

**PRECIOUS MNCAYI**

School of Economic Sciences, North-West University, South Africa

**JABULILE MAKHALIMA**

North-West University, South Africa

## **EXPLORING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES OF FEMALE UNIVERSITY GRADUATES: A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE**

### **Abstract:**

The South African labour market has long been known for its discriminatory nature. This remarkable feature stems from a racially divided past that persists even after more than 25 years of democracy. Females, in particular, face some of the highest unemployment rates among all groups in the country. While studies connecting gender to higher education have produced mixed results, it is worth noting that a greater percentage of females in South Africa have earned a bachelor's degree than males, according to the 2021 South African Post-School Education Monitoring Report. Moreover, the graduation rate for females has been consistently higher than for males in the last decade. In fact, females have consistently held higher graduation rates over the last decade. Although the higher education sector in South Africa produces a larger number of female graduates and seems to integrate them into the labour market better, unemployment remains a persistent issue among this group. To better understand the factors impacting employment outcomes for South African female university graduates, this article examines data collected from a database of 559 South African female university graduates. The findings show that age (particularly those under 30 years of age), previous racially disadvantaged background, being single, and a bachelor's degree in humanities are statistically significant factors that generate negative employment outcomes. The study recommends that the South African government and private sector take more active measures to encourage and empower females instead of relying solely on education. While education is important, the unique challenges of the South African labour market make it crucial for graduates to carefully consider their career choices and strive for academic excellence.

### **Keywords:**

Employment outcomes; university graduates; females; female graduates; graduate employment; South Africa

**JEL Classification:** A23, J01, J16