SOCIAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Literature Review

The Effects of COVID-19 on Women in South Africa: An Analysis using the Social Provisioning Framework

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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of COVID-19 has resulted in the South African government imposing a hard lockdown, bringing the majority of economic activities to a halt. For many countries, this pandemic has worsened existing gender inequalities, although in one of the world's most unequal countries, these inequalities have become particularly visible. This descriptive study used the five methodological starting points of the social provisioning framework to dissect how this pandemic has affected South African women, a group which has historically been disadvantaged, but has become even more so during the pandemic. The starting points include considering caring and domestic labour, human well-being, human agency, validating ethical judgements, and adopting an intersectional analysis. This paper has drawn together information from various sources which have collected data throughout South Africa's lockdown to paint a picture of the economic effects which the global pandemic has had on women. It has demonstrated how South Africa's labour market, social security framework, and issues related to corruption – all of which had been challenges before the lockdown – have exacerbated gender inequality. Though many policy toolkits are available for devising policies aimed at promoting gender equality or at gender mainstreaming existing policies, the social provisioning framework complements the various toolkits by issuing a challenge to adopt a more critical way of thinking about women's issues within society.

Keywords: Gender equality; women; COVID-19; Well-being; social provisioning framework; reproductive labour

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of COVID-19 has had devastating consequences around the world. Countries have had to make the difficult choice between allowing citizens to continue earning a living and protecting their

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health. As such, many countries introduced some form of 'lockdown', where people were encouraged to stay home to avoid the spread of the virus. South Africa imposed its own hard lockdown from 26 March 2020, bringing the majority of economic activity to a halt. Though the lockdown and its associated closures assisted in curbing the spread of the virus and alleviating the initial pressure on an already ailing health sector, the economic consequences have been devastating, with most countries expected to experience a recession in the near future (if they have not already done so) (World Bank, 2020).

Some have claimed that, during an economic recession, men tend to perform worse in relation to labour market outcomes (Alon, Doepke, Olmstead-Rumsey, & Tertilt, 2020; Standing, 2011), although the problem with adopting this view is that it embraces a narrow conception of what is considered valuable within an economy (that being what is considered work) and fails to recognise the challenges which arise when the reproductive and productive spheres intersect with one another; something which is a daily occurrence for many women in society. The evidence of women's dual responsibilities in the productive and reproductive spheres have been well documented (Connell & Philip, 2007; Cornish, Faraday, & Verma, 2006; McDowell, 1991). Crises which, like the COVID-19 pandemic, affect vulnerable members of society the worst, tend to shed light on the source of such vulnerabilities. This has been evident in what has happened around the world in the last few months. Business and school closures have left these vulnerable groups even more exposed than they usually are – the unemployed, workers in the informal sector, the poor, the youth, and women.

Given prior knowledge on the precarity which vulnerable groups face during times of crisis, and women in particular, it is expected that governments would have leaned towards approaches which are sensitive to these facts. Literature has shown how a case can be made for gender mainstreaming almost every policy which governs our social lives, and that policies which are gender blind tend to put women at a disadvantage, even when this outcome is not intended (Cornish et al., 2006; Council of Europe, 1998).

The case has been made for the need to include gender in *every* analysis of social policy and how this should be accomplished has been fleshed out with the use of various toolkits and methodology handbooks (Council of Europe, 1998; OECD, 2012; OECD, 2018; UN-Habitat, 2008; UNICEF, 2018). Though these provide useful tools for developing policies which deal with issues arising as a result of gender inequality, or for gender mainstreaming existing policy, during a crisis issues related to gender tend to be a secondary consideration to 'more pressing' challenges. In addition, the data required to devise a gendered response to a crisis is often not readily available to adequately utilise toolkits of this

nature. Thus, this paper instead makes use of Marilyn Power's Social Provisioning Framework (Power, 2004).

The purpose of this framework is to identify an alternative starting point in an economic analysis. In her paper, Power (2004, p. 4) states that "where the analysis begins limits what will be examined and what will be ignored". The social provisioning framework thus consists of methodological starting points, as Power refers to them and, of these, she outlines five. These include considering caring and domestic labour, human well-being, human agency, validating ethical judgements, and adopting an intersectional analysis.

Power compiled these methodological starting points based on the growing body of feminist economics literature over the last few decades. She does not advocate for a single uniform methodology which must be utilised in undertaking studies in the field, but bases this framework on her observation that "a study of the growing body of feminist economic literature suggests a coalescence around certain basic principles as points of analytic departure" (Power, 2004, p. 4). Indeed, a review of the feminist economics, and to some extent the feminist literature in general (though too many to mention here), reveals that these methodological starting points are a general feature, albeit that many studies evaluate only one or two of these starting points at a time (Casale & Posel, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989; Duffy, 2007; Floro & Pichetpongsa, 2010; Hancock, 2007; Klasen, 2004; McCall, 2005; McNay, 2016; Nelson, 2010; Peter, 2003; Rakovski & Price-Glynn, 2010).

The strength of the social provisioning framework lies in the fact that it provides a comprehensive look at an event and also provides an opportunity to sketch a bigger picture of circumstances, even if at just a conceptual or theoretical level – a feature which is missing from the studies cited in the previous paragraph. Though an *in-depth* analysis of all of Power's starting points in a single study is not desirable, the social provisioning framework explicitly draws out and anchors the (often implicit) assumptions of other authors within a broader feminist structure. Having a bigger picture as a starting point inevitably influences how application of the finer details will take place. It also allows for an overview of how every policy or action has a gendered effect and moves away from viewing gender equality as an 'add-on' once other social issues have been accounted for.

Though Power does not present this framework as rigid or absolute, she encourages the use of these points *simultaneously*, as far as possible, when analysing events or policies which affect women. She has also developed this framework based on a consideration of aspects which feminist scholars have

traditionally included in their work, and such a framework could prove useful beyond just interrogating gender differences. It could also, however, be applied to class, race, and other differences which create structural disadvantages in our society.

This descriptive study used the five methodological starting points of the social provisioning framework to dissect how this pandemic has affected South African women, a group which has historically been disadvantaged in society, but has become even more so during this global pandemic. This paper thus draws together information from various sources which have collected data throughout the lockdown to draw a picture of the effect which the global pandemic has had on women, young and old, economically active or not. Important to note, however, is that the goal here is not to discuss each element of the social provisioning framework in-depth, but rather to demonstrate how each of these elements allow us to flesh out the gendered experiences women face in a time of crisis, as well as during any other 'normal' time in our society. This paper will highlight how traditional vulnerabilities of women have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 global pandemic in South Africa, emphasising the need to consider gender in all policy deliberations, but also to take a broader view of challenges when undertaking an economic analysis.

This paper will start with a description of the five methodological starting points, followed by a discussion of how each of these starting points is sufficiently relevant to consider in the current economic climate. This will be followed by a short discussion and finally some recommendations in a concluding section.

POWER'S SOCIAL PROVISIONING FRAMEWORK

Power's (2004) Social Provisioning Framework challenges the traditional way in which economic analyses of social problems and policies starts and, she argues, ultimately ends. As such, she proposes a broader framework with which privilege or disadvantage within an economic system can be examined. In her 2004 paper, she argues that "caring labor and domestic labor are vital parts of any economic system and should be incorporated into the analysis from the beginning, not shoehorned in as an afterthought. One implication of this view is that interdependent and interconnected human actors are at the center of this analysis rather than the isolated individual" (Power, 2004, p. 4). Here, she refers to the first element within her methodological framework which relates to caring and domestic labour.

In her text, she emphasises the need to undertake household analyses as well as individual analyses. The former are able to capture the dynamics between broader society and the household, as this is traditionally considered the domain of women (the private or reproductive sphere), while individual analysis (similar to including only analyses at the household level), excludes intrahousehold power dynamics. This is emphasised by Himmelweit and Mohun (1977, p. 16) who state that housework "plays an important reproductive role with respect to ideology. For the family has a crucial stabilising function through the allocation of socially defined roles, both in the conditioning of children and in the maintenance of [a] docile, disciplined [and] divided working class. The family is one of the most important units for the socialisation of individuals in capitalist society". They further state that "[a]uthoritarian relationships in social production (capitalist to worker) are facilitated through their previous observation and acceptance in the home (parents to children and husband to wife)" (Himmelweit & Mohun, 1977, p. 16). Similar sentiments have been shared in the more-recently drafted white paper on families (Department of Social Development, 2013). This labour which women primarily perform is thus not just in service of the family with which they reside, but plays a crucial role in maintaining a social order within society.[2]

The second element in the social provisioning framework relates to human well-being. In the framework, human well-being requires a move away from traditional economic measures of well-being, wealth and income. The concept of human well-being is also closely related to human agency and ethical judgements. In her discussion on human well-being, Power draws closely on the work of Amartya Sen who developed the capability approach, which focuses more on "what people are able to be and do, and not on what they can consume, or on their incomes" (Robeyns, 2003, p. 62). Sen's approach goes beyond income measures to identify the types of political freedoms which people enjoy and the types of institutions within society which enhance or hinder individual freedoms (Sen, 1999). A lack of such freedoms and institutions can sometimes limit personal freedoms regardless of the wealth an individual enjoys. Sen's framework has been criticised for its lack of commitment to defining what well-being means, although this has also been identified as a strength of Sen's work, given the subjective nature of well-being (Hill, 2003). Well-being will be defined differently, depending on the time and place in which individuals find themselves. However, accommodating every single individual is not possible, and nor is it practical in the realm of public policy decision making. Many authors (too many to mention here) have thus measured well-being using a set of pre-defined factors which are

[2] Though power does not explicitly make the distinction between paid and unpaid reproductive labour, the distinction will be made in this paper.

objectively measurable (Bhorat & Kanbur, 2005; Bookwalter & Dalenberg, 2004; Villamagna & Giesecke, 2014; White, 2010).

Sen's measures of well-being relate to the freedoms of individuals, which are characterised by *choices*. Someone may not have the desire to exercise a freedom at a particular point in time, but it is important that they have the choice to decide not to. In his analysis, he refers to five instrumental freedoms which attempt to list aspects which define an individual's relationship to their communities or the state. These include political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security (Sen, 1999). While these instrumental freedoms do not define well-being as subjectively as a scale which attempts to measure individual life satisfaction, the point that this paper argues and attempts to demonstrate is that living conditions within the public sphere are intimately connected to conditions within the private sphere (household) and by extension, the individual. The advantage of using Sen's instrumental freedoms is that they represent the extent to which individuals have choices. Sen thus views a restriction on the choices people have as a limitation on their well-being.

Political freedoms, he defines as the right to choose who may govern a society as well as working accountability mechanisms once the chosen parties are in power, while he defines economic facilities as the resources which one has access to which enables production and consumption. Social opportunities refer to access to services such as education and healthcare which will have a direct bearing on one's ability to uphold a decent quality of living, and transparency guarantees, the factors which influence trust within a community. Corruption is an example of a factor which has a bearing on this last-mentioned freedom. Finally, protective security simply refers to the safety net which individuals are able to access to prevent any undue suffering. Sen (1999) specifically mentions the need for all of these to work in conjunction to enhance the freedoms of individuals within a society.

Closely related to the human well-being aspect is that of human agency. The more freedoms individuals are guaranteed in society, the more their human agency will be enhanced. Agency has been defined as "the capacity of a person (or other living and material entities) to intervene in the world in a manner that is deemed, according to some criterion or another, to be independent or relatively autonomous" (McNay, 2016, p. 40). Power (2004) thus emphasises the need to focus on *processes* and not just *outcomes*, and by doing so to consider the distribution of power in a particular process and how that could lead to a particular outcome.

One of the assumptions of mainstream economics theory is that arguments should be based on positive statements, i.e. that an economic analysis should be value and judgement free. However, Power (2004, p. 5) argues that "ethical judgments are a valid, inescapable, and in fact desirable part of an economic analysis". Other feminist scholars have also argued that the pursuit of a positive rather than a normative approach to designing interventions does not leave policies and theories value free, but only serves to mask "implicit assumptions about race, class and gender" even if done so unintentionally (Barker, 1999, p. 572). It is thus important to engage with value judgements so as to make clear what implicit assumptions underlie public policy decision making.

Lastly, Power's framework advocates for the adoption of intersectional analyses. This allows for the consideration of the multiple identities which women carry beyond just their gender. The most common of these include race, class, and sexual orientation. Given that this requires an additional layer of analysis which should complement the first four points, this will not be presented as a separate section in the discussion which follows, but as a complementary layer to the other elements. The following section applies the social provisioning framework to the situation women have found themselves in during the COVID-19 pandemic.

THE METHODOLOGICAL STARTING POINTS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

This section will consider how the global pandemic and the consequent response from the South African government has affected women – using the methodological starting points provided in the social provisioning framework.

CARING AND DOMESTIC LABOUR

The global pandemic has had devastating economic consequences and has resulted in job losses and business closures. This problem has been particularly acute in the South African economy where unemployment was a pre-existing challenge. Since 1994, the unemployment rate has remained stubbornly above 20%, increasing to an all-time high of 30.1% in the first quarter of 2020 (Stats SA, 2020b). The stoppage of most economic activity exacerbated this problem and it has been estimated that there was a 40% decline in employment amongst working-age individuals (Jain, Budlender,

Zizzamia, & Bassier, 2020).[3] These losses disproportionately affected women and the occupations in which they tend to be employed, as it is also estimated that two-thirds of all job losses which occurred between February and April (the first month of the lockdown) were lost by women (Casale & Posel, 2020; Jain et al., 2020). Stats SA (2020a) had further reported an unemployment rate of 32.3% for women (compared to 29.6% for men) in the third quarter of the year, indicating how the hard lockdown had exacerbated poor labour market conditions.

Though these figures only emphasise the extent to which losses were evident in wage work, they do show how economic deprivation has been gendered and how part of this is as a result of the burden which households tend to carry during such difficult times. Households act as an insurance mechanism for working individuals in many countries, particularly for those who live in poor households and have limited access to unemployment benefits (Bhalotra & Umaña-Aponte, 2010; Klasen & Pieters, 2012). In South Africa, the role which households play and have historically played is well institutionalised.

During the apartheid era, the Reserves (or homelands) housed the bulk of unpaid reproductive labourers and this assisted in keeping the economy running and the apartheid regime profitable for many years. Here, women took care of children and the elderly, as well as the sick when they returned home from the mines – ill or injured (Bozzoli, 1983). These women served as the social security net which the government did not provide to the population of colour – black women bearing the greatest brunt in this regard (Dinkelman & Pirouz, 2002; Pillay, 1985). The domestic role which women played during this time is still acutely relevant today. Though the democratic government has provided for a more equitable social security net, this does not include people who are able-bodied and of working age – thus excluding a large part of the population (Mackett, 2020). As such, many women still act as a source of social security where the government's net falls short. This is evident in how household formation has evolved around recipients of government grants; old-age pensions in particular (Klasen & Woolard, 2009).

The economic impact of the global pandemic has thus impacted women's domestic and caring roles in two respects. The first of these is as a result of the closure of restaurants and fast-food outlets, the

[3] These data are based on the NIDS-CRAM survey which was, in turn, based on a sample of 7 074 interviews, representative of the 2017 nationally representative NIDS sample. These data are thus not representative of the entire South African population, but rather of the 2017 NIDS sample, which is a sub-sample of the South African population (Kerr, Ardington, & Burger, 2020). In addition, some of these individuals who reported being out of work were temporarily out of work while others had become unemployed.

closure of schools and early childhood development centres, and the return of domestic workers and child minders to their primary residences. This has meant that women, who tend to perform the bulk of unpaid reproductive labour within the home (Rubiano-Matulevich & Viollaz, 2019), have experienced an increase in their domestic responsibilities, as 77.9% of wage workers reported working from home as a result of the national lockdown (Stats SA, 2020c). The majority of these had previously worked in non-residential buildings, prior to the lockdown. Evidence shows that far more women than men reported increased time spent on childcare as a result of the closure of educational facilities (Casale & Posel, 2020); similar evidence was also forthcoming in developed nations (Andrew et al., 2020). This would have been particularly severe for women given that children are more likely to be co-resident with their mothers or another female family member in South Africa (Posel & Grapsa, 2017). These matters highlight the challenges in relation to *unpaid* reproductive labour. With regard to *paid* reproductive or caring labour, women suffered similar vulnerabilities. According to the latest labour force survey data, women made up 55.39% of health professionals and 74.89% of health associate professionals (see Table 1). For these women, caring responsibilities extended beyond the households in which they live.

Though cashiers, tellers, and related clerks are not necessarily reproductive workers, they (together with the health professionals referred to) were classified as essential service workers since the beginning of the hard lockdown (Department of Health, 2020). Women made up 81.49% of these service workers, and black women 82.68% of the female workers who were employed in this occupation group (also in Table 1). These women would have had to manage their paid work outside of the home, as well as unpaid work within the home, during the lockdown period.[4]

Table 1: Female-dominated essential services occupations by gender (%)

	Health Professionals	Health Associate Professionals	Customer Service Clerks
Male	46.61	25.11	18.51
	(5.42)	(2.82)	(2.37)
Female	53.39	74.89	81.49
	(5.42)	(2.82)	(2.37)

[4] If living in a single-parent household, many of these women would also have the added worry of possibly leaving their children unsupervised during the day when they go to work should no other adult or household be available to assist in this regard.

Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
% of female employees who are black African	55.45	67.36	82.68

Source: LFS 2020/1. Note: Data are weighted. All differences significant at p<0.01. Author's own calculations. Number of observations for employed sample=17 320

Though these are some of the worst-affected women in the economy in relation to the work burden they experienced, there are many women who continued working from home, having to find a similar balance between their paid work and their domestic duties. The burden of unpaid reproductive labour (and paid reproductive labour for some) has thus been a key extenuating factor for women during the lockdown and this has resulted in additional vulnerabilities for women, which will be highlighted in the following sections.

HUMAN WELL-BEING AND AGENCY

Human well-being is broadly defined, although here it is discussed in the context of the five instrumental freedoms proposed by Sen (1999). In addition, given that access to these freedoms, or a lack of such access, has a direct bearing on human agency, human well-being and agency are discussed in tandem here.

At all levels of education, and within each earnings percentile, women were more likely to lose their jobs than men (Casale & Posel, 2020). The resultant job losses had severe consequences for women's economic facilities, specifically those who live in grant-receiving households (Van der Berg, Zuze, & Bridgman, 2020). Many of the grant-receiving households tended to rely on other forms of income in addition to the grant income, and most recipients tended to be women – specifically Child Support Grant recipients (Köhler & Bhorat, 2020; Wills, Patel, van der Berg, & Mpeta, 2020). Furthermore, where the Old-Age Pension was received, research has shown that female recipients displayed spending patterns which were more beneficial to the well-being of the entire household, as opposed to their individual needs (Duflo, 2000). The loss of employment and subsequent income would thus have had consequences which reached beyond the newly unemployed, but also their families, specifically if the person who lost their job was a woman.

The loss of employment, which disproportionately affected women, thus impacted women's economic facilities, but also their social opportunities. Women have experienced hardship due to the closure of educational institutions, but also as a result of the health-related nature of the crisis. The closure of educational institutions also has the potential to affect the ability of girls to return to school in the long-term, given the increased risk of sexual abuse within the household, as well as domestic violence, as schools no longer serve as a place of shelter for the bulk of the day.[5] Furthermore, given that women and girls bear the brunt of reproductive labour in the household, it is expected that, during a health crisis, many of them would be required to assist in the household when members of that household fall ill. Thus, even when schools do open, the domestic burden which girls and women carry present a risk factor to their continuing education. This would have longer-term implications for the empowerment of women.

In the aftermath of the Ebola crisis in West Africa, girls were less likely to return to school as a result of an increase in the incidence of teenage pregnancy. This stemmed from the fact that many children had been left "unsupervised and more visible" to sexual predators (Menzel, 2019, p. 444) and, in some countries, girls were forced to provide sexual favours in return for food (Elston, Cartwright, Ndumbi, & Wright, 2017). An additional challenge experienced during that time was that in some instances children had started working for a wage to help support their households and this created a disincentive for parents to invest in further education (Elston et al., 2017).

In terms of transparency guarantees, South Africa's endemic corruption problem has also reared its head during this pandemic. Reports of the mismanagement of funds intended to provide relief during the lockdown to the vulnerable population have been noted (Makwetu, 2020), and while these have been devastating to the poor, in general, it is important to note the differential affect which corruption has on women.

An important gap in the literature relates to the fact that most tools traditionally used to measure corruption do not take gender into account (Hossain, Musembi, & Hughes, 2010). Given that women make up a disproportionate share of the vulnerable population, the lack of access to public services, which is often a result of corruption, affect them the worst. Thus, if money which is meant to help the poor is stolen, women are worst affected given that they make up the majority of the poor, but also

[5] Reported by UNESCO, 29 April 2020, 'COVID-19 school closures: why girls are more at risk', http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/covid-19-school-closures-why-girls-are-more-risk-13406.

disproportionately make up the households in which there would have already been a lack of basic services (Casale & Desmond, 2007; Hall & Sambu, 2018). If these services are not readily available in the household, it would again be the women and the girls who make up for this through their domestic responsibilities, where they would spend a greater proportion of their time compared to men fetching water, firewood and other necessities for the functioning of the household (Antonopoulos, 2009; Carter & May, 1999).

The erosion of trust in public institutions not only relates to the explicit abuse of resources in which many public officials engage, but also includes citizens' perception of the competence of public officials and their ability to make use of public services to achieve just outcomes. One example of this is the perception that citizens hold of the police service and the impact that this has had on gender-based violence.

The rate of gender-based violence has increased during this lockdown period,[6] owing to the closure of havens where women (and girls) would normally find safety when such incidents occur, but also as a result the lack of capacity in the police service to prevent and/or remedy such incidences (Carrington, Guala, Puyol, & Sozzo, 2020). It has been found that women tend to avoid reporting incidents of abuse due to the risk of secondary victimisation and lack of trust in the police, amongst others (Keller, 2017).

The instances of corruption and inability of the police service to adequately respond to issues related to gender-based violence also impact the political freedoms of women, which include the ability to make use of accountability mechanisms. However, Hossain et al. (2010) have indicated that many public sector accountability mechanisms are gender blind and do not include the promotion of gender equality as a core outcome.

Lastly, a lack of protective security also has more devastating effects on women. The structural constraints left by the apartheid regime and the current design of South Africa's social security system leave households with the responsibility of providing this security net to a vast number of unemployed individuals. Theories such as the added-worker effect state that women often enter the labour market when the main breadwinner (often male) loses their jobs (Fernandes & De Felicio, 2005; Spletzer, 1997). While this presents a problem, given that such workers would tend to accept precarious work

[6] Reported by Times Live, 1 September 2020, 'Shocking stat on Gender-Based Violence during lockdown revealed', https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2020-09-01-shocking-stats-on-gender-based-violence-during-lockdown-revealed/.

in desperation, a larger challenge arises when a woman is the only working adult within the household.

The increase in female-headed households, due to the loss of the main breadwinner as a result of HIV-related deaths and increasing divorce rates, has been cited as one of the reasons for the feminisation of the labour force over the last two decades, and the placement of many of these women in low-paying, insecure jobs (Casale, 2003; Ntuli, 2007). This has had adverse effects on women's agency and their precarious positions in both the productive and reproductive spheres will negatively affect their well-being and agency. This well-being is implicitly related to the value judgements underlying the policy frameworks in South Africa, particularly those related to social protections of individuals.

VALIDATING ETHICAL JUDGEMENTS

South Africa's macroeconomic framework makes the implicit assumption that working for a wage is to be equated with success. This is evident in the social security framework which the country has adopted, as well as the revenue model on which it relies.

As discussed earlier, South Africa's social security framework does not make provision for individuals who are able-bodied and of working-age – with the exception of the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) (Mackett, 2020).[7] In terms of its response to the COVID-19 crisis, a grant (the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant) was made available to unemployed individuals who did not receive any other grant or qualify for UIF benefits (South African Government, 2020). Those who did receive existing grants were given an additional amount each month, although this benefit ended on 30 October 2020. The conditions under which the unemployed could apply for this grant were thus stringent, but still emphasised the need to work.[8] The R350 SRD grant was aimed at the unemployed who did not receive any income or other grant, and recipients needed to be permanent residents in South Africa, South African citizens, or registered refugees (in addition to other qualifying criteria).

The stringent conditions under which the SRD grant has been made available excluded many vulnerable

[7] The Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) is a contributory fund which workers and their employers contribute to and which can be accessed in case of a temporary absence from work (e.g. maternity leave) or a longer absence related to unemployment. Only those who have been previously employed and whose employers have registered them for this benefit can thus access it. In the informal economy, many workers will thus not benefit from the UIF.

[8] These were available to individuals over the age of 18, who were unemployed, did not receive any other grant, did not qualify for UIF, and did not receive any other income (South African Government, 2020).

individuals, such as those who may already be receiving existing grants, but who may still be living in poverty, those who may not have access to banking services, as well as those who receive remittances from family members, but who remain in impoverished households. In addition, the citizenship requirement for the SRD grant raised important issues in relation to rights and who is entitled to have those rights (Turner, 2001). According to Stats SA (2020d), migrants were more likely to be unemployed and living in an informal dwelling and, if they were employed, more likely to be employed in the informal sector.

Despite some of the shortcomings of this relief programme, organisations and scholars have called for the permanent instatement of the SRD or a similar grant,[9] as well as a continuation of top-up amounts to existing grant beneficiaries, although the termination of this benefit has continued.[10] Appeals have also been made to consider increasing the grant amount so as to push recipients above the food poverty line.[11]

Coupled with job losses, South Africa's social security landscape has been characterised by temporary relief measures in areas where more permanent solutions are needed. This is also evident in the country's revenue model which relies heavily on personal income tax. In the 2018/19 fiscal year, tax revenue constituted 26.2% of government revenue, and personal income tax made up close to 40% of this revenue base (National Treasury, 2020). This paints a picture of a revenue model which relies heavily on a non-functioning labour market, and in which women are in a generally disadvantaged position.

Adding to this, many of the country's service delivery mechanisms have failed to provide quality services, or any services at all (Alexander, 2010; Managa, 2012; Nleya, 2011). This has resulted in a large proportion of formally employed individuals who make use of private services, such as healthcare, security, and education (Ahmed & Sayed, 2009; Benatar, 2013; Fedderke, Kadt, & Luiz, 2000;

[9] Media Statement issued by Black Sash on 24 April 2020, 'Social Relief of Distress measures for children and 'caregivers', http://www.blacksash.org.za/index.php/media-and-publications/media-statements/641-social-relief-of-distress-measures-for-children-and-caregivers and the C19 People's Coalition on 16 October 2020, 'President's inadequate grant announcement is deeply anti-women and anti-poor', https://c19peoplescoalition.org.za/coalition-statement-presidents-inadequate-grant-announcement-is-deeply-anti-women-and-anti-poor/.

[10] Reported by Zoë Postman on 3 November 2020, 'Court says no to extending top-up grants', https://www.moneyweb.co.za/news/south-africa/court-says-no-to-extending-top-up-grants/.

[11] Media statement issued by Black Sash, 'Make permanent and increase the COVID-19 SRD and caregiver grants', https://www.blacksash.org.za/index.php/media-and-publications/media-statements/684-make-permanent-and-increase-the-covid-19-srd-and-caregiver-grants.

Landman, 2002). The 'voluntary' privatisation of many publicly provided services is testament to the failure of government to provide adequate services.[12]

The ability to access privately procured services, as well as the conditions on which the social security protection is provided, values labour in the productive sphere. This does not consider responsibilities in the reproductive sphere which may impede the ability of working-age individuals to fully engage in it. An additional layer to this problem includes the fact that the labour market has failed to provide an adequate amount of jobs for those who are willing and able to spend some of their time in the productive sphere, hence the high unemployment rate. However, even without considering the latter point, women would again be disproportionately affected by the value judgements related to wage work.

For many, their reproductive labour responsibilities have impeded their ability to engage fully in wage labour, and this capacity would have been even more reduced during the lockdown. This has already been noted in the job losses which women have suffered as a result of their domestic responsibilities. The push towards wage labour as an aspirational goal is thus an implicit value judgement in the South African policy framework and fails to acknowledge and accommodate the limitations which would accompany such assumptions. The current crisis has served to expose these existing shortcomings and exacerbate them and the next section will demonstrate how these factors have coalesced to deepen women's vulnerability within South African society as a result of the global pandemic.

DISCUSSION

A key theme which arises from the high-level analysis is that women's hardship is not just a result of recent developments which have accompanied this crisis, but primarily as a result of structural barriers which they faced even prior to the onslaught of the health crisis and the accompanying lockdown. These include disadvantages in the labour market, the healthcare sector, along with the lack of public service delivery and ongoing corruption at the hands of public officials. Not only were women more likely to be exposed to the risks the virus poses as a result of the feminised nature of some essential services occupations, but they have also been disproportionately affected by the job losses which occurred as a

[12] This disparity is also evident in the South African healthcare system where delays in COVID-19 test results were an issue in the public healthcare sector, but not necessarily in the private sector. This was reported by Amy Green in Spotlight on 24 June 2020, 'COVID-19: Stark differences between public and private sector testing, https://www.spotlightnsp.co.za/2020/06/24/covid-19-stark-differences-between-public-and-private-sector-testing/.

result of the hard lockdown being imposed. Those who were able to maintain their employment had to cope with their paid work as well as the increased domestic burden due to the closure of educational institutions and other service providers which would normally serve as mechanisms to 'outsource' household responsibilities – such as cooking and cleaning. As such, women's working time (on both paid and unpaid labour) has increased significantly, putting them at greater risk of burnout and mental distress.

The effectiveness of South Africa's social security framework was also called into question, given the value judgement which it implicitly makes about the importance of wage work. An additional layer of this judgement is women's precarious position in the labour market owing to their over-representation in paid reproductive work, as well as their socialised responsibility for unpaid reproductive work in the household. The weaknesses in both the social security framework as well as in the South African labour market, both existent long before the current crisis, have thus been exacerbated, leaving women in an even more vulnerable position than they were before. A value judgment which is warranted here is that expecting individuals to seek survival from a non-functioning labour market is unjust and an infringement on many Constitutionally guaranteed rights. The broad literature on the failing South African labour market fails to address the core issue which relates to the need to work. Additional criteria related to the social grants also serve to exclude vulnerable groups in the country, such as demonstrating extreme vulnerability, but having the resources with which to receive the grant.

The gendered effects and implications of corruption were also touched on, and it was noted how a lack of services is likely to affect women more adversely than it does men – this mainly as a result of their responsibility for the unpaid reproductive labour which would be required to make up for the lack of services. This creates an additional burden for women, who then not only suffer from money poverty but also time poverty (Musingarabwi, 2014; Posel & Grapsa, 2017; Rubiano-Matulevich & Viollaz, 2019). Corruption is also instrumental in explaining the underreporting of incidences of GBV amongst women, given their lack of trust in the police. Corruption thus affects women not only to the extent that it results in a lack of service delivery – services which are needed to free up women's time for more 'productive' activities – but also to the extent to which they are able to make use of public resources to enhance their physical security and seek justice when their rights are infringed upon. Though the years immediately preceding the outbreak of COVID-19 have been marred by incidents of femicide (Naeemah, Mathews, Jewkes, Martin, & Lombard, 2012; Stats SA, 2018), the pandemic has illuminated the extent to which women are not only vulnerable to threats outside their homes, but more importantly to threats inside their homes too. Conditions outside the home are thus intricately linked to what happens

inside it and the extent to which women can seek recourse in the public sphere to issues which are considered 'domestic'.

A positive development of this difficult phase has been the ability to reflect on what works and what does not in our society. These have already been made clear in the discussions which have arisen, particularly those related to the basic income grant.[13] However, a few other considerations are listed in the following section.

PREVENTION IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The novel coronavirus has had wide reaching social implications for society, affecting the most vulnerable in our society most severely. This paper has made use of a more holistic approach through employment of the social provisioning framework developed by Marilyn Power. She recommends that caring and domestic labour, human well-being, human agency, validating ethical judgements, and undertaking intersectional analyses be considered. This paper has introduced and briefly defined each of these methodological starting points and then applied them to what has come out of the current crisis and the government's response to the crisis.

A limitation of this paper, however, is that each of the methodological starting points need in-depth study, and that a deeper discussion of the pandemic in relation to each of them will require separate studies and varying methodologies. Despite this, the paper has demonstrated the usefulness of this framework to undertake a gendered analysis of a particular event or policy. As such, this paper has also demonstrated how women have been adversely affected by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

An additional limitation of this paper is that data to fully comprehend the impact of the current pandemic is not readily available, though this is expected given that the crisis is ongoing. The analysis does attempt to mitigate this by briefly touching on some of the longer-term effects which have resulted from the Ebola crisis in West Africa. These include the increase in teenage pregnancy and the longer-term effects on the educational advancement and mental well-being of children who stayed away from school during the lockdown period.

[13] Reported by Daily Maverick, 19 August 2020, 'A basic income grant will transform the South African social security system', https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-08-19-a-basic-income-grant-will-transform-the-south-african-social-security-system/

With the use of the social provisioning framework, along with existing literature and reports, this paper has demonstrated how almost every negative aspect which accompanied the current global pandemic had graver consequences for women than for men. As such, it makes a case for the ongoing calls for gender mainstreaming of old policies and new policies, as well as long and short-term interventions. The greatest strength of Power's methodological starting points is that she provides a structured way in which to undertake such an exercise.

The first policy implication which could be considered is the government's philosophy behind its social security and labour market policies. Rather than consider how equality can be enhanced in the labour market – which is in itself a necessary goal – the discussion should move towards how individuals can obtain social protection (and quality services) without necessarily having to engage in labour market activity. This is important given that unemployment has been a persistent problem in South Africa, but also given the changing labour market conditions which entail an informalisation of labour markets more generally, and the introduction of automation into production processes (Barchiesi, 2010; Hirschi, 2018). These are likely to affect the longer-term labour market prospects of a large part of the population, many of whom make up the youth, and young women in particular. The discussion needs to shift to a new politics of redistribution to ensure that the labour market is not the only tool through which people can attain and maintain a decent standard of living (Ferguson, 2015).

Related to this point is the issue of service delivery. The privatisation of public goods within South Africa is testament to the government's inability to provide quality services to its citizens and these basic human rights – which are entrenched and protected by the South African Constitution – should not be linked to privileged access to good quality employment in the labour market. The lack of capacity of the South African government to provide quality services is linked to issues of corruption and wasteful spending and usage of resources. The literature cited in this paper has also provided evidence of how corruption disproportionately affects women.

The positive effects of being led by a woman during the pandemic has been documented and studies have also show that having a greater proportion of women in leadership positions could have important implications for a reduction in corruption (Garikipati & Kambhampati, 2020; Hossain et al., 2010). It is thus necessary to find mechanisms which can ensure greater representation of women in higher office, but this representation is also affected at the provincial and local government levels where implementation could become an issue.

To contribute to the eradication of GBV, the Labour Research Service has provided solutions in order to suitably respond to incidents of GBV, as well as to prevent it. These include ratifying the ILO's global standard to end violence and harassment in the world of work, as part of addressing unequal power relations as a root cause of GBV (Solidarity Center, 2019), funding civil society organisations which promote women's participation in the public sphere, providing more widespread clinical services which are specifically designed to deal with GBV, and disrupting the cycle of GBV by being more attentive to the needs of children who are survivors of GBV.[14] Many of these points have been reiterated by other civil society organisations, in addition to investing in community protection and providing legal protection and assistance to women who are vulnerable (Oxfam, 2020).

Lastly, the human well-being and human agency elements of the social provisioning framework emphasise the need to consider not only material well-being, but also mental well-being. Thus, going forward, qualitative evaluations of women's mental well-being (and the mental well-being of members of society in general) during this time of crisis is necessary. Many may have experienced emotional and mental hardship, specifically in the light of the social distancing policies which were introduced and the trauma which arose as a result, with the increased incidence of gender-based violence being a key contributing factor to this trauma.

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[14] These were provided by the Labour Research Service, 'Six ways to end gender-based violence, https://www.lrs.org.za/articles/Six-ways-to-end-gender-based-violence.

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