute to the personal and professional growth of participants.

2.2.1.3.2.3. Reforming labour market regulations

Relaxing labour regulations can encourage businesses to hire more workers, as it reduces the costs and risks associated with employment (Nattrass, 2014). Reforming labour regulations in South Africa is another important aspect of addressing gaps in employment policies. This includes implementing labour regulations that balance protecting workers' rights and establishing conducive conditions for business development and job creation. This can be done by engaging with key stakeholders, such as trade unions and employer associations, to ensure that their perspectives and concerns are considered in the reform process. The following measures can be taken to reform labour force regulations:

- Reviewing and streamlining labour regulations

To effectively streamline labour regulations and foster a more flexible hiring environment, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs), it is crucial to address the rigidity of existing frameworks. This can be achieved through the simplification of administrative processes, the modernisation of hiring and firing procedures, and the promotion of flexible work arrangements. Reducing administrative burdens is essential for SMMEs, which often lack the resources to navigate complex labour regulations. Simplifying compliance requirements can alleviate the pressure on

these businesses, enabling them to focus on growth and employment. Bobovnik (2023) asserts that there is a need for contemporary labour law to adapt to modern market conditions, since traditional frameworks may hinder flexibility and responsiveness to economic changes. Furthermore, the enforcement of labour laws often relies on individuals or unions in vulnerable positions, which can exacerbate the challenges faced by SMMEs (Blackham, 2019). Therefore, a re-evaluation of enforcement mechanisms could facilitate a more supportive environment for small businesses.

Modernising hiring and firing procedures is critical. The existing legal frameworks often impose stringent requirements that can deter employers from hiring. The traditional distinction between employees and independent contractors can limit the applicability of labour protections, leaving many workers without adequate safeguards (Blackham, 2019). By rethinking these classifications and streamlining the processes involved in hiring and termination, businesses can operate with greater agility. Reducing arbitrary decision-making by employers through clearer regulations can empower both parties in the employment relationship (Cabrelli & Zahn, 2017).

Moreover, promoting flexible work arrangements is increasingly recognised as a vital strategy for enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction. Flexible working conditions significantly improve work engagement among employees (Farida, 2020). This flexibility not only benefits employees but also allows employers to adapt to fluctuating market demands and workforce needs. Kumar *et al*. (2021) emphasise the importance of flexibility in achieving a balance between personal and professional responsibilities, which is particularly relevant in today's dynamic work environment.

- Enhancing social protection nets

To enhance social protection nets in the context of more flexible labour markets, it is essential to provide sufficient support mechanisms such as unemployment insurance, skills development allowances, and access to healthcare and other social services. These measures are crucial for mitigating the risks associated with labour market flexibility, particularly for vulnerable populations.

The implementation of unemployment insurance is a critical component of social safety nets. It provides financial support to individuals who lose their jobs, helping to stabilise their income during periods of unemployment. Effective social safety nets, including unemployment benefits, can significantly reduce poverty levels and enhance economic resilience (Andile, 2024). Alif *et al*. (2023) emphasise the importance of social safety net regulations in addressing socio-economic impacts, particularly in the wake of crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. This highlights the necessity of having robust systems in place to support individuals during economic downturns.

In addition to unemployment insurance, skills development allowances play a vital role in preparing the workforce for changing labour market demands. By investing in skills training and development, governments can enhance employability and facilitate smoother transitions between jobs. Menger (2017) highlights the dynamics of high-skilled work and the need for flexible labour markets that allow individuals to transition between employment and unemployment. This flexibility is essential in a rapidly changing economic landscape, where continuous learning and adaptation are necessary for job security.

Access to healthcare and other social services is another critical aspect of strengthening social safety nets. Comprehensive healthcare coverage ensures that individuals do not face financial hardship due to medical expenses, which can be particularly burdensome during periods of unemployment. Rokhmah *et al*. (2020) highlight the significant allocation of resources to health services during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the importance of health as a component of social safety nets. Furthermore, the integration of social services, such as mental health support and housing assistance, can provide a holistic approach to welfare, addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals in flexible labour markets.

Moreover, the effectiveness of social safety nets can be enhanced through targeted interventions that consider the unique needs of different populations. Saikkonen and Ylikännö (2020) argue that a combination of public services and income transfers can strengthen social citizenship, particularly for marginalised groups. This approach ensures that safety nets are not only universal but also responsive to the specific challenges faced by various communities.

- Promoting social dialogue and collective bargaining

Promoting social dialogue and collective bargaining effectively is essential to encourage negotiation and collaboration among employers, workers, and the government. This can be achieved through the establishment of sectoral bargaining councils, the promotion of mediation and arbitration services, and the strengthening of labour inspection mechanisms. The following references provide insights into these strategies and their implications for labour market dynamics.

The establishment of sectoral bargaining councils can enhance collective bargaining processes by providing a structured platform for dialogue among stakeholders. Fackler (2024) indicates that personnel adjustments during the COVID-19 pandemic were more effectively managed in establishments with works councils that operated under collective bargaining agreements at the sectoral level. This suggests that sectoral agreements can have a significant impact in stabilising employment during crises, thereby fostering a collaborative approach to labour market challenges.

Goerke and Pannenberg (2022) highlight the significance of collective bargaining in the German industrial relations system, where it serves as a foundation for co-determination within establishments. Their findings indicate that collective agreements cover a substantial portion of private sector employees, reinforcing the importance of sectoral negotiations in shaping labour conditions and ensuring worker representation. This framework not only enhances the bargaining power of workers but also facilitates a more equitable distribution of resources within the labour market.

In addition to formal bargaining structures, promoting mediation and arbitration services can help resolve disputes and foster cooperation between parties. Bober *et al*. (2022) emphasise the role of collective bargaining in mitigating the impacts of economic crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by cushioning inequalities and reinforcing labour market resilience. By providing mechanisms for conflict resolution,

mediation services can enhance the effectiveness of collective bargaining and promote a more harmonious labour environment.

Furthermore, the strengthening of labour inspection mechanisms is vital for ensuring compliance with collective agreements and protecting workers' rights. According to Holtzhausen (2019), bargaining councils face challenges related to the representativity of parties involved. Ensuring that all stakeholders are adequately represented in negotiations is crucial for the legitimacy and effectiveness of collective bargaining processes. This can be achieved through robust labour inspection systems that monitor compliance and address grievances.

The German model of industrial relations, as outlined by Jäger *et al*. (2022), illustrates the balance between flexibility and collective action achieved through sectoral collective bargaining and firm-level co-determination. This model demonstrates that effective social dialogue can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes for employers and employees, fostering a collaborative labour market environment.

2.3.1.3.2.4. Improving policy coordination and implementation

The importance of improving policy coordination and implementation in employment policies cannot be overstated. Effective policy coordination and implementation are essential for addressing the pressing challenges in employment policies (Immervoll & Scarpetta, 2012). Improving these aspects is crucial for developing and executing employment initiatives that can adequately meet the diverse needs of the workforce and foster sustainable economic growth. Coordinated efforts across relevant government agencies, stakeholders, and policymakers are vital to ensure coherent, streamlined, and impactful employment policies. The following measures can be taken to improve education and training:

- Strengthening inter-ministerial coordination

Strengthening inter-ministerial coordination is a critical strategy for improving the effectiveness of government policies, particularly in areas such as education, labour, and economic development (Trein *et al*., 2020). Enhanced coordination among government departments ensures that policies are aligned, resources are utilised

efficiently, and the implementation of initiatives is coherent and impactful. One of the primary benefits of strengthening inter-ministerial coordination is the ability to create a unified approach to policy implementation. Effective policy implementation requires strong leadership and inter-ministerial collaboration, which can be achieved through the establishment of coordinating agencies that develop common objectives across ministries (Ng *et al*., 2021). Such agencies can maximise resource sharing and build strong collaborations with external organisations, thereby increasing accountability among agencies. This is particularly important in complex policy environments where multiple stakeholders are involved.

Moreover, the establishment of inter-ministerial committees can facilitate the sharing of data and information, which is essential for informed decision-making (Wallace *et al*., 2022). However, Hustedt and Danken (2017) highlight the challenges of inter-departmental coordination, noting that turf wars often arise when departments prioritise their own interests over collaborative efforts. To mitigate these challenges, governments can establish inter-departmental committees that focus on developing joint policy solutions. Such committees can help align the interests of various departments and foster a culture of collaboration, ultimately leading to more effective policy outcomes.

Effective data sharing is another critical component of inter-ministerial coordination. Wang *et al*. (2024) highlight the challenges of data sharing among government departments, citing issues such as data storage in separate departments and low security of shared information. By improving inter-departmental data sharing mechanisms, governments can enhance transparency and accountability, ultimately leading to better policy implementation. Additionally, the establishment of high-level inter-ministerial bodies can foster coordination between different policy areas. Such coordination can be facilitated through dedicated committees that bring together representatives from various ministries to align their efforts and share resources effectively (Gourgiotis *et al*., 2021).

- Improving monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

Improving monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is essential for ensuring the effectiveness of policies and programmes, particularly in the context of employment

outcomes. Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation systems allows for the systematic tracking of policy impacts, identification of areas for improvement, and informed decision-making. Effective monitoring and evaluation systems provide critical data on employment outcomes, skills gaps, and programme participation. Rothman (2017) emphasises the value of collecting outcome assessments from supervisors regarding interns, which can inform educational institutions about the strengths and weaknesses of their curricula. By leveraging data from internships, universities can enhance their programmes to better prepare graduates for the workforce, thereby improving employment outcomes.

Tejan and Sabil (2019) conducted research on employers' perceptions of employability skills in Morocco, further illustrating the need for quantitative data collection in evaluating employment programmes. Their findings indicate that understanding employers' views on employability skills can inform curriculum development and training programmes, ensuring that they align with labour market needs (Tejan & Sabil, 2019). This approach emphasises the necessity of integrating employer feedback into monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Migliore *et al*. (2021) emphasise the importance of leveraging technology and data to effectively track employment outcomes. Bano and Vasantha (2022) advocate for the use of metrics that matter to stakeholders, which can guide continuous quality improvement efforts aimed at enhancing job seekers' employment outcomes. This aligns with the broader goal of using data-driven insights to inform policy and programme development.

Furthermore, Allard *et al* (2017) conducted a study on the obstacles and prospects associated with using administrative data for programme evaluation. Their findings suggest that developing internal data infrastructure and analytic capacity within state agencies is crucial for improving practice and policy effectiveness. This highlights the need for systematic research into how agencies can build their administrative data capacity to enhance monitoring and evaluation efforts.

2.2.1.3.2.5. Supporting entrepreneurship and growth of small business

Supporting entrepreneurship and growth of small business is critical for fostering economic growth and creating job opportunities. Various measures can be

implemented to enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including education, mentorship, government support, and the establishment of business incubators.

One significant approach is the enhancement of entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship training plays a vital role in motivating potential entrepreneurs and equipping them with the necessary skills for sustainable growth and economic activity (Maritz & Brown, 2013). Programmes that focus on experiential learning and practical applications can significantly impact students' intentions to start their own ventures (Sá & Holt, 2019). For instance, integrating entrepreneurship into university curricula and extracurricular activities can cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship among students, thereby increasing their interest and ability to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Satwhikawara, 2024).

Business incubators also serve as a critical tool for entrepreneurship development. They provide essential resources such as networking opportunities, capital support, and training programmes, which are instrumental in facilitating business start-ups (Li *et al*., 2020). The positive mediation of business start-ups through these incubators highlights their importance in the entrepreneurial landscape, as they help bridge the gap between aspiring entrepreneurs and the resources they need to succeed (Li *et al*., 2020). Additionally, the role of government in supporting these initiatives cannot be overstated. Effective public governance can enhance the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic growth by fostering an environment conducive to innovation and the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) (Saberi & Hamdan, 2019).

Moreover, social support systems are essential for nurturing entrepreneurship. Social environments significantly influence individuals' intentions to start businesses, with supportive networks enhancing resilience and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Barrera-Verdugo, 2024). Programmes that focus on building social capital can thus play a pivotal role in encouraging entrepreneurship, particularly among marginalised groups who may face additional barriers (Pidduck & Clark, 2021). Supporting and incentivising entrepreneurship can create new job opportunities and stimulate economic growth. The following are measures that can be taken to support entrepreneurship:

- Providing access to finance and business support services

Facilitating access to finance, mentorship, and business growth services is crucial for supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses. Various strategies can be employed to achieve this, including the establishment of seed funds, provision of tax incentives, and offering comprehensive training and advisory services. Access to finance is a critical barrier for many entrepreneurs, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds. Establishing seed funds can provide the necessary capital for start-ups to launch and grow.

Financial support can significantly enhance the likelihood of business success, especially for minority and immigrant entrepreneurs who often face additional challenges in securing funding (Kremel, 2016). In addition to financial assistance, mentorship plays a pivotal role in the entrepreneurial journey. Effective mentorship can provide entrepreneurs with not only guidance and advice but also emotional and psychological support, which is crucial during the early stages of business development (Mouammer & Bazán, 2021). Mentorship programmes can significantly influence the entrepreneurial intentions and outcomes for university students, by connecting them with role models who offer practical insights and experiences (Mouammer & Bazán, 2021). Furthermore, the establishment of structured mentorship programmes can help bridge the gap between aspiring entrepreneurs and experienced business leaders, fostering a supportive environment that encourages innovation and resilience (Mouammer & Bazán, 2021).

Moreover, providing business development services, including training and advisory support, is essential for equipping entrepreneurs with the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of running a business. Programmes that focus on enhancing business acumen, marketing strategies, and operational management can empower entrepreneurs to make informed decisions and improve their business performance (Dalborg & Friedrichs, 2020). Additionally, the role of business advisers in supporting social entrepreneurship is crucial, as integrating business advisory services within mainstream support systems can enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship initiatives (Dalborg & Friedrichs, 2020).

Tax incentives can also serve as a powerful tool to stimulate entrepreneurial activity. By reducing the financial burden on new businesses, tax incentives can encourage investment and expansion, ultimately leading to job creation and economic growth

(Kremel, 2016). The combination of financial support, mentorship, and training creates a robust ecosystem that can significantly enhance the prospects for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

- Reducing regulatory barriers for small businesses

Simplifying regulations and licensing procedures for small businesses reduces administrative burdens and encourages entrepreneurship. This can involve streamlining business registration processes, reducing licensing fees, and providing online business registration and compliance platforms. One effective approach to simplifying regulations is the implementation of online business registration systems. Such platforms can enhance accessibility and efficiency, allowing entrepreneurs to complete necessary paperwork without the need for in-person visits to government offices. The digitisation of business registration processes can lead to a reduction in time and costs associated with starting a business, thereby encouraging more individuals to pursue entrepreneurial ventures (Hamzah & Widiastuti, 2023).

Furthermore, the availability of online compliance tools can help businesses stay informed about regulatory requirements, reducing the likelihood of non-compliance due to ignorance or misunderstanding (Bianco *et al*., 2022). Reducing licensing fees is another important aspect of regulatory reform. High fees can act as a significant barrier to entry for small businesses, particularly for startups with limited financial resources. By lowering these costs, governments can create a more favourable environment for entrepreneurship. Lower licensing fees correlate with increased business formation rates, as potential entrepreneurs are more likely to take the leap when financial barriers are minimised (Cegielska, 2020).

Moreover, the establishment of clear and transparent regulatory frameworks can further support small businesses. Ambiguity in regulations often leads to confusion and discourages potential entrepreneurs from starting their ventures. By providing clear guidelines and support for navigating the regulatory landscape, governments can empower small business owners to focus on growth and innovation rather than getting bogged down by bureaucratic hurdles (Cahyakusuma, 2023).

- Promoting innovation and technology adoption

It is important to support the adoption of new technologies and innovative business practices to enhance productivity and competitiveness. This can involve providing grants for research and development, supporting technology transfer initiatives, and promoting digital literacy. One of the key components of fostering innovation is the provision of financial support for research and development. Grants can enable small businesses to invest in innovative projects that may otherwise be financially unfeasible. Research and development grants can lead to substantial improvements in productivity and competitiveness, as they allow businesses to explore new technologies and processes that can enhance their offerings (Correa, 2024).

Correa (2024) highlights the positive effects of digital literacy on the digitalisation of business practices, emphasising that entrepreneurs equipped with digital skills are better positioned to leverage new technologies effectively. Moreover, promoting digital literacy is vital for ensuring that entrepreneurs can effectively adopt and utilise new technologies. Digital literacy encompasses a range of skills necessary for navigating the digital landscape, including the ability to use digital tools, analyse data, and engage with online platforms. Entrepreneurs with strong digital literacy are more likely to successfully implement digital solutions that enhance their business operations (Yanto *et al*., 2022). Yanto *et al*. (2022) emphasise the importance of digital literacy in maintaining micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMMEs) during challenging times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by enabling them to adapt to changing market conditions and consumer behaviours.

Furthermore, the integration of digital marketing strategies is essential for small businesses to reach broader audiences and improve their market presence. As highlighted by Lubis (2023), businesses that enhance their digital literacy can effectively implement digital marketing strategies that attract and retain customers, ultimately leading to increased sales and growth.

2.2.1.3.2.6. Promoting labour-intensive growth

One of the major gaps in employment policies in South Africa is the high youth unemployment rate. The problem remains a significant challenge despite the

government's efforts to address unemployment, especially among the youth (Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2020). There is a need for targeted policies and programmes that specifically address the barriers young job seekers face. Promoting labour-intensive growth in South Africa is essential for addressing the high unemployment rates and fostering economic development. Implementing policies that encourage job creation in high-potential sectors, and fostering closer ties between educational institutions and industry is crucial for achieving these goals. The following measures can be taken to reduce high youth unemployment in South Africa:

- Investing in infrastructure development

Investing in infrastructure projects that create jobs in labour-intensive sectors such as construction, transportation, and energy is important. This can involve prioritising public works programmes, promoting public-private partnerships, and investing in renewable energy projects. Infrastructure projects in sectors like construction and transportation are inherently labour-intensive, requiring a significant workforce. Investments in infrastructure can lead to substantial job creation, particularly in developing economies where unemployment rates are high (Mazorodze, 2024). Public works programmes can provide immediate employment opportunities while simultaneously improving essential infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and public facilities (Ngcobo, 2024). These programmes can be particularly effective in addressing community needs and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

- Supporting the development of labour-intensive industries

Implementing policies that encourage job creation in sectors with high potential for growth, such as manufacturing, agriculture, technology, renewable energy, and creative industries, is essential for promoting labour-intensive growth. Targeted investments in these sectors can lead to significant job creation and economic diversification (Hlayisi, 2022; Nattrass & Seekings, 2021). The clothing industry in South Africa has seen a shift towards cooperatives that promote labour-intensive production, demonstrating the potential for job creation through innovative business models (Nattrass & Seekings, 2021). Additionally, the renewable energy sector presents opportunities for employment while addressing environmental concerns, making it a strategic area for investment (Ebekozien *et al*., 2023).

- Promoting rural development and agricultural diversification

Investing in rural development and agricultural diversification to create employment opportunities in rural areas is crucial. This can involve supporting smallholder farmers, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, and developing rural infrastructure. Investing in rural development initiatives can significantly enhance the economic prospects of rural areas. Agricultural diversification is a key strategy for poverty alleviation, as it allows farmers to reduce their dependence on a single crop and improve their income stability (Feliciano, 2019). By promoting crop diversification, rural development policies can help farmers adapt to changing market conditions and environmental challenges, ultimately contributing to food security and sustainable livelihoods (Akpan *et al*., 2015).

Supporting smallholder farmers is crucial for enhancing agricultural productivity and promoting rural development. Policies that provide access to resources such as credit, training, and technology can empower smallholder farmers to adopt innovative practices and improve their productivity (Yakushnina, 2019). Participatory approaches that involve farmers in the development of agricultural interventions have been shown to increase the adoption of sustainable practices and enhance the effectiveness of agricultural diversification efforts (Fatch *et al*., 2021).

2.2.1.3.2.7. Addressing spatial inequality

The legacy of apartheid and its impact on education, training, and access to employment opportunities continues to affect certain demographic groups, leading to persistent disparities in the labour market. Spatial disparities continue to affect socio-economic outcomes, contributing to high levels of poverty and unemployment in marginalised communities (Shahaboonin *et al*., 2023; Shifa *et al*., 2021). Rural areas often experience higher unemployment rates due to limited access to education, training, and economic opportunities (Shahaboonin *et al*., 2023). This exacerbates the challenges faced by individuals in these regions. Investing in public transportation and infrastructure can bridge the gap between rural and urban areas. Improving public transportation systems and infrastructure can connect people in underserved areas with job opportunities in urban centres. Improved public transportation systems can

also facilitate access to employment, education, and training programmes, thereby enhancing the economic prospects of individuals in rural areas (Todes & Turok, 2018).

2.2.1.3.2.8. Ensure effective leadership

The South African labour market is plagued by gaps in employment policies that contribute to high unemployment rates and inequality (Meyer, 2014). The Department of Labour must demonstrate effective leadership to address these issues. To promote employment growth in South Africa, it is essential to implement comprehensive policies that address the specific challenges faced by the labour market. Strong leadership is crucial for driving initiatives that foster job creation and reduce unemployment rates.

Strong and capable leadership is essential in driving policies and initiatives that promote job creation and address unemployment. Effective leadership within the Department of Labour is vital for identifying and addressing gaps in employment policies. The Department of Labour should rely on empirical data and research to inform decision-making and policy formulation. Mongale (2019) emphasises that investments in human capital are critical for enhancing labour productivity, which is essential for economic development. By utilising data-driven approaches, the Department can ensure that policies effectively address the specific challenges faced by the South African labour market.

Effective leadership in the Department of Labour should involve coordinating efforts across different government departments, in addition to collaborating with private sector stakeholders and civil society organisations. Implementing solutions simultaneously and ensuring coordination among stakeholders allows for a holistic assessment of employment dynamics. Ngundu and Ngalawa (2023) argue that addressing the jobless growth dilemma in South Africa requires inclusive policies that consider the needs of various sectors, particularly the agriculture and informal sectors. This comprehensive approach enables policymakers to identify emerging challenges and adapt policies accordingly.

2.2.1.3.2.9. Job creation and economic diversification

Creating job opportunities across various sectors of the economy is crucial for addressing unemployment and fostering economic diversification in South Africa. Implementing policies that support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) can stimulate job growth and contribute to economic resilience. SMMEs are vital for job creation, as they account for a significant portion of employment in many economies (Chen, 2024). By promoting industries with high potential for job creation, such as renewable energy, agriculture, and technology, South Africa can effectively lower unemployment rates and enhance economic stability.

In addition to supporting SMMEs, focusing on specific industries with high growth potential is crucial for job creation. The renewable energy sector, for example, presents significant opportunities for employment while addressing environmental concerns. Investments in renewable energy can create numerous jobs in installation, maintenance, and manufacturing (Yang, 2023). Similarly, the agriculture sector can benefit from diversification strategies that enhance productivity and create new job opportunities in rural areas (Salifu, 2019).

Implementing these solutions requires high levels of coordination among stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, and civil society organisations. Trinh and Thủy (2021) highlight the importance of export diversification as a strategy for economic growth, indicating that a coordinated approach can enhance the effectiveness of job creation initiatives. By ensuring that policies are comprehensive and aligned with the needs of the labour market, the Department of Labour can maximise the impact of its efforts to address unemployment.

2.2.1.3.2.10. Addressing structural inequality and labour market policies

Structural barriers and unequal labour market policies often exacerbate unemployment, particularly for marginalised communities. It is essential to review and reform labour market regulations to ensure fair treatment and equal access to employment for all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances. Addressing issues related to discrimination, gender inequality, and access to opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups can play a significant role in

reducing unemployment gaps. Reforming labour market regulations is crucial for creating an equitable employment landscape. Bennett and Iwnicki (2022) highlight that addressing the barriers faced by individuals with multiple disadvantages can lead to improved employment outcomes. Their research emphasises the importance of advocacy, access to training, and opportunities provided by supportive employers as key facilitators for employment. By implementing policies that focus on these areas, the Department of Labour can help ensure that marginalised communities have equal access to job opportunities.

Discrimination and gender inequality remain significant barriers to employment for many individuals. Bellair and Kowalski (2011) indicate that access to stable employment is critical for reducing disparities. This underscores the need for targeted policies that address the unique challenges faced by disadvantaged groups, including women and racial minorities. Collaboration with various stakeholders is essential for creating effective labour market policies. Gestel *et al*. (2018) emphasise the importance of public-private networks in engaging employers to create more employment opportunities for disadvantaged job seekers. Their findings suggest that coordinated efforts among government agencies, private sector actors, and civil society organisations can lead to more effective implementation of employment policies and better outcomes for marginalised communities.

2.2.1.3.2.11. Support research and development

Investing in research and development is crucial for fostering innovation, technological advancements, and the emergence of new industries, ultimately driving job creation and economic growth. The Department of Labour should prioritise investment in research and development to continually assess the effectiveness of employment policies and identify new solutions to address evolving challenges in the labour market. The Department of Labour must utilise empirical data and research to inform decision-making and policy formulation. Sá and Holt (2019) emphasise that supports and barriers to researcher development can significantly influence the effectiveness of policies aimed at job creation. By understanding these dynamics, the Department can better tailor its employment policies to meet the needs of the labour market.

Research indicates that research and development investments are fundamental to stimulating economic growth and creating job opportunities. Maritz and Brown (2013) argue that countries that prioritise research and development can achieve a competitive advantage in the market, as these investments facilitate technological progress and innovation. By fostering an environment conducive to research and development, the Department of Labour can help stimulate job creation across various sectors.

2.2.1.3.2.12. Create a favourable business and development environment

Implementing policies that promote entrepreneurship, attract foreign investment, and support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) can stimulate job creation and economic development. A conducive business environment is essential for fostering innovation and ensuring that businesses can thrive, ultimately leading to increased employment opportunities. Supporting the growth of SMMEs is crucial for job creation, as they account for a significant portion of employment in many economies. According to Beynon *et al*. (2019), SMMEs play a vital role in economic growth and regional development, particularly in the context of local enterprise partnerships. By implementing policies that provide financial support, training, and resources for SMMEs, the government can enhance their capacity to create jobs and contribute to economic diversification.

Attracting foreign investment is another key aspect of creating a favourable business environment. Heinonen and Hytti (2016) emphasise the importance of entrepreneurship policies in fostering an attractive investment climate. By implementing regulatory frameworks that encourage foreign direct investment, countries can benefit from the influx of capital, technology, and expertise, which can lead to job creation and economic growth (Kaiyue, 2023). Focusing on industries with high potential for job creation, such as renewable energy, agriculture, and technology, can significantly contribute to lowering unemployment rates.

2.2.1.3.3 *Evaluation of alternative plans/policies/ generate objective assessment criteria*

The evaluation of potential solutions to address unemployment and enhance job creation involves assessing each solution against a set of objective criteria. This process includes analysing the feasibility, cost, benefits, and potential impact of each proposed policy or plan. Feasibility refers to the practicality of implementing a proposed solution within the existing economic, social, and political context. Maritz and Brown (2013) discuss the importance of understanding the institutional frameworks that shape policy implementation, which can significantly affect the feasibility of proposed solutions. By evaluating the political and economic landscape, policymakers can determine whether a solution can be realistically executed. Conducting a cost-benefit analysis is essential for understanding the economic implications of each solution. Sá and Holt (2019) highlight the significance of evaluating the costs associated with implementing policies against the expected benefits. This analysis helps to ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and that the chosen solutions provide a favourable return on investment.

Assessing the potential impact of each solution involves examining its expected effects on employment rates, economic growth, and social equity. Satwhikawara (2024) emphasises the need to consider the broader implications of policy decisions, particularly how they affect different demographic groups and industries. By analysing the potential outcomes, policymakers can prioritise solutions that yield the most significant positive impact. Engaging stakeholders in the evaluation process is crucial for gathering diverse perspectives and insights. Suharsono *et al*. (2019) note that stakeholder involvement can enhance the legitimacy and acceptance of policy decisions. By incorporating feedback from affected communities, businesses, and other relevant parties, policymakers can ensure that the solutions implemented are comprehensive and aligned with the needs of the labour market.

The proposed solutions above can be evaluated by assessing them against specific criteria. This involves analysing each solution's feasibility, cost, benefit, and potential impact. The following are the evaluation measures:

2.2.1.3.4. Establish clear objectives and metrics

Establishing clear objectives and metrics is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of policies aimed at increasing employment rates and addressing unemployment

challenges. Defining specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for each solution allows for a structured approach to assessing progress and outcomes. For example, a goal could be to increase the employment rate of young people aged 18-24 by 10% within five years through promoting labour-intensive growth and enhancing skills development programmes in South Africa. SMART goals provide a framework for setting clear expectations and measuring success. According to Breda (2018), having well-defined objectives helps organisations focus their efforts and allocate resources effectively. This structured approach ensures that all stakeholders understand the desired outcomes and can work collaboratively towards achieving them.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented solutions, it is crucial to establish relevant evaluation measures. O'Neil *et al*. (2022) emphasise the importance of assessing the impact of learnership programmes on skills development and employment opportunities. By analysing metrics such as job placement rates, participant satisfaction, and long-term career progression, policymakers can gain insights into the effectiveness of their initiatives. Continuous monitoring of progress against established metrics is essential for ensuring that policies remain relevant and effective. As highlighted by Bae *et al*. (2016), regular evaluations can help detect areas for enhancement and allow for appropriate adjustments to strategies.

This iterative process ensures that the solutions implemented are responsive to the evolving needs of the labour market. Engaging stakeholders in the goal setting and evaluation process is crucial for fostering ownership and accountability. As noted by Dedering (2021), collaboration among government agencies, private sector actors, and civil society organisations can enhance the effectiveness of employment initiatives. By involving diverse perspectives, policymakers can ensure that the objectives set are aligned with the needs of various communities and industries. The following measures can be taken to establish clear objectives and metrics:

- Identify key performance indicators

Establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of policies aimed at increasing employment and addressing unemployment challenges. These indicators can include employment rates, labour

force participation rates, skills mismatch indicators, the number of new businesses created, average wages, and income inequality measures. By defining specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for each KPI, policymakers can systematically assess progress and outcomes.

Employment rates are a fundamental indicator of labour market health. They reflect the proportion of the working-age population that is employed and can provide insights into the effectiveness of employment policies. Aaronson, *et al.,* (2014) emphasise the importance of monitoring employment rates to understand trends in labour force participation and to inform policy adjustments. Regular assessments of employment rates can help identify demographic groups that may be disproportionately affected by unemployment.

Labour force participation rates indicate the percentage of the working-age population that is actively engaged in the labour market, either through employment or job-seeking activities. Understanding these rates is crucial for assessing the overall engagement of individuals in the economy. Aaronson, et al., (2014) highlight that fluctuations in labour force participation can signal changes in economic conditions and the effectiveness of policies aimed at encouraging workforce engagement.

Skills mismatch indicators assess the alignment of the skills possessed by the workforce and the skills required by employers. Addressing skills mismatches is vital for improving employability and ensuring that individuals are equipped for available job opportunities. Bandung (2023) indicates that understanding skills mismatches can inform the development of targeted training programmes and educational initiatives that align with labour market needs.

The number of new businesses created is a critical indicator of entrepreneurial activity and economic dynamism. Supporting entrepreneurship is essential for job creation, as new businesses often drive innovation and provide employment opportunities. The promotion of a favourable business environment can lead to increased business formation, which, in turn, contributes to economic growth. The creative industry development policy innovation in Frankenberger *et al*.'s (2013) research, highlights the importance of fostering entrepreneurship to stimulate job creation and economic diversification.

Average wages give insights into the economic welfare of workers and the overall health of the labour market. Monitoring wage trends can help identify disparities and inform policies aimed at promoting equitable income distribution. Additionally, income inequality measures are essential for assessing the distribution of wealth within the economy. Addressing income inequality is crucial for fostering social cohesion and ensuring that economic growth benefits all segments of society. Research by Nafukho and Muyia (2010) emphasises the importance of addressing income inequality to promote sustainable economic development.

- Establish baseline data

Establishing baseline data is a critical step in measuring the effectiveness of employment policies and initiatives aimed at addressing unemployment and enhancing job creation. Collecting data on the current state of employment, skills levels, and other relevant indicators allows policymakers to assess progress against established goals. This process involves gathering quantitative and qualitative data that can inform decision-making and policy formulation.

Baseline data provide a reference point for evaluating the impact of implemented policies. According to Maritz and Brown (2013), without systematically collected data on employment variables, there is a significant gap in understanding the dynamics of the labour market. This lack of data can hinder the ability to assess the effectiveness of interventions and make informed adjustments to policies. By establishing a comprehensive baseline, the Department of Labour can better track changes in employment rates, skills levels, and other relevant indicators over time.

Key indicators for establishing baseline data should include employment rates, labour force participation rates, skills mismatch indicators, the number of new businesses created, average wages, and income inequality measures. Sá and Holt (2019) emphasise the importance of measuring employment-related social skills, which are essential for successful job performance. By incorporating these indicators, policymakers can gain insights into the effectiveness of their initiatives and identify areas that require further attention.

Continuous monitoring of baseline data is essential for assessing the effectiveness of employment policies. Satwhikawara (2024) highlights that regular evaluations can help identify gaps in skills and employment opportunities, enabling policymakers to adapt their strategies accordingly. This iterative process ensures that policies remain relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of the labour market. Engaging stakeholders in the data collection process is crucial for ensuring that the information gathered is comprehensive and reflective of the diverse experiences within the labour market. Suharsono *et al*. (2019) note that collaboration with various stakeholders can enhance the quality of data collected and provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by different demographic groups. By involving stakeholders, the Department of Labour can ensure that the baseline data collected are relevant and useful for informing policy decisions.

2.2.1.3.4 Implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

It is essential to implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for employment policies to effectively address unemployment and promote job creation in South Africa. This approach allows for the assessment of policy effectiveness, identification of gaps, and adjustment of strategies to meet evolving labour market needs. Monitoring and evaluation are critical for understanding the impact of employment policies on job creation and economic growth. Maritz and Brown (2013) argue that a historical analysis of South Africa's economic policies reveals a failure to adequately address the root causes of unemployment. By establishing monitoring and evaluation frameworks, the Department of Labour can systematically assess the effectiveness of its policies and make informed decisions based on empirical evidence.

A key component of effective monitoring and evaluation is the establishment of baseline data that reflect the current state of employment, skills levels, and other relevant indicators. These data serve as a reference point for measuring progress against established goals. Alfers and Rogan (2019) emphasise the need for comprehensive data collection to understand the challenges faced by different demographic groups in the labour market. By collecting and analysing these data, policymakers can identify trends and areas requiring targeted interventions.

Defining clear key performance indicators is essential for evaluating the success of employment policies. Key performance indicators could include employment rates, labour force participation rates, skills mismatch indicators, the number of new businesses created, average wages, and income inequality measures. Satwhikawara (2024) highlights the importance of these indicators in assessing the effectiveness of labour policies and ensuring that they address the specific challenges faced by the South African labour market. Engaging stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation process is crucial for fostering ownership and accountability. Suharsono *et al*. (2019) note that effective collaboration between government agencies, private sector actors, and civil society organisations can enhance the legitimacy and acceptance of policy decisions. By involving diverse perspectives, policymakers can ensure that the monitoring and evaluation framework is comprehensive and reflective of the needs of various communities and industries.

The monitoring and evaluation process should not be static, it must allow for continuous improvement and adaptation of policies based on the findings from evaluations. Elliott *et al*. (2020) argue that regular assessments can help identify emerging challenges and inform necessary adjustments to strategies. This iterative process ensures that employment policies remain relevant and responsive to the changing dynamics of the labour market. The following are measures to implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms:

2.2.1.3.4.1. Develop a monitoring framework

Establishing a robust monitoring framework is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of employment policies and initiatives aimed at addressing unemployment and promoting job creation. This framework should outline the data collection methods, frequency of data collection, and responsible parties for data collection and analysis. By implementing a structured approach to monitoring, policymakers can ensure that they have the necessary information to assess progress and make informed decisions. The monitoring framework should specify the methods for data collection, which may include surveys, interviews, administrative data, and observational studies.

Rani *et al*. (2021) demonstrate the effectiveness of automated monitoring devices in collecting data efficiently, suggesting that similar technologies could be employed in employment policy evaluations to reduce the burden on personnel and enhance data accuracy. By utilising a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, the Department of Labour can gain a comprehensive understanding of the labour market dynamics.

Determining the frequency of data collection is crucial for maintaining up-to-date information on employment trends and policy effectiveness. Pong *et al*. (2019) highlight the importance of regular data collection to track changes in behaviours and outcomes over time. For employment policies, a quarterly or bi-annual data collection schedule may be appropriate to capture seasonal fluctuations in employment and assess the impact of policy interventions promptly.

Clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders involved in data collection and analysis is essential for ensuring accountability and efficiency. Collaboration between government agencies, research institutions, and private sector stakeholders can enhance the quality of data collected. Nguyen (2024) emphasises the importance of coordinated efforts in data collection to ensure comprehensive coverage and accuracy. By establishing a collaborative framework, the Department of Labour can leverage the expertise and resources of various partners to improve the monitoring process.

Once data are collected, it is essential to analyse them effectively to derive meaningful insights. Tanida *et al*. (2014) examine the application of intelligent monitoring systems that can optimise data analysis processes, suggesting that similar approaches could be applied to employment data. By employing advanced data analysis techniques, policymakers can identify trends, assess the impact of policies, and make informed adjustments as needed.

2.2.3.4.2. Conduct regular monitoring

Establishing a robust monitoring framework is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of employment policies and initiatives aimed at addressing unemployment and promoting job creation. Regular monitoring allows for tracking

progress against established key performance indicators and identifying any deviations from planned targets. This proactive approach enables timely adjustments to policies and programmes, ensuring that they remain effective and responsive to the evolving needs of the labour market. Regular monitoring is crucial for understanding the effect of employment policies on employment and economic growth. According to Ferris *et al*. (2022), systematic tracking of treatment outcomes in healthcare can provide valuable insights that inform clinical decisions. Similarly, in the context of employment policies, continuous monitoring can help identify trends, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and inform necessary adjustments to strategies. This iterative process ensures that policies remain relevant and effective in addressing unemployment challenges.

Tracking KPIs such as employment rates, labour force participation rates, and skills mismatch indicators is essential for evaluating the success of employment initiatives. Yao *et al*. (2023) emphasise the importance of monitoring accumulated dose deviations in healthcare settings, which can be analogous to tracking employment metrics to assess the effectiveness of policy interventions. By regularly evaluating these indicators, policymakers can gain insights into the effectiveness of their initiatives and identify areas that require further attention. Identifying deviations from planned targets is a critical aspect of the monitoring process. Li *et al*. (2019) discuss the importance of recognising deviations in healthcare settings to improve treatment outcomes. In the context of employment policies, identifying deviations can help policymakers understand the factors contributing to unemployment and inform necessary adjustments to strategies. This proactive approach allows for timely interventions that can enhance the effectiveness of employment initiatives.

2.2.3.4.3. Conduct periodic evaluations

Conducting periodic evaluations is essential for assessing the overall impact of implemented solutions aimed at addressing unemployment and promoting job creation. These evaluations should occur at specific intervals, such as mid-term and end-of-term assessments, to provide insights into the effectiveness of policies and initiatives. By systematically evaluating the outcomes, policymakers can identify successes, challenges, and areas for improvement. Periodic evaluations allow for a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of employment policies. According to

Kuhlmann and Wollmann (2019), evaluations can provide valuable feedback on the implementation process and outcomes, enabling policymakers to make informed decisions about future strategies. This approach ensures that policies remain relevant and effective in addressing the evolving needs of the labour market.

Mid-term evaluations are particularly useful for assessing the progress of ongoing initiatives. They provide an opportunity to identify any deviations from planned targets and make necessary adjustments to strategies. As highlighted by Hargreaves *et al*. (2020), mid-term evaluations can help stakeholders understand the effectiveness of interventions and ensure that resources are allocated efficiently. This proactive approach allows for timely interventions that can enhance the impact of employment initiatives. End-of-term evaluations offer a comprehensive assessment of the overall impact of implemented solutions. These evaluations can provide insights into the long-term effects of policies on employment rates, economic growth, and social equity.

According to McLaughlin and Jordan (2018), end-of-term evaluations can help determine whether the objectives set at the beginning of a programme have been achieved and identify lessons learned for future policy development. Engaging stakeholders in the evaluation process is crucial for gathering diverse perspectives and insights. As noted by O'Neil *et al*. (2022), stakeholder involvement can enhance the legitimacy and acceptance of evaluation findings. By incorporating feedback from affected communities, businesses, and other relevant parties, policymakers can ensure that the evaluations conducted are comprehensive and reflective of the experiences of various demographic groups.

2.2.3.4.4. Employ a variety of evaluation methods

To ensure effective employment growth in South Africa, it is crucial to employ a variety of evaluation methods for assessing the impact of employment policies. A multifaceted evaluation approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how different policies affect various demographic groups and sectors within the economy. By utilising diverse evaluation methods, policymakers can gain insights into the effectiveness of their initiatives and make informed adjustments as necessary. Employing a range of evaluation methods, including quantitative and qualitative assessments, can provide a more holistic view of policy impacts. Ferreira and

Rossouw (2016) highlight the importance of historical analysis in understanding the effectiveness of economic policies in addressing unemployment. By combining quantitative data, such as employment rates and economic growth figures, with qualitative insights from stakeholder interviews, policymakers can better understand the nuances of policy implementation and its effects on different communities.

Regular data collection is essential for tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement. Alfers and Rogan (2019) emphasise the need for comprehensive data on employment conditions, particularly for vulnerable populations in the informal sector. By systematically collecting and analysing data, the Department of Labour can identify trends, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and make timely adjustments to policies. Engaging stakeholders in the evaluation process is crucial for gathering diverse perspectives and insights. Mongale (2019) discusses the role of stakeholder involvement in shaping effective employment policies. By incorporating feedback from affected communities, businesses, and civil society organisations, policymakers can ensure that evaluations are comprehensive and reflective of the experiences of various demographic groups.

Conducting impact assessments is vital for understanding the long-term effects of employment policies. Nizeyimana *et al*. (2022) highlight the importance of evaluating the psychosocial impacts of employment initiatives on individuals with disabilities. By assessing both immediate and long-term outcomes, policymakers can determine whether policies are achieving their intended goals and identify any unintended consequences that may arise. The following measures can be taken to employ a variety of evaluation methods:

- Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data analysis is a critical component in assessing the effectiveness of employment policies and understanding the dynamics of the labour market. By analysing employment statistics, survey data, and administrative data, policymakers can gain valuable insights into changes in employment levels, skills gaps, and other relevant indicators. This analysis enables the identification of trends, informs decision-making, and guides the development of targeted interventions. Employment statistics provide a comprehensive overview of the labour market, including employment rates,

unemployment rates, and labour force participation rates. According to Statistics South Africa (2020), regular updates on these statistics are essential for understanding the current state of the labour market and identifying areas that require intervention. By analysing these statistics over time, policymakers can assess the impact of employment policies and initiatives on job creation.

Survey data can offer insights into the experiences and perceptions of individuals within the labour market. For instance, the National Skills Survey provides valuable information on skills gaps and training needs among workers (Hamdan *et al*., 2019). By analysing survey responses, researchers can identify trends in skills mismatches and inform the development of targeted training programmes that align with labour market demands.

Administrative data, such as tax records and social security data, can provide a wealth of information on employment patterns and trends. For example, the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) data can be analysed to assess the impact of unemployment benefits on job retention and transitions into employment (Saberi & Hamdan, 2019). By leveraging this data, policymakers can gain insights into the effectiveness of existing support systems and identify areas for improvement. Quantitative analysis can also be used to identify skills gaps within the workforce. Research by Hoosen (2009) highlights the importance of understanding the skills landscape to inform education and training policies. By analysing data on educational attainment, vocational training, and employment outcomes, policymakers can identify specific skills that are in demand and develop targeted interventions to address these gaps. Employment statistics, survey data, and administrative data should be analysed to assess changes in employment levels, skills gaps, and other relevant indicators.

- Qualitative data collection

Qualitative data collection is a critical methodological approach in social research, particularly when seeking to understand the nuanced experiences of various stakeholders, including employers, employees, and other relevant parties (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews are a frequently utilised qualitative data collection technique that enables researchers to engage directly with participants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and feelings in depth (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Focus

groups are another qualitative method that involves guided discussions among a group of participants. This method is particularly effective for exploring collective experiences and generating dialogue around specific topics (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

- Cost-benefit analysis

Cost-benefit analysis serves as a systematic approach to estimating the strengths and weaknesses of alternatives to determine the best approach to achieve benefits while preserving savings (Frederick & VanderWeele, 2019). It involves comparing the total expected costs of each option against the total expected benefits, thus providing a clear economic rationale for policy decisions. In the context of employment interventions, such analyses can help identify which programmes yield the highest return on investment. Cost-benefit analysis is particularly relevant when evaluating employment policies aimed at enhancing job placement and retention for vulnerable populations. For instance, interventions like Individual Placement and Support have been shown to significantly improve employment outcomes for individuals with mental health issues (Drake, & Wallach, 2020). The costs associated with implementing such programmes, including training, support services, and administrative expenses, must be weighed against the benefits, such as increased employment rates, reduced reliance on social services, and improved quality of life for participants (Nurjanah, and Masek, 2022).

When conducting a cost-benefit analysis, it is crucial to identify all relevant costs and benefits, including direct and indirect costs as well as quantity the expected outcome. Direct costs include programme implementation, while indirect costs encompass societal benefits from reduced unemployment. Quantifying outcomes using metrics such as employment rates, income levels, and health improvements can provide a comprehensive view of the intervention's impact (Nurjanah, and Masek, 2022).

- Impact evaluations

Impact evaluations utilise rigorous methodologies to assess the causal effects of interventions on employment outcomes. Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) are considered the gold standard in this regard, as they allow for the isolation of the intervention's effects from other variables (Malla *et al*., 2017). Quasi-experimental

designs, while less rigorous than randomised controlled trials, can still provide valuable insights, especially when randomisation is not feasible Millerl *et al*., 2020). RCTs involve randomly assigning participants to either the intervention group or a control group, thereby controlling for confounding variables. For example, a study on supported employment found that participants receiving job coaching had significantly better employment outcomes compared to those who did not receive such support (McInnes *et al*., 2016). This method provides strong evidence of causality and is critical for informing policy decisions.

In situations where randomised controlled trials are impractical, quasi-experimental designs can be employed. These designs use existing data or non-randomised groups to evaluate the impact of interventions. For instance, Shadish,*et al*. (2002) highlight the importance of including quasi-experimental studies in systematic reviews to assess the effectiveness of health interventions. Such studies can provide insights into the effectiveness of employment programmes in real-world settings, albeit with some limitations regarding internal validity.

2.2.1.4.4. *Consider contextual factors*

When implementing employment policies, it is essential to consider contextual factors that can significantly influence the effectiveness of these policies. Contextual factors encompass a wide range of elements, including economic conditions, social dynamics, cultural norms, and institutional frameworks. Understanding these factors can help policymakers design and implement more effective employment strategies that are tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of different communities.

Contextual factors can serve as both constraints and opportunities for policy implementation. Maritz and Brown (2013) emphasise that the interplay of policy content, actors' participation, and contextual factors can significantly impact the success of policy initiatives. For instance, in the context of employment policies, factors such as local economic conditions, the availability of resources, and the existing institutional framework can either facilitate or hinder the implementation process. Recognising these factors allows policymakers to anticipate challenges and develop strategies to address them.

Socio-economic conditions play a key role in modelling the effectiveness of employment policies. Hartono (2023) and Sá and Holt (2019) highlight that the implementation of social assistance policies during the COVID-19 pandemic in Jakarta was influenced by various contextual factors, including the economic status of affected communities. In South Africa, understanding the socioeconomic landscape is vital for designing policies that effectively address unemployment and promote job creation, particularly in marginalised communities.

Cultural and social norms also influence the acceptance and effectiveness of employment policies. Kava *et al*. (2022) and Satwhikawara (2024) discuss how worksite tobacco control initiatives are affected by the cultural attitudes towards smoking in different communities. Similarly, employment policies must consider local cultural contexts to ensure that they are relevant and acceptable to the populations they aim to serve. Engaging with community leaders and stakeholders can help identify cultural barriers and facilitate the implementation of policies that resonate with local values.

Collaboration among various stakeholders is essential for effectively addressing contextual factors. As noted by Prabowo *et al*. (2022) and Suharsono *et al*. (2019), engaging stakeholders in the policy-making process can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of employment initiatives. By involving community members, businesses, and civil society organisations, policymakers can gain valuable insights into the specific challenges faced by different demographic groups and develop tailored solutions that address these challenges.

2.2.1.4.5. Ensure transparency and dissemination of findings

Ensuring transparency and the effective dissemination of findings is crucial when implementing employment policies. Transparency fosters trust among stakeholders, enhances accountability, and encourages public engagement in the policy-making process. By disseminating findings widely, policymakers can ensure that the insights gained from evaluations and research inform future decisions and contribute to continuous improvement in employment initiatives.

Transparency in the implementation of employment policies allows stakeholders, including government agencies, businesses, and the public, to understand the rationale behind policy decisions and the expected outcomes. According to Kuhlmann and Wollmann (2019) and Li *et al*. (2020), transparency is essential for building trust and legitimacy in public administration. When stakeholders are informed about the processes and criteria used in policy formulation and implementation, they are more likely to support and engage with these initiatives.

Disseminating findings from evaluations and research is critical for ensuring that the knowledge generated informs future policy decisions. Research by Hamdan *et al*. (2019) emphasises the importance of effective communication strategies in sharing research findings with diverse audiences. Policymakers should use different channels, such as reports, workshops, webinars, and social media, to reach different stakeholders and ensure that the information is accessible and understandable. Engaging stakeholders in the evaluation process can enhance the relevance and impact of findings. As noted by Saberi and Hamdan, (2019), involving stakeholders in discussions about evaluation results can foster a sense of ownership and accountability. By creating platforms for dialogue and feedback, policymakers can ensure that the insights gained from evaluations are considered in future policy adjustments.

Using data visualisation techniques can enhance the dissemination of findings and make complex information more accessible. According to Barrera-Verdugo (2024), effective data visualisation can help communicate key insights in a clear and engaging manner. By presenting data in visually appealing formats, policymakers can facilitate understanding and encourage stakeholder engagement with the findings.

Establishing a continuous feedback loop between policymakers and stakeholders is essential for improving employment policies over time. Research by Hargreaves *et al*. (2020) and Pidduck and Clark (2021) highlights the importance of iterative feedback mechanisms in refining policies and ensuring that they remain responsive to the needs of the labour market. By regularly soliciting input from stakeholders and incorporating their feedback into policy adjustments, the Department of Labour can enhance the effectiveness of its initiatives.

2.2.1.3.4. Implementation of plans/policies

Effective policy implementation in South Africa requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the country's distinct challenges and opportunities. This phase includes putting the chosen plan into action. It involves allocating resources, assigning responsibilities and establishing timelines.

2.2.1.3.1. Develop a comprehensive implementation plan

Creating a comprehensive implementation plan is essential for the effective execution of employment policies aimed at promoting job creation and reducing unemployment. This plan should outline the specific steps, resources, timelines, and responsibilities involved in implementing the policies. A well-structured implementation plan can enhance coordination among stakeholders, ensure accountability, and facilitate the achievement of desired outcomes.

Identifying key stakeholders is essential for ensuring that the implementation plan is comprehensive and inclusive. Engaging various stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, non-governmental organisations, and community groups, can enhance the effectiveness of employment policies. Sá and Holt (2019) emphasise the importance of collaboration among stakeholders in navigating the challenges of implementing employment support services. By fostering partnerships, policymakers can leverage the expertise and resources of different organisations to improve the implementation process.

Effective resource allocation is critical for the successful implementation of employment policies. This includes financial resources, human capital, and infrastructure. Abdalla and Al-Homoud (2012) and Satwhikawara (2024) highlight that comprehensive labour market reform programmes must be sufficiently broad and deep to bring substantial benefits in terms of growth and employment. Policymakers should ensure that adequate resources are allocated to support the implementation of initiatives, including training programmes, job placement services, and infrastructure development.

Establishing a monitoring and evaluation framework is essential for assessing the effectiveness of the implementation plan. This framework should outline the data collection methods, frequency of data collection, and responsible parties for data collection and analysis. According to Suharsono *et al*. (2019), regular evaluations can help identify gaps in policy implementation and inform necessary adjustments to strategies. By systematically tracking progress against established key performance indicators (KPIs), policymakers can ensure that the implementation plan remains relevant and effective.

The implementation plan should allow for continuous improvement and adaptation based on evaluation findings. As noted by Elliott *et al*. (2020), identifying gaps in policy implementation and addressing them promptly is crucial for achieving desired outcomes. By fostering a culture of learning and adaptation, policymakers can ensure that employment policies remain responsive to the changing dynamics of the labour market.

2.2.1.3.2. Build strong partnerships

Building strong partnerships is essential for the successful implementation of employment policies aimed at promoting job creation and addressing unemployment challenges. Collaborative efforts among various stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, and civil society organisations, can enhance the effectiveness of employment initiatives and ensure that they are responsive to the needs of the labour market.

Collaborative partnerships can facilitate the sharing of resources, expertise, and information among stakeholders. According to Ogutu *et al*. (2020) and Maritz and Brown (2013), effective partnerships can lead to improved outcomes in various sectors, including employment. Their research highlights that partnerships can create synergies that enhance the implementation of policies and programmes, ultimately contributing to sustainable development. By fostering collaboration, policymakers can leverage the strengths of different organisations to address complex employment challenges.

Cross-system collaboration is particularly important for addressing the multifaceted nature of unemployment. Winsor *et al*. (2011) and Sá and Holt (2019) emphasise that collaborative relationships among various systems can lead to improved employment outcomes for marginalised groups, such as young adults with developmental disabilities. By engaging multiple stakeholders in the policy-making process, the Department of Labour can develop comprehensive strategies that address the diverse needs of the workforce.

2.2.1.3.3. Strengthen institutional capacity

Enhancing the capacity of government agencies is important. This can be achieved by providing training and resources to government officials responsible for implementing employment policies and programmes.

- Develop monitoring and evaluation systems

Strengthening institutional capacity is crucial for the effective implementation of employment policies aimed at promoting job creation and reducing unemployment. This involves enhancing the skills, resources, and frameworks within institutions responsible for policy execution. A robust institutional capacity ensures that policies are not only well-designed but also effectively implemented and monitored. Oronje *et al*. (2019) and Maritz and Brown (2013) emphasise that strengthening capacity at individual, institutional, and organisational levels is essential for effective policy implementation. Investing in training and development for staff within the Department of Labour and related agencies is vital for enhancing institutional capacity. Corluka *et al*. (2014) and Sá and Holt (2019) highlight the need for capacity building among researchers to improve their engagement with the public policy world. Institutions can better navigate the complexities of policy implementation and adjust to changing labour market dynamics by equipping employees with the required knowledge and skills.

2.2.1.3.4. Address implementation challenges

Addressing the implementation challenges of employment policies is crucial for ensuring that these policies effectively promote job creation and reduce

unemployment, particularly in a complex socio-economic landscape like South Africa. The successful implementation of employment policies requires a comprehensive understanding of the barriers that may hinder their effectiveness, as well as strategies to overcome these challenges.

- Identify potential obstacles

Anticipatng potential challenges, such as resistance to change, lack of coordination, or insufficient resources is crucial. Structural barriers, such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of access to education and training, and systemic discrimination, can significantly impede the successful implementation of employment policies. According to Adewumi (2023) and Maritz and Brown (2013), these barriers often perpetuate inequalities in the labour market, making it essential for policymakers to identify and address them proactively. By conducting thorough assessments of the existing barriers, the Department of Labour can develop targeted interventions that address the specific challenges faced by marginalised communities.

Understanding the specific barriers that hinder the successful implementation of employment policies is the first step in developing effective mitigation strategies. Pager & Western, (2019) highlight that existing legislation and policies often fail to address the needs of marginalised groups, which can lead to ineffective reintegration into the workforce. By conducting comprehensive assessments of these barriers, policymakers can develop targeted strategies to overcome them.

- Develop mitigation strategies

Developing mitigation strategies to address the challenges of implementing employment policies is crucial for promoting job creation and reducing unemployment. The first step in developing mitigation strategies is to identify the specific challenges that may hinder the implementation of employment policies. These challenges can include structural barriers, such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to education and training, and systemic discrimination. According to Adewumi (2023) and Maritz and Brown (2013), understanding these barriers is crucial for formulating

targeted interventions that address the unique needs of marginalised communities. Mitigation strategies should also focus on ensuring that employment policies are adaptable to changing economic conditions.

There must be flexibility and a willingness to adapt implementation strategies based on feedback, monitoring data, and changing circumstances. Mitigation strategies should also include provisions for policy adaptation and flexibility. As the labour market evolves, it is essential for employment policies to be responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities. According to Elliott *et al*. (2020), adaptive policies that can be adjusted based on real-time data and feedback from stakeholders are more likely to succeed in promoting job creation and addressing unemployment.

Engaging stakeholders in the policy development process is critical for identifying challenges and developing effective mitigation strategies. Hemphill and Kulik (2015) and Sa and Holt (2019) emphasise the importance of collaboration between government agencies, private sector actors, and civil society organisations in promoting inclusive employment policies. By involving diverse stakeholders, policymakers can gain valuable insights into the challenges faced by different demographic groups and develop strategies that are responsive to their needs.

Implementing capacity-building initiatives and training programmes can help address skills gaps and enhance the effectiveness of employment policies. Satwhikawara (2024) highlights the importance of equipping individuals with the necessary skills to meet the demands of the labour market. By investing in training programmes that align with industry needs, policymakers can improve employability and facilitate smoother transitions into work. Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks is essential for assessing the effectiveness of mitigation strategies. Liu and Li (2022) emphasise the need for regular data collection and analysis to track progress and identify areas for improvement. By implementing a systematic approach to monitoring, policymakers can make informed adjustments to strategies and ensure that they remain relevant in a changing economic landscape.

2.2.1.3.5. Monitoring of effects of plans/policies

This stage involves tracking the progress and impact of the implemented plan. It includes gathering data, analysing results, and making adjustments as needed to ensure the effectiveness of the plan. The Department of Labour plays can play a crucial role in monitoring the effects of reformed employment policies in South Africa. They collect and analyse data on employment rates, job creation, and unemployment levels (Nattrass, 2014). They also track the implementation and outcomes of specific policies, such as labour market reforms and initiatives to increase employment opportunities (Kingdon & Knight, 2004).

Regular monitoring and evaluation are essential for assessing the effectiveness of employment policies. The Department of Labour can utilise various indicators, such as changes in unemployment rates and job creation patterns, to gauge the impact of these policies. Effective monitoring frameworks can help identify gaps in implementation and inform necessary adjustments to policies (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Felstead and Henseke (2017) emphasise the importance of assessing the consequences of employment practices on worker well-being and work-life balance, which can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of employment initiatives.

In addition to quantitative data, qualitative assessments are crucial for understanding the experiences of workers and businesses within the reformed employment landscape. Hanisch *et al*. (2017) highlight the significance of understanding perceived barriers to employment, particularly for marginalised groups, which can inform policy adjustments and targeted interventions. By incorporating qualitative data, the Department of Labour can gain a more comprehensive comprehension of the obstacles faced by different demographic groups in the labour market.

Collaboration with other government agencies, research institutions, and stakeholders is vital for gaining a holistic understanding of the multifaceted effects of reformed employment policies. Backhaus and Loichinger (2022) discuss the importance of cohort analysis in understanding labour force participation trends, which can be beneficial for evaluating the impact of policies on specific demographic groups. This collaborative approach allows for a more nuanced assessment of employment dynamics and the identification of emerging challenges.

The Department of Labour can identify unexpected consequences and areas requiring targeted intervention by delving into the nuances of employment dynamics. Kennedy and Bishu (2020) explore trends in representative bureaucracy, which can shed light on the effectiveness of employment policies in promoting diversity and inclusion within the workforce. This depth of analysis enables policymakers to make informed decisions and adapt policies to ensure sustainable and inclusive employment growth across South Africa.

By fostering collaboration, investing in education and skills development, and embracing technology, South Africa can work towards creating a more inclusive and sustainable employment environment. The Department of Labour can take the approach of planning theory and implement it in South Africa to curb high unemployment that emanates from gaps in employment policies. One effective strategy for policy implementation is to foster collaboration between government entities, employers, trade unions, and civil society organisations (Meyer, 2014b).

Additionally, leveraging technology and innovation can streamline administrative processes related to employment policies, making it easier for businesses to comply with labour regulations and for workers to access their rights. Embracing digital solutions can also enhance data collection and monitoring of labour market trends, enabling policymakers to make evidence-based decisions.

2.2.1.4. Limitation of planning theory

Planning theory faces several significant limitations that can impact the effectiveness and practicality of its application. One major limitation is the inherent complexity of planning processes, which makes it challenging to account for all the variables and factors involved in shaping a particular outcome (Olsen, 1990). This complexity can lead to oversights and gaps in the planning process, resulting in unanticipated consequences and shortcomings.

Additionally, planning theory often relies on assumptions and predictions about future conditions and behaviours. These assumptions can be uncertain and subject to change, making it difficult to accurately predict the outcomes of planning decisions (Albrecht, & Lim, 1986). Another limitation is the difficulty in predicting and

accommodating changes in the environment, economy, and society. Planning theory often relies on assumptions and extrapolations of existing data, which may not accurately capture the dynamic nature of the world. Consequently, plans formulated based on these assumptions may become quickly outdated and ineffective in addressing emerging challenges (Lawrence, 2000).

Furthermore, planning theory can be criticised for its sometimes-limited consideration of various stakeholders' diverse perspectives and interests (Lim, 1986). This can lead to plans that insufficiently address the needs and preferences of certain communities, leading to social and economic inequities. Moreover, planning theory may not adequately account for the political dynamics and power structures that influence decision-making processes. This can result in plans that prioritise powerful groups' interests and neglect marginalised communities' voices and concerns (Hacking, 2017). While planning theory offers valuable insights and frameworks for decision-making, it is important to acknowledge its limitations in capturing the complexity of real-world situations. These limitations highlight the need for continuous refinement and adaptation of planning theory to better account for complexity, change, and diverse stakeholder perspectives.

2.2.2 Theory of social justice

The study seeks to view local development through the lens of the theory of social justice. Social justice is one of the values on which community development is founded (Langhelle, 2000). It is perceived as a key aspect of democracy in society, where people are entitled to equal social, economic and political rights (Rawls, 1999). It deals with distributive justice that entails fair circulation of socioeconomic benefits to all communities (Miller, 1999). The principles of this theory include access to resources, equity, participation, diversity, and human rights (Miller, 1999). Thus, the pioneers of social justice theory argue that the government is responsible for implementing policies and legal frameworks that lead to the transformation of communities through equal distribution of social resources (Miller, 1999). Therefore, this study seeks to use social justice theory to explain local development and measures of inclusive local development in South Africa.

2.2.2.1. Local development and social justice

Local development refers to the initiatives and actions taken at the local level to improve a specific community or region's social, economic, and environmental conditions (Matarrita-Cascante *et al*., 2020). Social justice plays a crucial role in local development as it ensures that the prospects of development are equally distributed among all community members, particularly those who are marginalised or disadvantaged (Kabeer, 2010). To achieve social justice in local development, it is essential to address the principles of redistributive justice, which involves allocating resources to those with fewer opportunities; recognitive justice, which involves recognising and respecting cultural and gender differences; and representational justice, which involves ensuring equitable representation and political voice for all members of the community (Hlalele, 2014).

The theory of social justice and local development emphasises the need for a fairer society and achieving sustainable development goals through actions guided by redistributive justice, recognitive justice, and representational justice at the local level. Social justice has a crucial role to play in local development (Culwick & Patel, 2020). It is important to incorporate a coherent model that links local government with a local development strategy to address the imperatives of reform and achieve social justice in local development. This strategy should incorporate gender equality, the informal economy, and institutional organisational capacity (Jocom *et al*., 2021). By doing so, a local context can be created where all types of resources are maximised in the process of wealth creation in the locality. To summarise, the theory of social justice and local development emphasises the importance of achieving a fairer society through actions guided by redistributive justice, recognitive justice, and representational justice at the local level (Fuo, 2017).

Social justice theory is a framework for analysing and addressing issues of fairness, equality, and justice within societies. It focuses on promoting and ensuring equal opportunities, resources, and rights for all individuals, particularly those disadvantaged or marginalised. This theory emphasises the importance of redistributing resources and power to create a more equitable society (Cardoso & Breda-Vázquez, 2007). It recognises that systemic inequalities and injustices exist and seeks to address them through policies, practice, and interventions that promote social change.

Social justice theory is relevant to local development as it recognises the importance of addressing disparities and promoting equity at a community level. It highlights the need for inclusive and sustainable development that benefits all members of society, regardless of their social, economic, or cultural backgrounds. Social justice theory in local development involves understanding the root causes of inequities and designing interventions that aim to reduce these disparities. These interventions may include implementing inclusive education systems, providing access to healthcare and social services, promoting economic opportunities for marginalised groups, and ensuring equal representation and participation in decision-making processes.

Social justice theory applies to unemployment as it recognises that employment opportunities are a fundamental aspect of social and economic well-being. It acknowledges that systemic barriers and inequalities can contribute to higher rates of unemployment among certain groups, such as racial minorities, individuals with disabilities, and low-income communities. Social justice theory calls for equitable policies and practice that tackle these inequalities and give equal access to employment opportunities for all individuals. These may include implementing job training programmes, promoting inclusive hiring practice, and advocating for fair labour policies.

The role of equity in social justice theory plays a crucial part in the development of employment policy (Cardoso & Breda-Vázquez, 2007). It emphasises the need for equal access to employment opportunities, fair treatment in the workplace, and the elimination of discrimination and biases that might hinder individuals from fully participating and thriving in the workforce. By incorporating principles of social justice into employment policy, steps can be taken to address systemic inequalities and create a more inclusive and equitable work environment. This can be accomplished by enacting policies that promote equal pay, provide support and resources for underrepresented groups, ensure workplace diversity and inclusion, and address systemic barriers that perpetuate inequities in employment.

2.2.3 Key principles of social justice theory

Social justice theory is a framework that examines the fairness and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within society. It focuses on promoting equality, addressing systemic inequalities and discrimination, and ensuring that everyone has access to basic needs and human rights (Killen, at al., 2021). Social justice theory recognises the existence of different types of social goods that must be shared and distributed among members of society. Some key principles of social justice theory include:

Redistributive justice: This principle emphasises allocating resources and opportunities to individuals and groups who have been historically disadvantaged or marginalised to address existing inequalities and promote a fairer society. Recognitive justice: This principle recognises the importance of acknowledging and respecting the cultural, gender, and other differences within society. It promotes the idea that all individuals should be recognised and valued for their unique identities and experiences (Killen, at al. 2021). Representational justice: This principle focuses on ensuring equitable representation and political voice for all members of society. It emphasises the importance of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes and ensuring that underrepresented groups have a say in shaping policies and institutions (Babundo, 2023).

2.2.4 Key principles of social justice in community growth

The key principles of social justice in community growth involve addressing the disparities and inequalities within a community, ensuring equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, recognising, and respecting and respecting the diverse cultural and gender differences present, and providing equitable representation and voice to all members of the community (Warren, 2017). These principles are essential for fostering a fair and inclusive community where all individuals can thrive and contribute to the overall development.

Communities can work towards creating a more just and equitable society by incorporating these principles into local development initiatives (Fuo, 2017). To delve deeper into the impact of social justice on local development, it is important to

explore how these key principles are applied in real-life scenarios. One can consider case studies or examples where initiatives guided by redistributive justice, recognitive justice, and representational justice have led to tangible improvements in the social, economic, and environmental fabric of a specific locality.

Furthermore, understanding the challenges and obstacles that hinder the implementation of social justice principles in local development is crucial. Identifying these barriers can provide insight into how to better address and overcome them, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable local development efforts. The theory of social justice and local development offers a comprehensive framework for creating fair and equitable communities. A deeper understanding of the dynamics between social justice and local development can be attained by examining real-life applications, challenges, and potential solutions.

2.2.5 Application of social justice theory in South African context

Social justice theory provides a framework for understanding and addressing social inequalities. However, moving beyond theory and translating these principles into action is important to achieve meaningful social change (Flores *et al*., 2014). This requires implementing policies and practices that promote equal opportunities, fair distribution of resources, and inclusion of marginalised groups (Cardoso & Breda-Vázquez, 2007). It also requires challenging systemic injustices and advocating for policy changes that address societal inequities.

Implementing social justice in local communities requires a strategic and holistic approach. It involves addressing systemic inequalities and creating policies and initiatives that promote equal access to resources, opportunities, and representation for all members of the community (Matarrita-Cascante *et al*., 2020). Delving deeper into the intersection of social justice and local development reveals the intricate dynamics and complexities of fostering a truly fair and just society at the community level. When analysing real-life scenarios, it becomes apparent that initiatives guided by redistributive justice are not only focused on the allocation of resources to those in need but also on creating avenues for sustainable economic growth and empowerment. In addition, recognitive justice goes beyond mere acknowledgment

of cultural and gender differences; it involves actively incorporating these diversities into the fabric of local development initiatives.

This may entail supporting cultural heritage preservation, providing access to education and resources for marginalised groups, and ensuring that gender disparities are effectively addressed (Checkoway, 2013). Furthermore, the concept of representational justice extends beyond just ensuring a voice for all members of the community; it involves creating inclusive decision-making processes that actively engage individuals from diverse backgrounds (Checkoway, 2013). This approach fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among community members, leading to more sustainable and impactful development outcomes.

Understanding the challenges and obstacles that hinder the implementation of social justice principles in local development is crucial. These may include deep-seated systemic inequalities, resistance to change from existing power structures, and limited resources for effective implementation. By critically examining these barriers, it is possible to develop targeted strategies and interventions that can effectively overcome these obstacles and drive meaningful change.

To achieve social justice in local communities, it is essential to adopt a multifaceted approach that addresses immediate needs and focuses on systemic changes and long-term sustainability. This may involve forging partnerships with local stakeholders, leveraging the strengths of the community, and fostering a sense of collective responsibility for driving inclusive and equitable development. The theory of social justice and local development is a powerful framework that underscores the importance of achieving fairness and equity at the community level. By exploring the complexities, challenges, and strategies involved, a deeper understanding of the impact and potential of social justice in local development can be attained.

2.2.5.1. Restributive justice and local development

The application of redistributive justice in local development in South Africa is essential for addressing the deep-rooted inequalities that persist within the country (Fuo, 2017). Unlike in the past, when local government's role was limited to service

delivery, local government now has a constitutional mandate to play an expanded developmental role. This expanded role includes the obligation to contribute towards realising the transformative constitutional mandate aimed at social justice, which is primarily concerned with eradicating poverty and extreme inequalities in access to basic services (Rogerson, 1999).

The system of integrated development planning in South Africa requires each municipality to design and implement an integrated development plan that aims to achieve its expanded constitutional mandate and promote social justice (Fuo, 2017). Local governments can address the structural economic violence that has been perpetuated in South Africa and work towards creating a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities by incorporating redistributive justice measures into these development plans (Rogerson, 1999). These measures can include implementing policies and programmes that prioritise the needs of marginalised communities, such as targeted job creation initiatives, improved access to quality education and healthcare services, and affordable housing programmes.

Local governments can strive to address the root causes of poverty and inequality by ensuring that economic opportunities are accessible to all members of society through implementing redistributive justice in local development (Fuo, 2017). This approach to development recognises that the historical legacy of apartheid and ongoing systemic inequalities have resulted in certain groups of people being marginalised and excluded from accessing resources and opportunities. Therefore, through redistributive justice, local development initiatives can work towards rectifying these historical injustices and promoting social justice by prioritising the needs of marginalised communities and ensuring that they have equal opportunities to thrive and participate fully in society.

Integrating redistributive justice into local development in South Africa is crucial for addressing historical inequalities and promoting social justice (Rogerson, 1999). The integrated development planning system in South Africa holds great potential for contributing to social justice (Fuo, 2017). It provides a structured framework for municipalities to prioritise and meet the basic needs of people experiencing poverty, thereby working towards a more equitable distribution of resources and

opportunities. Municipalities in South Africa can incorporate redistributive justice measures into integrated development plans to address the historical structural economic violence that has been perpetuated, while promoting social justice through the redistribution of resources and opportunities.

Local government in South Africa has transitioned from limited-service delivery to one constitutionally mandated to play an expanded developmental role (Fuo, 2017). This expanded role includes addressing social justice issues, such as poverty and extreme inequalities in access to basic services, in order to ensure equal participation of all citizens in socio-political life (Pillay, 2008). To enable municipalities to fulfil their constitutional mandate, South Africa implemented a system of integrated development planning in 2000 (Fuo, 2017).

This integrated development planning framework is considered to be the chief governance instrument for South African municipalities. The purpose of the integrated development plan is to design and implement strategies that respond to diverse areas of human need, particularly the poor. However, despite the potential of integrated development plans to contribute towards social justice, their implementation has several challenges.

These challenges are partly attributed to the underlying legal and policy framework. Some of these implementation challenges include inadequate financial resources, lack of coordination between different sectors, limited capacity and skills within municipalities, and insufficient public participation in the planning process. Furthermore, there is a need to address the gaps in employment policies in South Africa.

The existing employment policies in South Africa need to be reviewed and revised to address the persistent gaps and inequalities in the labour market. These gaps include high unemployment rates, unequal access to opportunities, and disparities in wages and working conditions. There is a need for a retributive justice approach in local development to address these gaps.

In the context of local development in South Africa, the application of recognitive

justice is essential to ensure a fair and inclusive society (Fuo, 2017). This approach recognises and respects cultural and gender differences and promotes equitable representation and political voice by implementing recognitive justice in local development. South Africa can address historical injustices and empower marginalised communities through policies and initiatives prioritising inclusivity, representation, and acknowledging diverse perspectives.

Specific strategies to apply recognitive justice in local development include creating platforms for community participation and dialogue, engaging with local leaders and organisations to ensure diverse voices are heard, providing resources and support for cultural and gender-specific programmes and initiatives, and implementing policies that prioritise equal access to basic services and opportunities for all residents. This will ensure promotion of cultural and gender diversity in decision-making processes and leadership positions within local government. Furthermore, the application of recognitive justice in local development requires collaboration and partnership between government institutions, civil society organisations, and community members.

These stakeholders can work together to identify and address the specific needs as well as challenges faced by marginalised communities, as well as develop targeted interventions that promote social justice and equality. This will ensure the incorporation of community voices and perspectives in developing and implementing development projects. Furthermore, investing in education and awareness programmes can promote understanding and respect for different cultures and identities. Establishing mechanisms for redress and restitution for historical injustices, such as land redistribution and reparations for affected communities will also contribute to fostering long-term social justice.

Adopting a recognitive justice framework in South African local development efforts can create an environment where all individuals, regardless of their background or identity, are recognised, valued, and given the opportunity to actively participate in shaping their communities. These principles of recognitive justice in local development practice can contribute to creating a more just and inclusive society.

In addition to understanding the historical context and addressing structural inequalities, the importance of collaborative partnerships cannot be overstated when applying representational justice in local development in South Africa. Collaborative partnerships involve the meaningful engagement of various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations, community leaders, and local businesses (Shava, 2024). Establishing these partnerships not only fosters a sense of shared responsibility for addressing the challenges faced by marginalised communities but also allows for the pooling of resources and expertise (Dakyaga *et al*., 2023). Through collaborative efforts, a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to local development can be achieved.

Furthermore, these partnerships can serve as platforms for knowledge exchange and capacity building, empowering local community members to actively shape their own development trajectories. By leveraging the collective knowledge and experiences of diverse stakeholders, development interventions can be more responsive to the specific needs and aspirations of the communities they aim to serve. Moreover, collaborative partnerships provide a mechanism for accountability and transparency in decision-making processes. By involving a wide range of stakeholders, including those directly affected by development initiatives, decision-making becomes more inclusive and reflective of the diverse perspectives within the community. Fostering collaborative partnerships is integral to the successful application of representational justice in local development in South Africa. These partnerships create avenues for shared responsibility, knowledge exchange, and inclusive decision-making, ultimately contributing to more effective and sustainable development outcomes for marginalised communities.

2.2.5.2. Recognitive justice and local development

Recognitive justice in the context of South African local development refers to the fair and equitable recognition and inclusion of all individuals and communities in decision-making processes, policies, and initiatives that affect their lives (Fuo, 2017). This is crucial in addressing historical and ongoing social injustices, such as poverty and inequality, and ensuring that all members of society have equal access to

resources and opportunities for their socio-economic advancement. Recognitive justice in South African local development is essential for addressing the deep-rooted historical and ongoing social injustices faced by marginalised communities. (Beets & Louw, 2011).

It does not only involve the fair recognition and inclusion of all individuals and communities in decision-making processes but also requires a thorough understanding of the historical context and structural barriers that have perpetuated inequalities. To effectively apply recognitive justice, it is important to acknowledge the diverse cultural, social, and economic backgrounds of different communities within South Africa. This includes recognising the impact of apartheid and colonialism on the distribution of resources and opportunities, as well as understanding the unique challenges faced by each community (Liebenberg, 2015).

Furthermore, implementing recognitive justice in local development initiatives calls for meaningful engagement with community members to ensure that their voices are heard, and their perspectives are integrated into the decision-making processes. This can be achieved through participatory approaches that prioritise the agency and autonomy of local residents. In addition, recognising the value of indigenous knowledge and practices is integral to achieving recognitive justice. Acknowledging and incorporating traditional knowledge systems into development strategies makes it possible to harness diverse communities' strengths and resilience (Forde *et al*., 2021).

Ultimately, the application of recognitive justice in South African local development demands a holistic approach that goes beyond mere representation and tokenism. It requires a genuine commitment to understanding and addressing the complexities of historical injustices and actively working towards creating inclusive and equitable opportunities for all members of society. To ensure the application of recognitive justice in South African local development, it is crucial to adopt integrated development planning as a central governance instrument (Fuo, 2017). This approach allows for the convergence of multiple sectors to address diverse areas of human need, contributing to achieving social justice. One of the key elements of recognitive justice in South African local development is the eradication of poverty

and extreme inequalities in access to basic services.

This can be achieved through the allocation of material and human resources to those who have less by circumstance, addressing the principle of redistributive justice. Additionally, recognitive justice involves recognising and respecting cultural differences, ensuring that diverse cultural and gender identities are valued and represented. Redistributive justice emphasises the fair allocation of material and human resources to those disadvantaged by circumstance, ensuring that marginalised communities receive the support they need to thrive (Diezmartínez & Gianotti, 2022). This approach is crucial in environmental contexts, particularly where resources are scarce and communities are heavily reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods (Strzelecka *et al*., 2020). In this context, community-based conservation approaches can play a crucial role in achieving recognitive justice (Martin *et al*., 2016). By involving local communities in the planning and implementation of conservation projects, stakeholders can ensure that their perspectives and needs are considered.

Furthermore, community-based conservation approaches can inspire local community involvement in achieving conservation goals. To advance the interests of marginalised communities at the local level, it is necessary to revisit and adapt radical strategies that prioritise their needs. To advance recognitive justice in South African local development, it is important to implement inclusive and equitable employment policies (Ferketic *et al*., 2010). These policies should prioritise hiring and promoting individuals from marginalised communities, ensuring they are given equal opportunities for career advancement and economic empowerment.

2.2.5.3 Representational justice and local development

This approach acknowledges the historical injustices faced by marginalised communities and aims to ensure their inclusion and representation in the development process (Grobbelaar & Naidoo, 2011). To effectively apply representational justice in local development in South Africa, it is important to delve into the specific challenges and barriers faced by marginalised communities. Understanding the historical context of apartheid and its lingering impacts on these

communities is crucial for developing targeted and effective interventions.

One key aspect of representational justice is the active participation of the affected communities in the decision-making processes related to local economic development. This goes beyond tokenistic involvement and requires genuine empowerment and inclusion of marginalised voices. Furthermore, addressing the structural inequalities and power imbalances that perpetuate injustice is essential. This may involve dismantling discriminatory policies and practices and fostering an environment where the rights and needs of all community members are respected and valued (John *et al*., 2022).

Moreover, recognising the diverse needs and aspirations of different marginalised groups within rural areas is vital for ensuring inclusive and representative local development. Customised approaches that take into account the specific social, economic, and cultural contexts of different communities can contribute to more meaningful and sustainable outcomes (Grobbelaar & Naidoo, 2011). The application of representational justice in local development in South Africa requires a deep understanding of historical injustices, genuine community participation, addressing structural inequalities, and embracing diversity within marginalised communities. By integrating these principles into local economic development initiatives, real progress can be made towards fostering inclusive and equitable growth (Rogerson, 1999).

2.2.6 Impact of social justice on local development

Justice, and representational justice at the local level recognises that for local development to be truly beneficial and sustainable, the principles of social justice must be at the forefront of all initiatives (Snowman & Sunde, 2024). This ensures that resources and opportunities are distributed equitably, taking into account the needs and rights of marginalised or disadvantaged groups (Fuo, 2017). The impact of social justice on local development can be observed in various aspects of community life. Firstly, it ensures that all members of the community have equal access to resources and opportunities for growth and development (Culwick & Patel, 2020). This includes access to education, healthcare, employment, and participation

in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Moreover, the implementation of social justice principles in local development leads to the empowerment of marginalised and disadvantaged groups within the community. By addressing issues of inequality and discrimination, social justice initiatives create a more inclusive and cohesive society where all individuals can contribute to and benefit from development efforts (Matarrita-Cascante *et al*., 2020). Additionally, social justice in local development promotes sustainable practices that prioritise the well-being of both people and the environment. This includes initiatives that focus on poverty reduction, environmental conservation, and sustainable economic growth (Fuo, 2017). These initiatives address immediate needs and aim to create a foundation for long-term social and economic progress. Overall, the theory of social justice and local development highlights the importance of creating an inclusive and equitable society where all members have equal opportunities to thrive (Kim & Lim, 2017). This includes addressing systemic inequalities, empowering marginalised groups, promoting sustainability, and ensuring that local development initiatives benefit all members of the community (Piet & Mtapuri, 2014).

The conscious inclusion of redistributive, recognitive, and representational justice in local development strategies promotes sustainable and equitable growth (Hlalele, 2014). It helps bridge the gaps between different social groups and ensures that the benefits of development are not concentrated in the hands of a few but are shared among the entire community. The impact of social justice on local development is profound and transformative. It not only creates a more inclusive and equitable society but also lays the foundation for sustainable and holistic growth at the grassroots level. By prioritising social justice in local development initiatives, communities can work towards creating a more just and prosperous future for all.

2.2.7 Limitations of justice theory

Justice theory is a prominent framework that examines the concepts of fairness, equality, and morality within social systems. However, like any other theoretical framework, justice theory has its limitations and should be considered critically. One limitation of justice theory is its subjective nature (Rawls, 1971). This means that different individuals may have varying interpretations of what is fair or just, making it

challenging to establish a universally accepted standard of justice.

Another limitation of justice theory is its inability to account for cultural and contextual differences (Cooper-Knock & Macdonald, 2020). These differences can heavily influence perceptions of justice and may result in conflicting judgments. Furthermore, justice theory often focuses on the distribution of resources, neglecting other important aspects such as restorative justice and the healing process. Additionally, justice theory tends to overlook power dynamics and systemic inequalities that can influence the distribution of justice (Jasso, 2005).

These limitations suggest that justice theory alone may not provide a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing social issues and promoting equality and fairness. Instead, a more holistic and intersectional perspective that combines justice theory with insights from other disciplines, such as sociology, critical race theory, and intersectionality theory should be considered to better understand and address the complexities of justice in society (Jasso, 2005). Overall, while justice theory provides a valuable framework for understanding and discussing concepts of fairness and equality, it is important to approach it critically and consider its limitations and potential biases to develop a more comprehensive understanding of justice and explore alternative approaches that address the complexities and diverse needs of individuals and communities.

2.2.7.1. Limitation of justice theory in the South African context

The limitation of justice theory in the South African context is its narrow focus on transformative constitutionalism and its failure to address underlying systemic issues that hinder radical transformation, such as corruption, racism, low levels of skills among black people, land dispossession, state incapacity, low levels of foreign direct investments and the persistent problems of poverty, unemployment, and inequalities (Shai, 2019). This limitation leads to a discrepancy between the ideals of justice and the realities faced by marginalised communities in South Africa, as justice theory fails to adequately address these issues and bring about substantial change. Furthermore, the presence of multiple legal orders and divergences between human rights ideas and local notions of justice in South Africa adds another layer of

complexity to the application and effectiveness of justice theory in the South African context.

The limitation of justice theory in the South African context also extends to the practical challenges of implementation and enforcement. While the constitutional framework may espouse principles of justice and equality, the reality of implementing these ideals in a diverse and historically divided society is intricate. The prevalence of corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and capacity constraints within the state further impedes the effective realisation of justice for all citizens (Naher, at al. 2020).

Furthermore, the global interconnectedness of economies and the dynamics of international relations play a significant role in shaping the socio-economic landscape of South Africa. The impact of foreign direct investments, trade policies, and geopolitical influences adds another layer of complexity to pursuing justice and equity within the country (The World Bank, 2019). However, the justice theory in the South African context is unable to address the multi-layered and interconnected challenges of poverty, inequality, historical injustices, and systemic discrimination that persist in South Africa (Kakwata, 2024). In essence, the limitation of justice theory in the South African context is multifaceted, encompassing historical, cultural, socio-economic, and global dimensions that collectively contribute to the challenges of achieving substantive and transformative justice for all South Africans.

2.3 POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK REGULATING THE LABOUR FORCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

This section presents the employment legislative framework and its influence on employment levels in South Africa. The regulation of the labour force has an impact on employment levels. According to Employment & Labour (2019), labour regulation caters to and benefits all citizens. Several researchers have conducted studies on the effect of labour regulation on employment levels and found that labour regulations can have a significant impact on employment levels (Abrassart, 2015; Cazes *et al*., 2012; Nataraj *et al*., 2012; Santos, 2009). Nataraj *et al*. (2012) state that labour regulation positively affects employment levels.

The recent emergence of political democracy in South Africa has brought into sharp focus those macroeconomic and labour policies designed to combat unacceptably high unemployment levels and address the inequalities that have persisted for decades. The government has implemented various policies and legislative frameworks to create a more inclusive and sustainable labour market. In addition to addressing high unemployment levels, these policies also aim to promote fair labour practice, improve working conditions, and enhance the overall well-being of workers (Nzima & Duma, 2014).

These policies often prioritise the needs and rights of workers, while also considering the interests of employers and investors (Worku, 2015). One of the key policy initiatives is the Employment Equity Act, which seeks to promote equity and diversity in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination and implementing affirmative action measures to redress past inequalities. This Act not only promotes equal opportunities for all South Africans but also aims to create a more diverse and inclusive workforce, reflecting the country's demographics (Thomas & Jain, 2004). This Act places a legal obligation on employers to implement employment equity measures, such as developing equity plans, conducting workforce analysis, and ensuring representation of designated groups.

Furthermore, the Labour Relations Act governs collective bargaining and workplace relations, aiming to promote fair labour practices and ensure workers' rights are protected. This legislation seeks to create a conducive environment for constructive social dialogue between employers and employees, ultimately contributing to a more stable and productive labour market (Kruger & Tshoose, 2017). The Basic Conditions of Employment Act also sets minimum standards for working conditions, including working hours, leave entitlements, and remuneration. Overall, South Africa's labour market policies and legislative framework are designed to address the complex challenges of unemployment, inequality, and labour market exclusion while promoting a fair and inclusive work environment for all. The influence of labour regulation on employment levels in South Africa is discussed below:

2.3.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

The *Constitution of South Africa* (1996) enshrines workers' rights. Section 3(2)(a) statesthat all citizens are equally entitled to socio-economic benefits and privileges. Therefore, all citizens are entitled to equal job opportunities and fair labour relations in the country. Section 23 provides labour relation guidelines for the labour force. This includes Section 23 Subsection 1 which states that everyone has a right to fair labour practices (Constitution of South Africa, 1996). Section 2 states that the Constitutionis the supreme law of South Africa and, therefore, any conduct or law that contradicts it is invalid. Hence, all employment policies are subject to the Constitution of South Africa. As such, an Inclusive labour force that preserve jobs increases employment levels.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa plays a crucial role in regulating the labour market in South Africa (Worku, 2015). It sets out fundamental rights and principles that guide employment practice and protect the rights of both employees and employers. These rights include the right to fair labour practice, the right to form and join trade unions, and the right to engage in collective bargaining (Kruger & Tshoose, 2017). Furthermore, the Constitution prohibits unfair discrimination in the workplace based on various grounds, such as race, gender, religion, and age. The impact of the Constitution on the labour market extends beyond the direct protection of workers' rights. The Constitution has laid the foundation for a more equitable and just labour market in South Africa by guaranteeing the right to fair labour practice and prohibiting unfair discrimination (Eck & Newaj, 2020).

These constitutional provisions have influenced the development of labour laws and policies that aim to address historical inequalities and empower marginalised groups in the workforce. In addition to the explicit protections for workers, the Constitution's emphasis on human dignity and equality has shaped the broader societal attitudes towards labour and employment (Albertyn, 2019). It has fostered a culture of respect for workers' rights and has influenced the evolution of corporate social responsibility initiatives within the business community (Kruger & Tshoose, 2017). Companies are increasingly expected to uphold ethical labour practice and contribute to the socioeconomic development of the communities in which they operate, reflecting the

constitutional values of social justice and inclusivity.

Furthermore, the Constitution's role in labour market regulation is not static. As South Africa continues to address the challenges of unemployment, poverty, and inequality, the interpretation and application of constitutional principles in the context of labour market regulation are continuously evolving. This ongoing process of legal interpretation and policy implementation reflects the Constitution's adaptability to the changing social and economic landscape, ensuring that it remains a dynamic force in shaping the labour market for years to come (Ntimba *et al*., 2020). It is imperative to acknowledge that while the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa has undoubtedly played a significant role in labour market regulation, there are opposing arguments regarding its impact.

Dickinson (2017) argues that the extensive protection of workers' rights and the stringent regulations imposed by the Constitution can inadvertently create barriers to employment and economic growth. Clarke (2014) contends that excessive labour market regulation can stifle entrepreneurship and deter investment, ultimately leading to reduced job opportunities and economic prosperity. Additionally, the constitutional emphasis on collective bargaining and unionisation may lead to labour market inflexibility, making it challenging for employers to adjust wages and working conditions in response to economic fluctuations.

Ntimba *et al*. (2020) assert that the constitutional provisions aimed at addressing historical inequalities and empowering marginalised groups may create disparities in treatment and opportunities within the labour market. They argue that affirmative action policies, while well-intentioned, can result in reverse discrimination and adversely impact certain individuals and businesses. It is important to recognise that while the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa has undoubtedly made strides in protecting workers' rights and shaping labour market dynamics, there are valid concerns regarding the potential unintended consequences of its regulatory framework. These opposing viewpoints underscore the complex and nuanced nature of labour market regulation and the ongoing debate regarding the optimal balance between workers' protections and economic flexibility.

2.3.2 Labour Relations Act number 66 of 1995

The *Labour Relations Act* 66 of 1995 aims to promote social justice, peace in labour relations and democratise the workplace. According to Chapter 1 of the *Labour Relations Act* (1995), this Act implements fundamental human rights as set out in Section 27 ofthe Constitution and the International Labour Organisation. Section 1(c) provides a labour relation framework that regulates how employees, trade unions and employers can relate with one another. This provides protection for workers in the South African labour force. The Act plays arole in job security and preserves jobs in the labour force.

2.3.3 Employment Equity Act number 55 of 1998

According to Chapter 1 of the *Employment Equity Act* 55 of 1998, the purpose of this Act is to achieve equality in the workplace by promoting equal opportunities and eliminating prejudicial discrimination. Racism played a role in gatekeeping jobs and limiting access to skills development, which exacerbated unemployment (Munir, *et al*., 2021). The Employment Equity Act opens labour markets and stimulates employment opportunities in South Africa (Duval, at al., 2021). Equal and fair workplace treatment leads to enhanced productivity, ultimately creating more jobs (Du Toit *et al*. 2019). Fair treatment yields increased productivity (Hassan, 2013), and equal access to labour force reduces unemployment (Hassan, 2013). However, Loewald, Makrelov and Wörgötter, (2021) argue that the Employment Equity Act has low impact on employment growth. On the other hand, the Act has had a profound impact on employment levels in South Africa (Ntimba *et al*., 2020).

The Act was enacted to address the historical imbalances in the workplace and to promote equal opportunities and fair treatment for all employees. It aims to eradicate discrimination and to ensure that all individuals have an equal chance of being employed and advancing in their careers (Nzima & Duma, 2014). The historical background of employment equity in South Africa is rooted in the country's apartheid era, where discriminatory practice led to significant inequalities in the workplace. The implementation of the Employment Equity Act was a significant milestone in addressing these systemic injustices and creating a more inclusive and diverse workforce (Festus *et al*., 2016).

The key provisions of the Employment Equity Act go beyond mere representation and quotas. They require employers to take proactive measures to eliminate unfair discrimination, implement affirmative action measures, and promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Thomas & Jain, 2004). This has led to a shift in organisational culture and policies, fostering an environment where talent is recognised and nurtured, regardless of race, gender, or other characteristics. The impact of the Employment Equity Act on South African employment has been multifaceted. It has led to increased representation of previously disadvantaged groups in various industries and sectors. Moreover, it has prompted organisations to invest in training and development programmes targeted at historically marginalised groups, leading to a more skilled and diverse workforce (Ntimba *et al*., 2020).

Furthermore, the Act has fostered a culture of accountability and transparency, as companies are required to report on their progress in achieving employment equity goals (Festus *et al*., 2016). This has created more opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups and led to a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities within workplaces. The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 has had a transformative impact on employment levels in South Africa, reshaping the workforce and fostering a more inclusive and fair employment landscape. The Act has helped to address historical workplace discrimination and promote equal opportunities for all employees (Ntimba *et al*., 2020).

The Employment Equity Act has been the subject of criticism, particularly regarding its impact on employment levels in South Africa. Horwitz and Jain (2011) argue that it has led to reverse discrimination, where individuals from non-designated groups face barriers to employment and career advancement. Nzima and Duma (2014) argue that the Act's focus on quotas and affirmative action has resulted in some individuals being overlooked for employment opportunities based on their race or gender, leading to resentment and perpetuating stereotypes. Furthermore, Thomas and Jain (2004) claim that the emphasis on meeting numerical targets has led to "token" appointments and promotions, where individuals are selected based on their demographic characteristics rather than their qualifications and merit.

Strauss, and du Toit, (2010) argue that this has led to a decline in overall productivity and competitiveness in the job market as organisations prioritise meeting quotas over selecting the best candidates for the job. Kollapen, (2019) assert that the Act's reporting requirements place an administrative burden on companies, diverting resources and attention away from core business operations. They also contend that the Act's focus on historical imbalances neglects present-day meritocracy, where individuals should be judged based solely on their skills and abilities rather than their demographic characteristics. While the Employment Equity Act has undoubtedly made strides in addressing historical workplace discrimination and promoting equal opportunities, it has also introduced new forms of discrimination and administrative challenges, ultimately impacting employment levels in South Africa (Olckers & Zyl, 2015).

2.3.4 Employment Tax Incentive 26 of 2013

According to Section 2 (1) of the *Employment Tax Incentive Act* 26 of 2013, employment tax incentives encourage job creation in South Africa.The Act provides subsidised wages for youth, encourages employers to create additional jobs, and reduces youth unemployment (Development Policy Research Unit, 2020). The government provides the private sector with tax incentives to employ youthwith limited to no work experience (Ebrahim & Pirttia, 2019). The tax incentive assistsyoung people who have just left school to transition to the labour force (Womack, 2020). The Act has a minimal impact on youth employment growth in South Africa (Leowald, 2019; Bhorat *et al*., 2020). This is because small firms create more jobs as a result of this Act compared to bigger firms (Ebrahim *et al*. 2017).

The Employment Tax Incentive 26 of 2013, also known as the ETI, was implemented in South Africa with the aim of encouraging employers to hire young, unemployed individuals by providing them with a tax incentive (Festus *et al*., 2016). While the intention behind the ETI was to boost employment levels by incentivising employers to hire young, unemployed individuals, its actual impact has been the subject of much debate and analysis. Several studies have attempted to assess the effectiveness of the ETI in achieving its intended goals. Some researchers have pointed to positive outcomes, citing an increase in the hiring of young workers by eligible employers (Ranchhod & Finn, 2015; Festus *et al*., 2016; Budlender &

Ebrahim, 2021). However, there are also concerns that the incentive may have led to the displacement of older workers or an increase in temporary employment contracts, rather than sustainable, long-term job creation (Mtembu & Govender, 2015).

A more in-depth analysis of the impact of the ETI on South African employment levels would involve examining both quantitative data, such as changes in youth unemployment rates and overall employment figures, as well as qualitative factors, including the quality and stability of the jobs created as a result of the incentive (Ebrahim *et al*., 2017). Furthermore, it would be essential to consider the wider economic and social context in South Africa, including factors such as skills development, education, and the overall structure of the labour market. This broader perspective is crucial for understanding the true impact of the ETI on the South African employment landscape (Meyer, 2014a).

While the *Employment Tax Incentive Act* 26 of 2013 was introduced with the intention of boosting employment levels in South Africa, there are concerns regarding its actual impact on the job market. Bhorat, at al. (2021) argues that the ETI may not have had a significant effect on overall employment levels, as the incentive may have simply led to the reshuffling of existing workers rather than creating new job opportunities. In addition, Ranchhod and Finn (2015) point out that there are concerns that the ETI may have contributed to the proliferation of temporary employment contracts, which may not provide the same level of job security and benefits as permanent positions. This could potentially lead to a situation where young workers are continuously trapped in temporary employment without the opportunity for long-term career growth and stability.

Furthermore, Muller (2021) argues that the ETI may have inadvertently incentivised employers to focus on hiring younger workers at the expense of older, more experienced individuals. This could have implications for the workforce's overall experience and skill level, potentially impacting the quality of output and productivity in various industries. It is important to consider the ETI's potential drawbacks and unintended consequences to have a balanced understanding of its impact on the South African job market. Evaluating the long-term effects of the incentive and

considering alternative approaches to addressing unemployment in the country will be crucial in shaping effective employment policies.

2.3.5 Skills Development Act number 97 of 1998

Section 2(1) of *Skills Development Act* number97 of 1998 states that this Act aims toeradicate the shortage of skills in the South African labour force. The skills in the labour market often do not match the required skills in the labour force, which further exacerbates the unemployment problem (McGuinness, at al. 2018). Therefore, the government uses the Act to train workers to meet the skills required in the labour force(Du Plessis 2019). The Skills Development Act focuses on recruitment, training and development of previously disadvantaged groups (Wocke & Sutherland, 2008). Ferreira (2005) asserts that the Act seeks to alleviate unemployment in South Africa. Skills development positively affects job creation, employment, and the sustainability of work (Womack, 2020). Skills development increases job creation, productivity and income (Maïga *et al*. 2020; Ibrahim & Boerhannoeddin, 2017).

The *Skills Development Act* number 97 of 1998 has significantly impacted employment levels in the South African labour force (Worku, 2015). The Act aimed to promote skill development and training opportunities for all individuals, with a particular focus on historically disadvantaged groups. By implementing various measures, such as the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities and the Skills Development Levy, the Act sought to address the racial inequalities inherited from apartheid and create a more inclusive and skilled workforce (Worku, 2015).

The *Skills Development Act* of 1998 has been a crucial tool in the transformation of South Africa's labour force (Nzonzo, 2017). By implementing measures to address historical inequalities, the Act has played a pivotal role in increasing employment levels, particularly among historically disadvantaged groups (Allen, at al., 2021). The establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities has provided targeted training and development programmes, equipping individuals with the skills necessary to enter the workforce and contribute meaningfully to the economy.

Furthermore, the Skills Development Levy has facilitated the funding of various training initiatives, ensuring that resources are allocated to support skill development across different sectors (Nzonzo, 2017). This has empowered individuals to access employment opportunities and contributed to a more diversified and skilled labour force. As a result, the impact of the Skills Development Act on employment levels in South Africa has been substantial, laying the foundation for sustainable economic growth and social development (Nzonzo, 2017). While the Act aimed to promote skill development and training opportunities, it has also faced criticism for its impact on employment levels in the South African labour force. Allais, (2012) and Makgetla (2020) argues that the Act has contributed to increased unemployment, particularly among certain sectors of the population.

One criticism is that the implementation of the Skills Development Levy has placed an additional financial burden on businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (Kraak, 2008). The levy, intended to fund training initiatives, has been seen as a deterrent for businesses to hire new employees as they face higher operating costs (Penxa, 2009). This has been particularly challenging for businesses in sectors that already have high unemployment rates. Additionally, there have been concerns that the focus on training historically disadvantaged groups has led to a neglect of other skilled workers in the labour force (Mokhethi & Oladele, 2013). This has created a sense of unfair advantage for certain individuals and could potentially lead to resentment and discord within the workforce.

Furthermore, while the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities has provided targeted training and development programmes, there are criticisms about the effectiveness and relevance of these programmes in meeting the actual skill needs of the labour market. This mismatch has been seen as perpetuating unemployment, as individuals may not acquire the necessary skills demanded by businesses. Overall, the impact of the Skills Development Act on employment levels in South Africa remains a topic of debate, with some arguing that it has led to increased unemployment and economic strain in certain sectors of the labour force.

2.3.6 The Public Service Act, 1994

The *Public Service Act* of 1994 regulates recruitment and employment in the South African public service. Chapter 4 of the *Public ServiceAct* of 1994 states that a candidate must be a South African, have good character andbe in good health to be employed permanently in the public sector. It further states that appointment in the public service must be fair and be based on qualification, merit, suitability, efficiency, and level of training. The government provides goods and services, which creates job opportunities and sustainability (Caponi, 2017). The *Public Service Act* of 1994 regulates recruitment and employment in the public service, which plays a role injob creation in South Africa. Public service forms part of the community and social services sector, the most common source of employment in South Africa (Stats SA, 2022).

The *Public Service Act* of 1994 significantly impacted employment levels in the South African labour force (Worku, 2015). It was a landmark legislation that aimed to reform and professionalise the public service sector in South Africa. This had far-reaching effects on employment levels in the South African labour force, as it sought to address issues of employment relations, skills development, and equity within the public service (Ntimba *et al*., 2020). The impact of the Act can be seen in the transformation of the public service sector, with an emphasis on merit-based recruitment, equitable representation, and the creation of a professional and skilled workforce (Festus *et al*., 2016). This not only influenced employment levels within the public service but also had ripple effects on the broader labour force as a whole.

Additionally, the Act played a role in addressing racial inequalities inherited from apartheid by promoting affirmative action measures and prohibiting unfair discriminatory practice (Worku, 2015). Therefore, the *Public Service Act* of 1994 significantly impacted employment levels in the South African labour force by reforming the public service sector. Furthermore, the Act also introduced measures to promote employment equity and non-discrimination, which had a direct impact on the representation of historically disadvantaged groups in the workforce (Ntimba *et al*., 2020). This resulted in a more diverse and inclusive labour force, contributing to the overall social and economic development of South Africa. Overall, the *Public*

Service Act of 1994 had a multi-faceted impact on employment levels in the South African labour force, shaping both the public service sector and broader employment relations and equity within the country.

While the *Public Service Act* of 1994 aimed to reform and professionalise the public service sector in South Africa, there are opposing arguments regarding its impact on employment levels in the South African labour force. Kingdon and Knight (2007) argue that the emphasis on merit-based recruitment and the promotion of employment equity led to challenges in maintaining a skilled workforce within the public service. Ntimba *et al*. (2020) argue that the Act's measures to promote employment equity and non-discrimination, although well-intentioned, may have inadvertently led to tensions and feelings of unfairness among certain segments of the labour force (Ntimba *et al*., 2020).

There are concerns that the emphasis on equitable representation may have overshadowed the importance of merit and qualifications in recruitment and promotion processes, potentially resulting in a mismatch between job requirements and the skills of the workforce (Thozamile & Ngumbela, 2020). The focus on affirmative action and failure to implement policies effectively could potentially undermine merit-based hiring practice and disenfranchise deserving individuals (Breakfast & Maart, 2019). Additionally, Festus *et al*. (2016) argue that the Act's focus on employment equity may have created a perception of tokenism, with historically disadvantaged groups being seen as filling quotas rather than being recognised for their individual skills and contributions (Festus *et al*., 2016).

This argument suggests that the Act's impact on employment levels may not have been as positive as proponents claim, and that it may have contributed to challenges in maintaining a skilled and competent labour force within the public service and beyond. These criticisms highlight the complexity of the Act's impact on employment levels in the South African labour force and prompt a re-evaluation of its long-term effects on the country's employment relations and workforce development.

2.3.7 Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997

According to section 2(a) of the of *Basic Conditions of Employment Act* 1997, the Act gives effect to Section 21(1) of the Constitution (. This is done by providing measures for optimalbasic conditions in the workplace and regulating the basic conditions. This Act ensures that the dignity of workers is maintained in the workplace (Nino-Zarazua, & Torm, 2022). It preserves jobs by protecting workers from exploitation and involuntary job loss. It also promotes productivity, which eventually leads to job creation.

The *Basic Conditions of Employment Act* 75 of 1997, was implemented in response to the exploitation of employees in various sectors, including the domestic sector in South Africa (Sebola, 2014). The aim was to regulate working conditions, wages, and benefits for employees to protect their rights and ensure fair treatment. The implementation of this act had positive effects on employment levels in the South African labour force.

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act increased the level of job security for workers, which, in turn led to higher levels of employment (Mpedi, 2021). The Act brought about significant changes in the South African labour force. By establishing clear regulations on working conditions, wages, and benefits, the Act aimed to protect employees' rights and played a crucial role in shaping the employment landscape in the country (Worku, 2015).

The Act contributed to the reduction of exploitative practice, such as low wages and long working hours, and provided a mechanism for employees to enforce their rights and seek recourse in case of violations (Mpedi, 2021). One of the key impacts of the Act was the enhancement of job security for workers. By setting standards for working hours, overtime, leave entitlement, and other essential aspects of employment, the Act provided a sense of stability for employees (Fourie, 2017). This, in turn, contributed to an increase in employment levels as more individuals felt secure in their positions and were more willing to participate in the labour force.

Furthermore, the Act also addressed historic imbalances in the labour market,

particularly in sectors such as domestic work (Ntimba *et al*., 2020). By establishing minimum wages and standards for working conditions, the Act sought to rectify the exploitation that had long been prevalent in these sectors. This created a more equitable environment for employment, thereby positively impacting the overall levels of employment in the South African labour force (Sebola, 2014).

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act also laid the groundwork for a more productive and sustainable workforce (Mpedi, 2021). By ensuring that employees were fairly compensated and provided with reasonable working conditions, the Act indirectly contributed to higher levels of productivity and job satisfaction (Ntimba *et al*., 2020). This, in turn, positively affected employment levels as businesses were encouraged to expand and hire more individuals in compliance with the new regulations. While the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act* 75 of 1997 is often lauded for its positive impact on the South African Labour force, it is important to consider opposing arguments. Sebola (2014) argues that the Act may have inadvertently hindered employment growth in certain sectors of the economy.

Benjamin (2006) raised a concerned that by imposing strict regulations on working conditions, wages, and benefits, the Act may have placed a burden on employers, especially small businesses and those operating in industries with narrow profit margins. Festus *et al*. (2016) argue that these regulations may have created barriers to entry for new businesses and could have potentially discouraged existing businesses from hiring additional employees. Additionally, the establishment of minimum wages and standards for working conditions could have led to job losses in sectors that were heavily reliant on low-skilled or unskilled labour (Masango, 2020). Masango, (2020) argues that by increasing the cost of labour, especially for entry-level positions, the Act may have made it financially unviable for certain businesses to maintain or expand their workforce, negatively impacting overall employment levels.

The Act's focus on standardising employment conditions and benefits may have stifled innovation and flexibility in the labour market (Kruger & Tshoose, 2017). The researchers argue that by introducing rigid requirements, the Act may have limited employers' ability to negotiate individualised employment arrangements with their workers, which could have potentially hindered job creation in certain circumstances.

It is essential to critically evaluate both the positive and negative aspects of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act* 75 of 1997, to understand its impact on employment levels in the South African labour force.

2.3.8 Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act 53 of 2003

According to Section 2(a) of the *Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act* of 2003 aims to enable broad-based black economic empowerment (). This Act aims to liberate the previously disadvantaged people financially (Krüger, 2011). It empowers blacked owned SMMEs and increases the participation of black people in the economy (Du Plessis 2019). Cant and Rabie (2018)argue that the SMMEs are the engine of job creation and economic growth worldwide. Therefore, B-BBEE contributes to inclusive employment and economic growth in SouthAfrica. However, B-BBEE promotes corruption and causes economic strain (Pike *et al*., 2018) which affects the optimal impact of the policy.

The *Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act* 53 of 2003, also known as B-BBEE, was implemented in South Africa to promote economic transformation and increase opportunities for historically disadvantaged individuals, particularly black South Africans (Worku, 2015). Additionally, the Act seeks to address the racial inequalities inherited from apartheid by promoting the participation of black individuals in various sectors of the economy (Nzima & Duma, 2014). The impact of the *Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act* 53 of 2003 on employment levels in the South African labour force has been incremental rather than transformational (Sebola, 2014). While the B-BBEE Act has made progress in increasing representation and diversity at organisational levels, it has not resulted in a significant shift in employment levels in the overall labour force (Nzima & Duma, 2014).

The impact of the Act on employment levels in the South African labour force has been a topic of extensive research and analysis. While the Act has made incremental progress in increasing representation and diversity at organisational levels, it is crucial to delve deeper into the underlying factors that have limited its transformational impact on employment levels in the overall labour force.

One key aspect to consider is the implementation and enforcement of B-BBEE policies across different industries and regions in South Africa. The effectiveness of

these policies in creating tangible employment opportunities for historically disadvantaged individuals, particularly black South Africans, varies significantly based on factors such as industry dynamics, company size, and geographic location. (Oni & Fatoki, 2014). Furthermore, it is essential to examine the overall economic environment and business landscape in South Africa to understand how the B-BBEE Act interfaces with broader economic trends and employment dynamics. Factors such as global economic conditions, technological advancements, and shifts in consumer behaviour can influence the ability of B-BBEE to drive meaningful changes in employment levels (Munkuli, 2024).

In addition, a deeper exploration of the challenges and barriers that exist in the implementation of B-BBEE initiatives is necessary to understand why the Act has not resulted in a significant shift in employment levels. This could involve analysing issues such as limited access to skills development, barriers to entrepreneurship, and the impact of historical inequalities on the labour market.

To understand the impact of the B-BBEE Act on employment levels in the South African labour force, a multi-faceted approach that considers the interplay of policy implementation, economic forces, and social dynamics is essential. This deeper analysis will provide valuable insights into the factors that have constrained the Act's transformative potential in employment. In conclusion, while the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act has made some progress in increasing representation and diversity at organisational levels, its impact on overall employment levels in the South African labour force is limited (Worku, 2015).

2.3.9 Employment Service Act 4 of 2014

According to Section 2 of the *Employment Service Act* 44 of 2014, the purpose of this Act is to promote job opportunities and improve the ability of job seekers to access labour market. Employment services provide information about thelabour force to help jobseekers (ILO, 2021). This Act does not promise employment but only assists people in searching for jobs (Department of Labour, 2014). The Act contributes to inclusive employment growth facilitating access to the labour market for all individuals. The *Employment Service Act* 4 of 2014 is a piece of legislation in South Africa that aims to regulate and improve employment services in the country (Worku, 2015). It requires public employment services to provide a range of services,

including job matching, career guidance, and training programmes. It also promotes the registration and regulation of private employment agencies, ensuring they adhere to certain standards and ethical practice.

The impact of the *Employment Service Act* 4 of 2014 on employment levels in South African labour is multifaceted (Nzima & Duma, 2014). One possible impact is that the Act could lead to an increase in employment levels (Worku, 2015). By improving the efficiency and effectiveness of employment services, the Act may help job seekers find suitable employment opportunities more easily (Pelser *et al*., 2014). Since the implementation of the *Employment Service Act* 4 of 2014, there has been an observable shift in the labour landscape of South Africa. The Act has sought to regulate and improve public employment services and enforced standards and ethical practice within private employment agencies (Grogan, 2024). This has contributed to a more transparent and reliable employment service system, instilling confidence in both job seekers and employers.

Moreover, the Act has emphasised career guidance and training programmes, thereby equipping job seekers with the necessary skills and knowledge to match the requirements of available job opportunities (Worku, 2015). As a result, the Act has not only increased the total number of employment opportunities but has also catered to a more skilled and suitable workforce, thus positively impacting the overall employment levels in the South African labour market (Ntimba *et al*., 2020).

Furthermore, it is essential to delve into the specific sectors and regions to understand the nuanced impact of the *Employment Service Act* 4 of 2014. The Act's influence may vary across different industries and geographical areas, making it crucial to analyse these aspects to comprehensively evaluate its impact (Marumoagae, 2014). However, it is important to note that the *Employment Service Act* 4 of 2014 is just one piece of legislation among many factors influencing employment levels in the South African labour market. While the *Employment Service Act* 4 of 2014 may have positive impacts on employment levels in South African labour, it is important to consider opposing arguments as well. Festus *et al*. (2016) argue that the increased regulation and oversight of both public and private employment services could lead to higher costs for businesses. This could

potentially hinder job creation and lead to a decrease in overall employment levels.

Additionally, the emphasis on career guidance and training programmes may not be sufficient to address the systemic issues contributing to South Africa's unemployment, such as education disparities and economic inequalities (Ntimba *et al*., 2020). Worku (2015) argues that without addressing these underlying issues, the impact of the *Employment Service Act* 4 of 2014 on employment levels may be limited. Furthermore, the Act's impact may vary across different industries and regions, resulting in unequal effects on employment levels. While certain sectors and areas may benefit from the Act's provisions, others may experience challenges that could lead to a net neutral or negative impact on employment. It is crucial to consider these opposing arguments to have a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted impact of the *Employment Service Act* 4 of 2014 on employment levels in South African labour force.

2.4 EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

2.4.1 The relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa

The relationship between employment policies and employment levels is critical to local development. Employment policies, such as labour regulations, minimum wage laws, and job training programmes, directly impact the levels of employment within a region or country (Ligthelm & Niekerk, 1990). These policies can either promote job creation and economic growth or hinder them (Kingdon & Knight, 2007). Lax or inadequate policies may lead to exploitative labour practice and unequal distribution of employment opportunities (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2020). Moreover, employment policies not only affect the quantity of jobs but also the quality of employment. Policies that ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, and equal employment opportunities contribute to a more robust and sustainable employment environment (Scarpetta & Pierre, 2015).

Employment policies serve as a tool for job creation, worker protection and the promotion of strong labour relations (Department of Labour, 2022). The OECD(2021) classifies employment policies as direct job creation, supported employment and rehabilitation, training and employment incentives. The International Labour

Organisation (2011) asserts that employment policies influence labour demand and supply in a country. Therefore, policymakers must carefully consider the design and implementation of employment policies to ensure that they align with local development goals and promote inclusive and sustainable employment (Acemoğlu & Restrepo, 2020).

South Africa has a complex and multifaceted employment landscape that is significantly impacted by its employment policies. To fully understand the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa, it is essential to delve into the historical, social, and economic factors that have shaped the country's labour market (Festus *et al*., 2016). One crucial aspect to consider is the historical legacy of apartheid, which has had a lasting impact on the distribution of employment opportunities among different population groups. Thus, implementing affirmative action and employment equity policies aimed at addressing historical imbalances has influenced the dynamics of the labour market (Meyer, 2014b).

Furthermore, South Africa's unique economic challenges, such as high levels of inequality and unemployment, have necessitated the development of specific employment policies. These policies include job creation initiatives, skills development programmes, and labour market interventions designed to stimulate employment growth (Farmer, 2013). The effectiveness of these policies in reducing unemployment and promoting inclusive employment opportunities is a subject of debate among scholars and policymakers (Kingdon & Knight, 2007). In exploring the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa, it is important to analyse the effectiveness of these policies in addressing the systemic barriers to employment and their impact on different sectors of the economy. This requires a comprehensive examination of the regulatory framework, government interventions, and the role of the private sector in driving employment opportunities.

By understanding the intricate interplay between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa, it is possible to identify areas for improvement and innovation in the pursuit of inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Kingdon & Knight, 2007; Worku, 2015). While the historical legacy of apartheid has undoubtedly had a significant impact on the distribution of employment opportunities, it is important to recognise that employment policies focused on affirmative action

and employment equity have also raised concerns among certain segments of the population. Worku (2015) argues that these policies, while well-intentioned, have led to reverse discrimination and have created tensions within the labour market, ultimately impacting overall employment levels.

According to Festus *et al*. (2016), some economists and policymakers argue that the focus on job creation initiatives and skills development programmes may not be the most effective approach for addressing South Africa's employment challenges. Meyer (2014a) suggests that a shift in focus towards addressing broader economic issues, such as regulatory reform, investment in infrastructure, and stimulation of entrepreneurship, would have a more substantial impact on employment levels across various sectors.

Furthermore, the reliance on government interventions to stimulate employment growth has been met with scepticism by those who believe that a more hands-off approach, allowing the free market to dictate employment levels, would lead to more sustainable and organic job creation (Rachele, at al. 2019). While it is crucial to address systemic barriers to employment, it is important to consider the potential unintended consequences of certain employment policies and explore alternative approaches to achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth in South Africa. The relationship between employment policies and employment levels is discussed below.

2.4.1.1. Employment policies and their impact on creating job opportunities in South Africa

Employment policies in South Africa significantly impact job creation and employment levels in the country (Meyer, 2014b). Factors such as labour legislation, labour market governance, and active labour market policies all play a role in shaping the employment landscape and determining the availability of job opportunities (Kingdon & Knight, 2007). Depending on their design and implementation, these policies can either promote or inhibit job creation. For example, affirmative action and employment equity policies, which aim to address historical inequalities and promote representation of previously disadvantaged groups, have led to concerns of reversed discrimination and tensions within the labour market (Nzima & Duma, 2014).

Employment policies can have a significant impact on job creation (Gruidl & Walzer, 2015). Escudero (2018) conducted a study on the efficacy of employment policies and found that employment policies can significantly reduce the unemployment rate. Depending on their design and implementation, they can either promote or hinder employment opportunities (Bartik, 2021). Employment policies facilitate the creation of new employment through skills development, training, employment incentives and fair recruitment processes in South Africa.

Policies contributing to job creation in South Africa include the Employment Incentives Act, Skills Development Levies Act and Employment Equity Act (South Africa, Departmentof Labour 2013). Fair recruitment, employment incentives, training and skills development have thecommon goal of improving people's employability and subsequently improving their chances of being absorbed into the labour force (Maboshe, & Woolard, 2018). Training and employment incentives are commonly used globally to reduce unemployment (Romero & Kuddo, 2019). Thus, the government in SouthAfrica uses employment incentives and skills development to increase employment levels (Ebrahim & Pirttila 2019). Fredriksson (2021) however, asserts that training reduces unemployment.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated South Africa's pre-existing unemployment crisis, with the official unemployment rate peaking at 34.4% in 2021 (Stats SA, 2023). In response, the South African government introduced several employment policies aimed at stimulating job creation, supporting digital transformation, and integrating the informal sector into the formal economy. The post-2020 period has been marked by significant labour market disruptions in South Africa, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid digital transformation, and persistent structural inequalities. Studies, including reports from Stats SA and ILO, highlight the dual impact of digitalisation on employment. Digital transformation has accelerated automation and AI adoption, leading to job polarisation (ILO, 2022; World Bank, 2023). The dual impact of digitalisation on employment, creates new opportunities while exacerbating job insecurity, particularly in the informal sector. The acceleration of digitalisation and automation has reshaped South Africa's labour market. High-skilled digital jobs grow while middle- and low-skilled roles decline (ILO, 2023).

The pandemic accelerated remote work, e-commerce, and digital freelancing, creating new employment avenues. According to the ILO (2023), South Africa has seen a 15% increase in digital platform work since 2020, particularly in IT, logistics, and gig economy services. However, digital divides persist, with only 64% of South Africans having internet access (World Bank, 2023), limiting participation for low-income and rural workers. The South African government has introduced initiatives which aimed at upskilling youth in AI, cloud computing, cybersecurity and supported digital job creation in the public and private sectors. Despite these efforts, Aly, H. (2022). argue that policies must address affordability and infrastructure gaps to prevent further labour market exclusion.

The informal sector absorbed many job losses during lockdowns, with 2.3 million informal workers displaced in 2020 (Stats SA, 2022). However, by 2023, informal employment rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, highlighting its resilience. Informal workers remain largely excluded from social protections and digital financial systems. Recent policy developments include the National Informal Economy Upliftment Strategy (2023) which proposes integrating informal traders into digital payment systems. ILO's Recommendation 204 (2023) which advocates for extending labour rights to informal workers. Fourie, (2018) emphasise that without formalisation incentives, digitalisation may marginalise informal enterprises further.

To address the issue of unemployment and promote economic growth, governments must implement effective employment policies that create job opportunities (Bank, 2012). Governments must go beyond simply reducing unemployment rates and aim to create meaningful and sustainable job opportunities for diverse individuals. This involves developing policies that not only focus on job creation in traditional sectors but also explore emerging industries and support entrepreneurship (Baah-Boateng, 2016). In addition, governments should consider implementing initiatives such as training and re-skilling programmes to equip workers with the necessary skills for the jobs of the future.

Furthermore, fostering an environment conducive to innovation and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises can also be instrumental in generating employment

opportunities (Jang, 2018). By adopting a multi-faceted approach to employment policies, governments can make significant strides in reducing unemployment and driving economic growth. This can be achieved through a combination of targeted government interventions, such as providing incentives for businesses to expand and hire more employees, promoting entrepreneurship through access to funding and resources, and investing in infrastructure projects that create job opportunities (Bown & Freund, 2019).

Governments should prioritise the growth of private sector firms and informal sector activities. While creating job opportunities through employment policies is important, it is also essential to consider the potential drawbacks and limitations of such initiatives. One argument against the implementation of extensive employment policies is the potential burden they may place on businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (Bown & Freund, 2019; Hur, 2018). Mandates for job creation and support for emerging industries may result in increased operational costs for businesses, potentially leading to a decrease in their competitiveness and ability to thrive in the market.

Additionally, there is a concern that excessive government intervention in the job market through employment policies could lead to inefficiencies and distortions in the allocation of resources, ultimately hindering overall economic growth rather than promoting it (Pierre *et al*., 2016). Market forces should be allowed to naturally drive job creation and innovation, with minimal government intervention (Bown & Freund, 2019). By providing support for the growth of private sector firms and informal sector activities, as well as exploring rural alternatives to agricultural activities, governments can address both unemployment and underemployment, contributing to overall economic development and improved livelihoods for their citizens (Pratama *et al*., 2020). By investing in research and technology, supporting knowledge-based companies, and providing financial support for research driven by demand, governments can foster innovation and ensure the survival and growth of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

Furthermore, opponents of extensive employment policies may argue that excessive government involvement in the labour market could stifle the entrepreneurial spirit

and innovation, as businesses may feel constrained by regulatory frameworks and requirements set forth by employment policies (Bown & Freund, 2019). Considering these opposing perspectives, when formulating employment policies, it is important to ensure a balanced and holistic approach to addressing unemployment and promoting economic growth.

- *Job creation through training and skills development*

Effective job training programmes can significantly contribute to the enhancement of workforce skills (Tola, 2015). This, in turn, not only empowers individuals but also strengthens the overall human capital of a region or country. South Africa has long recognised the crucial role of skills development in job creation and economic growth (Samuel & Thakhathi, 2012). The government has taken various initiatives to improve the country's skills base, including the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities to oversee skills development in different sectors (Shava & Clementine, 2016). Additionally, the introduction of the Skills Development Act and Skills Development Levies Act has made it mandatory for employers to invest in the training and development of their workforce (Jinabhai, 2005).

These efforts aim to address the mismatch between available jobs and the skills possessed by the youth in South Africa, which is a major barrier to socio-economic development and the reduction of poverty and inequality (Kraak, 2005). Employer organisations in South Africa are also obligated to contribute to skills development through the Skills Development Levies Act, which requires them to allocate a portion of their annual payroll for their workforce's internal training and development (Jinabhai, 2005). This focus on skills development is aimed at addressing the mismatch between available jobs and the skills possessed by the country's youth, which has been a barrier to socio-economic development (Shava & Clementine, 2016).

The National Skills Authority is responsible for implementing and monitoring the skills development strategy, ensuring that progress is reported by the Sector Education and Training Authorities (Jinabhai, 2005). South Africa can enhance its international competitiveness and foster economic growth by addressing the skills gap and

creating a skilled workforce. Additionally, skills development plays a crucial role in reducing poverty and unemployment in South Africa (Kraak, 2005). By improving education and skills training, individuals are better equipped to find employment opportunities that match their capabilities, leading to increased economic participation and improved living standards.

Skills development in South Africa is essential for promoting wider socio-economic development and addressing the challenge of the "second economy." Skills development must align with the country's economic and political imperatives of reducing unemployment and poverty while fostering growth and international competitiveness. Through the implementation of skills development initiatives, South Africa aims to bridge the gap between available jobs and the skills possessed by its population.

Furthermore, skills development is also crucial for enhancing productivity and innovation within industries. Overall, skills development in South Africa is seen as a key driver for job creation, economic growth, poverty reduction, and international competitiveness. However, despite these efforts, there are still significant challenges in the South African labour market. Many young people enter the workforce without the necessary skills and qualifications, leading to high levels of unemployment and underemployment. This has particularly impacted historically disadvantaged groups, perpetuating inequality in the country.

To address these challenges, it is essential to delve into the various factors that contribute to the skills gap in South Africa. This includes examining the education system, access to training and development opportunities, and the alignment of skills supply with the demands of the labour market. Additionally, understanding the specific needs of different industries and regions is crucial for effective skills development and job creation. By taking a comprehensive approach to skills development, South Africa can better equip its workforce to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving economy. This will contribute to reducing unemployment, foster inclusive growth, and address systemic inequalities.

Job creation through training in South Africa is an essential strategy to address the

high levels of unemployment in the country (Mayombe, 2016; Meyer, 2014a). Training plays a crucial role in job creation strategies, as it helps to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to enter the workforce. However, for training to effectively alleviate poverty and unemployment, it needs to be supported by a comprehensive policy and strategy that targets specific employment and training initiatives (Meyer, 2014a). This policy should also address the broader context of poverty alleviation, including health, education, and income disparities (Coetzee, 1992). Furthermore, training interventions should prioritise the development of high-value skills that align with the needs of the domestic economy and promote international competitiveness.

South Africa has the potential to decrease unemployment and poverty while promoting growth and enhancing international competitiveness by aligning skills development with economic and political imperatives. In addition to focusing on high-value skills, job training should also consider the specific needs of different industries and regions. A tailored approach to training programmes can ensure that individuals possess the skills that are sought after within their local job market, leading to greater employment opportunities and economic growth in those areas. Furthermore, job training initiatives need to be inclusive and accessible to all members of society, including those from marginalised communities and individuals with disabilities. This approach not only promotes social equality but also maximises the potential talent pool for the workforce, contributing to a more diverse and skilled labour force.

Collaboration between the government, private sector, and educational institutions is crucial in order to achieve these goals (Mayombe, 2017; Paver *et al*., 2019). These stakeholders can identify the specific skill gaps in the labour market and develop targeted training programmes that address those gaps effectively by working together (Osikominu, 2012). This multi-stakeholder approach ensures that job training initiatives are aligned with the current and future needs of the economy, thereby maximising their impact on job creation and economic development (Naong, 2014).

South Africa can create a conducive environment for job creation and alleviate

poverty and unemployment by prioritising skills development, implementing targeted employment and training strategies, improving education and skills training, fostering entrepreneurship, and implementing effective government policies (Kraak, 2005). The South African government must adopt a comprehensive policy and strategy to alleviate poverty and unemployment through training (Mayombe, 2017; Paver *et al*., 2019). This plan should involve targeted employment and training strategies, measurable performance indicators, and research to ensure maximum benefits (Coetzee, 1992). Job creation through training in South Africa is crucial for stimulating socio-economic development and reducing poverty and unemployment (Meyer, 2014a).

- *Job creation through employment incentives*

Employment incentives hold a vital position in decreasing unemployment and stimulating economic growth in South Africa (Kingdon & Knight, 2004; Wentzel & Steyn, 2014). Because of the high unemployment rate, the government has enacted different strategies to encourage job creation and draw investment into the country (Wentzel & Steyn, 2014). These strategies include the creation of employment incentives such as tax breaks, grants, and subsidies for businesses that create new jobs (Mahadea, 2012). These incentives act as a driving force for creating employment by reducing the cost of hiring new employees and providing financial support to businesses (Paver *et al*., 2020). By offering these incentives, the government aims to incentivise businesses to expand and hire more workers, thereby reducing unemployment rates and stimulating economic growth (Kaggwa *et al*., 2012; Meyer, 2014b). Additionally, employment incentives can also help address specific challenges and gaps in the labour market (Wentzel & Steyn, 2014).

For example, the government can offer incentives to attract businesses in sectors with high unemployment rates or areas with limited job opportunities. This targeted approach can help address structural unemployment and ensure that incentives are effectively utilised to create sustainable jobs in areas of greatest need. (Wentzel & Steyn, 2014). Furthermore, employment incentives can encourage businesses to invest in training and skills development programmes for their employees, thereby

increasing their productivity and improving their long-term employability. Overall, employment incentives in South Africa are an essential tool for addressing unemployment and promoting economic growth (Ebrahim, 2021). Employment incentives encourage job creation and help stimulate economic growth in South Africa by offering financial benefits and support to businesses (South African Revenue Service (SARS), 2021).

One such incentive is the Employment Tax Incentive programme, which provides financial incentives to employers for hiring young, less experienced workers (Mtembu & Govender, 2015; SARS, 2021). This programme not only reduces the cost of employment for businesses but also provides valuable work opportunities for the youth, ultimately contributing to a more skilled and efficient workforce (International Labour Organisation, 2019). These employment incentives play a crucial role in addressing South Africa's high youth unemployment rates (Ebrahim, 2021). Another important employment incentive is the establishment of a youth employment quota system.

This system mandates that businesses allocate a certain percentage of their workforce to young employees, ensuring that job opportunities are created specifically for the youth (Ebrahim *et al*., 2017). Additionally, mentorship programmes can be implemented to facilitate self-employment. These programmes would guide and support aspiring entrepreneurs, assisting them in acquiring the essential skills and knowledge to launch their own businesses. Strengthening employment incentives in South Africa is crucial to promote job creation, particularly for the youth who face high rates of unemployment. Employment incentives in South Africa are an important tool for addressing unemployment and promoting economic growth.

- Job creation through fair recruitment processes

Fair recruitment processes hold a vital position in advancing job creation and economic development. Companies can attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates by ensuring that recruitment processes are fair and transparent. This, in turn, can lead to the hiring of individuals who bring unique perspectives, skills, and experiences to the workforce. Additionally, fair recruitment processes contribute to a positive employer brand, attracting top talent and increasing employee retention rates. Moreover, fair recruitment practices foster a sense of trust and confidence in

job seekers, encouraging their active participation in the hiring process.

Overall, fair recruitment processes have the potential to not only create job opportunities for individuals but also contribute to the overall growth and success of businesses and economies. Using technology in recruitment processes can significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of hiring, thereby promoting job creation (Liu *et al*., 2021). By utilising Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as AI-enabled recruiting technology, businesses can streamline the recruitment process, reduce time and cost associated with hiring, and improve the overall quality of hires (Esch & Black, 2019). Furthermore, research has shown that candidates have positive reactions to AI-enabled recruiting processes, which can increase their engagement and likelihood of applying for jobs.

By implementing fair recruitment practices and leveraging AI-enabled technology, businesses can create an environment that attracts the best candidates, promotes diversity and inclusion, and ultimately leads to the generation of more employment opportunities and economic prosperity. In conclusion, fair recruitment processes, coupled with the use of AI-enabled technology, have the potential to drive job creation by attracting qualified candidates and improving hiring.

2.4.1.2. Preserve and retain jobs

Employment policies are linked to preserving employment (Cole & Van der Walt, 2014). They provide protection measures that significantly preserve jobs in the labour force. Brown and Koettl (2012) assert that employment policies preserve and sustain jobs. Providing security and preserving jobs protects employed individuals and prevents a decrease in employment levels. Preserving jobs tends to have excessive regulations that discourage job creation in firms (OECD, 2013). Excessive regulations reduce the employment of outsiders as it affects job flow in a firm (Martin & Scarpetta, 2012). It can thus be deduced that preserving jobs has both negative and positive impacts on employment levels.

In order to effectively preserve and retain jobs using employment policies, it is essential to consider a multi-faceted approach that addresses the various factors impacting job retention (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019). One key aspect is the

implementation of supportive and inclusive workplace policies that foster a positive and motivating environment for employees. These policies could encompass flexible work arrangements, professional development opportunities, and non-discriminatory practices to ensure that employees feel valued and supported in their roles (Singh, 2019).

Additionally, creating a strong employee retention strategy involves understanding the specific needs and concerns of the workforce (Szabo & Balaci, 2023). Conducting regular employee satisfaction surveys, holding open forums for discussion, and providing avenues for anonymous feedback can assist in pinpointing areas for enhancement and inform the development of tailored retention policies.

Furthermore, collaborating with industry experts and analysing successful case studies can offer valuable insights into effective employment policies and retention strategies (Mowday, 1984; Rakhra, 2018). By learning from best practice and adapting them to the organisation's unique needs, employers can implement policies that preserve jobs and contribute to a thriving and sustainable work environment. To preserve and retain jobs, it is important for employers to prioritise staff retention as a crucial practice (Szabo & Balaci, 2023). By implementing retention strategies such as competitive salaries, work-life integration initiatives, and career growth and opportunities, employers can create an atmosphere in which employees feel appreciated, motivated, and loyal (Poornima & Selvam, 2018). This decreases turnover and the expenses related to recruiting and training new employees, fosters a positive company culture, and promotes productivity and innovation.

To preserve and retain jobs, employers can implement various strategies such as offering competitive salaries, providing work-life balance initiatives, promoting career growth and development opportunities, cultivating a positive company culture, and fostering open communication and feedback channels (Rakhra, 2018). While the strategies mentioned above are often touted as effective for retaining employees, it is important to assess the potential drawbacks and difficulties related to such approaches. Offering competitive salaries can increase the financial burden on the organisation, especially if these salaries are significantly higher than industry standards. This might lead to budget constraints and affect the company's overall financial health (Singh, 2019).

Providing work-life balance initiatives and opportunities for career growth and development could also create a sense of entitlement among employees, leading to unrealistic expectations and dissatisfaction if their demands are unmet (Szabo & Balaci, 2023). Moreover, cultivating a positive company culture and fostering open communication and feedback channels may not always guarantee job retention, as individual motivations and personal circumstances can greatly impact an employee's decision to stay with the organisation.

Additionally, the focus on employee retention through such strategies may inadvertently lead to complacency among employees, as they may feel that their jobs are secure regardless of their performance (Herman & Gioia-Herman, 2001). This could result in decreased productivity and innovation within the organisation. Therefore, while these strategies have their merits, it is essential for employers to carefully evaluate the possible downsides and consider a balanced approach that addresses the complexities of job retention from a more critical standpoint.

2.4.1.3. Reintegrate unemployed people back into the labour force

Lack of job opportunities discourages people from job hunting, eventually leading them to stop searching for employment (Alenda-Demoutiez, & Mügge, 2020). Employment policies create a conducive environment that enables discouraged people to get jobs. They increase labour demand, encouraging inactive workers to rejoin the labour force (Brown, & Koettl, 2015). Discouraged workers also benefit from skills development and training programmes that increase their chances of re-entering the labour force (Ebrahim & Pirttilä 2019). Reintegrating people in labour increases employment levels and leads to social inclusion (Morel *et al*., 2012).

It is important to focus not only on the unemployed portion of the population but also on the underemployed and inactive portions to address the issue of unemployment and harness untapped human potential. By adopting a broader definition of unemployment that considers discouraged workers and underemployment, policymakers can gain a more accurate understanding of the labour market challenges in South Africa (Baah-Boateng, 2015). To reintegrate unemployed people back into the labour force, targeted programmes should be implemented to support and transform the informal sector, making it a more attractive option for employment

rather than a mere refuge for the unemployed (Beukes *et al*., 2017). It is essential to recognise that the causes of unemployment and underemployment are multifaceted and often rooted in systemic issues (Meyer, 2014a).

It is crucial to address these underlying issues through comprehensive and targeted strategies to effectively reintegrate unemployed individuals back into the labour force. One of the key elements of such strategies entails investing in education and skills development. By providing access to quality training and education programmes, individuals can acquire the essential skills to address the needs of the changing job market. Additionally, fostering entrepreneurship can create new opportunities for employment, particularly in the informal sector. Another important aspect to consider is the creation of sustainable employment by developing infrastructure projects.

While addressing unemployment is crucial, it is important to consider that creating employment opportunities in the informal sector may not provide sustainable and secure employment for individuals (Günther & Launov, 2012). The informal sector often lacks regulation and formal protection for workers, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and unstable incomes. Instead of focusing on transforming the informal sector, resources could be better directed towards promoting formal employment opportunities that offer stability, benefits, and legal protections for workers (Meyer, 2014a).

Moreover, while important, investing in education and skills development may not necessarily guarantee employment for individuals. The job market is constantly evolving, and there is no guarantee that individuals with enhanced skills will find suitable employment opportunities (Baah-Boateng, 2016). Additionally, promoting entrepreneurship can result in increased competition and limited market opportunities, making it challenging for new businesses to thrive and provide sustainable employment opportunities. Furthermore, while infrastructure projects may create temporary employment, they are not always a long-term solution for addressing unemployment. Once the projects are completed, employment opportunities may diminish, leading to recurrent unemployment issues (Kyei & Gyekye, 2012). Therefore, a holistic approach is needed to address unemployment and underemployment (Sackey & Osei, 2006).

It is important for policymakers to critically assess the effectiveness of current strategies and consider alternative approaches that prioritise creating formal, stable employment opportunities and address the evolving challenges of the job market. Lastly, promoting inclusive economic growth and creating job opportunities in emerging industries play a significant role in reintegrating unemployed individuals into the abour force, providing avenues for sustainable and meaningful employment (Golub & Hayat, 2018). Policymakers can work towards effectively reintegrating unemployed individuals back into the labour force, thereby creating a more inclusive and dynamic economy by implementing these holistic and targeted approaches.

2.4.1.4. Employment services and job search assistance

Some policies assist people in finding jobs quickly in South Africa. This is doneby matching people skills with relevant job opportunities (ILO, 2015). The services provide market information and assist job seekers in responding to employment demands (Council of Economic Advisers, 2016). According to the International Labour Office (2015), such services have positive impact on employment levels.

In the current competitive employment landscape, employment services and job search assistance hold a critical role in helping individuals find meaningful employment opportunities (Pescador & Bayoneta, 2021). Finding the right job can be a daunting task. Employment services offer comprehensive support for individuals looking for employment, encompassing resume development, interview preparation, and career guidance counselling. These services can help individuals identify their skills and strengths, and match them with suitable job opportunities (McDowell *et al*., 2021).

Job search assistance programmes guide effective job search strategies, networking, and accessing hidden job markets. Additionally, they often offer workshops and seminars on skill development and industry trends to help individuals stay competitive in the job market. By utilising these services, individuals can enhance their opportunities of finding meaningful employment and advancing their careers (McDowell *et al*., 2021).

One effective approach in maintaining employment for individuals with severe disabilities, including severe mental illness, is the use of individualised job development, one-on-one job coaching, and advocacy with co-workers and employers. While employment services and job search assistance may seem beneficial on the surface, there are opposing arguments that suggest these services may have limitations. These programmes primarily benefit individuals with specific skill sets or education levels, leaving out those who do not fit into these categories (Pescador & Bayoneta, 2021).

Additionally, there are concerns that these services may perpetuate inequality by not providing equal access and support to all individuals seeking employment (Kalleberg & Wachter, 2017). Furthermore, there is growing acknowledgment of the significance of integrating mental health and substance-use services within employment services (Harris *et al*., 2013). Employment services and job search assistance are valuable resources for individuals seeking meaningful employment (McDowell *et al*., 2021).

While these programmes offer guidance on job search strategies and networking, the actual job placement success rates may not be as high as touted (Cottier, at al. 2018). Marshall *et al*. (2014) argue that individuals may still struggle to secure meaningful employment even after availing themselves of these services, leading to a sense of false hope and disappointment. Furthermore, job search assistance programmes may not always be equipped to keep pace with rapidly changing industry trends, leaving individuals at a disadvantage when trying to stay competitive in the labour force (Price, 2016).

This can result in individuals investing time and resources into training and skill development that may not align with the actual requirements of the job market. It is important to consider these opposing arguments and the potential limitations of employment services and job search assistance programmes to have a balanced understanding of their effectiveness. Overall, employment services and job search assistance can be valuable resources in helping individuals find meaningful employment (Card *et al*., 2009).

2.4.1.5. Job creation through digital transformation

Digital transformation has emerged as both a challenge and an opportunity for job creation. Recent employment policies have sought to harness digitalisation to stimulate economic growth while mitigating job displacement, particularly in vulnerable sectors. The pandemic accelerated digital adoption across industries, which led to growth in remote work, a 40% increase in remote/hybrid work post-2020 (ILO, 2023). Expansion of e-commerce and gig work. Platforms like Uber, Takealot, and SweepSouth saw a 25% rise in gig workers (World Bank, 2023). Decline in traditional retail jobs, approximately 200,000 formal retail jobs were lost between 2020-2022, partly replaced by digital roles (Stats SA, 2023).

South Africa's government and private sector have introduced measures to leverage digital transformation for employment, including the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy (2022), focusing on training in AI, blockchain, and cloud computing, targeting 10,000 youth annually. Draft National Labour Policy on Platform Work (2024) proposes minimum wage protections and benefits for gig workers. The Employment Tax Incentive (ETI) expansion now includes tech startups hiring youth.

Despite progress, disparities persist only 56% of rural South Africans have reliable internet access (ICASA, 2023). Moreover, gender gaps in tech in which women hold only 23% of ICT-related jobs (WEF, 2023). Automation in manufacturing and banking has eliminated 150,000 routine jobs since 2020 (Reserve Bank, 2024). Many informal traders lack access to digital tools, with only 18% using online sales platforms (Stats SA, 2023). Most digital job initiatives target formal sectors, leaving informal workers behind.

Post-2020 employment policies in South Africa have increasingly focused on digital transformation as a driver of job creation. While progress has been made in tech skills training and digital entrepreneurship, challenges such as the digital divide, job displacement, and informal sector exclusion remain. Future policies must prioritise inclusive digital access, stronger labor protections for gig workers, and targeted support for informal digital businesses to ensure equitable growth.

2.4.1.6. The role of informal sector in job creation

Policymakers have grappled with balancing formal sector revitalization with the realities of a growing informal economy that now accounts for 18.2% of total employment (ILO, 2023). The informal sector served as a critical shock absorber during economic crises. Absorbed 2.1 million workers displaced from formal jobs in 2020-21 (ILO, 2022). Informal employment grew by 8.7% between Q2 2020-Q4 2023 (Stats SA, 2024). Street trading and home-based enterprises accounted for 62% of new informal jobs (Stats SA, 2024). Recent ILO (2023) findings reveal 58% of informal workers are women, concentrated in domestic work and street vendingand Informal workers earn just 37% of formal sector counterparts' wages. It further revealts that only 12% of informal businesses use digital platforms for sales.

Despite its importance, the informal sector remains marginalized in policy. 78% of informal operators lack access to formal credit (FinMark Trust, 2023) and only 9% contribute to any pension fund (Stats SA, 2023). Moreover, Municipal bylaws frequently restrict informal trading in urban centres. Post-2020 employment policies in South Africa have achieved limited success in addressing structural labour market challenges. While the informal sector has demonstrated remarkable resilience, creating more jobs than the formal sector since 2020. It continues to operate at the margins of policy support. Future strategies must recognise informal employment as a permanent feature of South Africa's economy rather than a temporary phenomenon, with targeted interventions to improve working conditions, access to technology, and economic stability for this vital segment of the workforce.

2.4.2 The impact of employment policies on local development in South Africa

Employment policies create a conducive environment for local development (Bartik, 2020). They transform society through labour regulations by creating an inclusive labour force that enables broader access to employment opportunities, improves labour relations and enhances workers’ quality of life in the country (ILO, 2010). The objectives of social dialogue include promoting employment, rights at work and social protection (ILO, 2020). This reduces poverty, improves workers' quality of life and fosters a society's development goals.

To fully comprehend the effect of employment policies on local development in

South Africa, it is essential to consider the historical context in which these policies were developed. South Africa's employment policies have been shaped by a complex history of colonisation, apartheid, and post-apartheid transition (Mariotti & Zyl-Hermann, 2014). The legacy of discriminatory labour practices and unequal access to employment opportunities has impacted the country's development trajectory. Throughout the apartheid period, the South African government implemented a range of employment policies that benefited the white minority population to the detriment of the majority black population (Lodge, 2014). This system of institutionalised discrimination resulted in widespread economic marginalisation and disenfranchisement of the black community. Even after the formal dismantling of apartheid, the effects of these policies continue to shape the employment landscape in South Africa (Festus *et al*., 2016).

In response to these historical injustices, the post 1994 government has enacted a range of employment policies directed at addressing the economic inequalities from the past (National Planning Commission, 2012). Delving into the historical evolution of employment policies in South Africa can provide deeper understanding of their impact on local development. This understanding will shed light on the country's persistent challenges and provide valuable insights for designing more effective and inclusive employment policies to drive local development (Sibiya, at al. 2023). It is important to acknowledge the historical context of employment policies in South Africa, particularly the legacy of apartheid and its effect on the country's development trajectory. However, it is also essential to consider the broader economic and social factors that have influenced local development in South Africa.

While historical discrimination certainly played a significant role, it is important to recognise that employment policies alone may not fully account for the challenges faced in local development. Factors such as globalisation, technological advancements, and economic shifts also play a crucial role in shaping employment patterns and local development. Furthermore, Worku (2015) argues that overly stringent employment policies, particularly those aimed at rectifying historical inequalities, may have unintended consequences.

Meyer (2014b) contends that excessive regulation and affirmative action measures

can deter investment and stifle economic growth, ultimately hindering local development. In contrast, proponents of employment policies argue that these measures are necessary to address the historical injustices and promote inclusivity (Farmer, 2013). Worku (2015) argues that employment policies in South Africa have held a vital position in addressing the economic inequalities of the past and promoting local development.

Taking a balanced approach to understanding the impact of employment policies on local development in South Africa is crucial. By considering opposing viewpoints and the broader economic context, a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play can be achieved. This understanding can inform more nuanced and effective policy approaches to drive inclusive and sustainable local development in South Africa. The impact of employment policies on local development in South Africa is discussed below:

2.4.2.1. Inclusive labour force

Some policies regulate recruitment processes and labour relations that promote inclusivelabour markets in South Africa. These policies promote equal access to the market for allas people are given the opportunity to develop their skills and improve their employability; additionally, there are employment incentives that assist in absorbing people inthe labour force (ILO, 2020). An inclusive labour force eradicates poverty, inequality andunemployment in local communities (Felipe & Kumar, 2014). Making labour markets be accessible for all not only tackles the triple threats of poverty, inequality, and unemployment but also increases the probability of people being employed, which, in turn, increases tax revenue. Moreover, employed people participate in the labour force and contribute to socio-economic transformationin their localities (Felipe, 2012).

In order to create an inclusive labour force, it is important to implement employment policies that address the barriers and challenges faced by various groups. One way to create an inclusive labour force is to implement policies that focus on removing barriers to employment for marginalised groups such as women, people with disabilities, and minority communities (Nazarov *et al*., 2015). This can include

measures such as providing accessible workplace accommodations, promoting diversity and inclusion in hiring practices, and offering targeted training and support programmes (Thomas & Jain, 2004). Additionally, implementing policies that address systemic biases and discrimination within the workplace can also help create an increasingly inclusive labour force. These could include measures such as unconscious bias training for employees, enforcing anti-discrimination policies, and promoting equal pay and opportunities for promotion (Musetsho *et al*., 2021).

Employment policies can hold a vital position in fostering a more diverse and inclusive labour force by tackling these barriers and challenges. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that creating an inclusive labour force goes beyond simply implementing policies (Thomas & Jain, 2004). By incorporating various perspectives and implementing inclusive hiring practices, businesses can foster a sense of belonging and value among employees, resulting in a more engaged and committed workforce that is reflective of the diverse population. Furthermore, setting voluntary targets for representation and establishing flexible work arrangements can help support the recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups (Daya & April, 2017).

Inclusive employment policies need to be proactive and involve certain key steps. These steps include establishing an inclusion policy, enhancing staff training, eliminating obstacles, involving the disability community, and regularly assessing progress to ensure objectives are achieved and necessary adjustments are made (American Psychological Association, 2018). Implementing these steps is not only crucial for addressing health disparities and promoting social equality, but it is also required by South African law (Farmer, 2013). By implementing inclusive employment policies that focus on removing barriers and addressing systemic biases, organisations can create a labour force that is diverse, engaged, and committed.

Creating an inclusive labour force is a crucial goal for any nation, as it ensures equal opportunities and access to employment for all citizens (Festus *et al*., 2016). South Africa, like many countries, has implemented various strategies and policies to address the economic, political, and social inequalities of the past (Meyer, 2014b).

These policies aim to provide equal access to and control of the economy for all South African citizens (Farmer, 2013).

However, despite the government's efforts, there are still challenges to achieving an inclusive labour force. One of the main challenges is the high level of unemployment (Meyer, 2014b), with a rate exceeding 30 per cent (Statistics SA, 2024). While it is important to strive for an inclusive labour force, Meyer (2014a) argues that the government's focus on creating equal opportunities for all citizens may lead to reduced competitiveness and efficiency in the labour force.

According to Sing (2012) these initiatives could potentially lead to a decrease in productivity and innovation, as the emphasis on equal access to employment may overlook individual skills and qualifications. Additionally, opponents of inclusive employment policies argue that the focus on providing equal opportunities for all citizens may neglect merit-based selection and reinforce a sense of entitlement among certain groups, ultimately resulting in a less efficient and productive labour force (Nzima & Duma, 2014).

Furthermore, Samual (2012) points out that the implementation of extensive, inclusive employment policies could lead to increased government intervention and bureaucracy, potentially hindering the overall flexibility and responsiveness of the labour market to economic changes. It is important to consider these opposing arguments in the ongoing discourse about creating an inclusive labour force in South Africa. While equality and access to employment are paramount, balancing inclusivity and efficiency is essential for sustainable economic growth and development.

2.4.2.2 Inclusive local economic participation and development

Employment policies such as Employment Equity Act and Black Economic Empowerment create a conducive environment for inclusive local economic development in South Africa (Loewald *et al*., 2021). These policies enforce transformation in the local economy as the more people are employed, the more they are able to participate in the local economy (Maboshe, & Woolard, 2018). They

improve human capital allocation and reduce concentration in the economy (Andrews, and Cingano, 2014). They also increase the utilisation of black people's labourand empower them to participate in local economic development (Loewald *et al*., 2021). Moreover, employment policies support fair representation of all races in the labour force (Employment Equity Act, 1998), improving black people's representation in local economic development.

The emergence of democracy in South Africa has highlighted the need for inclusive local economic participation and development. The government has enacted different strategies, policies, and programmes to address the economic inequalities of the past and ensure equitable access to and management of the economy for all South African citizens (Farmer, 2013). The *Economic Transformation, Inclusive Growth and Competitiveness: Towards an Economic Strategy for South Africa* document emphasises the need for employment policies that can effectively address the economic inequalities of the past (National Treasury, 2019). The government's efforts in this regard have been directed towards creating policies that provide employment opportunities for all citizens and ensure that they have equal access to economic resources and the ability to control their own economic destiny.

These employment policies aim to promote social inclusion, reduce unemployment, alleviate poverty, and foster economic growth and international competitiveness (Farmer, 2013). One such employment policy is the Employment Equity Act, which seeks to eliminate unfair discrimination in the workplace and promote equal opportunity and representation for historically disadvantaged groups. By implementing employment policies like the Employment Equity Act, South Africa is taking significant steps towards inclusive local economic participation and development. One of the critical aspects highlighted in the document is the importance of addressing historical imbalances in the distribution of land, assets, and opportunities. The government has implemented land reform policies and programmes that aim to redress past injustices and provide economic opportunities for previously disadvantaged communities.

Furthermore, the document emphasises the need for a comprehensive approach to economic empowerment, which includes education and skills development, access

to financial resources, and support for entrepreneurship. By prioritising these areas, the government aims to create a more inclusive and dynamic economic landscape that can drive sustainable development and prosperity for all South African citizens. However, while the government's efforts in implementing inclusive economic policies are commendable, there are opposing arguments regarding the effectiveness of these measures. Focusing on employment policies and redistribution of resources may lead to unintended consequences (Baker, 2018).

For example, Niekerk (2020) argues that a heavy reliance on affirmative action and employment equity policies may result in reverse discrimination or the exclusion of individuals who may be more qualified for certain positions. In addition, Nzima and Duma (2014) argue that employment policies alone may not be sufficient to tackle the underlying causes of inequality and exclusion. Instead, a more holistic approach that includes systemic changes and tackles issues such as healthcare, education, and access to resources is necessary for sustainable economic development and inclusive local economic participation.

Overall, employment policies such as the Employment Equity Act hold a vital position in advancing inclusive local economic growth and participation. It is essential for policymakers to consider a holistic approach that tackles the underlying systemic issues and ensures that everyone has equal opportunities for economic participation. Addressing historical imbalances through employment policies is important for achieving inclusive local economic participation and development (Nzima & Duma, 2014).

One of the concerns raised is that a strong emphasis on employment policies and redistribution of resources may create disincentives for productivity and economic growth (Meyer, 2014b). Windie (2013) argues that excessive government intervention in the economy through policies aimed at equalising opportunities may lead to inefficiencies and hinder overall economic development. Additionally, Shava and Maramura (2017) point out that a heavy reliance on government interventions may result in dependency on state support and stifle innovation and entrepreneurship. There is a fear that an overreliance on government programmes may discourage individuals from seeking out their own opportunities and taking risks

in the business world.

Ngepah (2017) argues that inclusive economic policies have the potential for unintended consequences in the form of market distortions. Sebola and Tsheola (2014) suggest that government intervention in the form of land reform and resource redistribution may disrupt market mechanisms, leading to inefficiencies and allocation problems. Therefore, policymakers need to find a balance between intervention and enabling market forces to function effectively in order to achieve sustainable economic development and inclusive local economic participation (World Bank, 2021a). It is essential to consider these opposing arguments and engage in a balanced discourse to ensure that the pursuit of inclusive economic participation and development in South Africa is based on a comprehensive understanding of the potential drawbacks and challenges.

2.4.2.3 Decent, safe and healthy working environment

Employment policies promote basic human rights in the workplace (Niño-Zarazúa & Torm, 2022). They seek to promote and protect the well-being of workers in the labour force (Di-Ruggiero, Cohen, Cole, 2014). The policies ensure that people are not subjected to a hostile working environment and are treated with dignity, fairness and equality in labour relations (Cohen & Moodley, 2012). Weil (2019) posits that regulating the labour force improves employment conditions for vulnerable people in the workplace. Employment policies ensure that all workers are subjected to healthy and safe working conditions (Kingdon, 2011). A healthy and secure working environment contributes to productivity in firms and leads to local economic growth.

In South Africa, the establishment and maintenance of a decent, safe, and healthy working environment is crucial for promoting employee well-being and productivity. Employment policies play a vital role in ensuring that companies adhere to proper safety standards, provide necessary resources for employee health, and create a positive work culture that values diversity and inclusivity. Furthermore, these policies should encompass top management's commitment to promoting a safe and healthy workplace, the development of holistic human resources policies and practices that address employee well-being and work-life balance, the appreciation and

management of employee diversity, and the creation of inclusive organisational cultures that strive to eliminate historical systemic discrimination (Thomas & Jain, 2004).

South African businesses can not only comply with legal requirements but also foster an encouraging work environment in which employees feel appreciated, respected, and inspired to perform at their best when implementing these employment policies; this will contribute to higher employee retention rates, improved morale and job satisfaction, and ultimately enhance the overall success and reputation of the organisation (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

Overly strict employment policies may lead to a bureaucratic and inflexible work environment, creating barriers to innovation and adaptability (Kossek, *et al*.,,2023). Striking a balance between fostering a safe and healthy workplace and allowing for entrepreneurial creativity and agility is a complex challenge that needs to be carefully navigated (Said *et al*., 2020). Furthermore, there are concerns that excessive focus on diversity and inclusivity in employment policies could inadvertently lead to reverse discrimination or favouritism, creating tensions and conflicts within the workforce (Tamers *et al*., 2020). A singular focus on diversity quotas and inclusivity measures may overshadow individual merit and qualifications, potentially leading to a decline in overall performance and competitiveness within the organisation (Mazibuko & Govender, 2017).

It is important to consider these opposing arguments and engage in a balanced and nuanced discussion about the role of employment policies in South Africa. The establishment and maintenance of a decent, safe, and healthy working environment is crucial for promoting employee well-being and productivity. Employment policies play a vital role in ensuring that companies adhere to proper safety standards, provide necessary resources for employee health, and create an encouraging working culture that values diversity and inclusivity.

Furthermore, these policies should encompass top management's commitment to promoting a safe and healthy workplace, the development of holistic human resources policies and practices that address employee work life and well-being

integration, the recognition and management of employee diversity, along with the establishment of inclusive organisational cultures aimed at eradicating historical systemic discrimination (Thomas & Jain, 2004). By implementing these employment policies, South African businesses can comply with legal requirements and foster a positive work environment where employees feel valued, respected, and motivated to give their best (Calarco, 2010). Moreover, they will contribute to higher employee retention rates, improved morale and job satisfaction, and ultimately enhance the overall success and reputation of the organisation.

While it is essential to recognise the importance of employment policies in establishing a safe and healthy work environment, it is also essential to recognise the potential challenges and drawbacks associated with their implementation. Samuel (2014) argue that the government must consider the potential financial strain on businesses in adhering to stringent safety and health standards. Compliance with these policies may need substantial investing in infrastructure, equipment, and training, which could strain the resources of smaller businesses and potentially hinder their growth and sustainability (Pelser *et al*., 2014).

Additionally, overly strict employment policies may lead to a bureaucratic and inflexible work environment, creating barriers to innovation and adaptability. Striking a balance between fostering a safe and healthy workplace and allowing for entrepreneurial creativity and agility is a complex challenge that needs to be carefully navigated (Said *et al*., 2020). Furthermore, there are concerns that excessive focus on diversity and inclusivity in employment policies could inadvertently lead to reverse discrimination or favouritism, creating workplace tensions and conflicts (Tamers *et al*., 2020).

Mazibuko and Govender (2017) argue that a singular focus on diversity quotas and inclusivity measures may overshadow individual merit and qualifications, potentially resulting in a decrease in overall performance and competitiveness in organisations. It is important to consider these opposing arguments and engage in a balanced and nuanced discussion about the implications and trade-offs associated with the implementation of employment policies aimed at creating a decent, safe, and healthy working environment in South Africa.

2.4.2.4 Comprehensive social security

Employment policies provide workers with social security in that they protect workers from inequality, unemployment and poverty should they become unemployed or face personal issues in the workplace (Standing, 2012). Social security gives effect to human rights (ILO, 2013). The policies provide workers with social protection through unemployment insurance, health insurance, pension fund, maternity benefits, injuries and sickness benefits (Nino-Zarazua, & Torm, 2022). Social security enhances productivity and ensures that workers can continue with their livelihood following labour shocks (ILO, 2006).

South Africa has a complex and comprehensive social security framework to provide support and protection to employees in the workplace. This system encompasses various types of benefits, including unemployment insurance, disability benefits, and retirement pensions. One of the key components of social security in the South African workplace is the Unemployment Insurance Fund, which provides temporary income support to workers who become unemployed, as well as maternity benefits to female employees on maternity leave (Fombad, 2013). Additionally, the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act ensures that employees are compensated for any work-related injuries or diseases sustained or acquired in the workplace (Smit & Mpedi, 2011).

Furthermore, the social security framework in South Africa also includes provisions for old age pensions, disability grants, and child support grants, all of which play a crucial role in supporting vulnerable individuals in the workforce (Fombad, 2013). Various government agencies and regulatory bodies oversee the implementation and administration of these social security benefits to ensure that employees are able to access the support they need during different stages of their working lives. However, despite the efforts made to provide comprehensive social security in the South African workplace, there are still gaps and limitations in the system (Fombad, 2013; Lund, 2002).

In addition to statutory social security benefits, many employers in South Africa also

provide supplementary employee benefits such as medical aid, retirement annuities, and life insurance to further support their employees' financial security and well-being. Overall, the comprehensive social security framework reflects the country's commitment to safeguarding the welfare of its workforce (Dekker, 2010). While the social security system in South Africa aims to provide support and protection to employees in the workplace, there are opposing views about its effectiveness and efficiency.

Mpedi (2021) argues that the existing social security framework in South Africa is overly burdensome on employers and often leads to reduced job creation and economic growth. Mhango (2012) contends that the high costs associated with mandatory social security contributions for employers create challenges for businesses, especially SMMEs, to expand and create more job opportunities. Furthermore, Dorfman (2015) argues that the social security framework in South Africa lacks enough flexibility to adjust to the evolving requirements of a diverse and evolving workforce.

In addition, there are concerns about the sustainability of the social security system, especially in the face of demographic changes and increasing life expectancy. Mpedi (2021) argues that the current system may not be able to adequately support the growing number of retirees and elderly individuals in the future, leading to potential strains on the overall economy. Furthermore, Sibanda, (2012) claims that the social security system in South Africa has been plagued by issues of inefficiency, fraud, and corruption, which have hindered the effective delivery of benefits to those in need.

This has raised doubts about the equity and fairness of the system, as well as its ability to genuinely address the needs of vulnerable individuals in the workforce. It is important to consider these opposing views to have a comprehensive understanding of the social security framework within the South African labour market. Employers and the government need to work together to ensure that all workers, irrespective of their employment status, are eligible for social security benefits (Paul & Adhikary, 2023).

2.4.3. The impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality

The impact of employment levels on local development is significant (Windie, 2013). Higher employment levels in a community lead to several positive impacts on local development. They contribute to the economic expansion of a locality and play a key role in enhancing its residents' general quality of life. When more job opportunities are available, the community experiences a reduction in poverty levels, increased disposable income, and a boost in consumer spending (Rasoolimanesh *et al*., 2015). This leads to a vibrant local economy with thriving businesses and increased investment in infrastructure and public services. Moreover, a well-employed workforce fosters a sense of community and social cohesion (Schrock, 2014). When individuals are gainfully employed, they are more inclined to actively engage in community activities, volunteer work, and local governance, thereby strengthening the fabric of the neighbourhood and promoting a sense of belonging (Kline & Moretti, 2014).

Additionally, higher employment levels lead to the development of a skilled workforce (Immergluck, 1998). This, in turn, attracts new businesses and industries to the area, as they have access to a pool of skilled workers. Furthermore, higher employment levels often attract skilled workers and professionals to the area, leading to a diversification of the local talent pool and fostering innovation and entrepreneurial activity. This, in turn, can create a self-sustaining cycle of economic development and growth.

It is crucial to take into account the potential drawbacks of high employment levels on local development. One possible concern is the strain it can put on local resources and infrastructure. As more people are employed and businesses thrive, there may be increased pressure on transportation systems, housing availability, and public services, such as schools and healthcare facilities (Marchand & Weber, 2017). This increased demand for resources can lead to congestion, housing shortages, and extended waiting periods for essential services, ultimately affecting the quality of life for residents (Huang *et al*., 2021).

Additionally, a focus on high employment levels may also overlook the issue of job

quality. While increasing employment opportunities is beneficial, it is equally important to ensure that these jobs provide fair wages, job security, and opportunities for career advancement (Bartik, 1993). Without attention to job quality, an emphasis on high employment levels may result in an overworked, underpaid workforce facing precarious employment conditions (Du *et al*., 2020). Furthermore, an overemphasis on employment levels as a measure of local development may overshadow other important factors such as environmental sustainability, social equity, and cultural preservation (Du *et al*., 2020).

A narrow focus on employment may lead to gentrification, displacement of existing communities, and an imbalance in the distribution of resources and opportunities within the locality (Immergluck, 1998). In summary, while high employment levels can bring about positive changes in a community, it is crucial to approach the issue with a balanced perspective, considering both the benefits and potential challenges of increased employment. In conclusion, employment levels have a considerable influence on local development. They can contribute to economic growth, innovation, and a diversification of the talent pool (Bartik, 1993).

2.4.3.1. Living conditions

Lower employment levels lead widespread poverty and severe economic inequalities in South Africa (De Clercq, 2020). Poverty yields negative social calamities that threaten local development (Mood & Jonsson, 2015). Such calamities include congested public health facilities and poor or lack of housing in areas with low employment levels (Marutlulle, 2021). Poverty also results in a lack of infrastructure development and maintenance in areas with low employment, hindering the provision of water and sanitation (Gaal, 2017). Adequate provision of water and sanitation is vital for economic development and enhances the quality of life for everyone (National Planning Commission, 2012). This study argues that high employment levels will expand the municipal revenue base and increase tax revenue, which can be directed towards infrastructure development, ensuring adequate water and sanitation provision.

Employment levels and living conditions in South Africa are key indicators of the country's socio-economic status (Meyer, 2014a). South Africa has a complex and

multifaceted employment landscape that significantly impacts the living conditions of its population (Worku, 2015). The country has faced historical challenges related to unemployment, with varying rates across different demographics and regions. Understanding the intricacies of employment levels in South Africa requires examining factors such as education, skills development, and the performance of different sectors in the economy. Similarly, living conditions are influenced by access to basic amenities, healthcare, and housing, as well as social and economic disparities that exist within the population (Festus *et al*., 2016).

Delving deeper into these factors can provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding employment levels and living conditions in the context of South Africa. It is evident that the connection between employment levels and living conditions is deeply intertwined in South Africa. As the country strives to address historical challenges related to unemployment, it is crucial to also focus on improving the living conditions of its people. Access to education and skills development programmes is vital in bridging the gap in employment levels, while equitable access to basic amenities, healthcare, and housing is essential in improving living conditions (Meyer, 2014a). Moreover, addressing social and economic disparities within the population will be pivotal in creating a more inclusive and sustainable future for South Africa.

While it is important to address unemployment and improve living conditions in South Africa, Festus *et al*. (2016) argue that focusing solely on employment levels may not be the best approach. A school of thought suggests that simply increasing employment levels without addressing larger structural issues in the economy may not lead to significant improvements in living conditions (Nattrass, 2014). Turok, and Visagie, (2023) argue that a narrow focus on employment levels may overlook the need for broader economic reforms that could have a more substantial and lasting impact on the population's overall well-being.

Moreover, there are concerns that emphasising employment levels as the primary driver of improved living conditions may not fully address the underlying social and economic disparities that exist within the population (Anders, & Gearhart, 2018). Mayombe (2016) argues that a more holistic approach, including targeted social

welfare programmes and reforms to address income inequality, may be necessary to improve living conditions for all South Africans.

While access to education and skills development programmes is crucial to addressing unemployment, it is also important to consider the quality and relevance of the skills being developed in relation to the requirements of the evolving labour market. Without a focus on ensuring that the skills being developed align with the needs of employers, simply increasing employment levels may not necessarily lead to sustainable improvements in living conditions for all South Africans.

2.4.3.2. Indigent households and municipal revenue

Unemployed people use municipal services for free (Chitenderu *et al*., 2022). This threatens the municipal revenue base leading to poor service delivery and local development (Murimoga & Musingafi, 2014). Indigent support strains the viabilityof municipal finances, as the increase in the number of indigent people leads to higher municipal expenditure and reduced municipal revenue (Ruiters, 2018). Implementing the indigent policy is a challenge for local municipalities, as not all municipalities have the capacity to implement it (Pillay & Mutereko, 2022).

Indigent households, municipal revenue, and employment levels are interconnected factors that play a crucial role in the economic well-being of a community. The presence of indigent households reflects a community's level of poverty and economic inequality (Berisha *et al*., 2010). These households often struggle to meet their basic needs, placing a strain on local social services and support systems (Hailu2, at al. 2024). As a result, municipalities with higher indigent household percentages may experience reduced municipal revenue due to lower property tax collection and increased demand for social services (Balie, & Horn, 2021). In addition, the employment levels within a community significantly impact both municipal revenue and the frequency of indigent households.

Elevated unemployment levels may lead to a decrease in municipal revenue as fewer individuals are able to contribute through income taxes. Furthermore, a lack of employment opportunities can contribute to the growth of indigent households,

perpetuating the cycle of economic hardship. Thus, municipalities must prioritise creation of employment and economic development programmes to increase employment levels and generate sustainable municipal revenue (Luo & Douglas, 1996). Understanding the complex relationship between these factors is essential for developing effective policies and initiatives aimed at addressing indigence, boosting municipal revenue, and creating sustainable employment opportunities within a community (Hendrick, 2004).

While the interconnected nature of indigent households, municipal revenue, and employment levels is widely recognised, it is important to consider the opposing argument. Some may argue that the relationship between these factors is not as straightforward as it appears. For instance, Pack (1998) points out that focusing solely on the presence of indigent households as a reflection of a community's poverty and economic inequality may overlook other important factors. Joassart-Marcelli (2005) argue that other economic indicators and external factors such as investment incentives, business climate, and government policies can also influence the level of municipal revenue.

Furthermore, from an opposing perspective, the connection between employment levels and municipal revenue may not be as direct as suggested. Schumaker and Brownell (1984) argue that while high unemployment rates can indeed lead to a decrease in municipal revenue, there are instances where municipal revenue may not necessarily correlate with employment levels. Masaki (2018) highlights an example where municipalities with high employment levels still struggle with revenue generation due to mismanagement, economic dependency on specific industries, or other fiscal policies.

Considering these opposing viewpoints is important to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play. It allows for a more nuanced approach to policy development and decision-making, taking into account various variables and potential influencing factors.

2.4.3.3. Provision of services

Employment levels can have a significant impact on service delivery in municipal areas (Saba, 2022). Higher employment levels can lead to increased tax revenues for the municipality, which, in turn can be used to improve and expand essential services such as water, electricity, waste management, transportation, and healthcare (León-Moreta & Totaro, 2020). Additionally, higher employment levels can result in the availability of a larger workforce to provide these services, ensuring better coverage and response times. Low employment levels can strain the resources of a municipality and limit their ability to provide adequate services (Hanyane & Naidoo, 2015).

This can lead to service delivery backlogs, limited administrative capacity, and insufficient incentives for performance (León-Moreta & Totaro, 2020). Furthermore, low employment levels can also contribute to social and economic challenges within the municipal area, such as poverty and inequality, which can further hinder service delivery efforts. Therefore, it is crucial for municipal authorities to prioritise job creation and economic development to improve service delivery and meet the needs of the community (Kanyane, 2014).

While it is true that higher employment levels can potentially lead to increased tax revenues and a larger workforce to provide essential services, it is essential to take into account the potential drawbacks of solely focusing on job creation as a solution to service delivery challenges in municipal areas. Messinger (2012) argues that a singular focus on employment levels may overlook other important factors that impact service delivery. For example, overemphasising job creation could divert resources and attention from addressing inefficiencies and structural issues within municipal governance and administration (Krugell *et al*., 2010). Without addressing these underlying issues, simply increasing employment levels may not lead to significant improvements in service delivery.

Additionally, it is important to consider that employment levels alone may not be sufficient to address poverty and inequality within a community. Simply creating jobs does not guarantee that those jobs will provide a living wage or address systemic barriers that contribute to social and economic challenges. Therefore, a more holistic approach that addresses employment levels and social welfare policies may be

necessary to improve service delivery in municipal areas. While employment levels certainly contribute to the general well-being of a community, it is important to consider a broader range of factors and potential solutions when addressing service delivery challenges in municipal areas.

The link between employment levels and the overall well-being of a community is significant. Higher employment rates not only enhance economic stability but also result in increased social cohesion and reduced crime rates (Jwada, et al., 2019). Addressing employment issues in municipal areas can therefore have far-reaching positive effects beyond service delivery (Shongwe, & Meyer, 2023). Moreover, initiatives aimed at boosting employment levels, such as skills training programmes, support for small businesses, and infrastructure development, can create a ripple effect of benefits within the community. For instance, small business support has the potential to generate employment opportunities and foster entrepreneurship and innovation, contributing to an increasingly resilient and dynamic local economy.

2.4.4 Developing a local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development in a municipal area

Local economic development holds a vital position in reducing poverty and unemployment and creating employment opportunities in a municipal area (Piet & Mtapuri, 2014). A local development model that focuses on enhancing employment levels through effective employment policies needs to be implemented to achieve local economic development (Imamah *et al*., 2020). This requires the identification of key sectors with growth potential, implementing targeted training programmes, improving infrastructure, and engaging in collaborative efforts with local businesses and organisations.

By utilising a local development model, economic development planners can assess the impacts of job creation programmes and determine their social value (Felsenstein & Persky, 2007). This approach considers not only the efficiency of job creation but also its distributional effects, ensuring that the benefits are spread evenly among the population (Windie, 2013). Furthermore, this model emphasises the importance of realistic values placed on jobs for individuals who were previously unemployed or

underemployed and aims to create sustainable employment that provides adequate income and benefits.

Additionally, it is crucial to establish supportive policies for entrepreneurship, as this initiative can greatly enhance job creation and stimulate economic growth within local communities (World Bank, 2021b). By providing access to capital, business development services, and networking opportunities, the municipality can foster an enabling environment for businesses to prosper and expand, ultimately leading to increased employment opportunities.

Furthermore, a comprehensive approach to local development should include efforts to attract outside investment and promote economic diversification. Local authorities can attract investors and businesses that align with the community's values and contribute to sustainable economic development by identifying and promoting the municipality's unique strengths and resources, such as natural or cultural assets. The development of a local development model that prioritises employment policies requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the specific needs and potential of the municipal area. By leveraging key sectors, supporting entrepreneurship, and attracting outside investment, the municipality can create a robust framework for sustainable job creation and economic advancement.

The labour force dynamics in South Africa present a complex and multifaceted situation (Meyer, 2014a). South Africa's labour force is characterised by elevated unemployment levels, particularly among young people and those from historically marginalised groups. The legacy of apartheid and colonialism has left a deeply unequal distribution of employment opportunities, with many individuals facing barriers to entry and advancement in the workforce (Nattrass, 2014).

Furthermore, the informal sector plays a significant role in South Africa's labour force, with a substantial portion of the population engaged in informal, often unregulated work (Stats SA, 2022). This presents challenges in terms of job security, social protections, and overall economic stability for those involved. In addition, there are ongoing efforts to address these issues, such as skills development programmes and affirmative action policies. However, advancement has been gradual, and there

remains much work to be done in achieving an increasingly inclusive and equitable workforce in South Africa.

The model seeks to enhance local development in South African municipalities by identifying bottlenecks in employment policies that hinder employment growth in South Africa. The study assumes that a sound employment policy, aligned to the realities of the labour market, leads to employment growth, which, in turn, contributes to local development. Developing an employment-based local development model that aims to promote local development in South Africa requires a comprehensive understanding of the country's socioeconomic landscape and regional disparities.

It is crucial to take into account the distinct challenges and opportunities present in different regions of the country to effectively promote local development through employment policies (Meyer, 2014b). This can involve analysing the existing industries, infrastructure, and human resources, as well as identifying potential areas for growth and improvement. It also involves analysing the gaps in employment policies and closing them by reforming the existing policies as well as developing new policies address to the identified gaps.

One approach to promoting local development through employment is to implement targeted training and education programmes that align with the specific needs of local industries (Piet & Mtapuri, 2014). By equipping local residents with the required knowledge and skills, they can actively contribute to the development and growth of their regions. Additionally, promoting collaborations among local enterprises, government agencies, and education institutions can create a supportive ecosystem for sustainable employment opportunities (Barlow & Cohen, 2012).

Regulating informal markets and enforcing policies that require employers to strictly employ South Africans in low-skilled sectors. This will reduce youth unemployment and provide opportunities for the unskilled population in South Africa. It is essential to engage with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, including government officials, business leaders, community representatives, and academic experts. Collaboration and inclusive decision-making can result in the advancement of a robust policy model that responds to the unique requirements and ambitions of various regions in South Africa (National Planning Commission, 2012).

The study assesses the realities in the South African labour force, identifies gaps in employment policies, and proposes optimal policy measures to enhance employment growth. It further discusses employment levels as a measure of local development in South Africa, which will assist in the effective implementation of this employment-based local development model.

2.4.4.1 Realities in the South African labour force

Unemployment in South Africa has been a persistent issue with extensive implications for both the economy and society. A key factor contributing to elevated unemployment levels is the structural disparity between the skills available within the workforce and those required by the labour market (Bhorat, & Jacobs, 2019). This is exacerbated by the historical legacy of apartheid, which resulted in unequal access to education and training opportunities. Additionally, the country's economic structure, which is heavily reliant on resource extraction and manufacturing, has not kept pace with changing global trends, leading to job losses in these sectors (Festus *et al*., 2016).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic intensified the unemployment crisis in South Africa, resulting in significant job losses across multiple sectors (Burger & Fourie, 2019). The informal labour market, which employs a substantial segment of the population, was also severely impacted by lockdown measures and restrictions on movement (Burger & Fourie, 2019).

Moreover, the mismatch between urban and rural development has contributed to high unemployment rates, as urban areas attract a disproportionate share of investment and economic opportunities. This has resulted in significant disparities in employment and income levels between urban and rural populations (Meyer, 2014b). Tackling these intricate and diverse challenges necessitates a thorough and collaborative strategy involving the government, the private sector, and civil society. Policies aimed at improving education and skills development, promoting small and medium-sized enterprises, and diversifying the economy are crucial in tackling the root causes of unemployment in South Africa.

South Africa records only a 60% labour force participation rate and the country’s official unemployment rate is one of the highest in the world, standing at 32.1% (Stats South Africa, 2023). South African provinces experience high unemployment rates. Eastern Cape has the highest unemployment rate, reaching 40%, while the lowest is

in the Northen Cape, at 22.1%. Limpopo Province records an unemployment rate of 31.8%. This high level of unemployment has significant implications for the country, including poverty, inequality, social problems, and even the potential for regime change. Furthermore, the unemployment rate for people without matric stands at 38.6% and while those with matric face an unemployment rate of 33%. In contrast, the unemployment rate for graduates is 9.6% (Stats SA, 2023).

The unemployment rate for South Africans aged 15 to 24 years was 33% in the third quarter of 2023 (Stats SA, 2023). Additionally, women face higher unemployment rates than men, with women's unemployment rate reaching close to 34% compared to 30% for men (Stats SA, 2023). These high levels of unemployment in South Africa highlight a structural weakness in the economy, indicating the need for effective strategies and measures to stimulate job creation and reduce unemployment.

Statistics show that black people are vulnerable to unemployment, and unemployment affects black people more than other races in South Africa. Black people are not well represented in the labour market. Black individuals aged 15 to 64 years represent 37.9% of employment, 36.1% of unemployment and 59.4% of labour participation. Coloured people in the same age group account for 47.6% of employment, 21.7% of unemployment and 60.8% of labour participation. Asian/Indian people record 52.4% of employment, 11.7% of unemployment and 58% of labour participation. White people record 62% of employment, 8.5% of unemployment and 67% of labour participation (Stats SA, 2023:42-43a).

2.4.4.2 Proposed optimal policy measures to enhance employment growth

The study argues that the realities in the labour market can inform the review of employment policies and enhance employment levels in South Africa. The government can implement a race population-hiring ratio, ensuring that all races are well represented in the labour force, giving everyone in South Africa an equal chance of income generation. This will promote balance among the races in the South African labour force. Additionally, the government must subsidise sectors that require low to no skills and education to provide employment opportunities for people ople with limited or no skills.

Expanding access to quality education and vocational training opportunities for young people is crucial to help them acquire the necessary skills and qualifications

demanded by the job market. Implementing initiatives that promote entrepreneurship and self-employment among young people, such as providing mentorship, access to financing, and business development support, can foster innovation and economic growth. Collaborating with the private sector to create more internship and apprenticeship programmes will provide young people with practical work experience and on-the-job training, significantly increasing their employability.

To effectively address the evolving demands of the job market, it is crucial to enhance collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders. This partnership is essential for aligning educational curricula with the skills and competencies that are increasingly required in the workforce. Such collaborations can significantly improve the relevance of educational programmes, ensuring that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in their respective fields (Chen *et al*., 2014).

The integration of industry insights into educational frameworks not only facilitates the development of practical skills among students but also fosters innovation and entrepreneurship. For instance, the establishment of collaborative platforms between universities and industries has been shown to enhance knowledge exchange and resource sharing, which are vital for adapting to market changes (Tian, 2024; Yandong *et al*., 2024). Moreover, as the global economy evolves, educational institutions are encouraged to adopt an industry-oriented approach that emphasises practical application and innovation, thereby preparing students for the complexities of modern job roles (Fang, 2024; Halim *et al*., 2023).

Furthermore, the importance of social capital in these collaborations cannot be overstated. Strong relationships between educational institutions and industry partners enable the exchange of ideas and experiences, which can lead to innovative solutions and improved business performance (Rusilowati *et al*., 2023; Wickramasinghe & Malik, 2018). This collaborative effort is particularly relevant in sectors undergoing rapid technological advancements, where continuous reskilling and adaptation are necessary for both students and professionals (Roma, 2021). Therefore, fostering closer ties between education and industry is not merely beneficial but essential for ensuring that the workforce is adequately prepared to meet current and future challenges.

The government can create mirrors of state-owned entities to address graduate unemployment and the unemployment of people with skills and education. Increasing investment attraction and supporting SMMEs and entrepreneurs is essential to increase the supply of employment. The government must invest in sectors that can create many job opportunities. Moreover, government must stop outsourcing services to the public and instead hire the necessary skills in-house for each unit, further increasing employment levels.

Regulating informal labour markets and addressing the saturation of foreigners in the non-skilled labour force is essential. The presence of foreign workers, particularly in low-skilled positions, can lead to competitive pressures on wages and employment opportunities for native workers. While low-skilled workers may face wage suppression due to increased labour supply from immigrants, skilled workers often remain unaffected by these dynamics (Bratsberg & Raaum, 2012; Lai, 2013).

Moreover, the influx of foreign labour can exacerbate the saturation of the job market, particularly in sectors that rely heavily on low-skilled positions. This situation necessitates regulatory measures to ensure that the labour market remains equitable for native workers. Studies have shown that the economic integration of foreign workers can lead to both positive and negative outcomes, depending on the regulatory framework in place (Kwon, 2018; Parianom *et al*., 2023). For example, effective regulation can mitigate the adverse effects of foreign labour on native employment while still allowing for the economic benefits that such labour can bring, such as filling labour shortages in critical sectors (Bangkok, 2022).

The abovementioned measures will significantly increase employment levels in South Africa as they directly address the realities of the South African labour force. These measures offer solutions to problems that hinder employment growth in South Africa. The study's findings will further shape the proposed optimal policy measures to enhance employment growth.

2.4.4.3 Employment levels and local development

Employment growth is a critical factor in driving local development, as it not only generates employment opportunities but also stimulates economic activity and enhances community well-being. Gonzalez-Val and Marcen (2019) argue that while employment growth is a key indicator of economic health, it is often accompanied by

productivity increases, which can lead to complex dynamics in local labour markets. This relationship suggests that policymakers should consider both employment and productivity when designing strategies for local development. Therefore, the study argues that employment reduces socio-economic issues that burden the South African government.

Employment growth can significantly lower government dependency by providing individuals with stable income sources, thereby decreasing reliance on social welfare programmes. When individuals secure employment, they are less likely to require government assistance, which can alleviate the financial burden on local governments (Martin *et al*. 2016).

Thus, employment growth can reduce government dependency, decrease the number of indigent people, indirectly increase the municipal budget and boost service delivery, all of which significantly contribute local government development. Strzelecka *et al*. (2020) indicate that increased employment opportunities lead to a reduction in poverty levels, which is closely linked to decreased government dependency. The study argues that employment growth in local government can drive local development.

Increased employment growth can lead to a broader tax base, which indirectly boosts municipal budgets. As more individuals gain employment, they contribute to local taxes, which can be reinvested into community services and infrastructure. According to Lewis *et al*. (2018), municipalities that experience employment growth often see an increase in revenue, allowing for improved service delivery in fields such as health care, education, and public safety. Furthermore, enhanced service delivery can create a positive feedback loop, where improved services attract more residents and businesses, further stimulating local economic growth (Diezmartinez & Gianotti, 2022). This highlights the importance of effective service delivery in sustaining employment growth, as it creates an environment conducive to business operations and community well-being.

Local Economic Development has been identified as a crucial strategy in addressing poverty and unemployment. Strzelecka *et al*. (2020) examine the connection between local businesses and job creation in Northern Ghana, highlighting the influencing role of Local Economic Development (LED) policy in alleviating poverty. The authors

argue that effective LED policies can stimulate local businesses, creating more employment opportunities and, in turn, reducing poverty levels. This aligns with the broader objectives of LED, which focus on enhancing local economic activities to foster sustainable development.

The linkage between employment levels and local development has been extensively studied, and there is a consensus that job creation plays a significant role in stimulating economic growth, reducing unemployment, and improving the overall well-being of communities (Doran *et al*., 2016). However, the relationship between employment levels and local development is complex and influenced by various factors. Therefore, a dual approach to policy may be necessary, one that attracts jobs to a location and enhances the region's amenities to make it attractive to people, thus stimulating population growth.

Employment levels have a multifaceted impact on local development that extends beyond economic prosperity. When employed, individuals contribute to their community's economic growth through spending and taxation and experience improved mental and physical well-being (Piet & Mtapuri, 2014). This, in turn, leads to a more productive and engaged population, cultivating a sense of belonging and social cohesion within the region. Research conducted on the impacts of unemployment indicates that it is affected by various factors, including economic growth, educational attainment, and population growth (Rotaru, 2014).

Furthermore, the type and quality of employment available significantly influence local development (Cataldo & Rodríguez-Pose, 2017). A diverse job market that offering opportunities for skill development and career advancement can attract a talented workforce, which, in turn, can drive innovation and productivity within the local economy. Conversely, a high concentration of low-wage, unskilled jobs may hinder economic growth and perpetuate a cycle of poverty within the community (Piet & Mtapuri, 2014).

Understanding the intricate interplay of employment levels, job quality, and local development is essential for policymakers and urban planners. By implementing targeted strategies that focus on job creation and prioritise skills training, education, and infrastructure development, communities can create sustainable pathways to

prosperity. This holistic approach can address the root causes of unemployment and underemployment while fostering inclusive and resilient local economies.

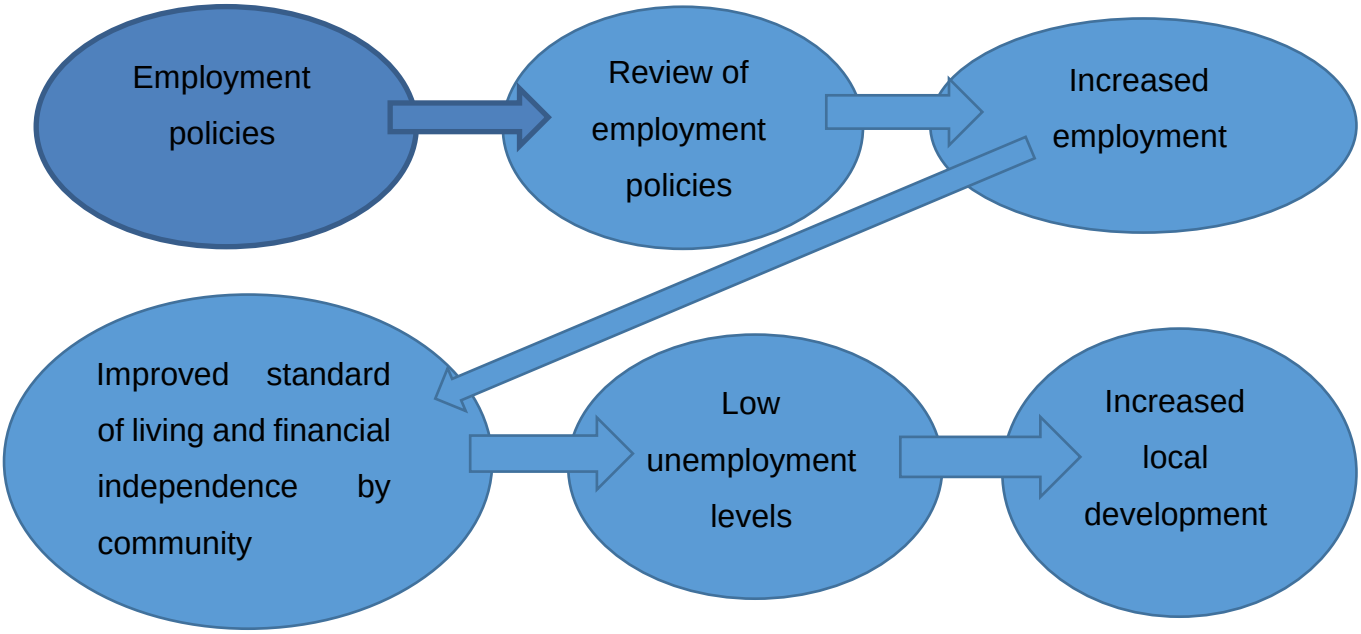

Figure 2.1: Proposed employment based local development model (Author composition).

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a comprehensive literature review aligned with the study's objectives and the theories that underpin the research. The study is grounded in planning and social justice theories. Planning theory as a lens to view employment policies, identifying gaps within them. It guided the development of measures to address these gaps using the planning process derived from planning theory. Additionally, social justice theory was used to explore local development, applying key principles to support the justification of local development in South Africa.

This chapter also highlighted the application of the study. The core objectives of the study were to explore the employment legislative framework and its influence on employment growth in South Africa, investigate the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa; examine the impact of employment policies on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality; assess the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality and

develop a local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology adopted in the study. The following sections cover the research design, methods, target population, sampling design, description of the study area, methods of collecting data, validity and reliability and ethical considerations.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The study used a case study approach to examine the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local development in the Polokwane Local Municipality. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research. The researcher used interviews and questionnaires to collect primary data.

The qualitative component consisted of 3 parts: In part 1, interviews were conducted with employees in the Department of Labour; In part 2, interviews were held with HR personnel from selected SMMEs in Polokwane Local Municipality; and in part 3 interviews were held with senior municipal employees at Polokwane Local Municipality. The quantitative component involved distributing questionnaires to municipal residents. This dual approach enabled comprehensive data collection to address the study's research questions.

The qualitative research approach enabled an in-depth exploration of the relationship between employment policies, employment levels, and local development in South Africa, with particular focus on Polokwane Local Municipality. Meanwhile, the quantitative research provided measurable data on residents' perceptions of local development within the municipality.

3.2.1 Description of the study area

The study used Polokwane Local Municipality as its study area. Located in the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province, South Africa, the municipality has a population of 837,649, with 244,359 households (City of Polokwane, 2022). It accounts for 60% of the Capricorn District Municipality's total population. Demographically, the municipality comprises 94% Black African, 4% White, 1%

Coloured, and 1% Asian/Indian residents (City of Polokwane, 2022). Employment data indicates 245,775 employed individuals, with a labour force participation rate of 36.9% and approximately 309,500 economically active individuals (City of Polokwane, 2022). The unemployment rate stands at 18.1% (City of Polokwane, 2022)

Polokwane Local Municipality hosts a significant number of SMMEs, making it a key employment hub compared to other municipalities in Limpopo Province. Additionally, it has the largest population in the Capricorn District and offers convenient accessibility for the researcher. Polokwane Local Municipality like other government entities, strives to transform the socio-economic conditions in local communities. Hence, the municipality provides services and infrastructure that significantly contribute to local community development.

3.2.2 Target population

The targeted population in the study consists of employees in the Department of Labour, particularly those responsible for overseeing the implementation of employment policies; selected SMMEs within the Polokwane Local Municipality that employ local residents; senior employees of the Polokwane Local Municipality, who serve as key practitioners of local development; and the residents of the municipality.

The selected SMMEs serve as employers of residents in the municipality; senior employees within the municipality are the key practitioners of local development and residents of the municipality, who are the primary beneficiaries of employment policies and whose experiences measure employment levels and development outcomes. This population was selected due to their direct relevance to the research questions and their unique insights into employment policy dynamics at institutional, employer, and community levels.

3.2.3 Sampling design

The study employed both purposive and random sampling methods. The researcher purposefully selected 25 participants and randomly selected 384 respondents, making a total of 409 participants. The purposive sampling method involved the deliberate selection of 25 participants as follows: five employees from the

Department of Labour; 15 Human Resource (HR) personnel from SMMEs in Polokwane Local Municipality and five senior employees in Polokwane Local Municipality. Additionally, the researcher purposefully chose one HR staff member from each selected SMME in Polokwane Local Municipality.

Thus, the researcher interviewed five employees in the Department of Labour, who are employment policy practitioners, and 15 HR personnel representing employers in Polokwane Local Municipality. The researcher also interviewed five senior employees in Polokwane Local Municipality, who are local development practitioners. These employees in the Department of Labour, HR personnel and senior employees in Polokwane Local Municipality provided the researcher with in-depth information on the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local development in South Africa, particularly Polokwane Local Municipality.

The random sampling method was carried out by randomly distributing questionnaires to residents of Polokwane Local Municipality. The researcher used a sample size calculator to determine the total number of questionnaires needed, yieldinga confidence level of 95%. Therefore, 384 structured questionnaires were distributed to Polokwane Local Municipality residents, based on the sample size calculator. The random sampling method enabled the researcher to obtain general views on the impact of employment policies and employment levels on local development in the municipality. Moreover, the convenient random sampling method enabled the researcher to randomly select respondents, giving all Polokwane Local Municipality residents an equal opportunity to participate in the study.

This study employed a purposive sampling strategy to engage key stakeholders who possess specialised knowledge and direct experience with employment policy implementation and outcomes. The targeted population comprised the following distinct but interrelated groups: policy implementation actors; employer representatives and municipal development practitioners. The random sampling method was carried out by randomly selecting community members.

Officials within the Department of Labour, specifically those occupying strategic roles in employment policy oversight, monitoring, and evaluation, provided critical institutional perspectives on policy design, operational challenges, and enforcement

mechanisms. The SMMEs served as employment generators and are instrumental in translating national labour policies into localised hiring practices. Senior administrative personnel within the Polokwane Local Municipality are tasked with local development planning and execution. Their inclusion facilitates an examination of how municipal governance structures mediate between national policy frameworks and grassroots employment realities.

Residents of the municipality constituted both the intended recipients of employment policies and key evaluators of their effectiveness. Their lived experiences provide empirical evidence of policy impacts on labour market participation, livelihood security, and socioeconomic mobility. This tripartite structure, encompassing state actors, economic units, and citizens, enables a comprehensive analysis of employment policy efficacy across national, municipal, and household levels of engagement. The sampling methodology thus ensures theoretical saturation while maintaining analytical distinction between policy formulation, implementation praxis, and experiential outcomes.

3.2.4. Data collection methods

The study employed structured questionnaires and interviews to obtain primary data. Secondary data was obtained by reviewing documents.

3.2.4.1. Interviews

The researcher interviewed 25 participants in this study. The interviewees included five employees in the Department of Labour, 15 human resource personnel in SMMEs, and five senior employees in Polokwane Local Municipality. The interviews provided the participants with the opportunity to thoroughly engage and answer the research questions of the study.

The employees in the Department of Labour helped the researcher understand the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local developmentin South Africa. The human resource personnel in SMMEs provided insights into the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in the country. Additionally, the senior employees in Polokwane Local Municipality assisted the researcher to understand the connection between employment policies, employment levels and local development in South African municipalities. All the interviewees played a crucial role in helping the researcher answer the research

questions posed in this study.

3.2.4.2. Questionnaires

The researcher distributed 384 structured questionnaires to residents of Polokwane Local Municipality to assess general perceptions about how employment policies and employment levels affect local development. To ensure accessibility, the questionnaires were translated into Sepedi.

3.2.4.3. Documentation

The researcher conducted a document review of materials aligned with the study's objectives, including government policies, legislative frameworks, journal articles, books, and thesis.

3.2.5 Data analysis procedures

Interview data were analysed using thematic analysis, a widely utilised qualitative method that identifies patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Vaismoradi *et al*., 2013). This approach enabled the identification of both similarities and differences in participants' views while offering flexibility for inductive or deductive analysis tailored to the research questions (Nowell *et al*., 2017). Thematic analysis is particularly effective for exploring subjective experiences and perceptions across disciplines. The process followed established steps to ensure systematic theme development.

Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase thematic analysis framework is one of the most widely cited methodologies for qualitative research. The phases consist of familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This systematic approach ensures rigorous analysis while maintaining methodological flexibility, with identified themes remaining firmly grounded in the data (Filia *et al*., 2018; Salija *et al*., 2016).

Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive approach, with initial codes derived inductively from interview transcripts. A second coder reviewed 20% of the data, achieving strong inter-rater reliability. Missing data (5% of participants) were addressed through triangulation with field notes, as recommended by Flick

(2018). Coding is a foundational process in qualitative research, enabling researchers to systematically analyse textual, visual, or auditory data by identifying patterns, themes, and meanings (Saldaña, 2021). The process is iterative and requires careful documentation to ensure reliability and validity. Below is a structured approach to coding qualitative data, drawing upon established methodological frameworks.

3.2.5.1. Data preparation and familiarisation

Before coding, the researcher immersed herself in the data through repeated readings or viewings to gain a comprehensive understanding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step ensured that coding is grounded in the data rather than preconceived assumptions. If working with interviews or focus groups, verbatim transcription is essential to capture nuances in participants' responses (Poland, 1995).

3.2.5.2. Initial open coding

Open coding involved breaking down data into discrete segments and assigning descriptive labels to each (Charmaz, 2014). This phase is inductive, allowing themes to emerge organically rather than being imposed by pre-existing frameworks. Codes should be concise yet descriptive (Saldaña, 2021).

3.2.5.3. Developing categories and themes

After initial coding, the researcher grouped related codes into broader categories through axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This step identifies relationships between codes, refining them into higher-order themes. Selective coding follows, where a core central theme is identified, integrating all other categories into a coherent narrative (Charmaz, 2014). For example, codes like "long hours," "burnout," and "lack of recognition" might converge into a central theme of "occupational stress."

3.2.5.4. Finalising the coding framework

The researcher developed a well-documented codebook, defining each theme with illustrative data excerpts (Nowell et al., 2017). This ensures transparency and allows future researchers to assess the study’s rigor.

3.2.5.6. Handling missing data in qualitative research

Missing data in qualitative studies may arise from participant attrition, incomplete responses, or technical issues (e.g., corrupted recordings). While quantitative research has well-established imputation methods, qualitative approaches require different strategies. The researcher determined whether missingness is systematic but explainable by observed data and biased due to unmeasured factors (Rubin, 1976). Strategies for addressing missing data included designing studies with clear consent forms and follow-ups to minimise dropouts (Dikko, 2016) and used multiple data sources (e.g., interviews, field notes) to compensate for gaps (Flick, 2018). Moreover, the strategies addressing missing data included explicitly stating limitations due to missing data (e.g., "Two participants withdrew after the first interview; their data were excluded").

The questionnaire data were analysed using Microsoft Excel 2010. The software facilitated automated statistical analysis of responses. For quantitative data analysis in Excel, a systematic approach was followed. Beginning with data familiarisation, where the researcher immersed herself in the textual responses to develop a comprehensive understanding of the content. This foundational step informed subsequent coding and theme development (Shimels *et al*., 2021; Solehan, 2023).

After familiarising with the data, the researcher generated initial codes by identifying significant phrases or sentences that captured key concepts. These codes were systematically organised in Microsoft Excel to enable efficient sorting and categorisation. As demonstrated by Hendry *et al*. (2016), this Excel-based approach allows for manual identification of recurring themes and subthemes across transcripts while maintaining transparency in the analytic process. The method not only improved data organisation but also facilitated the visualisation of thematic relationships, a crucial aspect of rigorous quantitative analysis.

Moreover, Excel's functionalities, such as sorting, filtering, and graphing capabilities, supported the thematic analysis process. As demonstrated by Shakir (2024), Excel's tools can systematically organize themes derived from literature, simplifying both data interpretation and presentation of complex datasets. This functionality proves particularly valuable in research contexts requiring clear, accessible communication

of findings.

3.3 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND OBJECTIVITY

The study ensured the validity and reliability of the questionnaires through pilot testing before accepting the final version. The researcher ensured the validity of questionnaires by ascertaining that the data collected could be generalised to the population. This was achieved by calculating the sample size with a 95% confidence level. Moreover, the researcher maintained objectivity when collecting and analysing data.

3.3.1 Qualitative research trustworthiness

Qualitative trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability. Measures of trustworthiness are discussed below:

3.3.1.1. Credibility

The researcher employed interviews as the primary qualitative data collection method, implementing several strategies to ensure credibility. These included audio-recording all interview sessions to maintain data integrity, implementing rigorous data analysis procedures to minimize errors, and clearly communicating the researcher's independent role to participants to reduce potential bias. These measures collectively enhanced the credibility of the findings.

3.3.1.2. Dependability

The study employed a reliable research design and methodology capable of producing consistent results upon replication. To ensure methodological rigor, the researcher maintained a comprehensive audit trail of all primary data, engaged two independent researchers to conduct parallel analyses (establishing inter-rater reliability), and systematically resolved any coding inconsistencies through consensus discussions.

3.3.1.3. Transferability

The researcher enhanced transferability by thoroughly documenting the research process and participant experiences, enabling readers to evaluate the potential applicability of findings to other contexts, populations, or temporal settings.

3.3.1.4. Conformability

The researcher ensured conformity by analysing primary data in a way that allows readers to confirm the study's findings. Objectivity was maintained when collecting andanalysing data.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical guidelines serve as a framework for researchers to ensure that their conduct aligns with established moral standards, thereby protecting the rights and well-being of study participants (Maxfield & Babbie, 2014). It is imperative that participants are well-informed about ethical considerations, including what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour during scientific inquiry (Maxfield & Babbie, 2014). The following ethical principles were adhered to in the study:

- **Permission to conduct the study**

The concept of permission to conduct research in research ethics refers to the ethical obligation of researchers to obtain the necessary approvals and permissions before initiating a study involving human participants (Maxfield & Babbie, 2014. This process is critical for ensuring that research is conducted ethically, respecting the rights and well-being of participants, and adhering to legal and institutional guidelines.

In this study, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee (TREC), and TREC granted the researcher ethical clearance to proceed with the study. The researcher also requested permission to collect data from the Department of Labour, various government departments, SMMEs in Polokwane Local Municipality, Polokwane Local Municipality and its residents.

- **Voluntary participation**

Involvement in a research study is a fundamental aspect of ethical research practices, emphasising that participation should always be voluntary and intentional. Coercion undermines the integrity of the research process and violates the ethical principles that govern human subjects research. According to Rubin and Babbie (2005), it is essential that participants are not pressured or manipulated into participating in research projects, as this can lead to ethical violations and

compromise the validity of the study.

In this study, the researcher informed the participants that their participation in the study was voluntary, and they could withdraw from participating should they wish to. The participants would not be required to provide reasons for withdrawing from the study. The researcher informed the participants that there would be no repercussions for refusing to participate in the study.

- **Informed consent**

One of the fundamental ethical principles in research is obtaining informed consent from participants. This involves providing potential participants with comprehensive information about the study, including its purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, allowing them to make an informed decision about their participation (Maxfield & Babbie, 2014). Moreover, Maxfield and Babbie (2014) state that informed consent is crucial for respecting the autonomy of participants and ensuring that they are voluntarily participating in the research. Informed consent ensures that participants are aware of their rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Ogunrin & Ogunrin, 2016). In this study, the researcher distributed informed consent forms for the participants to sign before participating in the study. The informed consent form included the details of the study and its potential benefits.

- **Anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality**

The concepts of anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality are critical for protecting participants' rights and ensuring the integrity of the research process. Each of these concepts plays a distinct role in safeguarding participant information and fostering trust between researchers and participants. Tilley and Woodthorpe, (2011) argue that anonymity is a guiding principle in qualitative research, as it protects participants from potential repercussions related to their involvement in the study.

In this study, the researcher ensured that these principles were respected, thereby fostering a safe and trustworthy research environment. The researcher informed the participants that their participation would remain anonymous and that data would be analysed and presented in a generalised manner. The researcher did not collect

personal information that could identify participants, and the data was not linked to any individual participants.

- **Respect, dignity and Standard care**

The principles of respect, dignity, and standard care are fundamental to ensuring that participants are treated ethically and that their rights and welfare are prioritised. According to Baines *et al*. (2013), respectful treatment is essential for fostering trust and cooperation between researchers and participants. When participants feel respected, they are more likely to share their experiences and insights openly, enhancing the quality of the data collected. In this study, the researcher ensured that research was conducted in a manner that honoured the rights and well-being of participants. Moreover, the researcher engaged with participants in a way that valued their opinions, experiences, and rights.

- **Deception of participants**

Deception in research occurs when participants are misled about the purpose, procedures, or risks of a study. This can include providing false information, omitting critical details, or creating a false narrative about the research (Wendler & Miller, 2004). Deception can lead to psychological or emotional distress for participants, especially if they feel manipulated or betrayed after learning the truth about the study (Hilbig *et al*., 2022). In this study, the researcher did not deceive the participants in any way and treated them with respect and dignity at all times. Moreover, the researcher was transparent and fully informed the participants about all relevant details and the purpose of the study. This openness enabled the participants to make an informed decision to continue or withdraw from participating.

- **Potential for harm**

Potential harm in research can manifest in various forms, including physical, psychological, emotional, social, and economic harm. Physical harm may arise from medical interventions or procedures, while psychological harm can result from distressing topics or experiences discussed during the research (Pollock, 2012). Participants must be fully informed about the risks associated with their participation,

allowing them to make educated decisions about whether to engage in the research (Barrios *et al*., 2021). In this study, the researcher assured the participants that they would not be harmed in any way when participating in the study and there were no risks associated with participating. The participants were not subjected to any physical, psychological, legal or social harm by participating in the study.

- **Benefits and risk**

Ethical research requires a careful assessment of the potential risks and benefits associated with a study. The concepts of benefits and risks in research ethics are essential for ensuring that research involving human participants is conducted responsibly and ethically. Understanding these concepts helps researchers navigate the complex landscape of ethical considerations, balancing the potential advantages of research against the possible harms to participants.

One of the primary benefits of research is the advancement of knowledge in various fields, including medicine, social sciences, and technology. Research contributes to the development of new treatments, interventions, and policies that can improve health outcomes and quality of life for individuals and communities (Ogunrin & Ogunrin, 2016). Research provides valuable data that can inform decision-making at individual, institutional, and policy levels. By understanding the outcomes and implications of research findings, stakeholders can make better-informed choices that enhance public health and welfare (Ateudjieu *et al*., 2019).

One of the most significant risks associated with research is the potential for harm to participants. This harm can be physical, psychological, or emotional, and researchers have an ethical obligation to minimise these risks (Barrow, at al. 2018). While research has the potential to advance knowledge, inform decision-making, empower participants, and improve standard care, it also carries inherent risks that must be managed.

In this study, the researcher prioritised the well-being of participants and implemented ethical standards to navigate these complexities effectively. The researcher further weighed the potential for harm against the anticipated benefits of the research, both for participants and for society at large (Slowther *et al*., 2006).

This balancing act is essential for ethical decision-making and often involves the input of ethics committees, which evaluate research proposals to ensure that risks are minimised and justified by the potential benefits.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The chapter provided the research design and methodologies employed in the study. It served as the study framework that guided the construction and nature of the study. The chapter outlined the methods for achieving the study's objectives and answering the research questions. The next chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. It also presents the findings and offers recommendations based on the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS, DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the research design and methodologies that guided and informed the data collection process and data analysis of the study. This chapter presents research findings, data analysis and interpretation of results. The study aimed to investigate the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local development in South Africa. The research was conducted in Limpopo Province and used Polokwane Local Municipality as its case study. The study's purpose was achieved through the detailed examination of the employment legislative framework and its influence on employment growth in South Africa; investigation of the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa; evaluation of the impact of employment policies on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality and the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality. The study sought to develop a local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development in South Africa.

The study used Polokwane Local Municipality as its study area, as it has become a critical economic hub in Limpopo Province (Polokwane Local Municipality, 2022). As the provincial capital, Polokwane's economic significance extends beyond its municipal boundaries, making it a prime location for research on the interplay between employment policies, employment levels, and local development. The choice of Polokwane Local Municipality as the study area was motivated by its centrality within the Limpopo province's economic landscape. Limpopo's economy is heavily reliant on sectors such as public services, manufacturing, trade, and agriculture, all of which are significant employers within the Polokwane region (Polokwane Local Municipality, 2022). Furthermore, the municipality contributes to economic output and formal employment, underscoring its pivotal role in the region's growth and development agenda. Understanding the relationship between employment policies, employment levels, and local development within the

Polokwane Local Municipality is crucial, given its status as the economic hub of the Limpopo province.

Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed to Polokwane Local Municipality residents, and 25 individuals were interviewed. The 25 interviewees consisted of five employees from the Department of Labour, 15 HR personnel from selected provincial government departments and SMMEs, and five senior employees from Polokwane Local Municipality. Below are the research findings, along with the analysis and interpretation of the data collected in the study.

4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study investigated the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local development in South Africa. It used Polokwane Local Municipality in Limpopo Province as its case study. Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were employed in the study. The study, therefore, employed both questionnaires and interviews to collect data. A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed to residents of Polokwane Local Municipality. Additionally, five employees from the Department of Labour were interviewed. 15 HR personnel representing employees within the jurisdiction of Polokwane Local Municipality were also interviewed in the study. Lastly, five senior employees from Polokwane Local Municipality were interviewed. In total, 25 individuals participated in the interviews.

The findings of the study are divided into four sections. The first section presents the analysis of questionnaires distributed to the residents of Polokwane Local Municipality; the second section focuses on the analysis of interviews conducted with the Department of Labour; the third section analyses the interviews conducted with HR personnel representing employers in Polokwane local municipality, and the last section examines interviews conducted with the senior employees in Polokwane Local Municipality.

The employees in the Department of Labour assisted the researcher in answering the research questions pertaining to employment policies, while the employers provided insights into employment levels and gauging the relationship between employment policies and employment levels. Lastly, the senior employees in Polokwane Local

Municipality contributed to answering research questions on local development in relation to employment levels in the municipality.

The analysis of questionnaires is presented in graphs and tables, while the analysis of interviews is presented using thematic analysis.

4.3 DATA COLLECTED THROUGH QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaires have long been a vital tool in research, providing researchers with a structured and systematic means of collecting data from diverse participants (Caduff & Ranganathan, 2023). This data collection method allows researchers to gather valuable insights and information from a wide audience, enabling them to better understand patterns, trends, and perspectives related to their area of study (Slattery *et al*., 2011). One of the key advantages of using questionnaires in research is their ability to provide a standardised and consistent approach to data collection. Researchers can ensure that the information gathered is directly relevant to their research objectives and that the responses can be easily analysed and compared, as participants answer predetermined questions.

Moreover, questionnaires have the potential to reach a large number of participants, which can be particularly useful for studies that aim to capture a broad range of perspectives or to observe trends across a diverse population (Drost, 2011). As noted by one researcher, questionnaires can provide insight into individual perceptions and attitudes as well as organisational policies and practise, making them a valuable tool for researchers in a variety of fields (Stern *et al*., 2014). Moreover, questionnaires encourage participant privacy and yield straightforward and descriptive data (Munn & Drever, 1990). Anonymity allows respondents to answer the questions more accurately and honestly, and enables them to provide straightforward answers.

The researcher administered a set of questionnaires to residents of Polokwane Local Municipality. The questionnaires were designed based on the research questions and aligned with the objectives of the study. The questionnaires included the following: biographical information, the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality and the impact of employment policies on local development in South Africa. The data were analysed in Microsoft Excel 2010, and the interpretation of the questionnaire results was presented in statistical form.

4.3.1 Presentation and interpretation of results collected from residents of Polokwane Local Municipality

Three hundred and eighty-four (384) questionnaires were distributed to the residents of Polokwane Local Municipality. All the distributed questionnaires were returned and analysed by the researcher. The data collected through questionnaires assisted the researcher to gain generalised views on the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality and the impact of employment policies on local development in South Africa. The presentation and interpretation of data collected through questionnaires is as follows:

4.3.1.1. Biographical information

The biographical information of an individual can reveal insights about the study participants and how their unique backgrounds and perspectives influence their interpretation and understanding of social phenomena, thereby shaping their reasoning and conclusions within the research (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). As such, biographical information plays a crucial role in contextualising and enriching the research process, enhancing the overall quality and utility of the findings. Biographical information is crucial in academic research, as it provides valuable context about the study's target population, their background, and their unique perspectives.

This information can shed light on potential biases, experiences, and motivations that may have influenced the research process and findings. Furthermore, incorporating biographical details can humanise the research, making it more accessible and relatable to a wider audience. Overall, including biographical information is vital in establishing the credibility and transparency of academic work (Hart & Annear, 2020). The study investigated gender, age group, education status and employment status to establish the biographical information of Polokwane Local Municipality's residents. The findings of the biographical information are as follows:

4.3.1.1.1 Gender of the residents in the Polokwane Local Municipal area

The inclusion of gender considerations is crucial when investigating the relationship between employment policies, employment levels, and local development in South Africa. Gender plays a significant role in shaping individuals' experiences and opportunities within the labour market, and it is essential to examine how employment

policies and outcomes may differentially impact men and women. By taking a gender-conscious approach, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between employment, policy, and local development, ultimately informing more inclusive and effective policy interventions.

South Africa's history of apartheid and the intersections of racism and sexism have left a lasting impact on gender dynamics in the country (Segalo, 2015). The legacy of this oppressive system continues to manifest in gendered inequalities, particularly in education, employment, and economic opportunities. Musetsho *et al*. (2021) have observed a "feminisation of the labour force" in the post-apartheid period, with an increase in women's participation in the workforce. The interpretation of gender in the findings of the study is as follows:

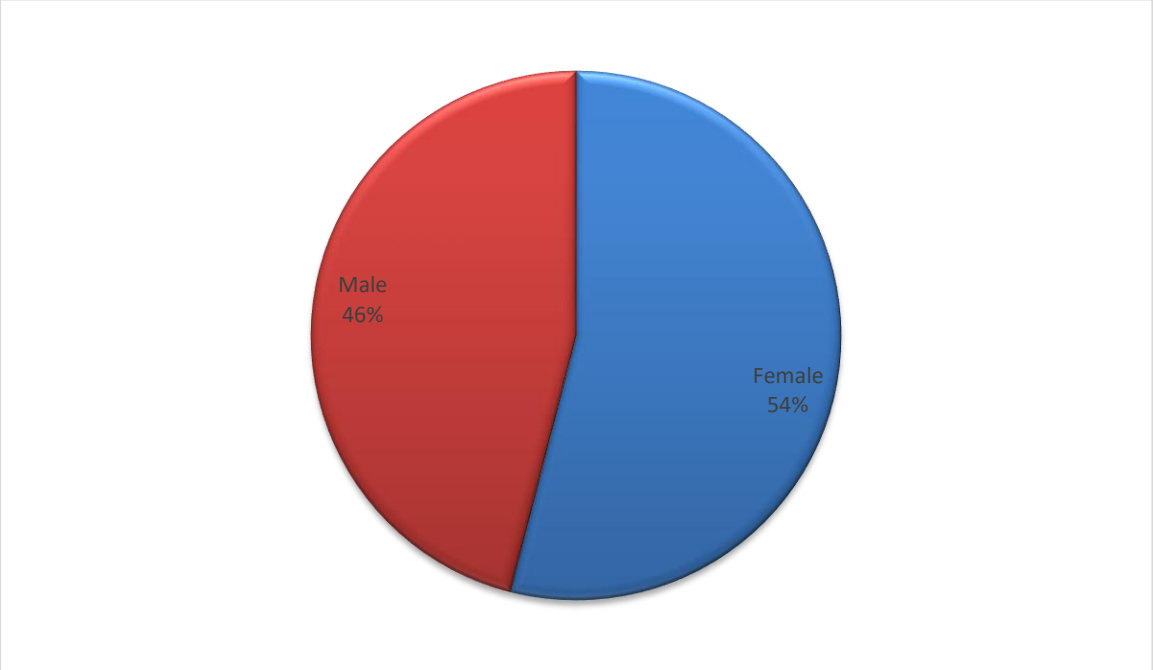

Figure 4.1: Gender of respondents

Figure 4.1 indicates that 46% of the population that participated in the study were men while 54% were women. The findings suggest that there are more women than men in Polokwane municipal area. This is an interesting observation, as one would typically expect a more balanced gender representation or even a male-dominant distribution in a study investigating employment policies and local development. However, there are several possible explanations for this female-skewed gender distribution.

The study by Olayode (2016) on women's participation in local governance in Nigeria highlights the persistent patriarchal biases in society that often marginalise women and allocate powerful political positions to men. This suggests that women may face more barriers to participating in local governance and employment-related studies. Their higher representation in this study could, therefore, be a result of deliberate efforts to include their voices and perspectives.

4.3.1.1.2 Age groups of the residents in the Polokwane Local Municipal area

It is important to investigate the age groups of the residents of the Polokwane Local Municipality to gain a comprehensive understanding of the population demographics and their specific needs. Studies have shown that the age distribution of a community can have significant implications for healthcare, social services, and economic development (Chalise & Rosenberg, 2019). The age composition of the population in a given locality is a crucial factor to consider when examining employment policies and their impact on employment levels and local development.

Polokwane, the capital city of Limpopo Province in South Africa, is a prime example of a municipality where understanding the age profile of residents can provide valuable insights into the design and implementation of pro-poor local development strategies. Understanding the age composition of the residents of Polokwane Local Municipality can provide valuable insights into the unique needs and demands of different demographic groups, which can inform more targeted and effective policies and interventions.

The age composition of the population in the Polokwane Local Municipality is an important factor to consider when studying the demographics and planning for community needs. Investigating the age distribution can provide valuable insights into the population's structure, service requirements, and potential areas of focus for local government and policymakers. By analysing the age groups, researchers can better understand the needs and characteristics of different community segments, enabling more targeted and effective resource allocation and programme development. The interpretation of age group in the findings of the study is as follows:

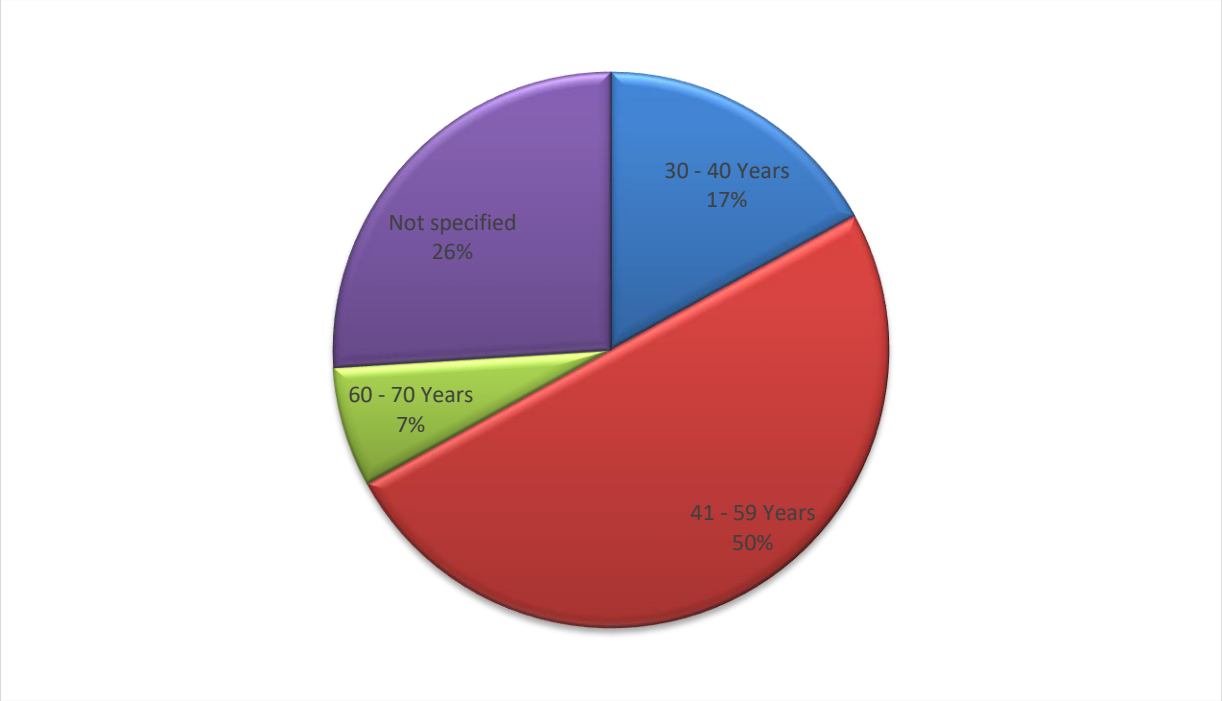

Figure 4.2: Age group of respondents

Figure 4.2 indicates that the majority of participants (50%) belong in the age group of 41 to 59 years, followed by 26% who did not specify their age. Next is the age group of 30 to 40 years, which accounts for 17% of participants, and lastly, 7% in the age group of 60 to 70 years. This finding suggests that the working-age population, rather than the elderly, comprises the predominant demographic in the Polokwane Local Municipality. This has important implications for the provision of public services, healthcare, and community resources, which should be tailored to meet the needs of this working-age majority.

Residents of working age within the Polokwane Local Municipality are more likely to be homeowners and contribute to municipal tax revenues through the payment of local property rates and other fees. This population segment represents an important demographic that supports the local economy and contributes to the overall financial stability of the municipality. Moreover, while older adults often contribute their time and energy to local issues, the ageing population also raises concerns about health maintenance. The finding further suggests that there are few elderly people who are interested in labour force participation and contemporary local development issues.

4.3.1.1.3 Education status of residents in the Polokwane Local Municipal area

The investigation of education status in South Africa is crucial, as it has far-reaching implications for the country's economic and social development. Low educational attainment is associated with low productivity growth, high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Moreover, maternal education has been shown to significantly impact child health outcomes, suggesting that improving educational opportunities, particularly for marginalised groups, can contribute to reducing inequality (Ohonba *et al*., 2018).

South Africa has made remarkable strides in improving educational enrolment at the primary and tertiary levels (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019). However, the quality of educational achievement remains a significant challenge, with the country lagging behind international standards on various metrics. The factors contributing to this discrepancy are multifaceted, involving issues such as historical legacies, race, language, geographic location, and socioeconomic status. The interpretation of educational status in the findings of the study is as follows:

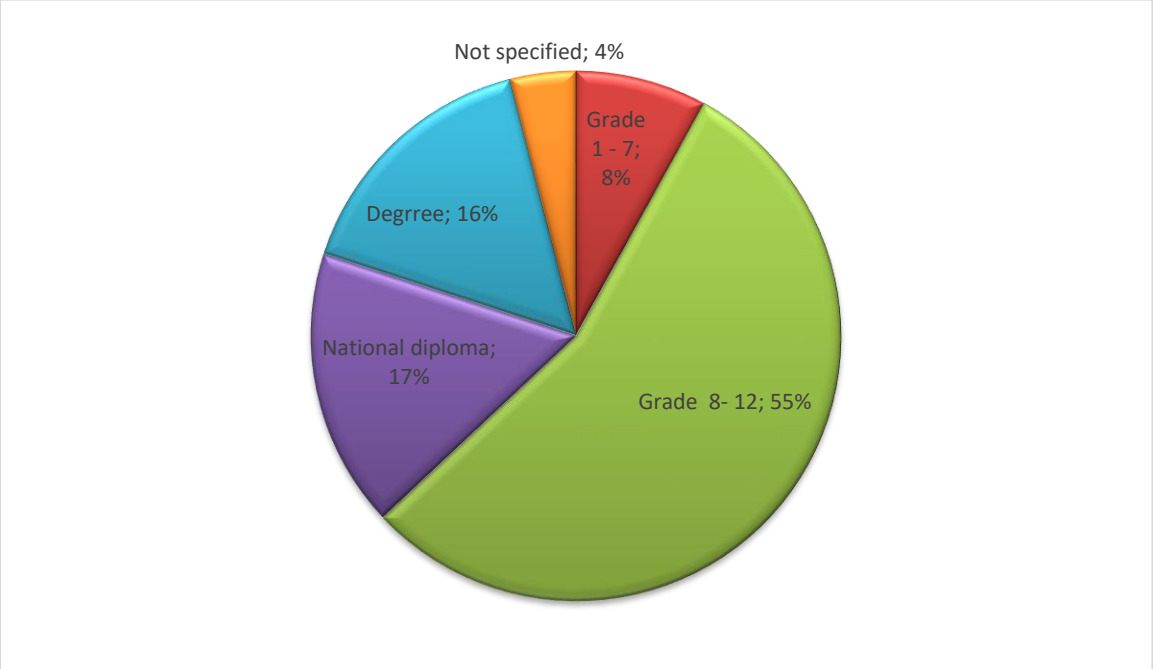

Figure 4.3: Educational status of respondents

Figure 4.3 indicates that the majority of respondents (55%) have a grade 8 to grade 12 education, followed by those with a national diploma at 17%, those with a degree

at 16%, and those with a grade 1 to 7 education at 8%. Only 4% of the respondents did not specify their educational status.

The study suggests that a significant portion of the population has not attained higher levels of education. This trend can be observed across various regions and demographics. For instance, while the proportion of individuals with a secondary education is relatively high in South Africa, the quality of secondary education remains a concern, with learners consistently performing below their peers in other countries on standardised tests (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019).

4.3.1.1.4. Employment status of residents in the Polokwane Local Municipal area

Investigating the employment status of residents is crucial when examining the relationship between employment policies, employment levels, and local development in South Africa. Understanding the employment status of residents is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of employment policies and their impact on local development. South Africa's labour market has undergone significant changes since the post-apartheid era, with the government implementing various policies to promote employment and address historical inequalities (Festus *et al*., 2016).

While these efforts have yielded some progress, the country continues to grapple with persistent unemployment issues, particularly among the previously disadvantaged groups. The researcher can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors driving poverty and inequality in South Africa by exploring the nuances of employment status. The high unemployment rate, currently at 32.9%, is a persistent challenge that has been exacerbated by the decline in the labour absorption capacity of the formal economy.

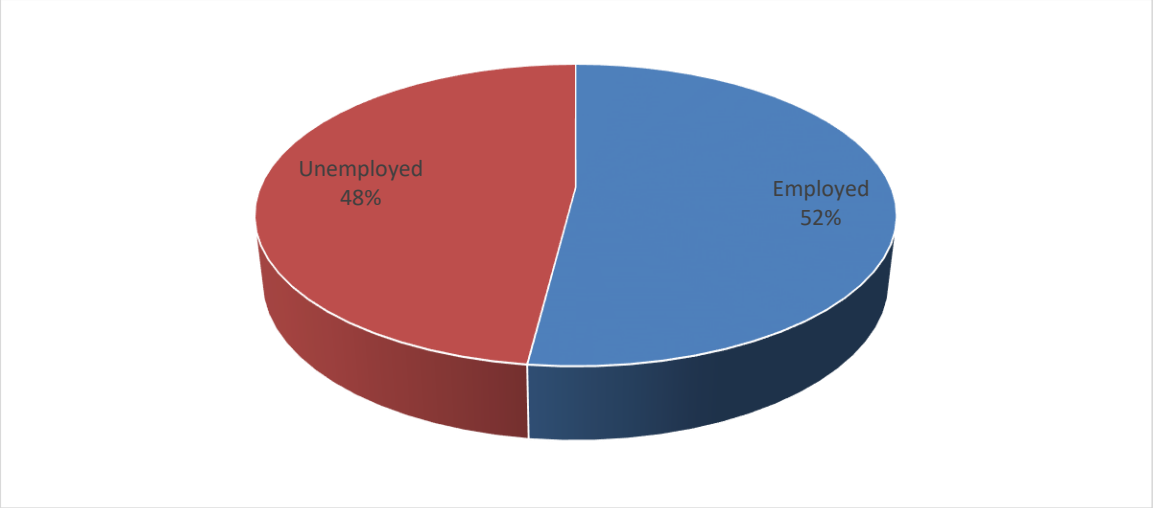

Figure 4.4: Employment status of respondents

Figure 4.4 indicates that the majority of the respondents are employed (52%), while 48% are unemployed. These findings suggest that despite the South African government's efforts to implement various employment policies to promote the rights of workers and encourage employment growth, unemployment remains a persistent issue. The impact of these high levels of unemployment has been devastating, resulting in poverty, social exclusion, inequality, crime, and social instability (Meyer, 2014a).

In addition, the country's large unskilled labour force and skills mismatch have been identified as structural factors contributing to the current unemployment conditions (Nonyana & Njuho, 2018). Technological advancements have also exacerbated unemployment, as they have led to job losses in various sectors. The importance of addressing unemployment cannot be overstated, as "jobs are the cornerstone of economic and social development" (World Bank, 2013:3).

4.3.1.2. The impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality

South Africa's economic and social development hinges significantly on job creation (Meyer, 2014a). Employment serves as a key driver of economic activity and can shape the development trajectory of local communities (León-Moreta & Totaro, 2020). When employment levels are high, consumer spending increases, tax revenues rise, and investment in infrastructure and services expands, stimulating further economic growth and development (Mile *et al*., 2022). Conversely, low employment levels can

lead to economic stagnation, reduced public funding, and diminished quality of life for residents.

Moreover, persistent joblessness has placed immense strain on the government's ability to effectively provide basic amenities, healthcare, education, and other critical services that citizens rely on, hindering the country's overall development and socioeconomic progress (Aiyetan & Das, 2021). Unemployment not only leads to poverty and social instability but also inhibits economic growth (Xesibe & Nyasha, 2020). Understanding the nuanced relationship between employment and local development is crucial for policymakers and community leaders seeking to promote sustainable and equitable growth. Therefore, addressing these labour market challenges is crucial for South Africa to achieve sustainable development at the local level (Meyer, 2014b).

The study investigated the standard of living and service delivery to establish the impact of employment levels on local development amongst the residents of the Polokwane Municipal area. The study examined the following factors to establish the standard of living in the Polokwane municipal area: monthly salary, which indicates the poverty line; dependency on grants; job search status, and employment opportunities in the municipal area; and the state of housing in relation to the living standards in the context of the study. It also explored the following factors to assess the state of municipal service delivery: payment of municipal services; beneficiaries of municipal indigent programmes; the state of infrastructure and water provision in the municipality; and the overall state of service delivery in Polokwane Local Municipality. The findings on both standard of living and service delivery are presented as follows:

4.3.1.2.1. Living standards of residents in the Polokwane Municipal Area

The importance of thoroughly examining and understanding the living standards and quality of life experienced by residents cannot be overstated. South Africa has long faced the challenge of high unemployment rates, which have significantly impacted the standard of living and overall quality of life for its citizens (Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2020). High unemployment has contributed to widespread poverty and a general decline in the well-being of the South African population. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the living conditions, access to resources, and overall well-being of

community members is crucial for informing policy decisions and implementing effective measures to improve their standard of living.

The residents' perspectives on factors such as satisfaction with their homes and access to essential services provide invaluable data on the true state of their living conditions. Researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and concerns faced by residents, particularly those in marginalised or vulnerable populations, by grounding the research in the lived experiences of the community (Brutschy & Zachary, 2014).The study examined key indicators of living standards in the Polokwane Municipal Area, including monthly income that is below poverty line, government dependency, the search for employment opportunities, the adequacy of job opportunities, and housing conditions. The findings are as follows:

4.3.1.2.1.1. Monthly income of residents in the Polokwane Local Municipal area

South Africa, a nation with a complex and dynamic socioeconomic landscape, has long grappled with the persistent challenge of poverty. Despite its status as an upper-middle-income country, a significant portion of its population continues to live below the poverty line, underscoring the stark inequalities that have persisted since the end of apartheid. Addressing this issue has been a key priority for policymakers, as they strive to implement effective strategies to alleviate poverty and promote inclusive economic growth. The findings on monthly income are interpreted as follows:

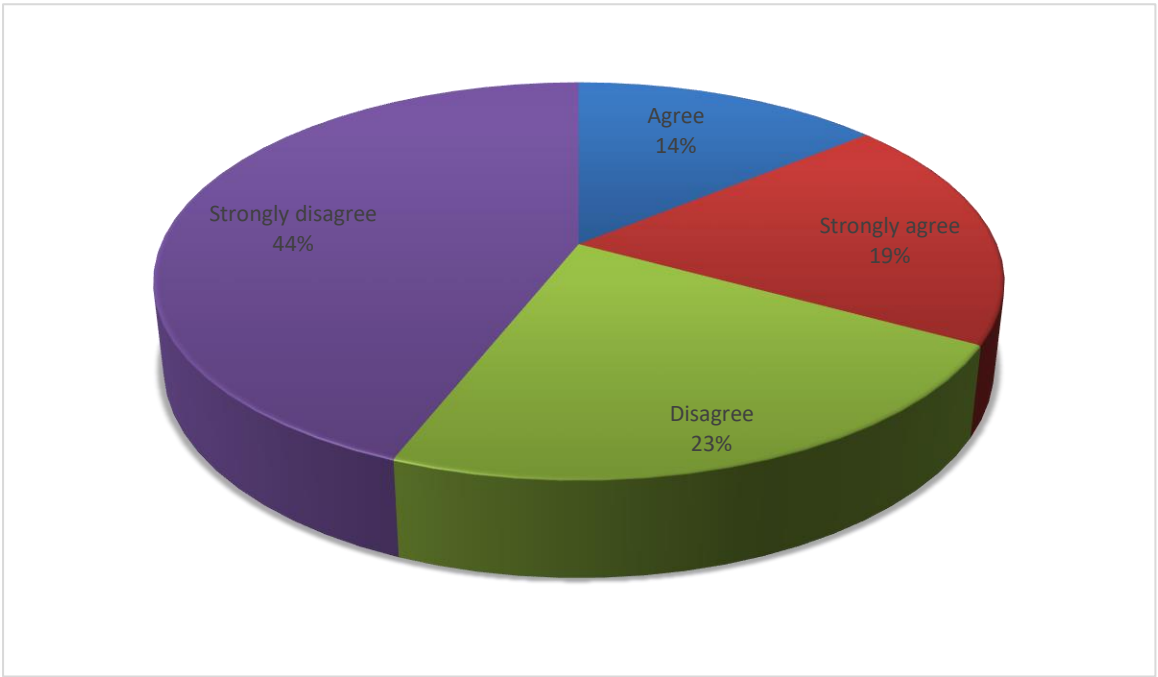

Figure 4.5The monthly income of respondents is R624.00 or lower

Figure 4.5 shows that the majority of respondents strongly disagree that their income is below the poverty line (44%), followed by 23% who disagree. However, 19% of respondents strongly agree, and 14% agree that their income is below the poverty line. The findings indicate that a total of 67% of respondents do not live below the poverty line, while 33% do. These findings correlate with the assertion by the Limpopo Provincial Government that Polokwane records 48.2% of people living in poverty conditions. The results suggest that poverty remains a persistent challenge in South Africa despite the country's efforts to alleviate it (Francis, & Webster, 2019).

Moreover, the findings suggest that South Africa has long grappled with the issue of persistent poverty, despite various government efforts through social policies and welfare interventions to address this challenge. Only 67% of respondents have a monthly income above the poverty line, with many households depending on grants as a source of income. However, despite these concerted efforts, unemployment remains a significant and stubborn challenge, and many South Africans continue to struggle with poverty and its far-reaching social and economic consequences. The lack of adequate job opportunities and the inability to secure stable employment have exacerbated the cycle of poverty, leaving a significant portion of the population vulnerable and unable to achieve financial security and improved living standards.

4.3.1.2.1.2. Government dependency in Polokwane Local Municipal area

Investigating the intricate relationship between the South African populace and their reliance on government assistance is crucial in analysing the implications of a growing population dependent on government resources. While government assistance can provide essential resources and support, there is also a concern that over-reliance on government aid can hinder the self-sufficiency and autonomy of local communities. The reasons for non-payment of municipal services in South Africa are multifaceted, including poverty, unemployment, a sense of entitlement, dissatisfaction with service provision, corruption, rising costs, and communication issues (Enwereji & Uwizeyimana, 2020).

This underscores the complex socioeconomic factors that contribute to the problem of government dependency and non-payment of municipal rates. People who depend on government grants often do not pay municipal rates, as their financial resources are limited and they rely heavily on government assistance to meet their basic needs. This failure to pay can create challenges for local governments in financing essential services and infrastructure for their communities. The complex relationship between government dependency and local development requires careful examination to ensure that development initiatives truly empower and emancipate the people. The findings on government dependency are as follows:

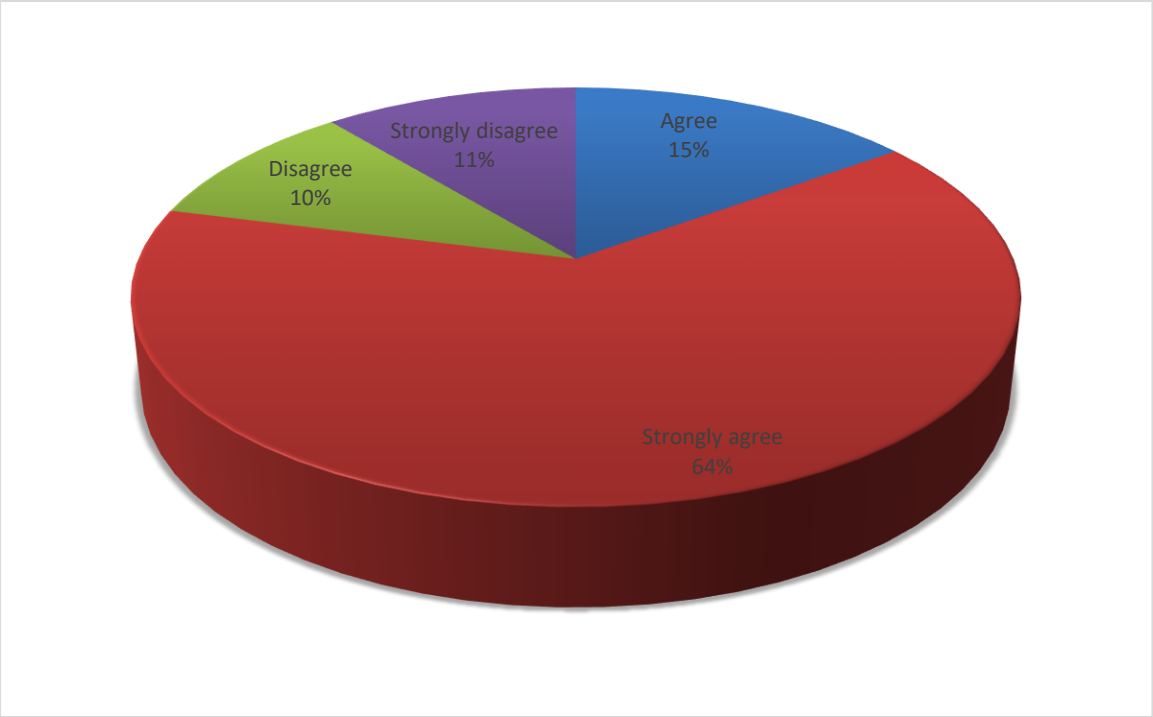

Figure 4.6: Government dependency of respondents: “I depend on a grant”

Figure 4.6 indicates that the majority of respondents (64%) strongly agree that they depend on government grants, followed by 15% of respondents who agree, Meanwhile, only 11% disagree and 10% strongly disagree. The findings show that 79% of respondents depend on government grants. The findings correlate with the assertion by the Limpopo Provincial Government that 45.9% of Limpopo’s population depends on government grants.

Only 21% of respondents are autonomous and do not depend on government grants. The findings suggest that South Africa, a nation plagued by significant socioeconomic challenges, has witnessed a growing reliance on government grants as a means of

addressing widespread poverty and inequality. This dependency on state assistance has become a crucial lifeline for millions of citizens, providing much-needed financial support and access to essential services. However, concerns have been raised about the long-term sustainability of this model and its potential to create a culture of dependency, which could hinder the country's efforts to achieve true economic and social development.

4.3.1.2.1.3. Residents searching for employment opportunities in the Polokwane Municipal area

Finding employment is essential for individuals to become financially independent, contribute to society, and achieve personal fulfilment. Employment provides a steady income and allows individuals to develop social connections, acquire new skills, and gain a sense of purpose (Nasution *et al*., 2020). Furthermore, the ability to utilise one's skills and abilities at work is a crucial contributor to job satisfaction (Wang *et al.,* 2020).

Employment is particularly important for people with disabilities as it helps them integrate into the community, build self-esteem, and reduce the risk of social isolation (Nasution *et al*., 2020). Employment is a fundamental component of an individual's life, as it supports their financial well-being and enables them to participate actively in their community, develop a sense of personal identity, and experience a heightened sense of purpose and accomplishment (Nasution *et al*., 2020).

Actively searching for and pursuing job opportunities in the diverse and dynamic South African job market is crucial for addressing the country's persistent unemployment crisis. This proactive approach can help individuals find meaningful employment, contribute to the local economy, and improve their financial stability and quality of life. There are various factors that influence an individual's job search behaviour, including their employment status, personal characteristics, and labour market conditions. Individuals may search for their first job after completing their education, seek re-employment after a job loss, or look for new opportunities while currently employed (Boswell *et al*., 2011).

Job search behaviour can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as the individual's level of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, financial needs, and proactive personality traits (Boswell *et al*., 2020). The job search process involves various

activities, including contacting employment agencies, networking, and submitting job applications. The effort and intensity of the job search, as well as the strategies used in the search, are important predictors of employment outcomes (Boswell *et al*., 2011). The findings on active searching for employment opportunities are as follows:

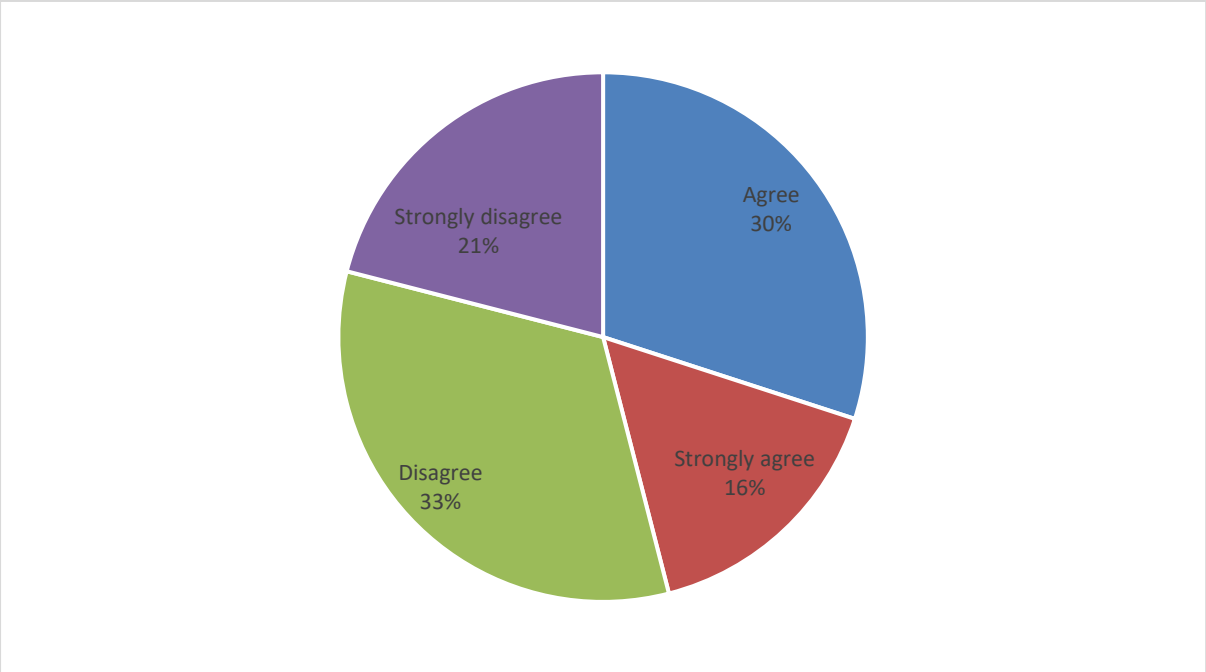

Figure 4.7: Respondents actively searching for employment opportunities

Figure 4.7 indicates that the majority of respondents are not searching for employment opportunities, with 33% disagreeing and 21% strongly disagreeing with the statement that they are seeking work. Meanwhile 30% agree and 16% strongly agree that they are searching for job opportunities. Overall, 54% of respondents have given up on the market, while 46% are actively searching for employment. The results suggest that pursuing employment opportunities can be daunting and arduous for many individuals.

The process of job searching can take both an emotional and psychological toll on people. Moreover, the results suggest that the youth searching for their first job are generally more motivated than older job seekers and tend to utilise more formal job search methods such as contacting employment agencies and job sites. According to Dubois *et al*. (2023), the job search process can be influenced by the individual's employment status, with employed individuals exhibiting more proactive and intentional job search behaviours compared to their unemployed counterparts.

4.3.1.2.1.4. There are adequate job opportunities in Polokwane municipal area

South Africa's development challenges, including high unemployment, poverty, and income inequality, have been well-documented (Marais, 2011). The country has a persistently high unemployment rate, particularly among young people (Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2020). According to Stats SA (2022), South Africa has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world, with certain demographic and geographic groups being disproportionately affected. Creating more jobs is essential to tackling this challenge.

One potential solution lies in the growth and support of small and medium enterprises, which are expected to play a critical role in addressing the problems of job creation, sustainable economic growth, and overall economic development (Fatoki, 2014). Entrepreneurship has been identified as a critical factor in job creation and economic growth, yet the formal sector has not provided adequate employment opportunities (Shafiu *et al*., 2020). The lack of sufficient job opportunities in the formal sector has led many individuals, especially the youth, to seek employment in the informal sector. However, the informal sector has also been shedding labour recently, further exacerbating the unemployment crisis.

Addressing this multifaceted challenge requires a comprehensive approach that not only focuses on fostering entrepreneurship but also on creating more stable and well-paying jobs in the formal economy. Policymakers must consider a range of strategies, including skills development, access to financing, and targeted support for small and medium enterprises, to unlock the potential of entrepreneurship and create the necessary job opportunities to address the pressing issue of unemployment in South Africa. The study’s findings on job opportunities in Polokwane Local Municipality are as follows:

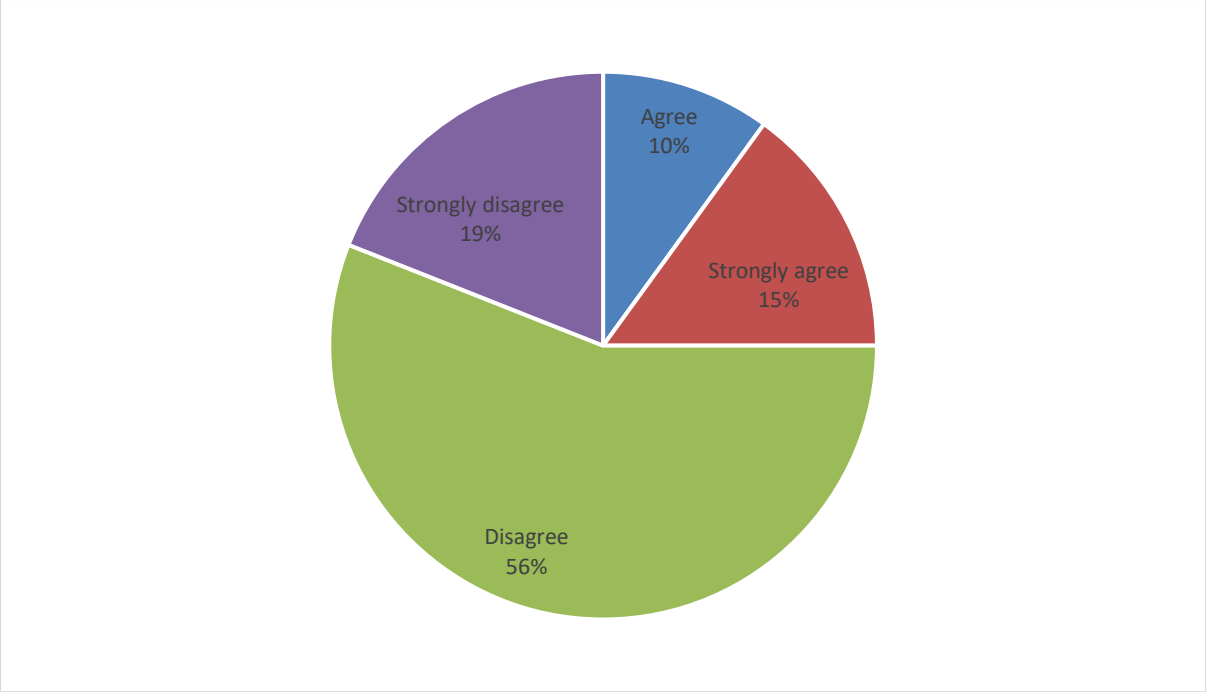

Figure 4.8: There are adequate job opportunities for respondents in Polokwane municipal area

Figure 4.8 illustrates that the majority of respondents believe that job opportunities in Polokwane municipal area are not adequate. A total of 56% of respondents disagree with the statement that there are adequate job opportunities, while 19% strongly disagree. In contrast, 10% agree and 15% strongly agree that job opportunities are sufficient. In total, 75% of respondents are of the opinion that there are inadequate job opportunities in Polokwane municipal area, whereas only 25% of believe that job they are sufficient. The finding correlates with the assertion that Limpopo Province, located in the northern region of South Africa, has long been plagued by the issue of inadequate job opportunities, which has had a significant impact on the economic well-being of its residents (Mogale & Bopape, 2023).

The data also highlights persistent geographic disparities in the country, with many job opportunities concentrated in metropolitan urban centres, while a significant portion of the population resides in rural local municipal areas. This physical separation between job seekers and employment hubs further complicates efforts to match skills with employment opportunities. The complex and persistent issue of inadequate job opportunities in South Africa can be attributed to historical, economic, and social factors.

These factors include the legacy of apartheid, skills mismatches, geographic disparities, limited economic diversification, and structural barriers to employment, particularly for marginalised groups (Burger and Jafta, 2022). Moreover, the legacy of apartheid has had a profound and long-lasting impact on the South African labour market (Duval & Shibata, 2021). The suppression of formal black entrepreneurship and the systematic denial of educational and economic opportunities for the black population have resulted in a significant skills gap and geographic mismatch between job seekers and available employment (Duval & Shibata, 2021).

4.3.1.2.1.5. Access to dignified housing in Polokwane municipal area

Proper housing is a fundamental aspect of sustainable local development, as it not only provides individuals and families with a safe and secure living environment but also plays a crucial role in shaping the overall well-being, economic prosperity, and social cohesion of a community (Oyebanji *et al*., 2017). Adequate and affordable housing contributes to improved health outcomes, educational attainment, and financial stability for residents, ultimately supporting the long-term growth and development of the local area. Additionally, well-designed and maintained housing can enhance the aesthetic appeal and liveability of a neighbourhood, fostering a sense of community pride and investment among residents (Anders & Gearhart, 2018).

The relationship between proper housing and local development is multifaceted and complex, encompassing a wide range of social, economic, and environmental factors. Adequate and affordable housing not only provides a safe and secure living environment for individuals and families but also plays a crucial role in shaping the overall well-being, economic prosperity, and social cohesion of a community (Swope & Hernández, 2019). This relationship is further influenced by factors such as urban planning, infrastructure development, and the availability of community resources, all of which contribute to a local area's long-term growth and sustainability.

Proper housing is a fundamental determinant of family well-being and can have a significant impact on the overall development of a community (Bratt, 2002). Housing is recognised as a key factor in inclusive growth, with implications for individual and household well-being, wealth accumulation, and access to opportunities (Sáiz, 2023). Its location also determines access to essential services, infrastructure, and

employment opportunities, which can have long-lasting impacts on individuals, especially children and the youth. The findings are as follows:

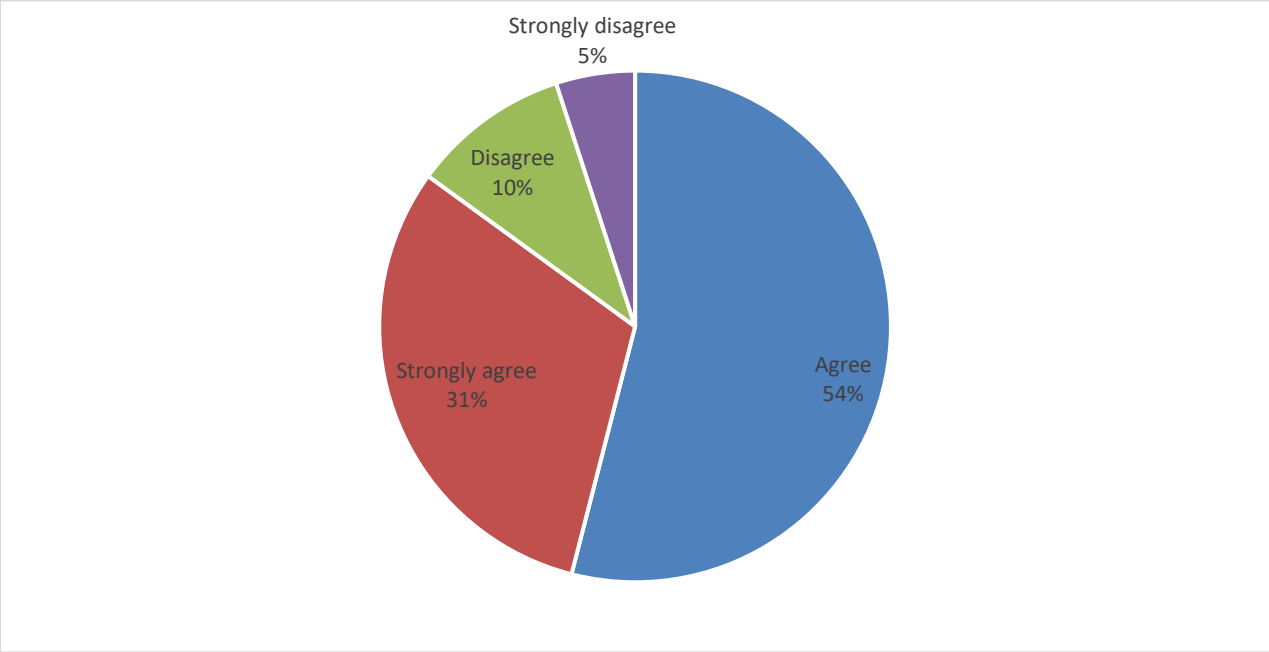

Figure 4.9: Respondents have proper housing in Polokwane municipal area

Figure 4.9 indicates that the majority of respondents are of the view that they have proper housing in the Polokwane municipal area. 54% percent of respondents agree while 31% strongly agree with the view. In contrast, 10% disagree, and 5% strongly disagree. In total, 85% of respondents have proper housing while only 15% of respondents do not. The findings suggest that Polokwane municipal area is characterised by adequate housing with most individuals enjoying an overall sense of belonging and security.

Housing is not merely a physical structure but also a social system that contributes to creating healthy and sustainable communities (Shama & Motlak, 2019). The findings dismiss the assertion that proper housing enables access to employment opportunities (Fowler & Farrell, 2017), given the inadequate job opportunities in the Polokwane Municipal area. The findings further suggest that respondents enjoy municipal services provided by the Polokwane Local Municipality.

4.3.1.2.2. Service delivery in Polokwane Municipal area

Service delivery, which encompasses the provision of essential public services such as water and infrastructure, plays a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of local

development (Muwonge *et al*., 2022). Adequate access to these public services enhances human development by improving quality of life and contributing to poverty reduction strategies (Nguyen *et al*., 2021). As such, empowerment and poverty reduction initiatives often prioritise providing basic public services as a key component in local government (Narayan, 2002).

However, improving public service delivery remains one of the greatest challenges facing communities, as these services are a key determinant of quality of life that is not solely measured by per capita income. Improved service provision may require further urbanisation, densification, and local economic growth, which can contribute to the municipality's ability to sustain these services (Krugell, *et al*., 2010). Moreover, fast and easy accessibility to public services, primarily related to their spatial distribution and alignment with the primary road network, is a crucial dimension of service quality (Wisutwattanasak, *et al*. 2021). The study probed payment of municipal services; beneficiaries of municipal indigent programmes; adequacy of infrastructure, and provision of water in the Polokwane Municipal area when establishing the state of service delivery in the municipality. The findings related to service delivery are as follows:

4.3.1.2.2.1. Payment for municipal services in Polokwane Local Municipality

The payment for municipal services is a critical issue that has significant implications for development in South Africa (Enwereji & Uwizeyimana, 2020). Adequate funding and efficient management of municipal services are essential for meeting residents' basic needs and supporting sustainable development across the country. Underfunding and ineffective governance in many municipalities have resulted in their inability to function effectively and provide essential services to the community. This has hindered progress towards achieving the country's development goals and improving the overall quality of life for its citizens (Hendriks, 2018).

Municipalities across the world face significant challenges in generating adequate revenue to meet the growing demand for public services (Bureau for Economic Research, 2021). This is particularly true in developing regions where population growth, urbanisation, and the need to extend services to non-compliant individuals strain local government finances (Hendriks, 2018). The ability of municipalities to raise sufficient funds to keep pace with the increasing service delivery requirements in their

jurisdictions has emerged as a pressing concern for policymakers and urban planners alike.

One of the key challenges facing municipal authorities in developing countries is their heavy reliance on central government transfers as the primary source of revenue, with relatively limited contributions from local taxes and service charges (Bureau for Economic Research, 2021). This vertical fiscal imbalance, where the responsibilities of local governments outpace their fiscal resources, has forced municipalities to either increase borrowing or cut essential services, both of which can jeopardise long-term local development (Morgan & Trinh, 2017).

Morgan and Trinh (2017) further highlight the need to devolve greater fiscal autonomy and enhance revenue-raising powers for local governments in order to ensure the financial sustainability of municipal service delivery. This includes empowering municipalities to levy property taxes, utility user fees, and other local revenue sources that can provide a more reliable and elastic revenue base. The findings on payment for municipal services in Polokwane Local Municipality are as follows:

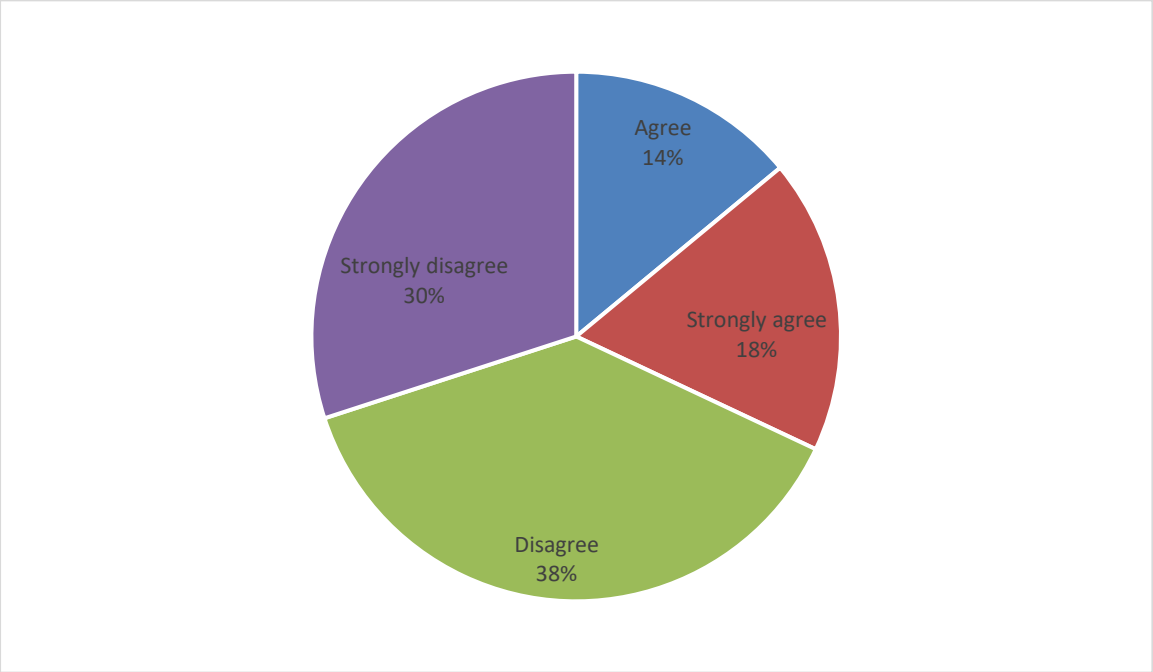

Figure 4.10: Respondents pay for municipal services in Polokwane Local Municipality

Figure 4.10 indicates that the majority of respondents, 38%, disagree followed by 30% who strongly disagree that they pay for municipal services. In contrast, 14% agree and 18% strongly agree. Overall, 68% of respondents do not pay for municipal

services while 32% do. The findings suggest financial constraints hinder many residents' ability to pay for services, which, in turn, impacts the provision of essential infrastructure and services, hampering local development in Polokwane Local Municipality.

As noted by Enwereji and Uwizeyimana (2020), non-payment is often linked to an inability to pay, as well as a culture of entitlement where citizens feel they should not have to pay for services. Additionally, when citizens perceive that their local government is not acting in their best interest, they are less inclined to comply with payment obligations. According to Bikam and Chakwizira (2021), the non-payment of municipal services has become a pressing issue for South African municipalities, with far-reaching consequences for both local governments and their communities.

4.3.1.2.2.2. Beneficiaries of the municipal indigent programme in Polokwane Local Municipality

The provision of basic services and infrastructure to all residents, including the indigent population, is a critical responsibility of local governments in South Africa. However, municipalities often face significant financial constraints in fulfilling this mandate, which can have far-reaching consequences for local development (Glasser, & Wright, 2020). The impact of these indigent programmes on municipal revenue and local development is a complex and multifaceted issue. On one hand, the implementation of these programmes can reduce the overall revenue collected by municipalities, as they are required to forgo or discount the fees charged for services provided to indigent households. This can lead to budgetary constraints and limit the ability of municipalities to invest in critical infrastructure and development projects (Bureau for Economic Research, 2021).

On the other hand, providing essential services to the indigent population can have positive spillover effects on local development (Medeiros *et al*., 2020). Ensuring access to basic services, such as water, electricity, and sanitation, can improve the living conditions of low-income households, enhance their well-being, and potentially contribute to increased economic productivity and community development. Therefore, municipalities often struggle to strike a balance between the need to support the indigent population and the need to maintain a sustainable revenue base

to fund local development initiatives (Schultz & Hendrickse, 2018). The findings on beneficiaries of the municipal indigent programme are as follows:

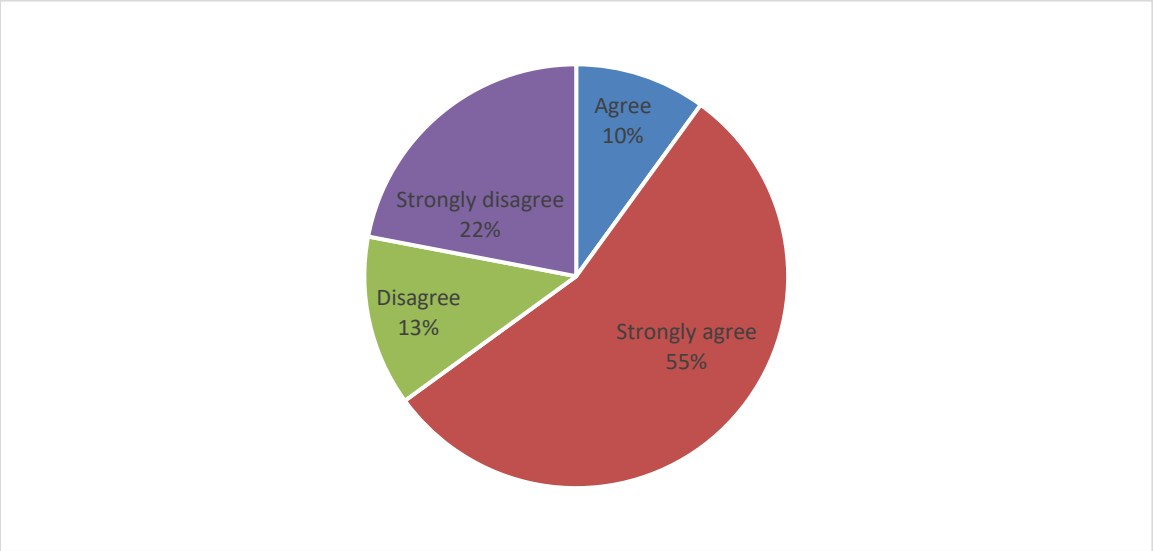

Figure 4.11: I am a beneficiary of municipal indigent programmes

Figure 4.11 indicates that the majority of respondents are beneficiaries of indigent programmes, with 55% strongly agreeing, followed by 10% agreeing. Conversely, 22% strongly disagree and 13% disagree. In total, 65% of respondents are part of the indigent population in Polokwane Local Municipality, while 35% of respondents do not benefit from indigent programmes in the area. The findings suggest that some individuals rely on discounted municipal services while others duly pay for their services.

One of the primary disadvantages of indigent programmes is their potential to discourage self-sufficiency and personal responsibility. When individuals receive government aid without being required to actively seek employment or make efforts to improve their financial situation, they may become reliant on these programmes and less inclined to take the initiative to better their circumstances (Institute For Economic Justice, 2022). This can lead to a cycle of dependence, where individuals remain in poverty and lack the motivation or opportunity to break out of it. Furthermore, the stigma associated with receiving welfare or other forms of public assistance can have detrimental effects on the mental health and social well-being of those in need.

4.3.1.2.2.3. Adequacy of communal infrastructure

Infrastructure plays a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of local development, as it underpins the fundamental systems and services that enable communities to grow and thrive. Without adequate infrastructure, communities may struggle to provide necessities, such as access to clean water, reliable electricity, and efficient transportation, which are essential for economic growth and social well-being (Effendi *et al*., 2019).

One of the key aspects of infrastructure development is its ability to bridge the gap between producers and consumers (Abdullahi & Sieng, 2023). Improved transportation infrastructure, such as roads, rails, and ports, can facilitate the movement of goods and people, connecting rural areas to urban markets and enabling the exchange of goods and services (Effendi *et al*., 2019). This connectivity can increase economic opportunities, as producers can access larger markets and consumers can access a wider range of products.

Moreover, infrastructure development can have a significant impact on the quality of life for residents. Investments in water and sanitation systems, for instance, can improve public health and reduce the incidence of waterborne diseases. At the same time, reliable electricity can power essential services and enable the use of modern technologies (Macura *et al*., 2021).

Infrastructure development can stimulate wider economic progress. Beyond its immediate advantages, such investment can serve as a driving force for broader economic expansion and progress. Improvements in physical infrastructure can enhance the productivity of private investments and enable the expansion of local industries. As noted by Effendi *et al*. (2019), infrastructure development can improve the quality of life for many people through increasing the value of consumption, enhancing labour productivity and creation of job opportunities. The findings regarding the adequacy of infrastructure in Polokwane Municipality are as follows:

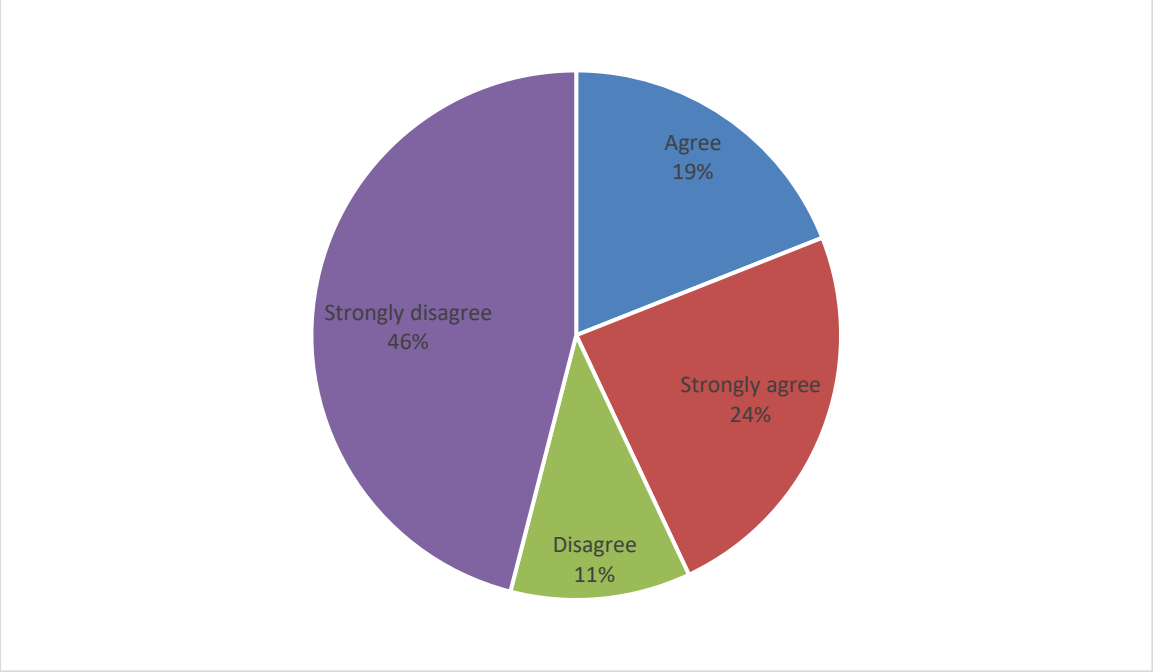

Figure 4.12: There is enough communal infrastructure for the respondents in Polokwane Municipal area

Figure 4.12 indicates that the majority of respondents strongly disagree, with 46%, followed by 11% who disagree that there is adequate infrastructure in their communities. While 24% of respondents strongly agree and 19% agree that their communities have adequate infrastructure, the overall findings reveal that 57% of respondents are of the opinion that there is inadequate infrastructure in Polokwane municipal area. Forty-three percent are of the opinion that there is adequate infrastructure in the Polokwane municipal area. The findings suggest that despite efforts in infrastructure investment, Polokwane Local Municipality still needs to further invest in infrastructure development and maintenance.

Although the Polokwane's infrastructure has improved post-1994, infrastructure investment levels in productive capacity remain low. The findings further correlate with the assertion that in the years leading up to the country's democratic transition, infrastructure spending was generally low. However, the government has since made efforts to address these deficits (Timilsina *et al*., 2023). Recognising the critical role that infrastructure plays in supporting economic growth, reducing inequality, and improving the overall quality of life for the country's citizens (Chitiga *et al*., 2016), the government has worked to close these long-standing infrastructure gaps.

4.3.1.2.2.4. Water provision in Polokwane Local Municipality

Reliable and equitable access to water is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development and the improvement of human well-being at the local level (Meehan *et al*., 2020). Water is essential for a wide range of essential activities, from drinking and sanitation to agriculture and industrial production. Lack of access to safe drinking water can have severe consequences for individual and community health. At the same time, water scarcity can also hinder economic progress and limit opportunities for improving living standards (Emran *et al*., 2024). The lack of reliable and equitable access to water can perpetuate cycles of poverty and marginalisation, particularly for vulnerable populations. Addressing these water access disparities is crucial for promoting more inclusive and sustainable local development.

Across the world, significant progress has been made in expanding access to water and sanitation services, which has contributed to improved health and living conditions for many people. However, significant challenges remain, particularly in lower-income communities and rural areas, where access to safe water can be limited or unreliable. (Meehan *et al*., 2020) In South Africa, for example, there are "geographies of insecure water access" that disproportionately affect marginalised populations, including low-income households and communities of colour (Meehan *et al*., 2020). These disparities in water access can have far-reaching and multifaceted consequences. They can negatively impact individual and community health, hinder educational attainment and opportunities, and limit economic progress and development.

The provision of clean and accessible water is a critical component of sustainable development, particularly in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals in South Africa. Sustainable Development Goal 6, which aims to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, is a clear testament to the global recognition of the importance of water in fostering local development (Nyingwa, at al. 2021). In South Africa, the challenges surrounding water provision are multifaceted. Additionally, the public water supply in many towns and villages is in a state of disrepair, forcing individuals and institutions to resort to alternative sources, such as boreholes, to meet their water needs (Nwaiwu *et al*., 2020).

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 would profoundly impact South Africans' socioeconomic development and quality of life. The availability of clean water is essential for health, education, and poverty reduction, as it underpins various aspects of human well-being.

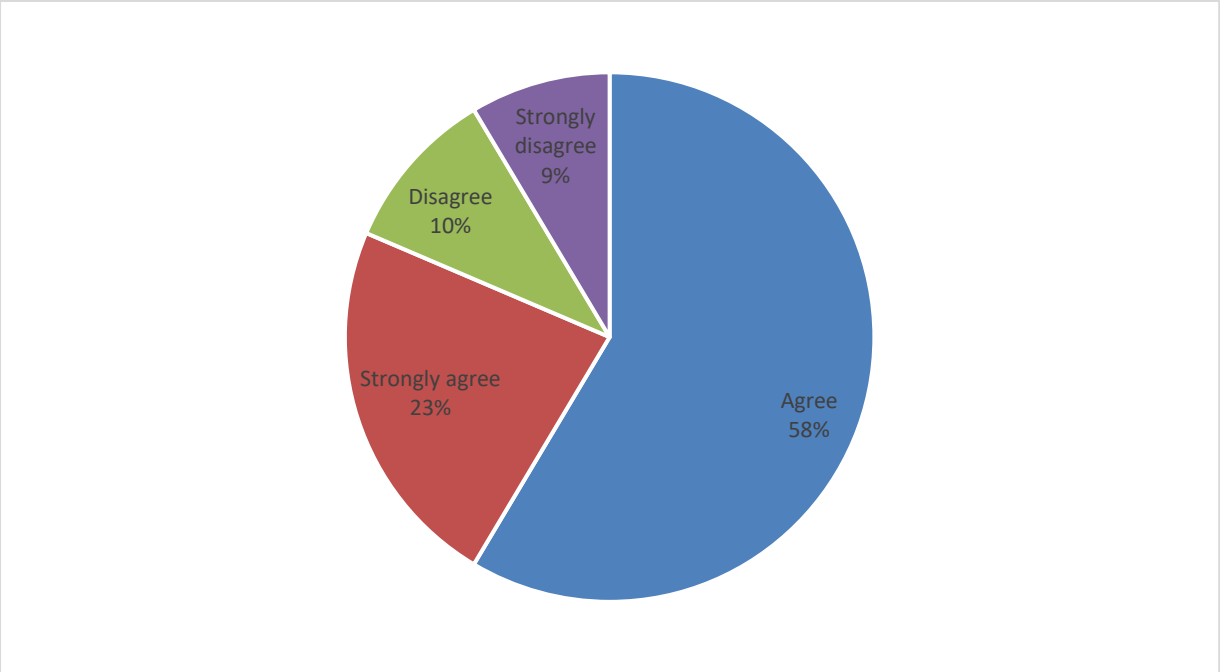

Figure 4.13: The supply of water in the municipality is satisfactory

Figure 4.13 indicates that the majority of respondents (58%) agree, followed by 23% who strongly agree, that water supply is satisfactory. Conversely, 10% disagree and 9% strongly disagree that water supply is satisfactory. In total, 81% of respondents eare satisfied with the water supply service, while only 18% are not satisfied.

The findings suggest that water access in Polokwane Local Municipality is geographically insecure, with urban populations enjoying better water provision service compared to those in rural areas and informal settlements. The study can deduce from the findings that the urban population is more likely to afford the water services provided by the municipality, allowing the municipality to sustain these services for them. In contrast, residents in rural areas and informal settlements cannot afford these services and the the municipality cannot provide water services to them.

The findings correlate with the assertion that the lack of access to water by populations who cannot afford it exists despite the principles of equality and non-discrimination under international human rights law (Khabo-Mmekoa & Momba,

2019). The legacy of apartheid has resulted in a system where water services, like other social services, still reflects racial imprints, with urban areas enjoying better water infrastructure and supply compared to informal settlements and rural areas (Mutyambizi *et al*., 2020). Indeed, while the South African Constitution enshrines the right to access sufficient water, the plight of disadvantaged communities in accessing this basic necessity remains a concern (Jegede & Shikwambane, 2021).

A large proportion of the urban poor in South Africa reside in informal settlements, which are often characterised by limited essential services, including reliable water supply (Enqvist *et al*., 2020). This issue is further exacerbated by the fact that water services in the country still bear the racial imprint of the apartheid era, with historically disadvantaged communities often facing the greatest challenges in accessing clean and reliable water (Jegede & Shikwambane, 2021).

4.3.1.2.2.5. Satisfactory municipal services in Polokwane Local Municipality

The provision of basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity, and waste management is a crucial aspect of local development in South Africa. The South African government recognises the importance of access to basic services to improve the quality of life of its citizens and promote local economic development (Mutyambizi *et al*., 2020). However, delivering these services has been a significant challenge, particularly in informal settlements and rural areas.

Decentralising service delivery to local municipalities has been a key strategy in South Africa's efforts to address the legacy of apartheid and improve service provision. Municipalities are responsible for managing and delivering water services to local populations and other essential services. However, municipalities often face significant challenges, including reducing apartheid-era backlogs, maintaining working systems, and recovering costs in an environment of high unemployment and household service debt (Bazaanah & Mothapo, 2023).

Understanding community perspectives on service delivery is crucial for identifying the challenges and potential solutions. Bazaanah and Mothapo (2023) highlight the need for improved community participation and collaboration between municipalities and residents to address water service delivery issues. Similarly, a study of Dipaleseng Municipality in Mpumalanga Province has identified poverty, economic

instability, and the provision of basic services as key challenges facing municipalities (Zama, 2013).

Despite these challenges, the South African government has significantly improved access to basic services. By 2010, about 90% of the population had access to water, 69% had access to sanitation, 64% had access to refuse removal, and 81% had access to electricity (Mutyambizi *et al*., 2020). However, there are still significant disparities in access to services, particularly in informal and rural settlements.

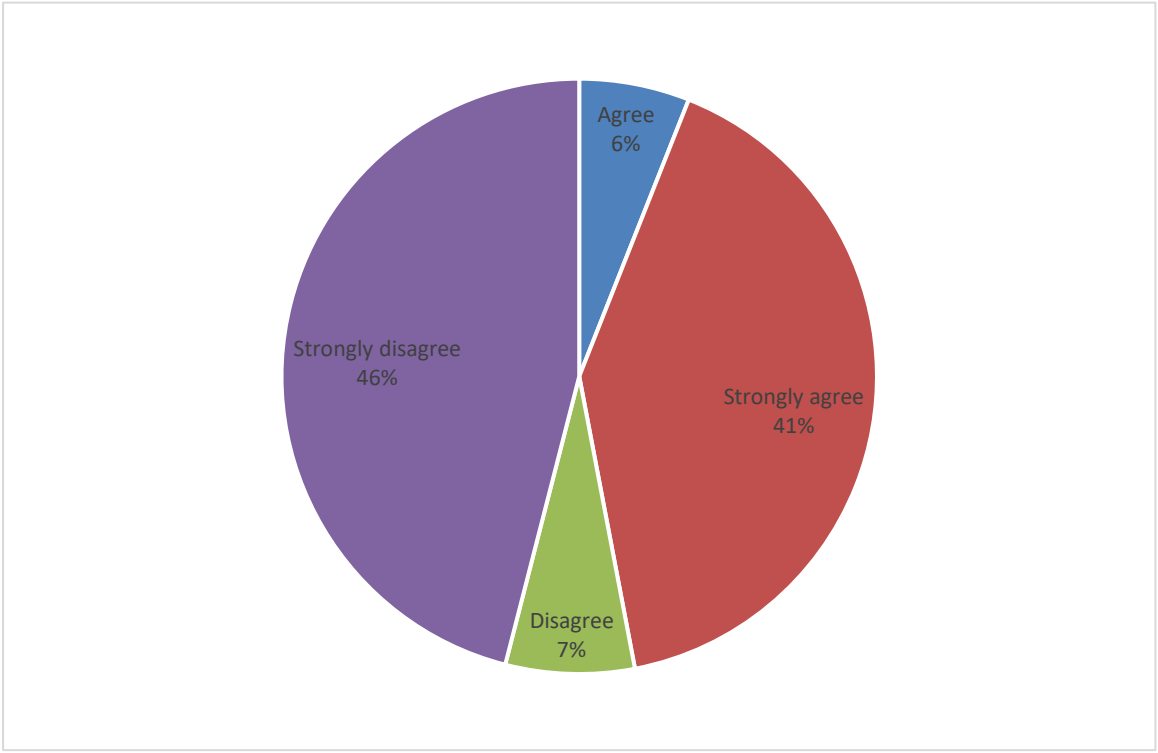

Figure 4.14: Service delivery is satisfactory in the municipality

Figure 4.14 indicates that 46% of respondents strongly disagree, followed by 7% who disagree, while 41% of respondents strongly agree and 6% agree that services in Polokwane Local Municipality are satisfactory. In total, 53% of respondents are of the opinion that service delivery is not satisfactory in Polokwane Local Municipality, compared to 47% who are of the opinion that service delivery is satisfactory.

The findings correlate with the assertion that South Africa has faced significant challenges in ensuring adequate service delivery at the municipal level, with many municipalities struggling to meet the needs of their constituents (Glasser, & Wright, 2020). While Polokwane Local Municipality has made efforts to provide services, there remains room for improvement in achieving consistently satisfactory service delivery.

Many municipalities are struggling to fulfil the expectations of new communities that they must serve, while also working to improve the quality of existing services and eliminating backlogs. This is exacerbated by the fact that the sources from which local authorities generate their revenue are often inadequate for the increased demand for funds (Mganga, 2023).

As Kanyane (2014) notes, poor service delivery in local municipalities is often a direct consequence of municipal capacity constraints, financial viability problems, service delivery protests, convoluted political processes, and corruption. These challenges have significantly diminished the ability of municipalities to effectively manage and deliver essential services, such as water and electricity, to their communities.

4.3.1.3. The impact of employment policies on local development in South Africa

South Africa has long grappled with the challenge of high unemployment rates, particularly among the youth (Meyer, 2014a). While the government has implemented various initiatives to address this issue, the unemployment rate, especially among young people, remains stubbornly high, posing a significant obstacle to the country's overall development (Nattrass, 2014) (de Lannoy *et al*., 2020). The government has responded with a range of initiatives, including policies and programmes focused on job creation, skills development, and entrepreneurship promotion (Akinyele, *et al.,* 2023).

However, the effectiveness of these efforts remains contentious, with some scholars arguing that the government's approach has been insufficient or misguided. One central argument is that the government's focus on high-productivity, capital-intensive industries has sidelined more labour-intensive options, which could potentially create more jobs in the short term (Furman & Seamans, 2018). Moreover, the trade union movement has also been critical of these policies, viewing them as a return to the "cheap labour" policies of the apartheid era (Nattrass, 2014).

Moreover, Kingdon and Knight (2023) argue that a more comprehensive and integrated approach is needed to address the various factors contributing to unemployment. This approach could involve reforms to labour regulations, improvements in education and skills training, and targeted support for entrepreneurship and small business development.

Unemployment remains a significant obstacle to local development as it hinders economic growth and exacerbates social and economic disparities (Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2020). This study explored aspects such as access to the labour force, participation in local economic development, the provision of decent, safe and healthy working environments and social security in the labour force of Polokwane municipal area, to assess the impact of employment policies on local development in South Africa. The findings on the impact of employment policies are as follows:

4.3.1.3.1 Access to the labour force in Polokwane municipal area

Access to a stable labour force plays a crucial role in local development in South Africa. The ability of a population to actively engage in the labour market can have profound implications for a nation's economic growth, social well-being, and overall development trajectory (Sen, 2014). A productive labour force contributes to economic growth by increasing output and generating income. This, in turn, can lead to improved living standards, reduced poverty, and enhanced overall well-being within the local community (Soubbotina, 2018). Furthermore, a skilled and adaptable labour force can attract investment, stimulate innovation, and promote diversification of the local economy (Padayachee & Zarenda, 1996). However, South Africa faces challenges such as high unemployment rates, skills mismatches, and inequality, which hinder the full potential of its labour force in contributing to local development (Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2020).

Effective policies and initiatives aimed at improving education, skills development, and labour market access are essential to harnessing the transformative power of the labour force for sustainable and inclusive local development (Khambule, 2018). Additionally, addressing issues like infrastructure development and creating a conducive business environment can further enhance the contribution of the labour force to local economic progress (Rogerson, 2015).

One of the key factors that can influence labour force participation is the state of a nation's health and education systems. Higher levels of education and improved health outcomes have been consistently linked to increased labour force participation, particularly among women (Klasen, 2019). Education and health can enhance an individual's productivity, employability, and overall economic opportunities, ultimately contributing to a nation's economic development (Cerf, 2023).

The labour force, as the collective pool of individuals actively participating in economic activities within a nation, is a fundamental driver of a country's development and progress. Its composition, productivity, and allocation have significant implications for economic growth, social well-being, and overall development (Merotto *et al*., 2018). The findings on access to the labour force are as follows:

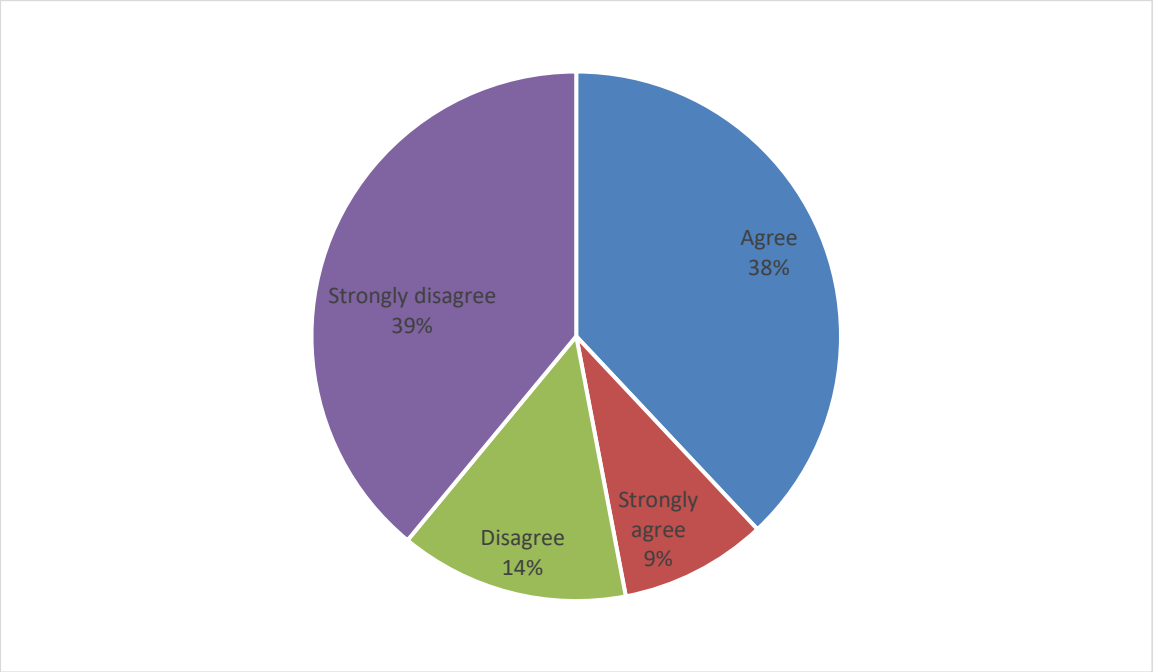

Figure 4.15: I have access to the labour force

Figure 4.15 illustrates that 39% of respondents strongly agree, followed by 38% who agree that they have access to the labour market. In contrast, 14% disagree and 9% strongly agree. In total, 53% of respondents believe that they do not have access to the labour market, while 47% believe they do. The findings suggest a divide in perceptions based on employment status. Unemployed individuals are of the view that they do not have access to the labour market, while those who are employed are of the opinion that they have access to the markets. The findings support the assertion that unemployed individuals often feel a sense of exclusion from the labour force, perceiving themselves as disconnected from the world of work (Navarro-Abal *et al*., 2018). This perception of disconnection can lead to feelings of isolation, a diminished sense of purpose, and a loss of professional identity, which can further exacerbate the challenges faced by the unemployed.

4.3.1.3.2. Participation in local economic activities in Polokwane municipal area

The contribution of employed individuals to a country's development is paramount, as they play a crucial role in driving economic growth, fostering social stability and contributing to the overall well-being of the nation (Sibiya, at al., 2023). Employment status significantly influences an individual's participation in economic activities and broader community integration (O'neil, *et al.,* 2018). Employed individuals tend to have higher levels of social capital, greater integration in leisure and civic activities, and improved subjective well-being. This is because employment not only provides income but also facilitates social contacts, a sense of purpose, and opportunities for personal growth (Buijs *et al*., 2012).

Conversely, unemployment can have significant social and psychological costs. The absence of structure, roles, and status that employment provides can lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression. Graduates who are more psychologically vulnerable are less likely to secure employment, further exacerbating their mental health challenges (Li& Toll, 2021).

The connection between employment status and community participation is particularly salient for individuals with disabilities and mental illness. Employed participants with disabilities have reported significantly higher levels of social capital and integration in leisure and civic activities compared to their non-employed counterparts (Tipnis *et al*., 2021). This suggests that employment plays a crucial role in facilitating social inclusion and meaningful participation in the community. The findings on participation in local economic activities in Polokwane municipal area are as follows:

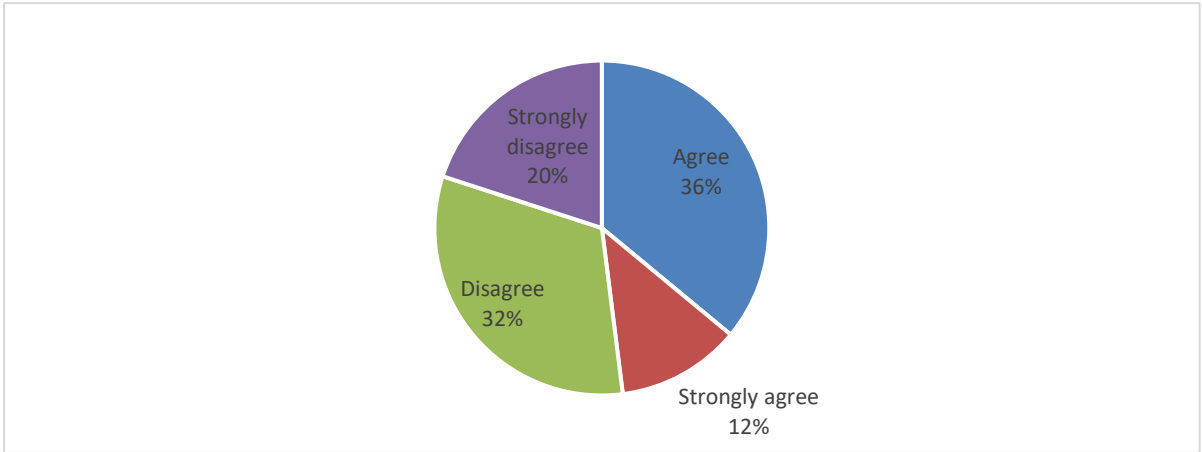

Figure 4.16: Respondents participate in local economic activities

Figure 4.16 indicates that majority (36%) of respondents agree that they participate in local economic activities, followed by 32% who disagree, 20% who strongly disagree, and 12% who strongly agree. Overall, 52% of respondents are of the view that they participate in local economic activities, while 48% hold opposing views. The findings suggest with the statement are employed and have the means to engage in economic activities, while those who disagree, are likely unemployed, limiting their ability to participate.

These findings correlate with the assertion that employed individuals can participate in economic activities in a more meaningful and substantial way compared to their unemployed counterparts (Mitra, 2020). This is because employment provides individuals with a steady source of income, which allows them to engage in a variety of economic activities, such as purchasing goods and services, saving and investing, and contributing to the overall economic growth of a society (Shafiu *et al*., 2020).

The findings further suggest that unemployment can have significant negative impacts on an individual's ability to participate in economic activities. The loss of income limits an individual's purchasing power and capacity to engage in economic activities such as buying goods and services, investing, or contributing to the overall economy. Furthermore, prolonged unemployment can erode an individual's skills and make it more difficult to find future employment, further exacerbating their economic challenges and reducing their potential for economic participation.

4.3.1.3.3. Workplace condition in Polokwane municipal area

The quality of workplace conditions within a country is a crucial factor that can profoundly influence a nation's overall development and progress. Numerous studies have demonstrated clear associations between the quality of the working environment and various outcomes, including the health and productivity of workers, their ability to balance work and personal life, and their capacity to fully utilise their skills and abilities to build successful careers (Saint-Martin *et al*., 2020).

Investments in improving working conditions can yield significant benefits for both individuals and society (Malik, 2023). By focusing on factors such as job design, work organisation, and the overall work environment, governments and employers can

create conditions that foster employee well-being, motivation, and productivity, ultimately contributing to the nation's economic and social progress.

Evidence suggests that poor working conditions can have detrimental effects on workers' health, leading to increased absenteeism, reduced productivity, and higher healthcare costs (Saint-Martin *et al*., 2020). Conversely, high-quality working environments with autonomy, flexibility, and supportive management can positively impact worker well-being and performance, generating economic and social benefits for the nation (Peters *et al*., 2022).

Furthermore, the impact of working conditions on productivity can have far-reaching implications for a country's overall economic performance (Chari *et al*., 2022). Policies and practices that promote better coordination among key stakeholders, such as employers, government regulators, and worker representatives, can help to address the apparent paradox of insufficient attention paid to job quality despite its proven benefits (Saint-Martin *et al*., 2020). The findings regarding working conditions in Polokwane municipal area are as follows:

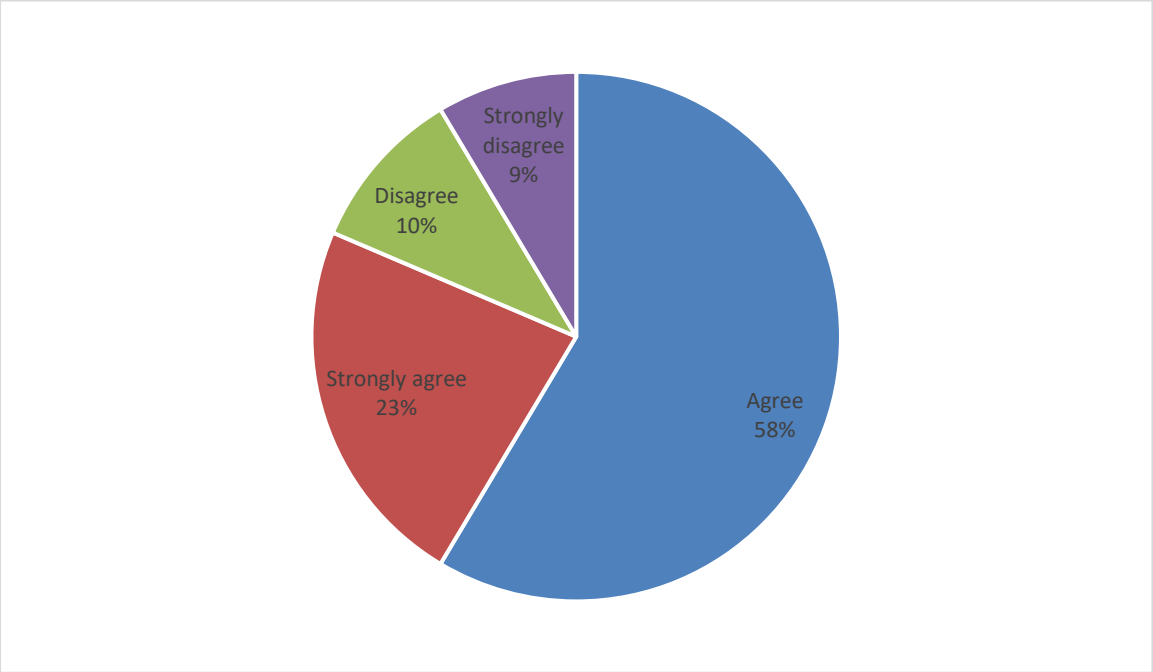

Figure 4.17: Decent, safe and healthy working environment working conditions of respondents in Polokwane municipal area

Figure 4.17 indicates that the majority of respondents agree (58%), followed by 23% who strongly agree that they work in a decent, safe and healthy working environment.

In contrast 10% disagree and 9% strongly disagree with this statement. Overall, 81% of respondents are of the view that they have a decent safe and healthy working environment, while only 19% fee otherwise. The findings suggest that employment policies play a pivotal role in shaping the working conditions in South African labour force.

The findings also suggest that the employers of those subjected to poor working conditions are not complying with employment policies and the legislative framework in South Africa. Moreover, the results indicate that the employment policies implemented in the post-apartheid era have played a pivotal role in shaping the working conditions and dynamics within the South African labour market. Since the end of apartheid, the South African government has implemented a range of employment policies aimed at addressing the legacy of racial discrimination and inequalities in the labour force.

4.3.1.3.4. Social security in the workplace: Polokwane municipal area

Social security systems have long been recognised as a crucial component of a country's development strategy. Well-designed social security systems have been shown to have a positive impact on a country's economic development (Rajan & Prasad, 2009). They can increase productivity and employability by enhancing human capital, boosting domestic consumption and demand, and facilitating the structural transformation of the economy. Social security benefits have become increasingly important in addressing issues of poverty, inequality, and the challenges posed by the informal economy (Olivier, 2019).

One of the key roles of job-based social security in the development of a country is its ability to provide a safety net for workers. In many developing countries, a significant portion of the workforce is engaged in informal, precarious employment, lacking access to traditional social security mechanisms (Olivier, 2019). By extending social security coverage to this population segment, governments can help mitigate the risks associated with job loss, illness, or old age, thereby contributing to the overall well-being and economic security of the population.

Social security is a crucial component of the workplace, providing a safety net for employees and ensuring financial stability during times of need. It is a form of social protection that guarantees the fulfilment of basic needs for a decent life, as defined

by various experts and legal frameworks(ILO, 2021). In the context of the workplace, social security plays a vital role in addressing the insecurities faced by workers, particularly those in the informal sector, such as casual labourers and self-employed individuals (Unni & Rani, 2009).

Like many other developing countries, South Africa has a large informal workforce that lacks adequate social security coverage. This has led to a significant portion of the population seeking employment in the informal sector to survive (Xweso, 2021). While the informal economy in South Africa provides employment opportunities for the unemployed and offers an alternative and often long-term means of subsistence for those who cannot find formal employment (Xweso, 2021), the absence of social security remains a pressing challenge. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive social protection schemes that accommodate the specific needs of informal workers. The findings on job-based social security in the Polokwane municipal area are as follows:

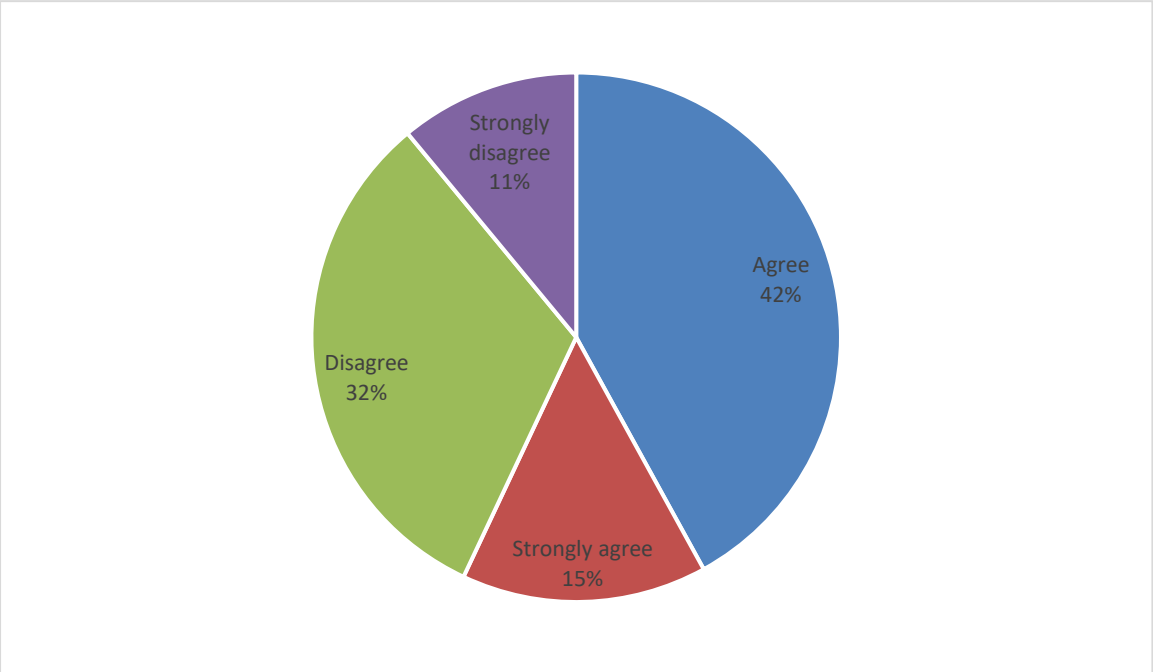

Figure 4.18: Respondents have social security in their workplace

Figure 4.18 indicates that 42% of respondents agree, followed by 15% who strongly agree, while 32% disagree and 11% strongly disagree that they have social security in their workplace. Overall, 57% of respondents are of the view that they have social security in their workplace, while 43% are of the view that they do not . These findings suggest that those who enjoy job-based security are employed in the formal labour

market while those who do not are employed in the informal sector where labour law compliance is minimal or non-existent. The findings suggest that employers in the formal labour force comply with employment policies and legislative frameworks in South Africa.

The findings align with existing research that while the informal economy provides opportunities, it also poses significant challenges in terms of compliance with labour laws and policies (Meagher, 2013). The informal economy, characterised by economic activities that operate outside formal regulatory frameworks, presents a complex and multi-faceted reality. The informal economy can provide much-needed opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed, offering a means of livelihood and a pathway to economic participation (Godfrey, 2011). However, the lack of regulation and oversight also poses significant challenges in terms of compliance with labour laws and social policies (Narula, 2020).

4.4 DATA COLLECTED THROUGH INTERVIEWS

This section is divided into three sections; the first section presents data obtained from interviews conducted with Department of Labour employees. Section two presents data obtained from interviews conducted with HR personnel in selected SMMEs within the Polokwane Local Municipality. Lastly, section three presents data obtained from interviews conducted with senior employees in Polokwane Local Municipality.

4.4.1 Section One: Presentation of data obtained from interviews with the Department of Labour

The study interviewed five employees in the Department of Labour who were purposefully selected to provide information regarding the influence of employment policies on employment levels and their impact on local development in South Africa. The study explored the influence of employment policies on employment levels; perceived challenges in compliance of legislative and policy frameworks, as well as the measures that can be taken to enhance employment policies and contribute to employment growth in establishing the relationship between employment policies and employment levels. The findings are as follows:

4.4.1.1. Influence of employment policies on employment levels

The participants were asked whether the following employment policies and legislative frameworks influence employment growth in South Africa:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa
- Labour Relations Act number 66 of 1995
- Employment Equity Act number 55 of 1998
- Employment Tax Incentive 26 of 2013
- Skills Development Act number 97 of 1998
- Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997
- The Public Service Act, 1994
- Employment Service Act 4 of 2014

The respondents stated that the Department of Labour does not gauge and evaluate the impact of employment policies on employment growth in South Africa. However, they stated that each employment policy in the labour force plays a role in employment growth. The following were their responses:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

All agreed that the Constitution, which was adopted in 1996, enshrines the right to fair labour practice and the freedom of association, which have influenced the development of South Africa's labour laws and regulations.

- Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995

All the respondents acknowledged that the Labour Relations Act, enacted in 1995, has also played a crucial role in shaping the labour relations landscape in South Africa. This legislation has established a framework for collective bargaining, dispute resolution, and the regulation of various aspects of the employer-employee relationship. While these legal frameworks were intended to protect workers' rights, they have also had implications for job creation and the overall economic environment.

- Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998

The respondents stated that the Employment Equity Act of 1998 was a critical policy instrument in post-apartheid South Africa, aimed at promoting affirmative action and increasing the economic participation of previously disadvantaged groups. The Act has contributed to increasing the representation of previously disadvantaged groups

in the workforce, which influences employment growth in South Africa. The Act sought to address the legacy of discrimination and inequality in the workforce, which had resulted in disproportionate income differentials and a lack of diversity in middle and senior management positions. The Act, along with the South African Constitution of 1996, provided the legal framework to demand non-discriminatory pay structures and promote equal employment opportunities.

- Employment Tax Incentive 26 of 2013

The respondents stated that tax incentives and skill development programmes can play a crucial role in driving job creation in South Africa. One respondent added that tax incentives, such as tax breaks or credits, can encourage businesses to invest in expansion, hiring, and training, thereby increasing employment opportunities.

- Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

The respondents agreed that the Skills Development Act of 1998 was a key policy intervention aimed at addressing workforce development by improving workforce skills and promoting employment growth. They further stated that the Act sought to establish a comprehensive skills development strategy, including implementing learnerships, skills programmes, and developing a national qualifications framework.

- Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997

The respondents stated that,

> "The Basic Conditions of Employment Act is a crucial piece of legislation that aims to establish and enforce basic employment standards in South Africa. This Act plays a significant role in shaping the labour landscape and can have a profound impact on job creation. While the BCEA is primarily focused on ensuring fair and equitable working conditions for employees, it can also influence the decisions of employers regarding hiring and job creation. One of the key provisions of the BCEA is the regulation of working hours, overtime, and leave entitlements. These regulations can impact the cost of employment and employers' flexibility in managing their workforce. Employers may be hesitant to create new jobs if they perceive the BCEA's requirements as overly burdensome or restrictive, as this could limit their ability to respond to changing business needs.

Additionally, the BCEA's provisions on minimum wages and other employee benefits can also affect the cost of employment. Employers may be less inclined to create new jobs if the minimum wage or other mandated benefits increase the overall cost of hiring and retaining employees. This can be particularly challenging for small and medium-sized businesses, which may have limited resources to absorb these additional labour costs."

One respondent stated however, that it is important to note that the BCEA also serves to protect workers' rights and promote a more equitable labour market. By ensuring basic employment standards, the Act can help to create a more stable and productive workforce, which may ultimately contribute to economic growth and job creation in the long run. The challenge lies in striking the right balance between protecting workers' rights and creating an environment that is conducive to job creation.

- The Public Service Act, 1994

The respondents stated that the Public Service Act of 1994 had a significant impact on job creation in South Africa. The Act aimed to restructure the public service and improve its efficiency, which, in turn led to the creation of new employment opportunities. The Act enabled the government to expand its workforce and provide more jobs across various sectors by streamlining administrative processes and encouraging public-private partnerships. One respondent added that "the Act's emphasis on skills development and training programmes helped to equip the workforce with the necessary skills to meet the evolving demands of the public sector. As a result, the implementation of the Public Service Act of 1994 contributed to the expansion of the job market and the overall economic growth of South Africa."

- Employment Service Act 4 of 2014

The respondents stated that the Employment Service Act 4 of 2014 was enacted in South Africa with the goal of improving job creation and employment opportunities in the country. This law aimed to establish a comprehensive public employment service that would connect job seekers with available positions and provide training and support to help workers find and maintain employment. By expanding the reach and capabilities of the public employment system, the Act sought to boost economic productivity and reduce the country's high unemployment rate. The legislation included provisions for increased collaboration between the government, private

sector, and civil society organisations to develop and implement employment-focused initiatives. Additionally, the Act mandated the collection and publication of detailed labour market data to inform policy decisions and programme development. Overall, the Employment Service Act 4 of 2014 represented a significant effort by the South African government to address the country's persistent unemployment challenges through a multifaceted approach to job creation and workforce development.

4.4.1.2 Hindrances to employment policies

The respondents were asked about any hindrances to employment growth emanating from employment policies as well as perceived challenges in compliance with the following policy and legislative frameworks:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa
- Labour Relations Act number 66 of 1995
- Employment Equity Act number 55 of 1998
- Employment Tax Incentive 26 of 2013
- Skills Development Act number 97 of 1998
- The Public Service Act, 1994
- Employment Service Act 4 of 2014
- Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997

The respondents were further asked to explain their responses and suggest measures to enhance employment policies and contribute to employment growth? The findings regarding hindrance to employment policy were as follows:

4.4.1.2.1. Are there any perceived challenges in compliance with the following legislative framework? If yes, please explain and if no, please explain.

4.4.1.2.1.1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

The respondents acknowledged that there are several perceived challenges regarding compliance with the South African Constitution within the labour force. These challenges often involve balancing employees' rights with employers' interests. Key challenges include:

- Dismissal for social media misconduct

Balancing employees' constitutional rights (freedom of expression, privacy) with employers' need to protect their reputation and productivity is a significant challenge. The lack of specific legislation in this area contributes to the difficulty.

- Enforcement of labour laws

While South Africa has a robust legal framework for labour rights, effective enforcement remains a challenge.

- High Unemployment and inequality

Persistent high unemployment rates, especially among the youth, and widening wage inequality create challenges for fair labour practice. One respondent suggested that these economic realities create an environment where labour exploitation may be highly likely.

- Transformation of the labour market

South Africa's labour market is still grappling with the legacy of apartheid. The respondents suggested that achieving true equality in the labour market remains a work in progress.

4.4.1.2.1.2. Labour Relations Act number 66 of 1995

The respondents were asked if there are any perceived challenges in compliance with the Labour Relations Act number 66 of 1995 in the labour force. They replied affirmatively, stating that there are several perceived challenges in complying with the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 in South Africa. One respondent stated that the challenges vary with the industry, company, and circumstances. The respondents further listed some of the most common challenges, including:

- Complexity and ambiguity

The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (LRA) is a complex piece of legislation, and some of its provisions are open to interpretation. This can create uncertainty for both employers and employees, leading to disputes and litigation. Moreover, the LRA covers a wide range of issues, from collective bargaining and strikes to dismissals and unfair labour practice. The language used can be technical and legalistic, making

it difficult for those without legal training to fully grasp. For example, determining whether a dismissal is substantively and procedurally fair can be complex, requiring careful consideration of various factors. Different interpretations of the LRA by employers, employees, and even the courts can lead to confusion and inconsistency.

- Cost of compliance

Meeting all the requirements of the Act can be expensive for businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. Costs can include legal fees, training, and administrative expenses. Compliance can be particularly burdensome for small businesses. They may have limited resources to dedicate to things like legal advice, human resources management, and training on LRA requirements. The costs associated with disciplinary hearings, CCMA proceedings, and Labour Court cases can be substantial, potentially impacting their financial viability.

- Capacity challenges

Many employers, especially smaller ones, lack the resources and expertise to understand and comply with the Act fully. This can lead to unintentional non-compliance. Many employers, especially in smaller businesses, lack dedicated human resources personnel with expertise in labour law. This can make it difficult for them to stay current with legislation and best practice changes. They may struggle to develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures that comply with the LRA.

- Enforcement issues

While the Act provides mechanisms for enforcement, such as the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration and the Labour Court, these processes can be lengthy and costly. This can deter some parties from pursuing their rights. While the CCMA and Labour Court are designed to resolve labour disputes, the processes can be time-consuming and expensive. Delays in resolving cases can create frustration and uncertainty for both employers and employees. Furthermore, enforcing judgments can sometimes be challenging, particularly against employers who are unwilling to comply.

- Changing economic conditions

The LRA was enacted in a specific economic context. Economic changes, such as globalisation and technological advancements, have created new challenges for labour relations that the LRA may not fully address. For example, the rise of the gig economy presents challenges for the traditional employer-employee relationship as defined in the LRA. The increasing use of technology and automation also impacts the nature of work and the skills required, potentially leading to job losses and the need for reskilling. The LRA may need to adapt to these evolving realities.

- Power imbalances

Despite the protections afforded by the LRA, power imbalances can still exist between employers and employees. This can make it difficult for employees to assert their rights effectively. Even with the protections provided by the LRA, employees can still be vulnerable, especially in sectors with high unemployment or where workers are not unionised. Fear of losing their jobs can make employees reluctant to raise concerns or challenge unfair treatment.

- Lack of awareness

Some employers and employees are not fully aware of their rights and obligations under the LRA. This can lead to non-compliance and exploitation. Many employees are unaware of their rights under the LRA, making them susceptible to exploitation. Similarly, some employers may be unaware of their obligations, leading to unintentional non-compliance. Education and awareness campaigns are crucial to address this issue.

- Conflicting interests

The LRA aims to balance the interests of employers and employees. However, these interests can sometimes conflict, making it challenging to find solutions that satisfy all parties. Balancing the needs of businesses to remain competitive and profitable with the rights of employees to fair wages, decent working conditions, and job security is an ongoing challenge. Finding solutions that address both sets of interests requires negotiation, compromise, and a commitment to social dialogue.

4.4.1.2.1.3. Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998

The respondents were asked if there are any perceived challenges in compliance with the Employment Equity Act (EEA) number 55 of 1998 in the labour force. stated that there are several perceived challenges in complying with the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 in South Africa. While the EEA aims to promote equal opportunities and redress historical disadvantages in the workplace, its implementation has faced obstacles. Some of these include:

- Resistance from some employers

The respondents stated that some employers may be reluctant to implement affirmative action measures, viewing them as reverse discrimination or an unnecessary burden. The respondents further mentioned that some employers may view affirmative action measures as infringing on their autonomy. One respondent stated that they might argue that merit should be the sole criterion for hiring and promotion decisions. This resistance can manifest as slow implementation, inadequate resource allocated to equity programmes, or even outright non-compliance.

- Lack of skills and resources

Smaller companies may lack the resources and expertise to develop and implement comprehensive employment equity plans. They might lack dedicated personnel, access to appropriate training, or the financial capacity to invest in diversity and inclusion initiatives.

- Focus on numerical targets vs. substantive equality

Sometimes, organisations may prioritise meeting numerical targets over fostering genuine inclusion and transformation. One of the respondents noted that there was "an absence of ambition in target setting," suggesting a potential focus on numbers rather than real change. There is a risk that organisations may prioritise meeting numerical targets for designated groups without addressing underlying systemic inequalities. Simply achieving a certain percentage of representation does not necessarily translate to genuine inclusion, equal opportunities, or workplace culture transformation.

- Psychometric testing challenges

The use of psychometric tests in recruitment and selection needs careful consideration to ensure fairness and compliance with the EEA. Tests must be validated to ensure they do not unfairly disadvantage certain groups. Bias in test design or administration can perpetuate existing inequalities, even if unintentional.

- Definition of 'designated groups'

The EEA's focus on designated groups, while intended to address historical disadvantages, can be seen as reinforcing racial and gender categorisation. This approach may not fully capture the complexities of intersectionality and other forms of discrimination. The ongoing debate about the definition and scope of designated groups highlights this challenge.

- Regional disparities

South Africa's diverse demographics present regional variations in racial and gender representation. A one-size-fits-all approach to employment equity may not be effective.

- Enforcement and monitoring

Effective enforcement and monitoring of EEA compliance are crucial. If there are insufficient mechanisms to ensure accountability, companies may be less inclined to fully implement the Act's provisions.

4.4.1.2.1.4. Employment Tax Incentive 26 of 2013

The respondents were asked if there are any perceived challenges in compliance with the Employment Tax Incentive (ETI) 26 of 2013 in the labour force. They replied that yes, there are several perceived challenges in complying with the Employment Tax Incentive. While the ETI aims to stimulate youth employment by reducing labour costs for employers, some of the challenges include:

- Complexity of the ETI programme

The rules and regulations surrounding the ETI can be complex and difficult for employers to understand and implement correctly. This complexity can lead to errors and non-compliance, potentially resulting in penalties or the loss of benefits.

- Administrative burden

The ETI requires employers to maintain detailed records and submit regular reports, which can create a significant administrative burden, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises with limited resources.

- Limited awareness and understanding

Some employers may be unaware of the ETI programme or may not fully understand its benefits and requirements. This lack of awareness can limit the programme's effectiveness in promoting youth employment.

- Potential for abuse

There is a risk that some employers may attempt to abuse the ETI programme by claiming benefits for ineligible employees or by manipulating employment practice to maximise their tax benefits. This can undermine the integrity of the programme and reduce its overall impact.

- Targeting and effectiveness

Questions remain about the overall effectiveness of the ETI in achieving its objectives. The programme primarily benefits employers rather than creating sustainable employment opportunities for young people. Concerns exist about whether the ETI incentivises the creation of quality jobs with opportunities for career advancement or simply subsidises low-wage, temporary positions. Evaluating the long-term impact of the ETI on youth employment outcomes is crucial.

- Monitoring and enforcement

Effective monitoring and enforcement are essential to ensure compliance and prevent abuse. However, limited resources and the complexity of the programme can make it challenging for regulatory bodies to oversee the programme effectively. Insufficient monitoring and enforcement can undermine the credibility of the programme and reduce its impact on youth employment.

4.4.1.2.1.5. Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

The respondents were asked if there are there any perceived challenges in compliance with the Skills Development Act number 97 of 1998 in the labour force. They replied that yes, while the Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998 was introduced with the noble aim of addressing skills shortages and promoting workforce development in South Africa, its implementation has been fraught with challenges, hindering its overall effectiveness. These challenges can be categorised into several key areas:

- Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) effectiveness

SETAs often face challenges in attracting and retaining qualified personnel with the necessary expertise to manage funds, design effective training programmes, and oversee implementation. This lack of capacity can lead to inefficiencies and poor decision-making. One respondent noted that concern have been raised about the efficiency and effectiveness of SETAs in managing funds and implementing training programmes. Issues such as mismanagement, corruption, and lack of capacity have hampered their ability to fulfil their mandate. Allegations of financial mismanagement, corruption, and misallocation of funds have plagued several SETAs. These issues erode public trust and divert resources away from crucial skills development initiatives.

- Employer participation

While employers are required to contribute to the skills development levy, there have been challenges in encouraging active participation in training programmes. Some employers view the skills development levy as an additional tax burden rather than an investment in their workforce. This perception can lead to reluctance to actively participate in training programmes and contribute to the overall skills development effort. The skills development system, with its various regulations and reporting requirements, can be complex and burdensome for employers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. This complexity can discourage participation and create administrative hurdles.

- Lack of focus on critical skills

While the Skills Development Act aims to address critical skills shortages, there can be a disconnect between the training offered and the actual skills needed in the economy. This mismatch can perpetuate skills gaps and hinder economic growth. One respondent pointed to the failure of the education and training system to supply the economy with needed skills.

- Alignment with labour market needs

A key challenge is ensuring that training programmes offered through SETAs align with the labour market's actual skills needs. Mismatches between skills acquired and jobs available can lead to unemployment and underemployment. Employers often struggle to find training programmes offered by SETAs that align precisely with their specific business needs and skills requirements. This misalignment can make it difficult to justify investment in training and may lead to employers seeking alternative training solutions.

- Quality of training

The quality of training offered by different training providers can vary significantly. Ensuring consistent quality and relevance across all programmes is a major challenge. One respondent highlighted the difficulty in interpreting existing research on ICT skills shortages and the lack of comprehensive and credible data.

- Limited Impact on employment outcomes

A key measure of the success of skills development initiatives is their impact on employment outcomes. However, limited evidence demonstrates a strong link between participation in SETA-funded training and improved employment prospects.

- Monitoring and evaluation

Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential to track the impact of skills development initiatives and ensure accountability. Weaknesses in these areas can hinder the assessment of the Act's success. Effective monitoring and evaluation require robust data collection and analysis. However, there are challenges in gathering reliable data on the impact of skills development programmes and measuring their effectiveness.

4.4.1.2.1.6. The Public Service Act, 1994

The respondents were asked if there are any perceived challenges in compliance with the Public Service Act, 1994 in the labour force. They replied that yes, there are several perceived challenges regarding compliance with the Public Service Act, 1994, particularly concerning the labour force in South Africa. While the Act aims to create a professional, efficient, and ethical public service, its implementation has faced obstacles. Some of the key challenges include:

- Capacity and resources

One key challenge is the limited capacity and resources within the public service to effectively monitor and enforce compliance. This constraint can hinder the ability to ensure adherence to the Act's provisions across various departments and levels of government. The Act's effective implementation hinges on adequate monitoring, training, and enforcement resources. A lack of sufficient resources can hinder investigations into misconduct, limit the provision of training on ethical conduct and regulations, and weaken the capacity to take disciplinary action when necessary. This can create an environment where non-compliance goes unchecked, undermining the Act's objectives. Furthermore, one respondent noted the importance of building a capable state through proper human resource management, suggesting that investing in human capital within the public sector is crucial for effective governance and service delivery. This implies that a lack of human resource investment can exacerbate compliance challenges.

- Attracting and retaining skilled employees

Another challenge relates to attracting and retaining skilled employees in the public sector. Competition with the private sector poses a significant challenge. One respondent pointed out the difficulty in competing with the private sector, which often offers better compensation and development opportunities. If public sector salaries and benefits lag behind those offered in the private sector, attracting and retaining qualified individuals becomes difficult. This can lead to a loss of skilled personnel, making it harder to maintain a high-performing public service that adheres to the Act's standards. It can further lead to a skills gap within the public service, making it harder to meet the standards set by the Act. Moreover, high staff turnover can disrupt institutional knowledge and create instability, further hindering compliance efforts.

- Changing nature of public service delivery

The changing nature of public service delivery, including outsourcing and privatisation, can create complexities in ensuring compliance across different entities involved in providing public services. The lines of accountability and responsibility may become blurred, making it challenging to enforce the Act's provisions uniformly. Clear contractual obligations and robust oversight mechanisms are essential to maintain consistent adherence to the Act's principles.

- Employee commitment and motivation

Employee commitment and its impact on service delivery are crucial to any public sector context. A demotivated workforce is less likely to adhere to regulations and ethical standards. Factors such as perceived unfairness, lack of recognition, and limited career development opportunities can contribute to low morale and disengagement, potentially increasing the risk of non-compliance.

One respondent highlighted the importance of employee engagement and performance in achieving the goals of public service, which are central to the Public Service Act, of 1994. Improving employee commitment and addressing the underlying issues contributing to dissatisfaction could indirectly support compliance with the Act by fostering a more motivated and effective workforce. Addressing these underlying issues and fostering a positive work environment can indirectly support compliance by promoting a more committed and responsible workforce. This aligns with the broader goals of the Public Service Act, which seeks to create a professional and ethical public service.

4.4.1.2.1.7. Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997

The respondents were asked if there are any perceived challenges in compliance with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), 75 of 1997 in the labour force. They replied that there are several perceived challenges in complying with the Act in South Africa. Both employers and employees experience these challenges and often contribute to labour disputes and non-compliance. Some of the key challenges include:

4.4.1.2.1.7.1 For employers

- Complexity and interpretation of the Act

The BCEA covers various employment conditions, including working hours, leave, deductions, terminations, and various other aspects. The language used in the Act can be technical and difficult to understand, especially for smaller businesses without dedicated HR or legal departments. Furthermore, frequent amendments and sectoral determinations add layers of complexity, requiring constant updates and training to ensure ongoing compliance. A specific example might be navigating the nuances of calculating leave pay for employees who work irregular hours.

- Cost of compliance

Meeting the minimum requirements of the BCEA, such as providing paid annual leave, sick leave, family responsibility leave, and maternity leave, can represent a significant cost for businesses. The obligation to pay overtime at the prescribed rate can also strain budgets, especially in sectors with fluctuating workloads. For small and medium-sized enterprises, these costs can be particularly burdensome, potentially hindering growth and job creation. For example, a small business might struggle to afford the costs associated with providing maternity leave and may be tempted to avoid hiring women of childbearing age.

- Enforcement challenges

The Department of Labour is tasked with inspecting workplaces and enforcing the BCEA. However, they face limitations in terms of resources, personnel, and capacity to monitor all workplaces effectively. This can lead to inconsistent enforcement and a perception that non-compliance is tolerated. Furthermore, the process of investigating complaints and prosecuting violations can be lengthy and complex, discouraging both employers and employees from pursuing formal channels.

- Sectoral variations

Different industries have unique operational requirements and employment practices. The BCEA attempts to address these variations through sectoral determinations, which set specific minimum standards for particular sectors. However, developing and implementing these determinations can be challenging, and ensuring compliance

across diverse sectors requires significant effort and resources. For instance, the agricultural sector may have different working hour requirements compared to the manufacturing sector.

- Avoiding exploitation

Some employers may intentionally exploit loopholes in the BCEA or misclassify workers to avoid providing the required benefits and protections. This can include paying below the minimum wage, denying leave entitlements, or forcing employees to work excessive hours without proper compensation. Vulnerable workers, such as migrants or those in informal employment, are particularly at risk of exploitation.

4.4.1.2.1.7.2. For employees

- Lack of awareness

Many employees, especially those in low-skilled or informal jobs, are unaware of their rights under the BCEA. This lack of awareness makes them vulnerable to exploitation and prevents them from asserting their entitlements. Language barriers and low literacy levels can further compound this challenge. For example, an employee might not know that they are entitled to paid sick leave and may continue working while ill, potentially exacerbating their health condition.

- Fear of retaliation

Employees may be hesitant to report violations of the BCEA due to fear of losing their jobs or facing other forms of retaliation from their employers. Even when employees are aware of their rights, they may be hesitant to report violations due to fear of reprisal from their employers. This fear can be particularly acute in sectors with high unemployment rates, where employees may feel they have limited options and cannot risk losing their jobs. Retaliation can take various forms, including dismissal, demotion, or harassment.

- Access to justice

Navigating the legal system to address BCEA violations can be daunting and expensive for employees. Legal representation can be costly, and the process of lodging complaints and attending hearings can be time-consuming and complex. This

can effectively deter employees, especially those earning low wages, from pursuing legal action.

- Informal employment

A significant portion of the South African workforce is employed informally, making enforcing the BCEA and protecting these workers' rights difficult. The informal economy in South Africa is substantial, and many workers in this sector are excluded from the protections of the BCEA. These workers often lack written contracts, work irregular hours, and are paid in cash, making it difficult to monitor compliance and enforce their rights. This leaves them particularly vulnerable to exploitation and unfair labour practice.

4.4.1.2.1.8. Employment Tax Incentive 26 of 2013

The respondents were asked if there are there any perceived challenges in compliance with the Employment Tax Incentive (ETI) 26 of 2013 in the labour force. They replied that yes, there are several perceived challenges in complying with the Employment Tax Incentive Act 26 of 2013 in the labour force. While the ETI aims to encourage employment of young, less-experienced workers, some employers have found navigating the requirements complex, leading to concerns about unintentional non-compliance. The following are some key challenges:

- Interaction with other labour laws

The ETI must be applied with other labour legislation, such as minimum wage laws and collective bargaining agreements. This interplay can create further complexity and make it challenging for employers to ensure full compliance across all relevant regulations.

- Variations in interpretation

Ambiguities within the ETI legislation can lead to varying interpretations by different stakeholders, including employers, tax authorities, and labour inspectors. This lack of clarity can create uncertainty and increase the risk of non-compliance.

- Record-keeping and documentation

Employers must maintain meticulous records to demonstrate that employees meet the eligibility criteria for the ETI. This includes proof of age, employment contracts, payroll records, and other relevant documentation. This administrative burden can be particularly onerous for small and medium-sized enterprises with limited resources.

- Indirect displacement

Even if employers do not directly replace older workers, the ETI might indirectly discourage the hiring of older individuals due to the financial incentives associated with employing younger, eligible workers. This could exacerbate age discrimination in the labour market.

- Impact on wage levels

The respondents asserted that the ETI could suppress wage growth for young workers, as employers might factor the tax incentive into their wage calculations, effectively reducing the overall cost of labour.

- Effectiveness and impact

While the ETI aims to stimulate job creation, there is ongoing concern about its actual effectiveness. One respondent suggested that the ETI primarily subsidises pre-existing employment rather than creating new jobs. Moreover, the ETI may also result in "deadweight loss," where the government provides tax incentives for jobs that would have been created anyway, thus representing an inefficient use of public funds.

- Limited awareness and understanding

Some employers, may be unaware of the ETI or lack a clear understanding of its requirements, hindering its uptake and effectiveness.

- Fraud and abuse

Like any incentive programme, the ETI is susceptible to fraud and abuse. Employers might misrepresent employee information or manipulate employment practice to maximise their tax benefits. Robust monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are essential to prevent such activities.

- Monitoring and enforcement

Effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are crucial to ensure compliance with the ETI and prevent abuse. However, resource constraints and the complexity of the regulations can make this challenging.

4.4.1.2.2. What measures can be taken to enhance employment policies and contribute to employment growth?

The respondents were asked about the measures that can be taken to enhance compliances with the following employment policies and their impact on employment growth in South Africa:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa
- Labour Relations Act number 66 of 1995
- Employment Equity Act number 55 of 1998
- Employment Tax Incentive 26 of 2013
- Skills Development Act number 97 of 1998
- The Public Service Act, 1994
- Employment Service Act 4 of 2014

The following is the response on improving employment policies in South Africa.

4.4.1.2.2.1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

The respondents were asked about measures that can be taken to enhance compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and its impact on employment growth in South Africa. They expressed that the relationship between labour regulations, compliance, and employment growth is complex. The following are the recommended measures:

- Enhanced monitoring and inspection

Increased monitoring and inspection of workplaces are crucial to ensure compliance with labour laws and constitutional provisions on fair labour practice. This requires adequate resources and capacity within the relevant government agencies.

- Impact on employment growth

Tackling structural issues in the South African economy, such as inequality and spatial disparities, is crucial for creating a more inclusive and dynamic labour market. One respondent highlighted the structural nature of South Africa's unemployment problem.

4.4.1.2.2.2. Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995

The respondents were asked about measures that can be taken to enhance compliance with the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 and its impact on employment growth in South Africa. They responded by stating that several measures can be implemented to enhance compliance with the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 in South Africa, potentially fostering employment growth:

4.4.1.2.2.2.1 Strengthening enforcement mechanisms

- Increased inspections and audits

More frequent and rigorous inspections by the Department of Labour can help identify and address non-compliance issues. This could involve proactive inspections as well as investigations based on complaints.

- Stricter penalties for non-compliance

Higher fines and other penalties for violations can deter employers from non-compliance. This could include publicising violations to create reputational damage.

- Enhanced dispute resolution mechanisms

Streamlining dispute resolution processes at the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration can ensure quicker and more efficient handling of labour disputes, encouraging compliance and reducing uncertainty for both employers and employees.

- Empowering labour inspectors

Providing labour inspectors with better training, resources, and legal backing can strengthen their ability to enforce the Labour Relations Act effectively.

4.4.1.2.2.2.2. Promoting education and awareness

- Educational campaigns

Targeted campaigns can educate employers and employees about their rights and responsibilities under the Labour Relations Act. This can include workshops, online resources, and informational materials.

- Simplifying legal language

Making the Labour Relations Act and related regulations more accessible by using plain language can improve understanding and compliance.

- Training programmes

Offering training programmes for employers and HR professionals on Labour Relations Act compliance can equip them with the knowledge and skills to implement fair labour practice.

4.4.1.2.2.2.3. Collaboration and social dialogue

- Strengthening social dialogue

Encouraging regular dialogue between government, employers, and trade unions can foster a shared understanding of labour market challenges and facilitate the development of solutions that promote compliance and employment growth. One respondent highlighted the importance of collaboration between the government and trade unions.

- Joint initiatives

Collaborative initiatives between government, employers, and unions can focus on promoting compliance, addressing specific labour market issues, and developing sector-specific solutions.

4.4.1.2.2.2.4. Addressing underlying economic factors

Promoting Investment and Economic Growth: Broader economic policies that encourage investment and economic growth can create a more favourable environment for job creation and compliance with labour standards.

- Skills Development

Investing in skills development programmes can improve the employability of the workforce and address skills shortages, potentially leading to higher employment rates.

- Support for Small and Medium Enterprises

Targeted support for SMMEs, often significant job creators, can help them comply with the LRA and contribute to employment growth.

4.4.1.2.2.2.5. Impact on employment growth

While enhanced compliance with the LRA can create a fairer and more stable labour market, its direct impact on employment growth is complex. One respondent argued that stricter regulations can increase labour costs and discourage hiring, while another contended that fair labour practice can improve productivity, reduce labour unrest, and ultimately contribute to economic growth and job creation. They all stated that It is important to note that the effectiveness of these measures depends on various factors, including the political will to implement them, the capacity of enforcement agencies, and the overall economic context. They asserted that a comprehensive approach that addresses both compliance and broader economic challenges is likely to be most effective in promoting sustainable employment growth in South Africa.

4.4.1.2.2.3. Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998

The respondents were asked about measures that can be taken to enhance compliances with the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and its impact on employment growth in South Africa. They responded by saying that several measures can enhance compliance and potentially impact employment growth:

- Strengthened monitoring and enforcement

Increased inspections and audits by the Department of Labour can ensure companies adhere to the Act's requirements. Heavier penalties for non-compliance can also deter violations. One respondent mentioned that amendments to the Act, suggest ongoing efforts to refine its implementation.

- Increased awareness and training

Educating employers and employees about their rights and responsibilities under the Act is crucial. Training programmes can help companies develop and implement effective employment equity plans. One respondent highlighted the importance of clear communication regarding diversity management goals.

- Targeted support for designated groups

Providing mentorship, skills development programmes, and access to funding opportunities can help designated groups overcome historical disadvantages and compete effectively in the labour market. One respondent emphasised the importance of equal opportunities and representation for these groups.

- Simplified reporting procedures

Streamlining the reporting process for employment equity plans can reduce the administrative burden on companies and encourage greater compliance. One respondent noted that the analysis of annual returns submitted to the Department of Labour suggests that the existing reporting mechanisms may need improvement.

- Incentives for compliance

Offering tax breaks or other incentives to companies that demonstrate strong commitment to employment equity can encourage voluntary compliance.

- Promoting inclusive workplace culture

Fostering a workplace culture that values diversity and inclusion can create a more welcoming environment for designated groups and improve overall employee satisfaction. One respondent mentioned the importance of diversity at all organisational levels.

4.4.1.2.2.3.1. Impact on employment growth

The respondents stated that the impact of the Employment Equity Act on employment growth is a complex issue, with perspectives differing based on various factors. By promoting diversity and inclusion, the Act can lead to a more representative workforce that better reflects the demographics of South Africa. This can broaden the talent pool, improve skills utilisation, and enhance innovation and productivity, potentially

contributing to economic growth and job creation. The long-term impact of the Act on employment growth is likely to depend on how effectively it is implemented and the extent to which it fosters genuine inclusion and skills development. One respondent suggested examining factors associated with superior performance in employment equity programmes.

4.4.1.2.2.4. Employment Tax Incentive 26 of 2013

The respondents were asked about measures that can be taken to enhance compliances with the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and its impact on employment growth in South Africa. They responded by saying that several strategies can be implemented to improve ETI compliance and potentially boost its impact on employment growth:

- Simplifying the application and claim process

A complex and burdensome process can deter employers, especially smaller businesses, from utilising the ETI. Streamlining the process, potentially through online platforms and simplified forms, can significantly improve uptake.

- Increasing awareness and education

Many employers are either unaware of the ETI or unsure how it works. Targeted outreach programmes, workshops, and easily accessible online resources can educate employers about the benefits and procedures involved.

- Strengthening monitoring and enforcement

Regular audits and inspections can ensure employers are correctly applying the ETI and deter fraudulent claims. Clear penalties for non-compliance should be enforced.

- Providing support and guidance

Dedicated support services, such as helplines and online chat platforms, can assist employers with navigating the ETI process and resolving any queries.

- Collaborating with stakeholders

Engaging with employer organisations, labour unions, and other relevant stakeholders can foster a shared understanding of the ETI and promote its effective implementation.

- Reviewing and adjusting the ETI regularly

The effectiveness of the ETI should be periodically reviewed and adjusted to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to the changing labour market dynamics. This could involve revising the eligibility criteria, incentive amounts, or targeted sectors.

4.4.1.2.2.4.1. Impact on employment growth

Improved compliance with the ETI can contribute to employment growth in several ways:

- Increased hiring of young workers

By reducing the cost of employing young workers, the ETI incentivises businesses to create more job opportunities for this demographic.

- Improved skills development

As more young people gain work experience, they develop valuable skills, enhancing their employability and contributing to a more productive workforce.

- Reduced unemployment

The ETI can help lower unemployment rates by stimulating job creation, particularly among the youth.

- Boost to economic growth

Increased employment and productivity can contribute to broader economic growth and development.

It is important to note that the ETI is not a silver bullet solution to unemployment. Its effectiveness depends on a range of factors, including the overall economic climate, the availability of skilled labour, and the implementation of complementary policies. Continuous monitoring and evaluation ensure the ETI achieves its intended objectives.

4.4.1.2.2.5. Skills Development Act number 97 of 1998

The respondents were asked about measures that can be taken to enhance compliance with the Skills Development Act (SDA) number 97 of 1998 and its impact on employment growth in South Africa. They responded by saying that several

measures can be taken to enhance compliance and maximise its impact on employment growth:

- Strengthening monitoring and enforcement

Increased monitoring and enforcement by the Department of Labour are crucial. This includes regular inspections of workplaces to ensure compliance with levy payments and skills development plans. Stronger penalties for non-compliance can also deter companies from neglecting their obligations. One respondent mentioned that the Act focuses on a levy-grant scheme and a National Skills Fund, highlighting the financial aspects that require strict monitoring.

- Improving SETA effectiveness

Sector Education and Training Authorities play a vital role in implementing the SDA. Improving their efficiency and accountability is essential. This can involve streamlining processes, enhancing communication with stakeholders, and ensuring greater transparency in the allocation and use of funds. One respondent pointed out governance problems and financial mismanagement within SETAs, emphasising the need for improvement.

- Promoting public-private partnerships

Collaboration between government, businesses, and training institutions is crucial for effective skills development. Public-private partnerships can leverage resources and expertise to develop targeted training programmes that meet industry needs. One respondent mentioned the importance of PPPs in addressing unemployment and skills development, particularly in occupational programmes.

- Encouraging workplace learning

Creating a culture of learning within workplaces is essential. Employers should be encouraged to provide opportunities for on-the-job training, mentorship programmes, and further education for their employees. One respondent emphasised the Act's intention to encourage employers to use the workplace as an active learning environment.

- Targeting specific groups

Focusing on specific groups, such as unemployed youth, women, and people with disabilities, can have a significant impact on employment growth. Targeted skills development programmes can equip these groups with the skills needed to enter the workforce. One respondent noted the leadership system's increasing focus on young, unemployed Africans, highlighting the importance of targeted interventions.

- Addressing labour market mismatches

Effective skills development requires alignment with labour market demands. Regularly assessing skills gaps and developing training programmes that address these gaps can ensure that individuals are equipped with relevant skills for available jobs. One respondent noted the importance of improved education and skills training as a solution to job creation, emphasising the need for alignment with market needs.

4.4.1.2.2.6. The Public Service Act, 1994

The respondents were asked about measures that can be taken to enhance compliance with the Public Service Act of 1994 and its impact on employment growth in South Africa. They responded by saying that several measures can be implemented to enhance compliance and potentially foster employment growth:

- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation

Regular audits and inspections can help identify areas of non-compliance and inform corrective actions. Performance management systems should be linked to the Act's provisions, ensuring accountability for adherence.

- Capacity building and training

Public servants need to be adequately trained on the Act's provisions, ethical conduct, and performance standards. This includes training on anti-corruption measures, conflict-of-interest regulations, and fair recruitment practices.

- Improving communication and transparency

Clear communication channels and accessible information about the Act can promote understanding and compliance. Transparency in decision-making processes can build trust and reduce opportunities for corruption.

- Empowering oversight bodies

Independent oversight bodies, such as the Public Service Commission, should be strengthened to effectively investigate complaints, enforce compliance, and recommend sanctions for violations.

- Promoting a culture of ethics and accountability

Fostering a culture of ethical conduct and accountability within the public service is crucial. This can be achieved through leadership commitment, ethical codes of conduct, and whistleblower protection mechanisms.

- Review and update legislation

Periodic review and updates of the Act can ensure its relevance and effectiveness in addressing contemporary challenges. This includes aligning the Act with other relevant legislation, such as labour laws.

4.4.1.2.2.6.1. Impact on employment growth

Enhanced compliance with the Public Service Act can indirectly contribute to employment growth in several ways:

- Improved service delivery

A more efficient and effective public service can create a conducive business growth and investment environment, leading to job creation.

- Increased investor confidence

A transparent and accountable public sector can attract foreign investment, stimulating economic activity and employment opportunities.

- Reduced corruption

Combating corruption frees up resources for development initiatives and creates a level playing field for businesses, promoting job creation.

- Enhanced skills development

Investing in training and development within the public service can improve skills and productivity, indirectly supporting employment growth in other sectors.

- Fair labour practice

Compliance with fair labour practice within the public service can set a positive example for the private sector, promoting decent work and job creation.

4.4.1.2.2.7. Employment Service Act 4 of 2014

The respondents were asked about the measures that can be taken to enhance compliance with the Employment Service Act 4 of 2014 and its impact on employment growth in South Africa. They responded by saying that several measures can be taken to enhance compliance and maximise its impact:

4.4.1.2.2.7.1. Strengthening Enforcement and Monitoring

- Increased inspections and audits

Regular inspections of both public and private employment services can ensure adherence to regulations. This includes verifying proper registration, fair practice, and data reporting accuracy. Stronger penalties for non-compliance can deter violations.

- Enhanced data collection and analysis

A robust system for collecting and analysing data on employment services usage, job placements, and labour market trends is crucial. This data can inform policy adjustments and targeted interventions.

- Public awareness campaigns

Educating employers, job seekers, and the public about the Act's provisions, rights, and responsibilities can promote voluntary compliance and encourage reporting of violations.

4.4.1.2.2.7.2. Improving service delivery and accessibility

- Expanding the reach of public employment services

Increasing the number of public employment centres and enhancing their services, particularly in underserved areas, can improve access to job opportunities for all.

- Promoting collaboration between public and private employment services

Fostering partnerships between public and private actors can leverage resources and expertise to provide more comprehensive and effective employment services. This includes sharing information, coordinating services, and developing joint initiatives.

- Utilising technology

Leveraging online platforms and digital tools can streamline job searching, matching, and placement processes, making them more efficient and accessible. This can also facilitate data collection and analysis.

4.4.1.2.2.7.3. Addressing specific challenges

Skills Development and Training: Integrating skills development programmes with employment services can better equip job seekers with the skills employers need, improving their chances of securing employment.

- Support for vulnerable groups

Targeted interventions and support services for vulnerable groups, such as the youth, women, and people with disabilities, can address specific barriers to employment and promote inclusivity.

- Combating fraud and corruption

Implementing measures to prevent and address fraud and corruption within the employment services sector is essential to maintain its integrity and effectiveness.

4.4.1.2.2.7.4. Impact on employment growth

Enhanced compliance with the Employment Services Act can contribute to employment growth in several ways:

- Improved labour market efficiency

By connecting job seekers with suitable vacancies more effectively, the Act can reduce frictional unemployment and improve the overall efficiency of the labour market.

- Increased job creation

By promoting fair and transparent recruitment practice, the Act can encourage businesses to create more jobs and invest in human capital.

- Enhanced labour market participation

By improving access to employment services and addressing barriers to employment, the Act can increase labour market participation, particularly among marginalised groups.

- Better matching of skills and jobs

By promoting skills development and training, the Act can better align the skills of job seekers with the needs of employers, leading to more productive and sustainable employment.

4.4.2 Section Two: Interpretation of data obtained from interviews conducted with HR personnel in SMMEs

This section presents data findings obtained from interviews conducted with HR personnel in SMMEs within Polokwane municipal area. The study interviewed 15 HR personnel in SMMEs. The HR personnel were purposefully selected to provide information regarding the influence of employment policies on employment levels in South Africa, the perceived gaps in employment policies and legislative framework that hinder employment growth, challenges associated with compliance and possible measures to enhance employment growth and policies in the country. The findings for Section two are as follows:

4.4.2.1. The influence of employment policies and legislative framework on employment growth in South Africa

The participants were asked if there were any employment policies and legislative frameworks that directly impact and influence employment growth in the labour force. The respondents confirmed that there are employment policies and legislative frameworks that have a direct impact on employment growth in South Africa. The following are the stated policies and legislative frameworks:

- Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995

This act governs the relationship between employers and employees, including collective bargaining, strikes, and dismissals. It aims to promote fair labour practice and resolve disputes. However, certain provisions, while protecting workers' rights, may increase the cost of hiring and firing, potentially hindering job creation.

- Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997

This act sets minimum standards for employment conditions, including working hours, leave, and remuneration. It aims to protect workers from exploitation. However, similar to the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, while important for worker welfare, it can increase business labour costs.

- Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998

This act seeks to address historical inequalities in employment by promoting affirmative action and eliminating unfair discrimination. While aiming to create a more inclusive workforce, some businesses may find the implementation of affirmative action targets challenging.

- Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

These initiatives aim to improve the skills base of the workforce through training and development programmes. Investing in human capital aims to enhance productivity and employability, ultimately contributing to long-term job growth.

- National Minimum Wage Act 9 of 2018

This relatively recent legislation introduces a national minimum wage, aiming to improve the living standards of low-wage earners. While potentially beneficial for income equality, concerns exist about its impact on employment, particularly in sectors with low profit margins.

- Employment Service Act 4 of 2014

This initiative encourages businesses to create work experience opportunities for young people, aiming to address youth unemployment.

4.4.2.2. What are the perceived gaps in the employment policy and legislative framework that hinder employment growth?

The participants were asked if there were any perceived gaps in the employment policies and legislative framework that have the potential to hinder employment growth. The respondents replied yes, and the following are the perceived gaps:

4.4.2.2.1. The dual nature of labour regulation

South Africa's labour regulations, while designed to protect workers' rights and promote fair labour practice, present a dual nature. On the one hand, they establish crucial safeguards against exploitation and ensure decent working conditions. On the other hand, they can impose costs on businesses, potentially hindering job creation.

4.4.2.2.2. Minimum wage

Minimum wage legislation, while aiming to improve the living standards of low-wage earners, has been a particularly contentious issue. Critics argue that setting a minimum wage above the market-clearing wage can lead to job losses, especially in labour-intensive sectors. They contend that businesses, faced with higher labour costs, may reduce their workforce or forgo expansion plans. However, minimum wage proponents argue that it can boost consumer spending and reduce income inequality, potentially stimulating economic growth. The actual impact likely depends on factors such as the level at which the minimum wage is set and the overall economic climate.

4.4.2.2.3. Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 and collective bargaining

The Labour Relations Act plays a significant role in shaping the dynamics of the labour market. While it promotes collective bargaining and provides mechanisms for dispute resolution, some argue that it can make the labour market more rigid. For instance, regulations related to dismissals can make it more difficult for businesses to adjust their workforce in response to changing economic conditions. This rigidity suggests it can discourage investment and job creation.

4.4.2.2.4. Skills development and education

Beyond regulations, the skills gap in South Africa poses a significant challenge to employment growth. While policies like the Skills Development Act aim to address this issue, their effectiveness depends on factors such as the quality of training programmes and their alignment with the economy's needs. Furthermore, broader educational reforms are crucial for equipping the workforce with the skills needed for long-term employment.

4.4.2.2.5. Broader economic context

It is crucial to acknowledge that employment policies operate within a broader economic context. Factors such as global economic conditions, technological advancements, and investor confidence all play a role in shaping employment outcomes. Therefore, attributing changes in employment solely to specific policies can be misleading.

4.4.2.2.6. A multifaceted approach

Addressing South Africa's unemployment challenge requires a multifaceted approach. This includes not only reviewing and refining existing labour regulations but also investing in education and skills development, promoting entrepreneurship, and fostering a conducive environment for investment and economic growth. Finding the right balance between protecting workers' rights and promoting job creation is a complex task that requires ongoing dialogue and collaboration between government, business, and labour.

4.4.2.3. Are there any perceived challenges in complying with employment policies and the legislative framework? If yes, please explain and if no, please explain.

The participants were asked if there were any perceived challenges in complying with employment policies and the legislative framework that have the potential to hinder employment growth. The respondents replied that yes, there are several perceived challenges faced by employers in South Africa regarding compliance with employment policies and the legislative framework. The following are the perceived challenges:

4.4.2.3.1. Minimum wage policies

Some respondents argued that it protects vulnerable workers and reduces income inequality, while others contended that it could hinder job creation, particularly in sectors with low profit margins. They suggested that artificially raising the cost of labour above market levels can disincentivise hiring, especially for entry-level and low-skilled positions. This can lead to higher unemployment, particularly among young people and those entering the workforce for the first time. Some employers argued that these regulations increase labour costs, making it more challenging to hire new workers, especially during economic downturns.

4.4.2.3.2. Labour regulations

Beyond the minimum wage, broader labour regulations, including those related to dismissal procedures and collective bargaining, can also be perceived as burdensome by employers. Complex and stringent regulations can increase compliance costs and create administrative hurdles, potentially deterring businesses from expanding their workforce or even leading to job losses. Some respondents mentioned that South African law does not permit dismissal at will, requiring substantive and procedural fairness, which can make dismissal litigation outcomes unpredictable.

4.4.2.3.3. Employment Equity 55 of 1998 and BBBEE

Policies like the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1995 and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment 53 of 2003 aim to address historical inequalities and promote diversity in the workplace. However, some employers find these policies challenging to implement due to their complexity and administrative requirements. Some respondents noted these policies and the incremental progress in representation. While the policies are essential for social justice and redress, their implementation can pose challenges for businesses, particularly smaller ones with limited resources. Moreover, they can be complex and administratively burdensome for businesses to implement.

4.4.2.3.4. Skills mismatch

Another critical factor contributing to South Africa's unemployment challenge is the skills mismatch between the available workforce and the labour market demands. While education and training programmes exist, they have not always kept pace with the evolving needs of industries. This mismatch can lead to structural unemployment, where individuals lack the necessary skills to fill available vacancies.

4.4.2.4. What are the measures that can be taken to enhance employment policies and contribute to employment growth?

The participants were asked if there were any measures that could be taken to improve and enhance employment policies and potentially contribute to employment growth. The respondents replied yes, several measures can be taken to enhance employment policies and contribute to employment growth in South Africa. The following are the measures:

4.4.2.4.1. Promote labour market flexibility

While protecting worker rights is crucial, some respondents argued that excessive rigidity in labour regulations can hinder job creation. Reforming regulations to allow for greater flexibility, such as easing hiring and firing restrictions, could encourage businesses to expand their workforce. However, it is essential to strike a balance between flexibility and worker protection to avoid exploitation.

4.4.2.4.2. Invest in education and skills development

Addressing the skills mismatch between the labour force and market demands is vital. Investing in education and training programmes that equip individuals with the skills needed for in-demand jobs can improve employability and boost productivity. This includes focusing on vocational training, technical skills, and digital literacy.

5.4.2.4.3. Support Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises are significant job creators in many economies. Providing support to SMMEs through access to finance, business development services, and streamlined regulations can help them grow and create more jobs. Targeted interventions for SMMEs in high-growth sectors can be particularly effective.

4.4.2.4.4. Encourage entrepreneurship

Fostering a culture of entrepreneurship can stimulate job creation. This can be achieved through initiatives that provide training, mentorship, and access to capital for aspiring entrepreneurs. Simplifying business registration processes and reducing bureaucratic hurdles can also encourage new business ventures.

4.4.2.4.5. Promote active labour market policies

Active labour market policies, such as job search assistance, training programmes, and wage subsidies, can help unemployed individuals find and retain employment. These policies can be particularly effective when targeted at specific groups, such as young people or long-term unemployed individuals.

4.4.2.4.6. Foster public-private partnerships

Collaboration between the government, private sector, and labour unions can be instrumental in developing effective employment policies. Public-private partnerships can facilitate skills development initiatives, infrastructure projects, and other investments that create jobs and boost economic growth.

4.4.2.4.7. Review and streamline regulations

Periodically reviewing and streamlining existing labour regulations can reduce administrative burdens on businesses and improve compliance. Simplifying complex regulations can make it easier for companies to navigate the legal landscape and focus on creating jobs.

4.4.3 Section Three: Presentation of data obtained from interviews conducted with senior employees in Polokwane Local Municipality

Five senior employees in the Polokwane Local Municipality were interviewed for the study. The senior employees in the municipality were purposefully selected to provide information regarding the influence of employment levels on local development in South Africa. The study explored the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality and the effect of employment policies on local development in South Africa, aiming to establish the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local development. The findings are as follows:

4.4.3.1. The impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality

The study explored the impact of employment levels on revenue collection, the state of development in the municipal area, the impact of employment levels on local development in the municipal area, the availability of indigent programmes and its impact on the municipality, and the level of development in the municipal area. The aim was to establish the impact of employment levels on local development in the Polokwane Local Municipality. The findings are as follows:

4.4.3.1.1. How do the employment levels affect revenue collection in the municipality?

The study explored how employment levels affect municipal revenue generation. Three participants indicated that the municipality imposes fees for services provided to community members, with jobless individuals frequently unable to afford these services and thus accruing municipal debt. Additionally, one respondent observed that the municipality has the discretion to terminate services, which prompts customers to

seek alternative energy sources. This, in turn, diminishes the municipality's capacity to sell and finance budgeted services.

4.4.3.1.2. How is the level of local development in the municipality?

The respondents reported that the level of local development in the municipality remains uneven, with significant rural areas that are still underdeveloped. Development is concentrated in the city clusters, particularly the Seshego and Mankweng clusters, which are progressing more rapidly. The Moletjie cluster is also undergoing development, but the remaining clusters, such as Molepo Chuene Maja, Sebayeng Dikgale, and Aganang, are predominantly rural and continue to lag behind in terms of development.

There are numerous plans aimed at fostering development in predominantly rural areas. For a region to develop, it must possess fundamental infrastructure and services. The Integrated Development Plan ensures that communities have access to basic necessities such as water, electricity, housing, and roads. The municipality intends to develop predominantly rural areas by providing this essential infrastructure, which will facilitate service delivery. The provision of water, housing, electricity, and road networks is expected to attract investment to these predominantly rural clusters. For instance, the presence of road infrastructure can incentivise private developers to establish commercial ventures, such as malls, within these localities.

According to one respondent, the municipality plans to transform predominantly rural clusters into townships. The intention is to develop new townships in clusters such as Moletjie. The municipality has a positive relationship with tribal authorities and intends to collaborate with them on spatial planning in these clusters. This approach aims to prevent settlements from encroaching on wetland areas in the locality, thereby contributing to the overall development of these clusters.

The findings indicate that implementing the Integrated Development Plan annually contributes to development. However, as the population grows, more people are likely to move into the city, while some will prefer residing in rural areas. In response, the municipality aims to establish various centres and nodes that offer comparable levels of development. The municipality's mission is to become a metropolitan area with adequate development across all clusters. Additionally, the municipality is working to

decentralise service payment points to facilitate easier access for community members.

One respondent argued that “for area to be developed, it must have basic services and the IDP ensures that community have access to services. The municipality has introduced boreholes as a measure to argument shortage of water supply in the urban areas to accommodate population growth.”

Respondents noted that urban clusters tend to have higher levels of services that merely require maintenance to sustain, whereas rural clusters have more pressing needs for improved service delivery. For instance, the urban clusters of City and Seshego have sufficient service levels, whereas the rural clusters of Aganang and Sebayeng-Dikgale require more extensive development.

4.4.3.1.3. How do employment levels affect local development in the municipality?

The respondents indicated that employment levels have a significant impact on local development. They explained that when a population consists primarily of unemployed individuals, it poses a challenge for the municipality, as these residents are unable to pay for the services provided. This can lead to conflicts between the municipality and the community when debt collectors are deployed to recover unpaid service fees. This, in turn, affects the quality of services delivered, as the municipality must reinvest the collected revenue back into service provision. Consequently, the quality and scope of services may diminish, ultimately impacting the overall development of the local area.

One respondent contended that high unemployment rates correlate with elevated levels of criminal activity within specific areas or clusters. This criminal behaviour includes the vandalisation of street lights, which burdens the municipality with additional responsibility of replacing the damaged infrastructure. This cycle diverts municipal funds away from other essential services, redirecting them toward maintaining and replacing the vandalised infrastructure.

According to one respondent, Polokwane Municipality's funding sources include national grants and revenue generated from the sale of services to clients and residents. The municipality utilises these grants and the anticipated revenue from clients and residents to budget for service delivery projects within its jurisdiction. If the city fails to generate or collect the expected revenue from service sales, the

implementation of service delivery projects and programmes will be adversely affected, as there will be insufficient funds to execute such initiatives.

4.4.3.1.4. Are there indigent support programmes in the municipality?

The respondents reported the presence of municipal indigent support programmes, which provide free and subsidised services to households with incomes below the current threshold of approximately R5200.00. However, they noted that these indigent programmes are limited to the urban clusters of the city and Seshego. Within these clusters, the indigent programmes provide subsidies for water and electricity, as the municipality holds the electricity licensing rights. In contrast, the Mankweng cluster receives subsidised water but obtains electricity from Eskom.

The rural areas benefit from electricity subsidies provided by Eskom. Additionally, rural clusters receive free water access through grants from the national government. These grants fund water infrastructure development, such as boreholes, in the rural clusters. Some rural areas rely on boreholes and water from Lepele Northern Water, as the city of Polokwane lacks sufficient dams. Regions without pipeline coverage are predominantly rural, largely due to the lack of infrastructure. However, the municipality is actively working to expand the pipeline network to areas currently lacking infrastructure. In areas without access to the municipal water supply, residents utilise boreholes, with some previously relying on diesel-powered pumps. Recently, the municipality has transitioned to using electric-powered water pumps in these regions.

4.4.3.1.5. How do indigent households affect the municipality?

The respondents were asked to describe how indigent households impact the municipal budget. They reported that indigent households significantly affect the municipality's financial resources. For instance, if the number of registered indigent households covered by a R50 million budget increases from 50 to 100, the municipality must allocate an additional R50 million to accommodate them. As the number of indigent households rises, the municipality must allocate more funds to support them.

Two respondents stated that it also affects the revenue base of the municipality, which affects service delivery. Indigent households affect the municipality in that they cannot afford the services. If the municipality cannot receive the full realistically anticipated budget, service delivery will be affected negatively.

One respondent argued that,

> “the City makes budget provisions each financial year dedicated to supporting the indigent households so they can access municipal services. However, often at times, indigent households exceeding the allocated 6 kilolitres of water, consuming more than the 100kw of electricity provided. When indigent households exceed the allocated support they have to pay for any extra they consume and at times they are unable to do so due high levels of unemployment or for some other reason. The City will be hamstrung to continue to provide services if indigent households are not able to pay for any extra service beyond the allocated support. This situation will lead to the City restricting provision of service and ballooning the municipal debt book”.

4.4.3.1.6. How do employment levels affect infrastructure development and maintenance in the municipality?

The respondents were asked about the relationship between employment levels and infrastructure development and maintenance within the municipality. They indicated that high unemployment and unpaid service fees diminish the revenue base, which, in turn constrains the municipality's capacity to fund and execute infrastructure projects. The municipality operates under budgetary limitations when implementing infrastructure initiatives.

Two respondents stated that high unemployment levels can impact municipal budgets, including capital and operational expenditures. Consequently, municipalities are compelled to respond to community demands and maintain infrastructure. However, due to limited budgets, municipalities may be forced to prioritise maintenance in certain areas while neglecting others, leading to community protests. As a result, municipalities often resort to short-term and low-quality measures to maintain and develop infrastructure, working under constant pressure from the community due to budget constraints.

One respondent also argued that,

> “the inability by residents and clients of the City due to unaffordability, unemployment or other reason negatively affects implementation of projects budgeted from the expected revenue from sale of services. This might result in secondary and un-intended social ills issues such as illegal water and electricity

connections as a result of the City restricting services due to non-payment of services".

4.4.3.1.7. Is local development satisfactory in the municipal area?

The respondents indicated that the local development in the municipal area has not yet reached a satisfactory level. The municipality still requires further development to achieve its vision of becoming a metro with various economic hubs. The municipality recognises the need for more new and developed townships. Currently, areas like Seshego and Mankweng have a mix of tarred and untarred roads and rural and urban components. The municipality aims to improve and transform all these clusters into well-developed townships. However, population growth poses a challenge, as new settlements require development. Additionally, tribal authorities continue to establish new settlements without the municipality's knowledge, which is another issue that needs to be addressed.

There is progress, yet the municipality must accommodate emerging settlement patterns. Additionally, community interference, opposition parties, and tribal authorities frequently delay development due to misunderstandings or disputes within the municipality. Budget constraints are also a concern, as some grants are conditional on being used solely for the requested project. Failure to implement the project within the stipulated timeframe and redirecting funds to other projects can result in the revocation of the grant. The grants require the municipality to engage in effective forward planning, but this is challenging, as the promised funding does not always materialise or is often reduced, impacting the implementation processes.

One respondent argued that local development is a constantly evolving challenge. While service delivery levels may not be fully satisfactory, progress is observable. New settlements often lack essential services, necessitating their implementation. Existing backlogs in service provision across the city further complicate this. Additionally, in areas with adequate service levels, significant maintenance is required to prevent infrastructure deterioration and ensure continued use by residents and clients. This includes addressing aging infrastructure, which is a costly undertaking.

4.4.3.2 The impact of employment policies on local development in South Africa

The study explored the inclusive labour force and its impact on inclusive local economic participation, and local development in establishing the impact of employment policies on local development in South Africa. The findings are as follows:

4.4.3.2.1. Is there an inclusive labour force, and how does it affect local development in Polokwane Local Municipality?

The respondents were asked about the presence of an inclusive labour force and its impact on local development within the Polokwane Local Municipality. They reported a lack of an inclusive labour force, indicating that significant progress is still needed in this area. When individuals are unemployed, they are unable to pay for services, which diminishes the revenue base and consequently reduces the budget available for infrastructure development and the provision of basic services.

The respondents suggested that municipal labour force policies should be re-evaluated to address the exclusion of individuals aged 35 and above. This age group primarily consists of homeowners or household caretakers, and their exclusion from employment opportunities can lead to increased budgetary allocations for indigent households, non-payment of municipal bills, a rise in municipal debt, and various societal issues within the community.

4.4.3.2.2. Does the municipality enjoy inclusive local economic participation and how does it affect local development?

The respondents were asked about the municipality's inclusive local economic participation level and its impact on local development. The majority of respondents indicated that when people are employed, the municipality can retain investors. This is because employed residents have greater purchasing power, which helps retain investors within the municipality. Moreover, the respondents indicated that the municipality aims to attract investment through the use of incentives and the maintenance of public services, intending to draw in and retain investors. This strategy is anticipated to foster local economic development and mitigate unemployment within the municipality.

One respondent noted that a greater number of people employed in the municipality would likely attract additional investment. They cited the recent establishment of Greenery in the city of Polokwane as an example of a contribution to the region's

development. However, the respondent cautioned that high unemployment reduces consumer purchasing power, thereby discouraging investment.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented, analysed and interpreted the study's findings. The analysis was based on the data collected from the residents of Polokwane Local Municipality through questionnaires, as well as interviews conducted with employers from the Department of Labour and employers in the Polokwane municipal area. The following chapter provides the summary, recommendation and the conclusion drawn from the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the research findings, data analysis and interpretation of results. The summary of findings, recommendations and conclusion of the study are discussed in this chapter. The summary provides a brief overview of the findings related to each objective of the study. It also includes a discussion on recommendations for enhancing employment policies to potentially increase employment growth, which will ultimately improve local development in South Africa. Lastly, the conclusion of the study is presented, drawing on the findings of the research. The recommendations and conclusions of the study are based on the study's findings.

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between employment policies, employment levels and local development in South Africa, with Polokwane municipal area as its case study. The objectives of the study were as follows: to analyse the employment legislative framework and its influence on employment growth in South Africa; to examine the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa; to examine the impact of employment policies on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality; to analyse the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality and to develop a local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development in South Africa. The summary of the findings of the study is as follows:

5.2.1 The relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa

The researcher interviewed employees in the Department of Labour. Employees often possess extensive expertise and experience in their respective fields. Their insights can provide rich, nuanced data that adds depth and credibility to the study's findings. They are more likely to understand complex concepts and provide informed responses, leading to more accurate and reliable data. Moreover, senior employees'

perspectives are often grounded in practical experience. This can make the study's findings more relevant and applicable to real-world situations. Their contributions can help bridge the gap between theory and practice, leading to more impactful research outcomes.

The study purposefully selected employees in the Department of Labour to provide in-depth insights on the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa. The study explored the influence of employment policies on employment levels; perceived challenges in compliance with legislative and policy frameworks as well as the measures that can be taken to enhance employment policies and contribute to employment growth. The goal was to establish the relationship between employment policies and employment levels. The findings are as follows:

5.2.1.1 The influence of employment policies on employment levels in South Africa

The analysis of employment policy by the employees in the Department of Labour reveals that employment policies have an influence on employment levels. The relationship between employment policies and employment levels is complex. It depends on various factors, including the specific policies implemented, the broader economic context, and the characteristics of the labour market. The employees were asked if the listed employment policies have an impact on employment levels in South Africa and they stated that the Department of Labour does not evaluate the impact of employment policies on employment growth. They highlighted that evaluating the impact of policy was out of their scope as a department. This finding limits the study as the relationship between employment policies and employment levels can only be determined through the actual impact not the employment policy analysis. However, they deliberated on the influence of employment policies on employment levels. The following are some ways in which employment policies can influence employment growth:

- Labour market regulations

Regulations related to hiring and firing, working conditions, and collective bargaining can impact employment levels. While some regulations aim to protect workers' rights and promote fair labour practice, overly rigid regulations can sometimes discourage hiring and increase labour costs, potentially leading to lower employment levels.

Excessive regulations can sometimes discourage hiring, while regulations that promote fair labour practice can create a more stable and productive workforce.

Regulations that make it more difficult or expensive to dismiss employees (e.g., strict employment protection legislation) can discourage employers from hiring, particularly in uncertain economic times. This can lead to lower employment growth. Conversely, flexible regulations can make it easier for businesses to adjust their workforce to changing market conditions, potentially promoting job creation.

- Labour force participation

Regulations that affect working conditions, such as parental leave policies or flexible work arrangements, can influence labour force participation rates. Supportive policies can encourage more people, particularly women and older workers, to enter or remain in the workforce, contributing to employment growth.

- Skills development and training

Policies that invest in education and skills development can improve the quality of the labour force and enhance employment prospects. Moreover, policies that promote skills development and vocational training can improve the employability of the workforce, leading to higher employment levels. For example, initiatives that provide funding for training programmes or incentivise employers to invest in training can equip workers with the skills needed for available jobs. However, the effectiveness of these policies depends on their alignment with labour market demands and the quality of the training provided.

- Public sector employment

Public service acts often establish the framework for public sector employment, including hiring processes, job classifications, and terms of service. Expanding public services, such as healthcare, education, or social welfare, can directly create jobs within the public sector. However, the extent to which this contributes to overall employment growth depends on government budgets and the broader economic context. The efficiency and productivity of the public sector can indirectly affect employment growth. A well-functioning public sector can provide essential services, such as infrastructure and a stable legal framework, that support private sector activity and job creation. Hence the inefficiency and lack of accountability in the public sector, could negatively impact overall economic performance and employment growth.

- Minimum wage policies

Regulations that influence wage setting, such as minimum wage laws or collective bargaining agreements, can affect employment growth. While minimum wage laws aim to protect low-wage workers, they can sometimes lead to job losses if employers cannot afford to pay the mandated wage. The impact depends on the level of the minimum wage and the elasticity of labour demand.

- Working conditions and benefits

Regulations related to working hours, overtime pay, health and safety standards, and other benefits can increase labour costs for employers. While these regulations are important for worker well-being, they can sometimes discourage hiring if the costs are perceived as excessive.

- Reducing labour costs for employers

Tax breaks are likely to have a more significant impact on employment decisions than smaller incentives. Incentives targeted at specific groups, such as young workers or long-term unemployed individuals, can be more effective in creating employment. Employment incentives have a positive impact on employment growth for firms of all sizes, but the impact is reduced for smaller firms (Román *et al*., 2017). The broader economic climate can influence the effectiveness of employment tax incentives. During periods of economic growth, incentives may be less necessary as businesses are already expanding and hiring. However, during economic downturns, incentives can play a more significant role in encouraging businesses to retain or hire workers. The impact of incentive programmes is stronger during recessions, particularly for own-account workers (Román *et al*., 2017).

- Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs)

These policies aim to improve the employability and job-matching process for job seekers. Examples include training programmes, job search assistance, and wage subsidies. Well-designed ALMPs can increase employment rates, particularly for disadvantaged groups. Festus *et al*. (2016) discuss some of the challenges in the South African labour market and the need for effective policies to address unemployment, particularly among specific demographic groups.

- Unemployment benefits

Unemployment insurance programmes can provide temporary financial support to unemployed individuals, but they can also potentially disincentivise job searching if the benefits are too generous or last for too long. The design of unemployment benefit systems is crucial to balance these competing effects.

5.2.1.2 Perceived challenges in compliance with employment policies and legislative frameworks

The findings reveal that both the Department of Labour and employers face perceived challenges when enforcing and complying with employment policies and legislation in the labour force. The challenges include:

- Complexity of legislation

The South African labour legislative framework is complex, with numerous laws and regulations covering various aspects of employment. This complexity can make it difficult for both employers and inspectors to understand and apply the rules correctly. The post-1994 labour legislation aims to redress past unfair discrimination, however, the complexity of this legislation can create challenges for implementation.

- Informal economy

A significant portion of the South African economy is informal, making it difficult to monitor and enforce labour standards. Businesses operating in the informal sector often lack proper registration and are not easily accessible to labour inspectors.

- Capacity of employers

Many small and medium-sized enterprises lack the resources and expertise to fully understand and comply with labour regulations. Providing support and guidance to SMMEs is crucial for improving compliance. Labour Inspections and Compliance for Businesses (2017) mentions that employers are often willing to comply but find it difficult due to the numerous laws.

- Resistance from employers

Some employers may deliberately resist complying with labour regulations to reduce costs or gain a competitive advantage. This can necessitate stronger enforcement measures, including penalties and legal action.

- Monitoring and evaluation

The department of labour lacks effective evaluation measures that can assess the impact of the implemented policies. Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential for assessing the impact of enforcement activities and identifying improvement areas. However, without direct access to these resources, it is difficult to assess their effectiveness.

5.2.1.3 Measures that can be taken to enhance employment policies and contribute to employment growth

The findings reveal the measures that can be taken to enhance employment policies and contribute to employment growth. The following are the proposed measures:

- Promote labour market flexibility

While protecting worker rights is crucial, some argue that excessive rigidity in labour regulations can hinder job creation. Reforming regulations to allow for greater flexibility, such as easing hiring and firing restrictions, could encourage businesses to expand their workforce. However, it is essential to balance flexibility and worker protection to avoid exploitation.

- Invest in education and skills development

Addressing the skills mismatch between the labour force and market demands is vital. Investing in education and training programmes that equip individuals with the skills needed for in-demand jobs can improve employability and boost productivity. This includes focusing on vocational training, technical skills, and digital literacy.

- Support Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Small and Medium Enterprises are significant job creators in many economies. Providing support to SMMEs through access to finance, business development services, and streamlined regulations can help them grow and create more jobs. Targeted interventions for SMMEs in high-growth sectors can be particularly effective.

- Entrepreneurship

Fostering a culture of entrepreneurship can stimulate job creation. This can be achieved through initiatives that provide aspiring entrepreneurs with training, mentorship, and access to capital. Simplifying business registration processes and reducing bureaucratic hurdles can encourage new business ventures.

- Promote active labour market policies

Active labour markets policies, such as job search assistance, training programmes, and wage subsidies, can help unemployed individuals find and retain employment. These policies can be particularly effective when targeted at specific groups, such as young people or long-term unemployed individuals.

- Foster Public-Private Partnerships

Collaboration between the government, private sector, and labour unions can be instrumental in developing effective employment policies. Public-private partnerships can facilitate skills development initiatives, infrastructure projects, and other investments that create jobs and boost economic growth.

- Review and streamline regulations

Periodically reviewing and streamlining existing labour regulations can reduce administrative burdens on businesses and improve compliance. Simplifying complex regulations can make it easier for companies to navigate the legal landscape and focus on creating jobs.

5.2.2 The impact of employment policies on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality

The study explored the inclusive labour force and its impact on local development; as well as inclusive local economic participation and its impact on local development, in establishing the impact of employment policies on local development in South Africa. The findings reveal that there is a lack of inclusive and fair participation in the labour force. The findings are as follows:

5.2.2.1 Inclusive labour force participation and its impact on local development

Inclusive employment policies play a crucial role in promoting an inclusive labour force. They prohibit discrimination based on factors like race, gender, disability, and age, promoting equal opportunities. Inclusive labour force participation plays a critical role in promoting local development in municipalities, serving as a foundation for economic growth, social equity, and community resilience. Communities enjoy economic growth and improved public services when all the citizens have equal access to employment opportunities. More employed individuals contribute to a larger tax base for the municipality. This increased revenue can be used to fund infrastructure improvements, enhance public services, and create a more attractive

business environment. Moreover, higher employment rates are often associated with lower social costs, such as a reduced demand for social welfare programmes and lower crime rates. This creates a more stable and attractive environment for businesses and investors. The findings reveal that there is lack of an inclusive labour force in South Africa, particularly in the Polokwane municipal area. The findings suggests a critical imbalance in the labour market. When individuals are unemployed, their lack of income directly impacts their ability to pay for essential services like water, electricity, and sanitation, as well as municipal taxes and fees. This diminished revenue stream shrinks the local government's budget, hindering its capacity to invest in crucial infrastructure projects like roads, public transportation, and communication networks.

Furthermore, the reduced budget can also limit the provision of basic services, creating a ripple effect that negatively impacts the overall quality of life within the community. This situation can create a vicious cycle where unemployment leads to reduced revenue, hindering development and further limiting job opportunities. The findings highlight how weak public services can lead to declining local development. Moreover, insufficient government funds can restrict the improvement of infrastructure projects, hindering development in the locality. The study emphasises unemployment's burden on families and communities, contributing to poverty and potentially increasing social unrest.

5.2.2.2 Inclusive local economic participation and its impact on local development

Inclusive local economic participation plays a transformative role in sustainable local development. A higher employment rate translates to more people with disposable income, creating a larger consumer base for businesses. Therefore, the greater number of employed individuals in a municipality can make it more attractive for investment. They can attract businesses seeking new markets and opportunities for growth. Moreover, a larger employed population often implies a larger pool of skilled workers. The findings reveal that there is an imbalance level of inclusivity in local economic participation.

The findings suggest the exclusion of individuals from economic activities exacerbates disparities, as those with access to resources and opportunities accumulate wealth, while the marginalised segments of society remain impoverished. When some groups

are left out of the economy, it hinders local development and the country's overall progress. This happens because resources, opportunities, and support systems are not shared fairly, making existing gaps between rich and poor even worse. The imbalance in participation in economic activities has far-reaching consequences for development, including inequality, poverty, social unrest, and human capital underutilization.

5.2.3 The impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality

The study examined the impact of employment levels on revenue collection, the state of development in the municipal area, the impact of employment levels on local development in the municipal area, the availability of indigent programmes and its impact in the municipality, and the level of development in the municipal area in establishing the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane. The findings reveal that low levels of employment negatively affect the revenue base and contribute to uneven development patterns in the Polokwane municipal area. Additionally, lower employment levels negatively affect local development. While the Polokwane Local Municipality provides indigent programmes, the level of local development does not reach the desired satisfaction. The findings are as follows:

5.2.3.1 The impact of employment levels on revenue collection

The findings reveal that lower employment levels impede the municipal revenue base. When people are unemployed, they often struggle to afford essential municipal services like water, electricity, and sanitation. This inability to pay can create a ripple effect with several negative consequences. As the study respondents noted, unpaid service fees lead to accumulating municipal debt for residents. This debt can strain individuals and families financially, making it even harder to escape the cycle of poverty. Municipal debt leads to municipalities resorting to terminating services for non-payment.

This can have severe consequences for residents, impacting their access to basic necessities and further diminishing their quality of life. Unpaid service fees diminish the municipality's revenue stream, hindering its ability to fund essential services and infrastructure projects. This can lead to a decline in the overall quality of life in the

community. The study further reveals the culture of alternative service seeking. When municipal services become unaffordable or unavailable, residents may seek alternative sources, as the study's participants observed. This can further reduce the municipality's revenue and create challenges for service planning and delivery.

5.2.3.2 The state of development in the municipal area

The findings reveal that the state of development in the municipality remains uneven. Uneven development between urban and rural clusters is a common phenomenon characterised by a disparity in economic opportunities, infrastructure development, and access to essential services. Urban areas often attract a higher concentration of economic activity due to agglomeration economies, specialised industries, and access to larger markets. This concentration can lead to a self-reinforcing growth cycle in urban areas while rural areas lag. Urban areas typically benefit from better infrastructure, including transportation networks, communication systems, and utilities. This superior infrastructure further attracts businesses and investment, exacerbating the development gap. The allure of better economic opportunities and access to services often leads to population migration from rural to urban areas. This migration can further deplete rural areas of their workforce and human capital, hindering their development potential.

The study reveals that the municipality intends to transform the predominantly rural clusters into urban clusters:

> "The municipality's intention is to develop predominantly rural areas by providing this essential infrastructure, which will facilitate service delivery. The provision of water, housing, electricity, and road networks is expected to attract investment to these predominantly rural clusters. For instance, the presence of road infrastructure can incentivise private developers to establish commercial ventures, such as malls, within these localities."

The study argues that the municipality can realise its goal if employment policies are amended and there are higher employment levels in the municipality.

5.2.3.3 The impact of employment levels on local development in the municipal area

The study reveals that lower employment levels negatively affect development. Low employment levels lead to a smaller tax base, limiting the resources available for local

development initiatives. The study highlights that insufficient revenue collection can adversely affect service delivery projects and programmes. High unemployment can lead to decreased consumer spending, business closures, and a general decline in economic activity. Unemployment is often associated with increased social costs, such as higher crime rates and greater demand for social welfare programmes. High unemployment can lead to a decline in property values, further eroding the tax base and making the community less attractive to investors.

5.2.3.4 The availability of indigent programmes and its impact in the municipality

The findings reveal that Polokwane Local municipality provides qualified residents with free and subsidised services—households earning below the threshold, which is currently around R5200.00. The study further reveals the municipality has indigent programmes which are limited to urban clusters, namely the city and Seshego. The indigent programmes receive subsidies for water and electricity in the clusters where the municipality holds electricity licensing rights. Mankweng cluster receives water subsidies but gets electricity from Eskom. These programmes are crucial for ensuring access to basic services for vulnerable populations, promoting social equity, and improving overall quality of life. By providing essential services, these programmes can help break the cycle of poverty and contribute to community development. However, indigent programmes often face challenges related to funding sustainability, accurate identification of eligible households, and potential for abuse or fraud.

5.2.3.5 The impact of indigent programmes on the municipality

The findings reveal that indigent programme negatively affect the municipal budget. The most direct impact is the cost of providing free or subsidised services to eligible households. As the number of indigent households increases, so does the financial burden on the municipality. The study illustrates this point: "If the number of registered indigent households covered by a 50 million budget increases from 50 to 100, the municipality must allocate an additional 50 million to accommodate them".

Managing an indigent programme involves administrative overheads, including verifying eligibility, processing applications, and monitoring usage. These costs can add up, particularly in larger municipalities or those with complex programmes. Offering free or subsidised services means less revenue collected from those households, directly impacting the municipality's income stream. The financial strain

of indigent programmes can sometimes lead to difficult trade-offs. Municipalities may have to reduce spending on other essential services or infrastructure projects to accommodate the programme's costs.

5.2.3.6. Satisfaction with local development in the municipal area

The findings reveal that local development in the Polokwane municipal area faces challenges and is not entirely satisfactory. The findings further show that the municipality still requires further development to achieve its vision of becoming a metro with various economic hubs. The municipality recognises the need for new and developed townships. Currently, areas like Seshego and Mankweng have a mix of tarred and untarred roads and rural and urban components. The municipality aims to improve and transform all these clusters into well-developed townships. However, population growth poses a challenge, as there are new settlements that require development. Additionally, tribal authorities continue to establish new settlements without the knowledge of the municipality, an issue that also needs to be addressed.

5.2.4 To develop a local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development in South Africa

The study proposed an unemployment-based local development model shown in Figure 5.1:

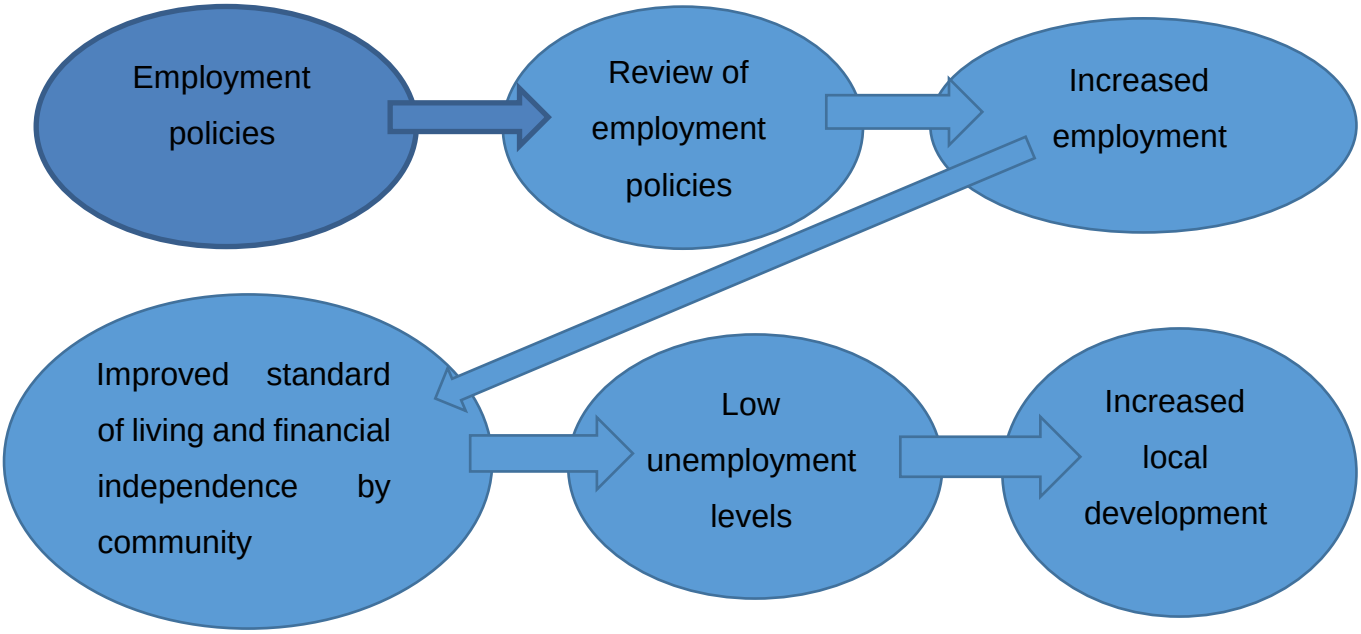

Figure 5.1: Proposed employment based local development model

(Author composition)

The researcher argues that enhancing the employment policies and regulating the labour force can potentially lead to increased employment levels, which, in turn would improve the standards of living and financial independence of the local populace. The study argues that high employment levels will potentially lead to increased local development. More employed residents lead to increased household incomes and greater local spending, boosting local businesses and the overall economy. Higher employment levels broaden the tax base, providing more resources for local governments to invest in infrastructure, services, and community development initiatives. With more people employed, there is typically a decrease in reliance on social welfare programmes, freeing up public resources for other uses. The study argues that higher employment levels are generally considered a positive factor for local development, but the relationship is complex and not always straightforward. While more jobs can contribute to improved local development, the quality, type, and distribution of those jobs matter significantly.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends measures to improve employment policies, which could potentially enhance employment growth and have a significant impact on local development in South African local communities. The study investigated the relationship between employment policies employment levels and local development in South Africa and found that employment policies have an influence on employment levels with both employment policies and employment levels playing a significant role in driving local development. The findings of the study informed the following recommendations:

5.3.1 Reforming labour regulations to boost employment

Easing labour regulations can incentivise businesses to expand hiring by lowering the costs and risks of employment (Nattrass, 2014). In South Africa, labour market reforms should strike a balance between safeguarding workers' rights and fostering a business friendly climate that stimulates job creation. Engaging key stakeholders

including trade unions and employer associations in the reform process, is essential to ensure policies reflect diverse perspectives and address critical concerns. The following measures can be taken to reform labour force regulations:

- Modernising labour regulations for flexibility and growth

Policymakers should focus on reducing regulatory rigidity through simplifying administrative processes, modernizing employment procedures, and encouraging flexible work arrangements to create a more adaptable labour market, particularly for SMMEs. SMMEs often struggle with complex labour regulations due to limited resources. Streamlining compliance requirements would ease this burden, allowing these businesses to prioritise growth and job creation. Bobovnik (2023) argues that labour laws must evolve to reflect contemporary economic realities, as outdated frameworks stifle flexibility (Bobovnik, 2023). Additionally, current enforcement mechanisms can disproportionately disadvantage SMMEs (Blackham, 2019). Reforming these processes would create a fairer and more supportive environment for small businesses.

Overly restrictive employment laws can discourage hiring, particularly due to rigid distinctions between employees and independent contractors. These classifications often leave workers without adequate protections while limiting employer agility (Blackham, 2019). Revising these categories and simplifying hiring/firing procedures would enable businesses to respond more dynamically to market conditions. Clearer regulations could also reduce arbitrary employer decisions, fostering more balanced workplace relationships (Cabrelli & Zahn, 2017).

- Reinforcing social safety nets in flexible labour markets

To protect workers in increasingly flexible labour markets, governments must strengthen social safety nets through comprehensive support systems. It is essential to provide sufficient support mechanisms such as unemployment insurance, skills development allowances, and access to healthcare and other social services. A robust unemployment insurance system provides critical income stability during job transitions, reducing poverty and enhancing economic resilience (Andile, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of such systems, as social safety nets proved vital in mitigating socio-economic shocks (Alif *et al*., 2023). Investing in

continuous skills training helps workers adapt to evolving labour demands. Menger (2017) emphasises that flexible labour markets require policies that support workforce mobility, ensuring individuals can transition smoothly between jobs and training opportunities. Accessible healthcare prevents financial strain during unemployment, while integrated services address broader welfare needs (Rokhmah *et al*., 2020). Tailored interventions, combining public services and income transfers, can strengthen social inclusion, particularly for marginalised populations (Saikkonen & Ylikännö, 2020).

5.3.2 Strengthening social dialogue and collective bargaining

Effective promotion of social dialogue and collective bargaining is critical for fostering cooperation between employers, workers, and government. Key strategies include sectoral bargaining councils, mediation and arbitration services and enhanced labour inspection systems. Establishing structured platforms for sector-wide negotiations helps stabilise employment during economic shocks. Fackler (2024) found that workplaces with sectoral bargaining agreements managed pandemic-related workforce adjustments more effectively, demonstrating their value in crisis response. The German model shows how sectoral agreements covering most private-sector employees can standardise labour conditions while maintaining flexibility (Goerke & Pannenberg, 2022).

Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms preserve labor peace during economic turbulence. Bober *et al*. (2022) highlight how collective bargaining during COVID-19 reduced inequalities and enhanced market resilience by providing structured conflict resolution pathways. Robust monitoring ensures bargaining outcomes translate into practice. Holtzhausen (2019) emphasises the need to address representation gaps in bargaining councils, while Jager *et al*. (2022) demonstrate how Germany's dual system of sectoral bargaining and workplace codetermination balances flexibility with worker protections.

5.3.3 Enhancing policy coordination and implementation for effective employment strategies

Robust policy coordination and implementation are critical for developing employment initiatives that meet workforce needs and drive sustainable economic growth

(Immervoll & Scarpetta, 2012). The following measures can be taken to improve education and training:

- Enhancing inter-ministerial coordination for effective governance

Strong inter-ministerial coordination is essential for aligning education, labour, and economic development policies, ensuring coherent implementation and optimal resource use (Trein *et al*., 2020). A unified approach across government departments enhances policy coherence, minimises duplication, and improves accountability (Ng *et al*., 2021). Establishing central bodies with cross-ministerial mandates can harmonise objectives, facilitate resource sharing and strengthen external partnerships. Regular forums for data exchange and joint decision-making help overcome siloed governance (Wallace *et al*., 2022). High-level inter-ministerial bodies can synchronise efforts across policy areas, leveraging shared expertise and resources (Gourgiotis *et al*., 2021). This structured approach ensures that complex, multi-stakeholder initiatives achieve their intended impact.

- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation for employment policy effectiveness

Robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks are vital for assessing employment policies and programs. These systems enable systematic tracking of policy impacts, identification of improvement areas and data-driven decision making.

5.3.4 Increased inspections and audits

More frequent and rigorous inspections by the Department of Labour can help identify and address non-compliance issues. This could involve proactive inspections as well as investigations based on complaints. Increasing the frequency and rigor of audits can serve to reinforce compliance with employment-related legislation, thereby promoting accountability among employers and fostering trust in the labour market. One vital aspect of this phenomenon is the role of internal audits in shaping employment policies from within organisations. As ILO (2020) notes, internal auditors, often sharing a dual identity as trade union members, can help ensure that audit activities are perceived as objective and constructive channels for organizational improvement rather than punitive measures. This dual perspective may help in crafting policies that are more inclusive and reflective of employee needs (ILO (2020). Furthermore, Bird, and Zolt, (2020) indicate that voluntary audit reforms can stimulate

employment growth among small firms. They suggest that adopting auditing standards can enhance business practices that, in turn, lead to increased hiring rates (Huq *et al*., 2020).

5.3.5 Stricter penalties for non-compliance

Higher fines and other penalties for violations can deter employers from non-compliance. This could include publicising violations to create reputational damage. Numerous studies indicate a correlation between the severity of penalties and levels of compliance within organizations. For instance, a comprehensive review conducted by Weil (2018) demonstrates that jurisdictions imposing higher monetary fines observed a decrease in violations, particularly in labour disputes. A study by Alamgir, and Banerjee (2018) accentuates the significance of media coverage in shaping public perception. Organizations concerned about their public image may experience enhanced pressure from stakeholders, customers, and investors when violations become widely known. The reputational damage associated with publicised violations can manifest in consumer boycotts, stock price drops, and diminished partnerships, thereby incentivizing compliance (Alamgir, & Banerjee, 2018).

5.3.6 Race population-hiring ratio

The concept of a race population-hiring ratio implies that the government would establish guidelines or quotas to ensure that the racial composition of the workforce reflects the demographic makeup of the population. This approach aims to rectify historical injustices and promote diversity in the labour market. By advocating for well-represented racial groups in the labour force, the policy seeks to ensure that all racial demographics have access to employment opportunities. This is particularly important in a country like South Africa, where apartheid policies historically marginalised non-white populations. There is a need for equal chances for all individuals to generate income, regardless of their racial background. This aligns with broader goals of social justice and economic equity, aiming to create a more inclusive economy where everyone can participate and benefit. Implementing such a policy would be a direct response to the legacy of apartheid, which created significant disparities in wealth and employment opportunities among different racial groups. By ensuring that hiring practices reflect demographic realities, the government can work towards reducing these inequalities.

5.3.7 Regulating low skills sector labour

This implies that the government should implement policies and regulations to manage the labour market for low-skilled jobs. This could involve setting standards for wages, working conditions, and employment practices to protect both local and foreign workers. Regulation may also include oversight of recruitment practices to ensure fairness and transparency. Regulating the low-skilled labour market and limiting foreign workers could have significant economic implications. It may help protect local jobs and ensure that South Africans have access to employment opportunities. The government must find a balance between protecting local employment and recognising the need for foreign labour in certain sectors. This could involve creating pathways for skilled foreign workers while implementing stricter regulations for low-skilled labour markets.

5.3.8 Enhanced dispute resolution mechanisms

Streamlining dispute resolution processes at the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration can ensure quicker and more efficient handling of labour disputes, encouraging compliance and reducing uncertainty for employers and employees.

5.3.9 Empowering labour inspectors

Providing labour inspectors with better training, resources, and legal backing can strengthen their ability to enforce the employment policies effectively.

5.3.10 Educational campaigns

Targeted campaigns can educate employers and employees about their rights and responsibilities under the employment policies. This can include workshops, online resources, and informational materials.

5.3.11 Simplifying legal language

Making employment policies and related regulations more accessible using plain language can improve understanding and compliance.

5.3.12 Strengthening social dialogue

Encouraging regular dialogue between government, employers, and trade unions can foster a shared understanding of labour market challenges and facilitate the

development of solutions that promote compliance and employment growth. Collaboration between the government and trade unions is important.

5.3.13 Policies transforming labour markets through equity-focused policy reform

Structural inequalities in labour markets systematically disadvantage marginalised groups, requiring comprehensive policy interventions to create inclusive employment ecosystems. To dismantle these barriers, governments should modernise labour laws to prohibit discriminatory practices and establish robust monitoring systems for enforcement (Bennett & Iwnicki, 2022). This will create sustainable pathways to employment for all citizens. The approach addresses both systemic and practical barriers to inclusive employment

5.3.14 Aligning education and training with market needs

Several studies and reports highlight the persistent gap between South Africa's education and training systems and the skills demanded by the labour market. South Africa's youth unemployment rate (ages 15 – 34) was 45.5% in Q1 2024 (Stats SA, 2024). Meanwhile, a World Bank (2023) report found that 58% of South African firms struggle to find workers with the right skills, particularly in technical and vocational fields. Moreover, according to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2022), only 34% of employers believe graduates have the necessary workplace skills. The 2021 South African Graduate Employers Association (SAGEA) survey revealed that 47% of employers had to retrain graduates due to skill deficiencies.

The mismatch between the skills possessed by job seekers and the requirements of the labour market is a critical issue contributing to the high unemployment rates in South Africa (Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2020). The existing education and training systems do not sufficiently equip individuals with the necessary skills employers demand (Beukes *et al*., 2017). As a result, there is a need for comprehensive reforms in the education and training sector to bridge this gap. Government initiatives should strengthen vocational training and technical education to provide individuals with practical and relevant skills. The following are measures that can be taken to align education and training with market needs:

- Strengthening partnerships between educational institutions and businesses

Enhancing partnerships between educational institutions and businesses is crucial for promoting collaboration that aligns with industry needs. Such partnerships can manifest in multiple ways, such as co-designing curricula and training programs tailored to current workplace demands. Employer involvement in shaping educational content is vital, as it ensures relevance and equips students with skills sought after in the job market. Thune and Storen (2015) emphasize the value of graduate students engaging with work organizations during their studies, noting that these interactions can improve employability and better prepare them for the workforce.

Moreover, incorporating industry experts into academia can greatly enrich the learning experience. When professionals serve as guest lecturers, they not only enhance curriculum relevance but also encourage active student engagement, thereby boosting employability (Otache, 2021). Similarly, guest speakers help align academic knowledge with workplace expectations, offering students valuable insights into the competencies employers prioritize (Riebe *et al*. 2013).

Beyond curriculum development, internships and apprenticeships play a key role in fostering industry-academia partnerships. Chen *et al*. (2014) suggest that collaboration between higher education institutions and businesses enables resource-sharing and leverages complementary strengths, reducing the costs and risks tied to research and innovation. Such partnerships benefit students by providing hands-on experience while supplying industries with a steady stream of job-ready graduates. Additionally, integrating industry feedback into academic programs is vital for maintaining relevance. Involving stakeholders in curriculum reviews ensures that educational offerings remain aligned with market needs, ultimately enhancing graduates' employability (Tagulwa, 2023).

- Enhancing vocational and technical education

Vocational and technical education plays a vital role in closing skills gaps across key industries. To boost enrolment, strategies such as financial incentives, career awareness campaigns, and improved training quality should be prioritised. Raising awareness about vocational career pathways is essential, as students who

understand their options are more likely to make informed decisions about their futures (Ramadhany, 2022). This is particularly important for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, as access to vocational guidance can significantly influence their career trajectories (İşeri, 2019). Equally important is ensuring that vocational training remains high quality and industry relevant. Refining teaching methods and strengthening industry-based training can enhance graduates' skills and employability (Ernawati, 2021). A supportive learning environment further improves career preparedness (Kuijpers *et al*., 2011).

- Investing in lifelong learning and reskilling initiatives

Investing in lifelong learning and reskilling initiatives is essential for supporting workers in adapting to changing labour market demands. Programmes that help individuals acquire new skills and upgrade existing ones can take various forms, including online courses, access to training facilities, and career guidance services. One significant aspect of promoting lifelong learning is the availability of online courses. Online courses enable individuals to take control of their educational journeys and pursue skills relevant to their careers (Ossiannilsson, 2022). This self-directed approach to learning is crucial in a rapidly changing job market, where individuals must continuously update their skills to remain competitive.

Moreover, the role of social and human capital in promoting participation in lifelong learning cannot be overlooked. Knipprath and Rick (2014) emphasise that individuals with higher qualifications are more likely to engage in lifelong learning activities related to their jobs, but they also note that low-qualified adults are motivated to upgrade their skills, particularly when provided with the right support and resources. This highlights the importance of creating inclusive programmes that accomodate diverse educational backgrounds.

Access to training facilities is another critical component of reskilling initiatives. Non-formal lifelong learning plays a vital role in different economic contexts, suggesting that providing accessible training opportunities can help workers invest in their skills at various stages of their careers (Herrero & Prado, 2018). This is particularly relevant in sectors experiencing rapid technological changes, where continuous learning is necessary to keep pace with industry demands. Financial support for reskilling programmes is also essential. Organisations that implement reskilling and upskilling

policies can significantly enhance their workforce's adaptability to digital transformations (Winarni, 2024). By investing in employee training, companies not only improve their operational efficiency but also contribute to the overall resilience of the labour market.

5.3.15 Revitalising skills development for economic participation

A progressive skills integration framework across all education levels is essential for developing workforce-ready graduates. This lifelong learning approach includes early stage acquisition of core skills in basic education and gradual specialisation through tertiary education. The specialisation includes labour market responsiveness curriculum with industry-validated competencies. This scaffolded approach transforms education from knowledge transmission to capability development, ensuring students graduate as adaptable, skilled participants in the modern economy.

5.3.16 Tackling spatial inequality in South Africa's labour market

The enduring effects of apartheid continue to manifest in stark geographical disparities, with marginalized communities facing systemic barriers to economic participation. Research confirms that spatial inequality remains a key driver of unemployment and poverty (Shahaboonin *et al*., 2023; Shifa *et al*., 2021), particularly in rural areas where access to education and employment opportunities remains limited. Strategic interventions needed include improving transport Infrastructure and decentralise economic development. This multi-pronged approach addresses both the physical and structural barriers perpetuating spatial inequality, creating pathways for inclusive economic participation across all regions. The strategy recognises that solving South Africa's unemployment crisis requires targeted solutions for its unique geographical challenges.

5.3.17 Strengthening leadership for employment growth

South Africa's labour market is characterised by persistent unemployment and inequality (Meyer, 2014b). This challenges demand decisive leadership from the Department of Labour to drive meaningful change. The Department must ground decisions in rigorous labour market research and data analytics which foster evidence-based policymaking. The department must also coordinate with other government departments to align economic and employment policies. This approach

moves beyond bureaucratic management to proactive, solution-oriented leadership that can transform South Africa's employment landscape. The Department's ability to synthesise data, collaborate across sectors, and innovate policies will determine its success in reducing unemployment.

5.3.18 Driving employment growth through economic diversification in South Africa

A multi-sector approach to job creation is essential for reducing unemployment and building a resilient, diversified economy in South Africa. Strategic focus should centre on SMME development as an employment catalyst and investment in sectors with high growth potential. This integrated framework positions South Africa to simultaneously address immediate unemployment challenges while building long-term economic resilience through strategic sector development.

5.3.19 Advancing job creation through strategic research and development investment

Targeted investment in research and development serves as a powerful catalyst for innovation, industry growth and employment opportunities. The Department of Labour should maximise labour market impact by using empirical data to identify emerging labour market challenges and solutions. They can also systematically evaluate employment policy effectiveness through rigorous research and development (Sá & Holt, 2019). This approach transforms research and development from an abstract concept into a concrete driver of quality employment and sustainable economic development. The Department's active role in coordinating these efforts ensures research outcomes directly inform workforce development strategies.

5.3.20 Fostering a business-friendly environment for job creation and economic growth

Strategic policy interventions that foster entrepreneurship and strengthen SMMEs can significantly boost employment and economic growth. Research confirms SMMEs serve as critical employment drivers, generating most jobs in developing economies (Beynon *et al*., 2019). Financial enablement, capacity building and regulatory streamlining can maximise their impact. These measures help SMMEs scale operations, enhance productivity, and create quality jobs while promoting economic

diversification. The most effective approaches combine financial assistance with technical support and policy reforms, creating an ecosystem where small businesses can thrive as engines of inclusive growth.

5.3.21 Mirroring state-owned entities

The concept of creating mirrors of state-owned entities implies that the government can replicate successful SOEs in various sectors to address specific employment challenges. These entities can be designed to focus on sectors with high potential for job creation, such as technology, renewable energy, and infrastructure development. By establishing these entities, the government can directly create jobs that align with the skills and education of graduates. This approach can help bridge the gap between education and employment, ensuring that graduates have access to positions that utilise their qualifications effectively. The establishment of these entities can also help mitigate structural unemployment by providing training and development programmes tailored to the needs of the labour market. State-owned entities often play a crucial role in economic development by driving investment and innovation. By creating new entities, the government can stimulate economic growth while simultaneously addressing unemployment.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The previous chapter presented the research findings and interpretation of the results of the study. This chapter provides a summary of the findings, recommendations, and conclusions drawn from the study. The study investigated the relationship between employment policies, employment levels, and local development in South Africa, using the Polokwane municipal area as its case study. The objectives of the study were to analyse the employment legislative framework and its influence on employment growth in South Africa; examine the relationship between employment policies and employment levels in South Africa; examine the impact of employment policies on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality; analyse the impact of employment levels on local development in Polokwane Local Municipality and to develop a local development model that has the potential to increase employment levels and enhance local development in South Africa. The study used qualitative and quantitative research designs and adopted interviews and questionnaires as data

collection tools. It employed both probability and non-probability sampling to draw its sample and analysed data using Microsoft Excel 2010 and thematic analysis.

The study found that employment policies influence employment growth. While some regulations aim to protect workers's rights and promote fair labour practices, overly rigid regulations can sometimes discourage hiring and increase labour costs, potentially leading to lower employment levels. Conversely, flexible regulations can make it easier for businesses to adjust their workforce to changing market conditions, potentially promoting job creation. The study also found that there are challenges when employers comply with employment policies and the Department of Labour faces challenges when enforcing the compliance of employment policies. The study further found that both employment policies and employment levels have an impact on local development. On one hand employment policies ensures inclusive labour market and affords every citizen a chance to participate in the labour force. On the other hand employment lower employment levels exacerbates dire socio-economic conditions perpetuating significant government dependency. Moreover, unemployed household enjoy indigent programmes benefits reducing municipal revenue base and ultimately affecting municipal service provision and state of local development.

The study recommends the relaxation of regulations. Simplifying complex regulations can make it easier for companies to navigate the legal landscape and focus on creating jobs. Periodically reviewing and streamlining existing labour regulations can reduce administrative burdens on businesses and improve compliance. The study also recommends investment in skills development and education. Addressing the skills mismatch between the labour force and market demands is vital. Investing in education and training programmes that equip individuals with the skills needed for in-demand jobs can improve employability and boost productivity.

Moreover, the study recommends supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and fostering an entrepreneurship culture. SMMEs are significant job creators in many economies. Assisting SMMEs by providing access to financial resources, business development services and streamlined regulations can help them grow and create more jobs. This can significantly improve employment levels and ultimately enhance local development in South Africa. High employment levels will potentially lead to increased local development, as argued by the study. More employed residents lead

to increased household incomes and greater local spending, boosting local businesses and the overall economy.

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