



Women's employment Status in South

Africa

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1. Introduction

Over the last few decades many countries experienced an increase in the labour force participation of women. Much has been written on the feminisation of the labour force in both developed and developing countries around the world (Standing et al., 1996; Barker 1999). Klasen and Woolard (2000) found that global female labour force participation rates dramatically increased in the 1990s. In South Africa in the 1960s only 23 per cent of women were employed, by 1985 this figure had risen to 36 percent and by 2008 it had almost doubled to 45.5 per cent.

However, South African unemployment rates (both male and female) are still amongst the highest in the world. Unemployment is seen as one of the most pressing socio-political problems facing the government. In the third quarter of 2009, the unemployment rate stood at 23.3%. Women made up 57% of the not working group with 20% being unemployed and 80% were not economically active. During this quarter the number of employed people was lower than that registered in the second quarter of the same year. Comparisons of data between 2008 and 2009 show that, the number of



ally, with the annual increase among women higher than

that of males (Statistics South Africa, 2009). This is despite steps taken to address gender equity in the country.

It is thus important to isolate factors that could still be playing a significant role in women's employment status. Thus, the main objective of the study is to investigate the role of socio-demographic factors in women's employment status. The socio-demographic factors include population group, age, level of education, province of residence and marital status.

The analyses are based on the Quarterly Labour Force Survey carried out by Statistics South Africa. The logistics regression revealed that there is a huge and important role that socio-demographic characteristics play in the employment status of women in South Africa. Through this study clear differences in characteristics between the employed women and unemployed women in the country are revealed.

2. Literature Review

This section discusses employment and unemployment looking specifically to women unemployment in South Africa and the socio-demographic factors relating to women's employment status in the country. Women have always reported higher response rates of



(Mahlwele : 2002) There are many factors including

educational and occupational opportunities that are seen as contributing to these differences between men and women unemployment rates. There is existing knowledge on the relationship between women employment and the some socio-demographic factors and these are discussed below:

2.1. Women employment and age

Due to either lack of or minimal experience, young people, especially young women, find it difficult to secure jobs. As a result, youth unemployment has become a contentious issue in the country. Youth unemployment is generally much higher than that of adults in most countries of the world. In particular, younger women struggle mu The formal workplace is characterised by older women with a lot more experience than the younger women. ch more to get employment than older women (Miatsheni & Rospabe, 2002).

2.2. Women employment and population group

Historically in South Africa, access to the labour market was based on race. Restrictions on the number of people employed in a particular sector were also determined by race, for example, managerial positions were reserved for whites. In addition to this the labour market was a male dominated terrain.



Currently, policies that have been implemented post 1994 to deal with this situation continue to have large gaps that still need to be urgently addressed by both the employers and government. For instance, white women still dominate the employment sector when compared to women in other population groups, as well as when compared to African men (USAID Southern Africa, 2009)

2.3. Women employment and level of education

Educational attainment can do more than just improve a person's intellectual capacity, it also gives one better access to jobs and improves one's chances of being employed and having higher earnings. In studies done on returns from education it has been found that when the unemployment rate falls earnings rise for people with higher education. The differences are always stark between the highest and lowest education levels. This is because employers view the ability to earn an academic credential as an indicator of assets such as organisational skills and aptitude so that the potential worker will bring to the job (OECD, 2002).

2.4. Women employment and marital status

Most women who are married tend to take care of the children and other dependent relatives including taking care of the elderly and therefore may temporarily withdraw from the labour force.



do not all have such responsibilities and are therefore

more inclined to be involved in the formal economy. Marital status can be the foundation for unemployment among women who are forced to take care of their children and sacrifice employment in the process (Mahlwele, 2002

2.5. Women employment and province of residence

Employment is to a large extent determined by geographic location. Therefore, it is obvious that women living in a particular industrialised/metropolitan area (e.g. Gauteng) would have high employment ratio than women living in a less industrialised area or province (e.g. Limpopo).

3. Methodology

Binary logistic regression was the main method used.

3.1. Sources of data:

The main source of data for this study is the Quarterly Labour Force Survey. The data was collected by Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) in the third quarter of 2009 (July to September). Data collected mainly focuses on labour market activities of individuals between 15 years and 64 years who live in South Africa. The survey respondents included all persons in the households observed



3.2. Sample design

The sample for the survey covered the non-institutionalized population except for workers' hostels. However, persons living in private dwellings within institutions were also interviewed. The sample is based on information collected during the Population Census of 2001. A total of 3080 Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) were selected from Enumeration areas (EAs) that were used during the Census for the selection of dwelling units for all household based surveys. The sample is representative at national and provincial levels.

3.3. Questionnaires

The Household Questionnaire was used to interview all the households in the sample. It is divided into two parts - the cover page and the questionnaire. The information collected in the questionnaire is structured as follows:

- Demographic information and biographical information of all persons in the household;
- Information on unemployment and inactivity; and
- Information on main work activity (for the employed)



All fieldworkers were trained on the fieldwork procedures, such as, how to identify the selected PSUs and dwelling units, and on the administration of the questionnaire. In order to check if the trainees understood the instructions clearly they were taken through evaluation exercises on each section that had been covered. Group discussions and role plays were also used to ensure better understanding

3.5. Response rates

The average response rate, for the third quarter of 2009 was 90.1 percent. The table below shows response rates by province.

Table 1: Response rates by province

Province	Percent
Western Cape	78,9
Eastern Cape	96,5
Northern Cape	90,8
Free State	94,5
KwaZulu-Natal	93,7
North West	94,6



Mpumalanga	96,6
Limpopo	97,9
South Africa	90,1

4. Analytical Framework

Univariate analyses of all variables relevant to the study of women employment status were performed.

Thereafter bivariate analyses of the dependent variables by socio-demographic characteristics were performed. Multivariate logistic regression analysis was carried out separately to study the odds of women being employed and unemployed. The forward selection procedure with a significance level of 0.5 for the Wald statistic was used. All potential interactions were included one by one as proposed by Hosmer and Lemeshow (2000). All those variables that appeared significant were used in the logistic regression. Data analysis was carried out using statistical package SPSS version 17.

5. Operational definitions of dependent and independent variables

The selection of potential factors that might influence the employment status of women was based on the literature review. The independent variables used in the analysis refer to different factors to which they roughly belong, namely socio-demographic factors (marital status, age, population group, province of



dependent variable in this study as already discussed earlier is

employment status which is a binary variable (unemployed and employed).

(a) Dependent variable

The dependent variable is employment status and is treated as a dichotomous variable (employed and unemployed women).

Employed women

These are defined as women who were aged between 15 ó 65 years during the reference week and did work for at least an hour or had a job or a business to go to if they were temporarily absent from home.

Unemployed women

Unemployed women would be those who are in the working age population and were not employed in the reference week, were actively looking for work and were available for work. It also includes those who did not work in the reference week but have a job or business to start at a definite date in future. Those women, who did not work in the reference week, did not have a job to go to and had not taken steps to look for a job for various reasons were also included in this category.



These variables are those identified as influential in the employment status of women.

Marital status: This variable indicates the marital status of all the women in the study. Three categories were created: Married/Living with partner (two groups collapsed); Divorced/separated/widowed (three groups collapsed) and never married.

Age: A set of five dummy variables were defined for the variable age: 15-24 years, 25-34 years, 35-44 years, 45-54 years and 55 -64 years.

Population group: This variable indicates the population group to which the women belong to.

There are four main population groups of South Africa: African, white, coloured and Indian.

Province of residence: This variable indicates the place of residence in which the women reside. These are the nine provinces of South Africa: Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, North West, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo.

Level of education This variable indicates the level of education that has been attained by the women in the study. Four educational categories were defined for the women: no schooling, less than matriculation, matriculation and tertiary qualification.

6. Regression analysis

Regression analysis was used to identify if the above variables were significant in influencing the employment status of women. The logistic regression model looks at the estimates and at the probability that an event will or will not occur.

7. Data analysis

7.1. Descriptive analysis

This section first presents and discusses the descriptive statistics for the selected variables followed by a



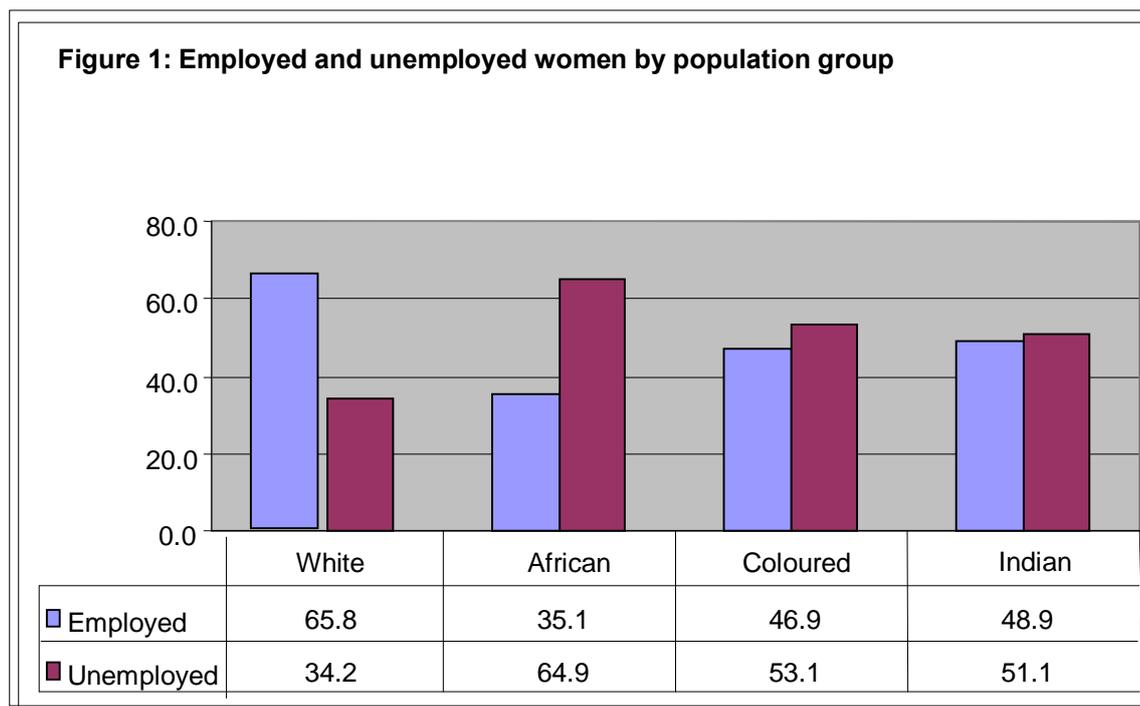
hic factors and lastly a discussion of the parameter estimates

from the model.

Table 2 shows that there were 54, 542 women that were interviewed in the survey. The majority of these were Africans (79.4 %) followed by coloureds (11.3%), whites (7.2%) and Indians (2.2%).

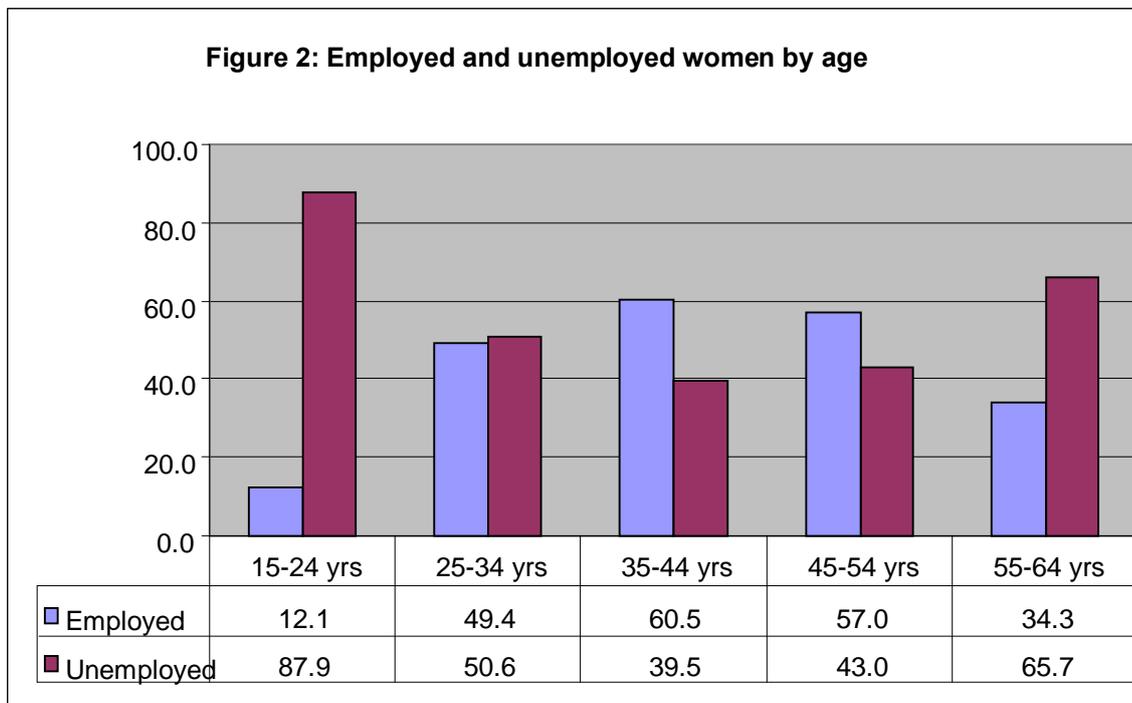
The spread of the distribution of the women is not far off the distribution of the population of South Africa among the major population groups. Only absolute figures are provided in the table so that the reader can get the real picture. Percentages sometimes tend to cloud the actual results obtained.

Table 2: Women’s employment status by population group





As can be seen in Figure 1 the racial imbalance is still evident in the South African labour market even amongst women. The majority of employed women are white while the majority of unemployed women are African. About 65% of white women in the survey were employed, followed by African women (35%), coloured women (46.9%) and Indian women (48.9%).



When we look at Figure 2 above, of the 32.5% of women in the age bracket 15 ó 24 yrs, only 12% of them are employed. Women in the age bracket 35ó44 yrs accounted for the greatest share as 60.5% of them are employed even though they only account for 19% of the total number of women in the working age population.



In Figure 3, the majority of women who were employed were those with tertiary qualifications; about 80% of women with tertiary qualification were employed compared to the 49.9% with less than matric and 31.2% with no schooling. Only 30% of the women with matric (who form the majority of the women in the study) were employed. Women with tertiary qualifications were the only category that had a higher percentage of women that were employed.

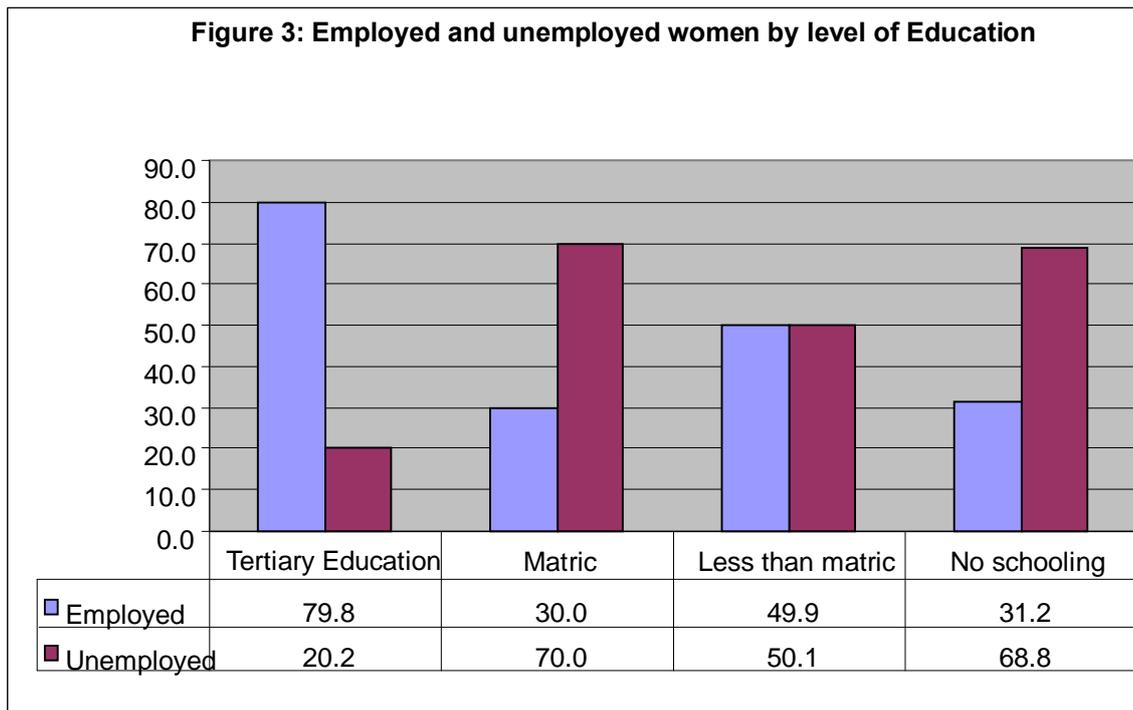


Table 5 indicates that, the majority of women in this study were single (never married). The results showed that 36.1% were married or living together with partners, 56.5% had never been married



owed.

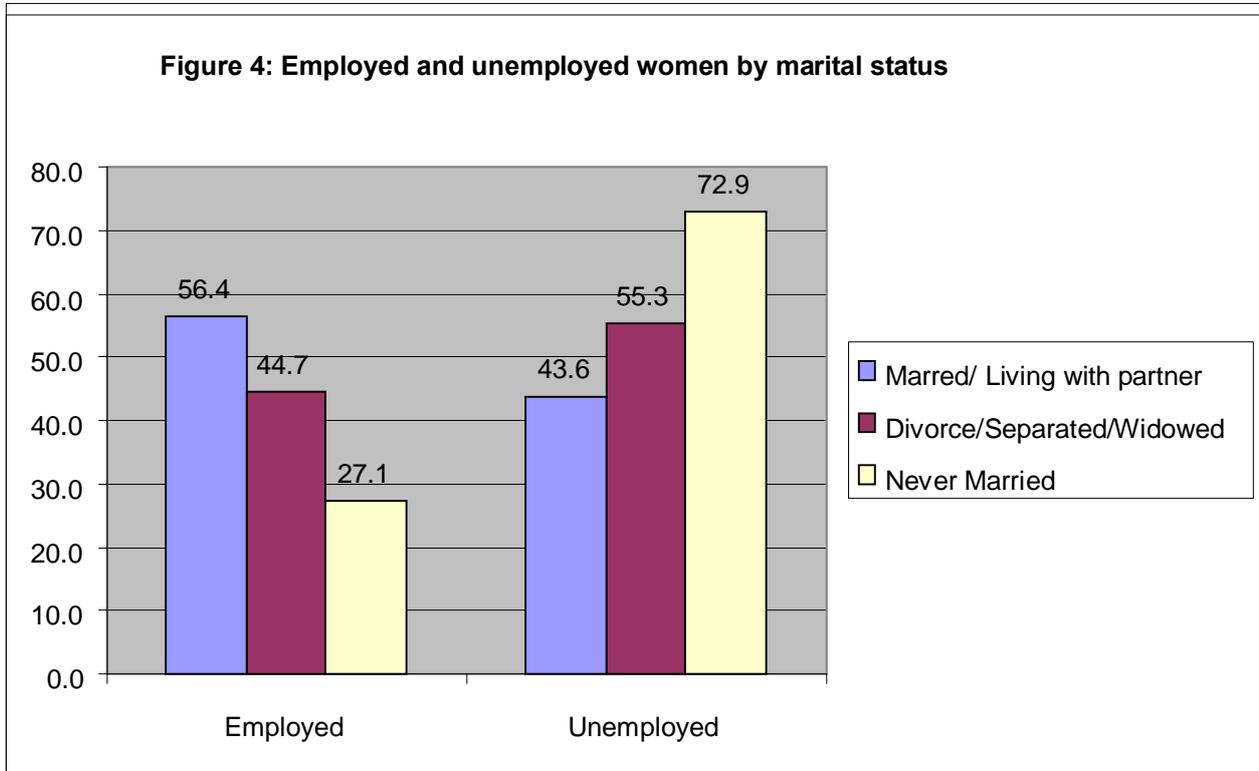
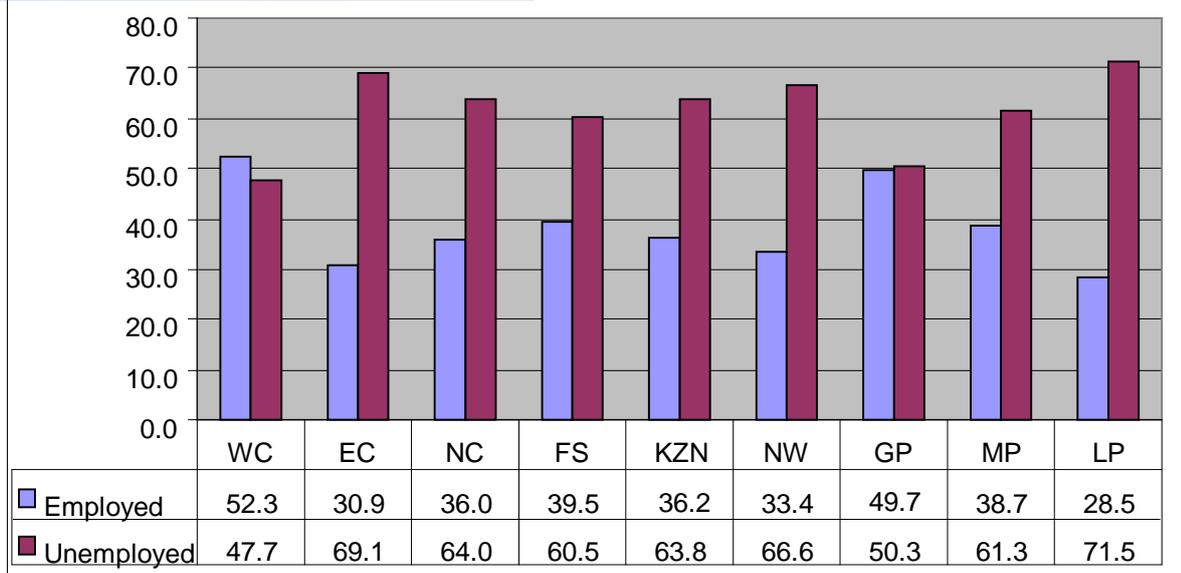


Figure 5 indicates that Western Cape had the highest number of employed women. About 52% of women in Western Cape were employed followed by Gauteng (49.7%), Free State (39.5%), Mpumalanga (38.7%) KwaZulu Natal (36%), Northern Cape (36%), North West (33%), Eastern Cape (30.9%) and Limpopo (28.5%).

Employed women by province of residence



7.2. Bivariate logistic analysis

This regression model was fitted on all women who were employed which is our dependant variable and used all the identified independent variables e.g. age, population group, level of education, province of residence, and marital status.

Women’s employment status and age

Age group 15 ó 24 years has been used for reference. Table 7 shows that women who were in the 25-34 years of age bracket were 5.3 times more likely to be employed than those who were 15 to 24 years of age. Also women who are 35 to 44 years of age were 8.0 times more likely to be employed than those who were 15 ó 24 years of age. This remains the case even among the



64 yrs of age. This shows that the older the women the

more likely it is for them to get employment. There was a significant association between the women's employment status and age.

Women's employment status and population group

The white population group was used as reference. The data shows that white women are more likely to be employed than the other population groups. However, the difference with the Coloured population group was insignificant. The Indians are the least likely to get employed. African women are 1.47 times less likely to get employed than white women. These results indicate that a strong relationship does exist between the employment status of women and the population group they belong to.

Women's employment status and level of education

The impact of education in women's status of employment Higher levels of education attainment relate to a higher probability of taking part in the market economy. Tertiary education level has been used for reference. Women who had achieved tertiary education level were more likely to get employment than those with Matriculation, less than matriculation or no schooling. In all these categories the differences were very significant. Women with matriculation were 5.9 times less likely to get jobs than those with tertiary education. Those with less than matriculation were 2.7



with tertiary qualifications. Women with higher levels of

education can be associated with a higher chance of being employed than those with less education.

Women's employment status and province of residence

For the province of residence the Western Cape was used for reference. It was found that women living in the Western Cape were more likely to get employment opportunities than those staying in other provinces. There were fewer opportunities in the other seven provinces; however the differences were not significant in Gauteng province. Women in all the other provinces except for Gauteng were less likely to enter the labour market than women in Western Cape. Women in Eastern Cape were 1.7 times less likely to get jobs than those in the Western Cape and women in Limpopo were 1.8 times less likely to get jobs than those in Western Cape. The results show that there is a relationship between employment status and province of residence.

Employment status of women and marital status

Married or living together were used as reference. It is clear that there is a relationship between women's employment status and marital status. Women who were married or living together with partners were more likely to get employed than those who were divorced/separated/widowed and never married. Women who were divorced were 1.2 times less



are married or living together with partners. Women who

never married were 1.5 times less likely to get employed than those who were married or living with partners.

8. Conclusion and Discussion

The main objective of the study was to provide insight into the role that social factors play in the status of employment of women in South Africa. For this purpose several explanatory variables were analysed to examine the socio-demographic characteristics that influence women's status of employment. Despite the seemingly positive employment growth since 1994, the model shows that young women are negatively affected by the high unemployment currently experienced in South Africa. The study showed that approximately 90% of women in the age bracket 24-34 years were unemployed.

The majority of women who were employed had tertiary qualifications. Approximately 80% of women with tertiary qualifications were employed. The province of residence provided an expected result with more women unemployed in the rural and poorer provinces of the country. Similar to another study conducted by Statistics South Africa (2009), where it was found that highest unemployment rates were found in provinces that were mostly rural and extremely poor. The study



important role that socio-demographic characteristics play in

the employment status of women in South Africa. Through this study clear differences in characteristics between the employed women and unemployed women in the country are revealed.

Subtitle

Figure or Table Title

Women's employment status by population group

Employed and unemployed women by age

Employed and unemployed women by marital status

Unemployed and employed women by province of residence

Employed and unemployed women by level of Education

REFERENCES (RÉFÉRENCES)

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