Barriers to the career progression of women into senior leadership positions within a selected South African Bank

Claudette Saygran

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Declaration of Authenticity

I declare that this research paper is my own work and that each source of information used has been acknowledged by means of a complete reference. This research paper has not been submitted before for any other research project, degree, or examination at any university.

Signature: █████████████ Date: 29 March 2021

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Abstract

This study explores the challenges that impact the career progression of women who have a focus on progressing from middle management to senior management in the banking sector in Johannesburg. Although there is a steady increase in the number of women in the middle and lower management spheres, there is still an under-representation of women in higher levels of management. The study aims to explore the key factors that impede career progression for women as well as identify factors that influence career progression. The research draws from the lived experiences of women in middle management and senior management.

Three sources of data collection methods were used in this study, namely, literature review, semi-structured interviews, and a questionnaire. The literature review presents key themes that are linked to career barriers. These themes are listed in the theoretical section of the study. A purposive sampling method was used to identify a total of 18 women who participated in the interviews and questionnaire. The sample consisted of women in middle management and women in senior management as well as one woman in executive management. The feedback was analysed using thematic data analysis. Key themes were extracted from the data collected.

The results obtained from interviews and the questionnaire align with some of the findings in the literature review. The key themes of career barriers, highlighted by the data collected, are self-concept, gender stereotyping, bias, lack of role models as well as societal, culture and religious expectations. An interesting finding is that the challenges that women in middle management experience are comparable to the challenges that women in senior management experience.

The fundamental difference between middle management and senior management is their perception of their own ability to overcome these challenges. Moreover, senior management displayed higher levels of confidence as opposed to middle management. The perspectives of the woman at an executive level confirmed the challenges highlighted by women in middle management and senior management. Furthermore, the women in executive management confirmed that some of these challenges still exist even at the highest level.

This study was conducted in order to gain insights into the topic of career barriers faced by women through lived experiences of women in middle management and senior management. By gaining an understanding of the challenges women face in their careers and interpreting the behaviour, experiences and perception of women in middle management and senior management positions, an underlying contributor - that hinders career progression - was identified to be related to societal expectations of women as well as religious and cultural lessons on traditional gender roles.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

FB   First Bank
SOE   State Owned Entities
BAWASA   Businesswomen's Association of South Africa
SCCT   Social Cognitive Career Theory
TCA   Thematic Content Analysis

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Background

Numerous studies over the last few decades have explored the challenges women face with career progression into senior management. Despite heightened interest in this topic, the struggle that women face – in order to advance in their career - is very much alive in the 21st century. A recent study conducted by Grant Thornton International Limited (2020), highlights that globally only 29% of women occupy senior leadership roles. Although there is an increase in the number of women in higher levels of management, it's noted that - over the past decade - the total number of women in senior management increased by only 9% (Grant Thornton International Limited, 2020).

According to Kolb (1997), there is a general belief that leadership is a traditionally masculine activity. As a result, gender inequality in senior management positions still exists and leads to the low representation of females in these positions (cited in Akhtar, 2008). Recent studies by Grant Thornton International Limited (2020) support this argument by pointing out the vast difference in the representation of men and women at higher levels of management.

Figure 1: Representation of women and men in senior management globally
Source: Grant Thornton International Limited (2020)

To contextualise South Africa in this situation, reference is made to the 2017 Women in leadership census conducted by Business Women's Association of South Africa (BWASA). Notable findings from the census indicate that women account for 51% of the population of South Africa, yet they account for only 44.3% of the employed workforce. These women are concentrated in lower levels of the organisation (Business Women's Association of South Africa, 2017).

The low levels of women reaching higher levels of leadership is not isolated to certain sectors of the economy. Research suggests that this is a tendency

displayed in all sectors or fields. The statistical data presented by BWASA (2017) highlights the gaps in the representation of women in management positions in South Africa. Only 20.7% of directors, 29.4% of executive managers and 11.8% of CEO positions are held by women. The report has highlights a concern that the progression of women into senior levels of management has been relatively slow with a growth of 16.2% between 2008 and 2017 (Business Women's Association of South Africa, 2017).

Although a large part of the research states that leadership is gender neutral and that career opportunities are vast for both males and females there is still an under-representation of female leaders in higher levels of management in an organisation. Although there have been noticeable successes in terms of women empowerment, there still remain issues that impede their career development and continue to exist. These range from stereotyping, discrimination, self-efficacy and the lack of empowerment initiatives at lower levels of management (Ngcobo, 2016).

Lewis (2019) asserts that despite major advancements women have made in becoming a significant part of the workforce, they are still facing important career development issues. Many women achieve lower and middle management positions, however their progression is halted when they hit the glass ceiling (Lewis, 2019).

The glass ceiling is a metaphor for the hard-to-see or sometimes known informal barriers that keep women from achieving promotions, pay raises and further opportunities. Women may find that, regardless of their qualifications and talent, the artificial glass ceiling limits their career advancement opportunities (Lewis, 2019). The glass ceiling concept will be unpacked further in the literature review.

The research site for this study is in the banking sector in Johannesburg South Africa and will be referenced as First Bank. The researcher - from her personal experience in the banking sector and through her observation and lived experiences in the environment for almost two decades - has noticed that there is a low representation of female leaders in the senior management levels in the bank. Furthermore, the progression from middle management to senior management is slight.

This study is motivated by the researcher's personal observation of the rate at which women progress into higher levels of management. The researcher is a woman herself who has a keen interest in gender equality. The researcher has a special interest to understand how the few women, who have managed to reach senior management and top management levels, have done so and furthermore how do they retain these positions. This study intends to explore the key challenges that women face in their career progression.

1.2 Ontology

Bryman (2012) states that ontology is a system of belief that reflects an interpretation by an individual about what constitutes a fact. It is concerned with identifying the overall nature of existence of a phenomenon. Bryman (2012) suggests that ontology is associated with a central question of whether social entities should be perceived as objective or subjective.

The researcher is a female middle manager in a bank. The researcher began her career in a junior position at the bank and has progressed up to middle management. Throughout her career in the bank, she has observed the behaviour of both women and men in senior leadership positions. She has observed that women progress faster from junior management to middle management as opposed to from middle management to senior management. Based on this observation, the researcher has decided to pursue the current study that will explore the barriers to the career progression of women into senior leadership positions.

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) argue that humans and their social worlds are unique and therefore should not be studied in the same manner as physical phenomena. Owing to the difference in cultural backgrounds, circumstances and associating different meanings to social phenomena that result in creating and experiencing different social realities. Furthermore, Saunders (2019) explains that interpretivists are critical of the positivist attempts to discover definite, universal laws that apply to everyone. The general believe is that profound knowledge of the complexities of humanity are lost if these are limited fully to law-like generalisations.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), relativism presents a view that reality is subjective and differs from person to person. Thus, the researcher believes that truth is socially constructed, is subjective in her thinking and believes that meanings and understandings are developed through social views. There is no single truth but multiple views of a phenomenon (Saunders *et al*., 2019). The purpose of this study is to create fresh, robust insights and renditions of the career barriers that women in management face.

Baghramian and Carter (2019) state that relativism is the idea that giving things a definition is based on the perspective from which these are viewed. An example is when viewing holographic pictures, the picture changes depending on one's position in relation to the picture itself. In other words, the view changes depending on where one is standing when looking at it (Baghramian and Carter, 2019)

This study examines the point of view of female managers regarding career challenges that they experience. The purpose is to contribute to the understanding of why women are under-represented at senior management level.

1.3 Research Problem

Throughout history the presence of women in public life was curtailed. Society advocated for women to take part in nuptials, childbearing, and parenting. As such family responsibilities became part of their everyday life while their husbands took care of the family's financial needs. (Ngcobo, 2016). This gave rise to the Feminist movement, who fought for a woman's place in society, giving equal rights to women in the society and in the workplace. Research suggests that women are progressively starting to enter the labour force, with a number of women becoming the main support system for their families. However, owing to gender inequalities and other associated challenges, women are prone to being undermined in the workplace (Ngcobo, 2016).

Although there is a notable increase in the number of females in middle and lower management, there is still a lower representation of females in senior levels of management. The problem that this study intends to address is the low representation of females in senior management positions.

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

As previously introduced the objective of this study is to explore the challenges that impact the career progression of women with a focus on progressing from middle management to senior levels of management. The aim of this study is to determine the key factors that contribute to the low representation of female leaders in senior management positions. Moreover, this study intends to understand the detrimental effects of career barriers on the career development of female managers in the bank.

1. Primary Objective

To explore the interpersonal and environmental career barriers that women face as they progress in their careers in the banking sector in Johannesburg South Africa.

2. Secondary Objectives

2.1 Identify the factors that influence the career progression of women into senior levels of management and establish what support structures are in place for these women.

Data was collected from key stakeholders:

    a. Women in middle management to confirm the perceived barriers. The sample included women who are new to the middle management level, as well as women who have been in stuck in middle management for a number of years. Some have retained their positions in the bank for a long period of time.

    b. Women who already progressed to senior levels of management. These included women who have progressed from the middle management level into higher levels. This also includes women who have acquired new positions at senior levels in the bank.

2.2 Understand and interpret the behaviour, experiences and perception of women who have made it to middle management and senior levels of management in order to gain insights into career obstacles and career advancements experienced.

2.3 Suggest recommendations on how women in the banking industry can overcome the barriers that impeded their career progression.

1.5 Research Question

Based on the objectives outlined above the following research questions were identified.

Primary research question

The primary research question to be answered in this study is: What are the key barriers that impede the career advancement of woman into senior levels of management within the banking sector in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Secondary research questions
1. What are the career challenges experienced by women in management?
2. What are the factors that influence career progression to higher levels?
3. What are the opinions of women in middle management and senior management regarding the representation of women at higher levels?
4. What support systems are available to women in leadership?
5. How have women, who are in senior management, advanced in their careers?
6. How can women overcome the career advancement barriers?

Research objectives linked to research questions

Research Problem	
The problem that this study intends to address is the low representation of women in senior management positions in the banking sector in Johannesburg, South Africa.	
Aim	**Primary Research Question**
The aim of this study is to explore the factors that contribute to the low representation of females in senior management positions.	What are the key barriers that impede the career advancement of woman into senior levels of management?
Objectives	**Secondary research questions**
• Objective 1: Explore the career development challenges experienced by female leaders.	• Sub-question 1: What are the career challenges experienced by women in management?
• Objective 2 Identify the factors that influence the career progression of women into senior management positions.	• Sub-question 2: What are the factors that influence the career progression to higher levels?
• Objective 3 Establish the support structures that are in place for female leaders.	• Sub-question 3: What support systems are available to women in leadership?
• Objective 4 Gain insight on career advancement of women into senior leadership positions.	• Sub-question 4: How have women who are in senior management advanced in the careers?
• Objective 5 Gain insight on career hindrances experienced by women in middle management and women in senior management	• Sub-question 5: What are the opinions of women in middle management and senior management regarding the representation of women at higher levels?

• Objective 6 Make recommendations on how women in banks can overcome the challenges of progressing from middle management positions to senior management positions.	Sub-question 6: How can women overcome the career advancement barriers?

1.6 Epistemology

Based on the researcher's relativist ontology, the epistemological lens that directed this study is interpretivism. The research framework that was utilised in this study was drawn from the interpretive research approach aiming to gain a profound understanding of how people construct meaning to social life and to certain phenomena (Qutoshi, 2018).

Creswell (2009) states that interpretive methodology is directed at understanding the phenomenon from an individual's perspective and investigating the interaction among individuals as well as the historical and cultural contexts which people inhabit (cited in Qutoshi, 2018).

The researcher will develop an understanding of the phenomenon of career development of women in leadership through gaining insights to individual's perspective on the barriers to career progression. Knowledge of reality was gained through social constructs such as documents, journals, previous studies and interviews. The objective of the literature review is to understand and interpret the behaviour of women in leadership positions.

1.7 Theory Development

Based on the relativist ontology and the interpretivist epistemology, the researcher will use inductive reasoning to develop a theory of career barriers faced by women. According to Lathi (2013), inductive research starts from an observation on a specific phenomenon. The researcher collects data which is analysed. It is only after the analysis and, based on this, that a theory and conclusions can be drawn. Lahti (2013) explains that in inductive research, theory and the conclusions are by no means certain nor are they the only conclusions. This suggests that there may be several conclusions and not only one.

Inductive reasoning was triggered by the researcher's observation of the under-representation of women in senior levels of management at the bank. The objective for using inductive reasoning in this study is to gain insights and knowledge from lived experiences of women in their career progression in order to enhance the existing theories.
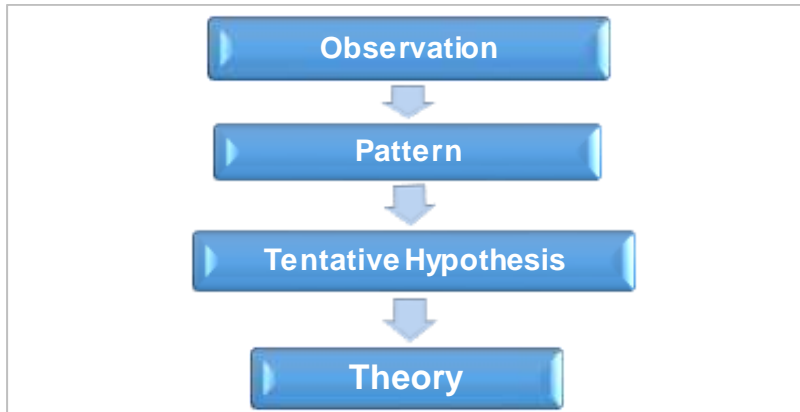
Figure 2: Inductive Reasoning
Source: Shuttleworth & Wilson (2008)

Shuttleworth and Wilson (2008) confirm that inductive reasoning never allows one to establish truth with 100% certainty. Rather, one is able to strengthen the likelihood of a conclusion by adding more evidence. The researcher draws from theories such a leadership theory, congruent theory and social role theory for this study.

1.8 Theoretical Frameworks

The following literature and theories will be referenced to expand the understanding of female leadership, career management and the influence of social roles. The theories identified will assist in analysing and answering the research questions. Theoretical frameworks enabled the researcher to obtain an in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon from a theoretical perspective.

The rise of feminism and the feminist movement

To comprehend the challenges that women endure in their career development fully, it is important to understand the challenges they had to go through to earn a spot in the workplace. A review of the rise of feminism and the feminist movement will provide insights into this struggle journey. Research conducted by Egan (1999) highlights that early liberal feminism theories in the 19th century focused on men, while neglecting women. Egan (1999) does however highlight that some of the early liberal philosophers began to spread their nets to include women in aspects of their discourse on equality. Liberal feminism was also the source of the second wave of the Women's Movement.

The theory of leadership

The theory of leadership is explored to understand, and to give a platform of knowledge of, the leadership phenomenon. However, it must be noted that the theory of leadership alone is vast therefore the researcher focused on the theory of female leadership. The leadership theories are used as a lens to explain the nature of female leadership and the career challenges encountered by female leaders.

According Sinclair (2014) in the late 1980s a focus on women and leadership was emerging. Sinclair (2014) states that in an article by Rosener, in the Harvard Business Review in 1990, the second wave of women leaders did not have to imitate the male model of organisational leadership also known as the 'command and control' leadership. Women leaders are succeeding due to their transformational leadership and their interactive leadership.

According to Sinclair (2014) women are encouraging, they easily share power and information and they have the ability to get other people excited about their work. She argues that this form of leadership is very effective indicating that organisations should be open to expanding their definitions of effective leadership. Sinclair (2014) highlights that Rosener's argument that women lead differently to men became a controversial topic which resulted in researchers noting the consequences of identifying a feminine style of leading.

Sinclair (2014) states that feminism aims for change in patriarchal structures, feminism advocates diversity in the ways that women who have faced sexism and patriarchal norms, have resisted and changed both the public and organisational perspectives to mobilise and empower others.

Role congruity theory

The role congruity theory of prejudice towards female leaders, which was proposed by Eagly and Karau (2002), explains that prejudice toward female leaders is due to the inconsistencies that remain between the characteristics aligned to female gender stereotypes and the subsequent characteristics aligned with typical leadership. Eagly and Karau (2002) confirm that these inconsistencies lead to the following prejudice:

1. Women are perceived as less favourable than their male counterpart for potential leadership roles.
2. Evaluating behaviour that fulfils the prescriptions of a leadership role are less favourably when it is performed by a woman.

The role congruent theory highlights two consequences of the prejudice. The first consequence is that attitudes are less positive toward female leaders as opposed

to male leaders. The second consequence is that it is much more difficult for women to become leaders, obtain success and growth in leadership roles.

Eagly and Karau (2002) suggest that evidence from various research paradigms confirms that the consequences take place for female leaders when perceptions of incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles are heightened. Concepts such as "glass ceiling" will be explored to gain a further understanding of the career challenges for female leaders.

The researcher also investigated the concepts of gender stereotyping and unconscious bias to gain a further understanding of the divide.

Social Cognitive Career Theory

The social cognitive career theory of Bandura (1994) was used as a lens to understand the relationship between the social variables and career development. The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) claims that an individual's career choices are influenced by self-efficacy or self-concept beliefs, outcome expectations and personal goals (Lent *et al*., 2000). The concept of self-efficacy and the impact of self-efficacy on career development will be explored.

1.9 Research Design

Given the researcher's ontological stance and background, it is fitting that the research undertaken is exploratory. Exploratory research is triggered when the researcher has an idea, or has observed a phenomenon, and seeks to understand more about it. The researcher seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the career challenges experienced by female leaders. Therefore, based on the researcher's relativist ontology and the interpretivist epistemological stance, the most suited research design for this study is a qualitative, phenomenological study.

1.10 Conclusion

Based on the preliminary review of the existing literature, the researcher has established that there is a significant amount of research on the career progression challenges that women in leadership experience. However limited research is available to investigate what happens beyond attaining management positions, as such limited studies have attempted to document the experiences of women who have shattered the glass ceiling despite the challenges faced.

Therefore, the primary goal of the paper is to provide insights into the challenges that women in middle management experience when attempting to progress into senior management levels thereby contributing to the knowledge of career development challenges of female leaders.

The secondary goal of this study is to gain knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon from the experiences and perspectives women who have succeeded to cross the glass ceiling into senior management positions.
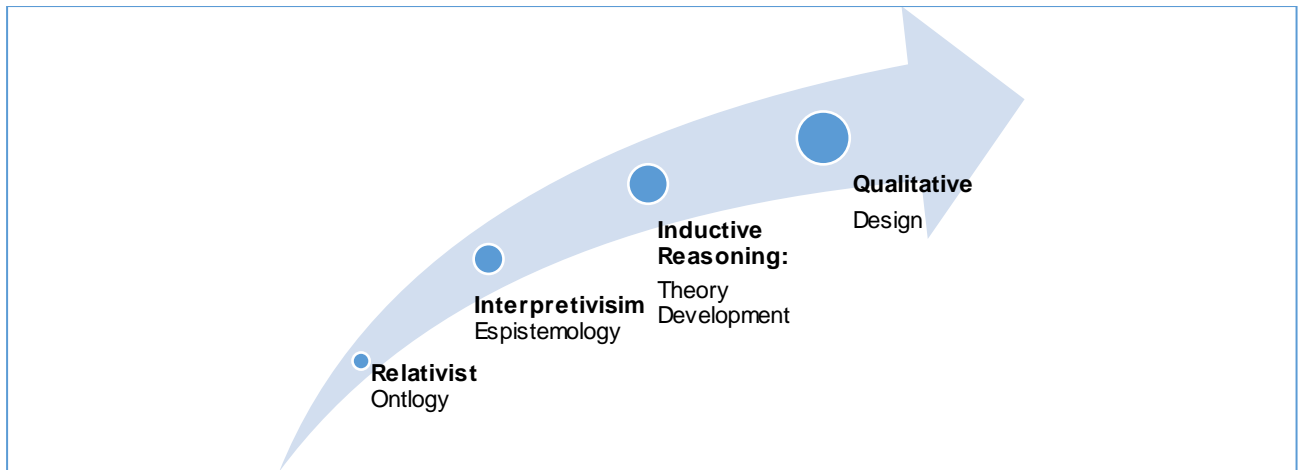
Figure 3: Research Approach

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Over the past few decades, there have been noticeable advances in the South African workforce. One specific change is the inflow of women into professional positions (Moeketsane, 2013). It was revealed that, in 2019, the segment of women who represented senior management positions globally was at 29%, a 5% increase from 2018 (Grant Thornton International Limited, 2020).

The biggest obstacle women face on the path to senior leadership is becoming stuck at the entry level owing to the lack of focus at lower levels in the organisation. Research indicates that organisations are likely to have effective gender diversity measures for senior roles as compared to junior roles however if the issues at the lower end of the spectrum are not addressed there will be a scarcity of women within an organisation who will be able to move up the ladder (Grant Thornton International Limited, 2020). The data collected from over a decade shows the slow progress of women into senior management roles globally.
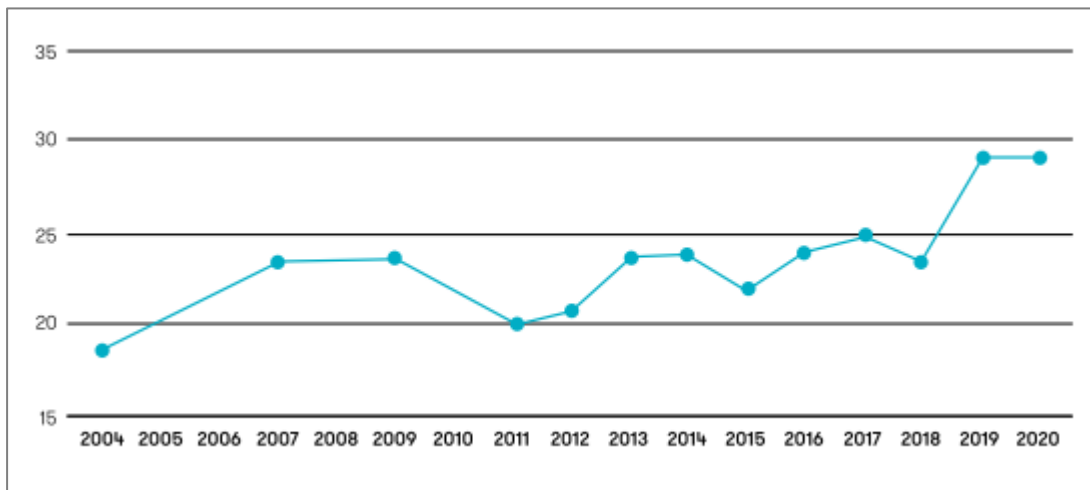
Figure 4: Women in Senior Management Positions
Source: Grant Thornton International Limited (2020)

Recent research suggests that women continue to face obstacles in progressing to senior leadership roles globally (McKinsey & Company, 2016). The major obstacles to career progression of women are the barriers they have to face in the workplace. McKinsey and Company (2016) highlight that these barriers are poorly understood. A woman's view of the impediments to her success in leadership is not necessarily shared by the organisation in which she is employed (McKinsey & Company, 2016).

The Women Matters Africa Report, which was published by McKinsey and Company (2016) suggests that gender issues are not being taken seriously. Figure 5 below highlights the results of the survey conducted with 55 companies and 35 women leaders on their observation and insights of the main barriers to success in the workplace (McKinsey & Company, 2016). Attitudes towards women in the workplace were the most prevalent response recorded, the double burden syndrome followed as the second-highest burden.
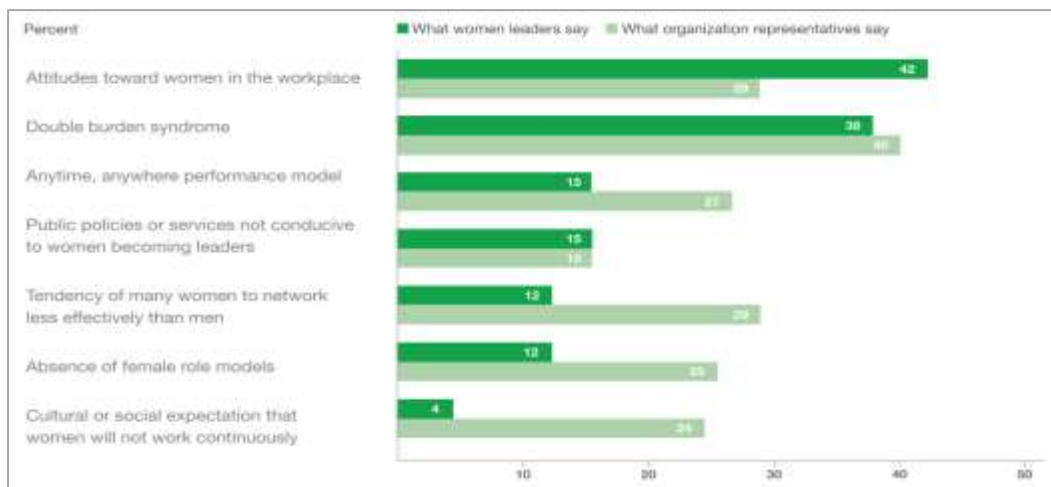
Figure 5:Perceptions of the main barriers to success in the workplace
Source: (McKinsey and Company 2016)

To aid the discussion on the key barriers to the under-representation of women at senior management levels, the literature review first looks at the history of women's progression in the workplace followed by the barriers that women raise. The Feminist Theory and the Social Cognitive Career Theory frame the literature review

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This section reviews the literature related to leadership with particular reference to female leadership. The theoretical framework provides an insight into the rise of the feminism and a brief overview of the journey women have had to endure over decades. The Social Cognitive Career Theory provides insights into the fundamental constructs that frame the career of women.

2.2.1 The Rise of Feminism and the Feminist Movement

The general concept of feminism relates to the belief of equal opportunity for both males and females. Equal opportunity suggests that both men and women enjoy equal opportunities in all matters such as treatment, respect, and social rights. Therefore, feminists are individuals who acknowledge social gender inequality and prevent it from continuing (Ngcobo, 2016).

A shift in the 20th century saw a revolution take place where it became acceptable for woman to be part of the workforce. The revolution was attributed to the long battle that women fought for equal opportunity and their rights. The battle for women rights gave rise to feminist movements and 'feminism' (Halle, 2018).

According to Halle (2018), the term 'feminism' is often used to refer to the rights of women as opposed to rights equal to those of men. Offen's study on feminism cited in (Halle, 2018) looks at feminism in relation to any person whose ideas and actions are related to the recognition of women's rights. This is done with a view to defining and interpreting their own lives apart from an ideal of womanhood invented by society and the acknowledgement of the injustice and inequality towards women. In general, feminists are defined by a group of individuals who recognise social disparity based on gender and prevent it from persisting. Feminists emphasise that, historically, men have gained more opportunities than women (Ngcobo, 2016).

Research conducted by Egan (1999) highlights that early liberal feminism theories in the 19th century focused on men, while neglecting women, as they were perceived as their husband's or father's possession and therefore did not qualify for the autonomy sought for men. Egan (1999) does however highlight that some of the early liberal philosophers began to spread their nets to include women in aspects of their discourse on equality. Liberal feminism was also the source of the second wave of the Women's Movement which again called for equal opportunity and equal treatment for woman and sought to integrate women into "conventional' society.

Originally, women were responsible for the home and family care. As a result, a woman who entered the workforce was considered temporary since her primary occupation remained taking care of her home, family and childbearing responsibilities (Halle, 2018). Feminist movements globally facilitated the progression of women into the labour force and gave rise to the number of working women in the 20th century. In particular, the latter half of the 20Th century highlighted significant changes in the roles and expectations of women in society and this was achieved through the politics and activism of feminism (Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin & Frame 2005). As the recognition of women and women's rights started to evolve in society so did the status of working women.

Irrespective of the increasing presence in the workforce, women have entered the workforce in lower-status and lower-paying jobs (Tinklin *et a*l., 2005). Often, women and men do not have the same choices. Growing up one learns that women they are main care givers. Family influence towards education and career aspirations was limited to men. As a result, gender differences were developed in early childhood (Halle, 2018). Research suggests this still holds true in the 21st century.

Tinklin *et al.* (2005) explain that women often viewed employment as secondary to their household responsibilities. Women's careers were limited to certain areas and industries and most of the work included nursing, administrative support, teaching, social work, and clerical jobs (Halle, 2018). The discrepancy between traditionally male and traditionally female occupations largely contributed to earning gaps between men and women (Halle, 2018).

According to Egan (1999), there are several lenses of the feminist theory, some created by feminists with feminism reflecting through most of them. However, Feminism itself has distracted women from addressing pertinent issues. If a woman addresses an issue with a sympathetic reference to the impact on women or with awareness of the faint disparities often perpetrated against women, she is labelled a feminist (Egan, 1999). This implies that through the rise of feminism a certain stigma has been attached to the word "feminist" which has resulted in society often disregarding gender equality and women empowerment issues.

Morelli (2011) states that in recent years media has declared the death of feminism and has attached negative connotations to feminism which imply that it is not necessary. Morelli (2011) suggests that young women are reconstructing feminism to carve out the redefinition of their own identity, moreover in the 21st century - feminist movements are not dead. They still exist and are highly necessary. It is reported that present day feminists are undoubtedly endorsing practices which are different from those demonstrated by their foremothers (Morelli, 2011).

It is suggested that despite the heightened awareness of female empowerment, women seem to still be subjected to inequalities. The argument is supplemented by Lathi (2013) who states paradoxically women are becoming more visible, yet they seem to be voiceless. Morelli (2011) concludes that the association between feminism and the working class, in the 21st century, could easily mislead society to believe that women have been liberated. Even though there has been a shift in women empowerment recent data suggest that the gender gap is still significant especially in leadership roles (Grant Thornton International Limited, 2020).

Morelli (2011) acknowledges that feminism is associated with nuances which have been present for years. As a result, modern women are inevitably led to accept the stigma associated with stereotyping. Camp's theory (Morelli, 2011) suggests the key to overcoming prejudices and stereotypes lies in comprehending the uniqueness in one's ability and using it as a starting point to validate its validity.

The 1960s was a period that observed a significant increase in the number of women in the workforce. After this period, the growing number of women in the labour force has become a crucial concept in economy and philosophy (Morelli, 2011).

According to Morelli (2011), second-wave feminists (those who campaigned in the 19th century) are concerned that the new generation of feminists are devoted to a feminist movement that they label as "style without substance". Fischer (2012) states that the second-wave feminists accuse the 21st -century feminist of being too fashion-orientated and promoting sexual freedom. This goes directly against feminist movements in previous generations who passionately fought for equality, the eradication of violence against women, sexual rights to name a few.

The unexpected findings of the second wave feminist signal the need for additional studies to be conducted in order to understand more about the evolution of the "21st-century feminist" and the subsequent impact on society and their careers. Look at Hassim. Gouws for South African perspectives on this

Gouws and Coetzee (2019) state that post democracy in South Africa, women's activism shifted towards the engagement with institutional politics, with a specific focus on influencing the legislative and policy agenda in South Africa. They achieved this by the submission of legislations and working with parliament. Hassim (2003) expands on this by highlighting that the representation of women in the South African parliament has notably increased owing to women's movements that deliberately adopted the strategy to support the use of quotas and the extension of systems of political patronage to incorporate women.

Gouws and Coetzee (2019) point out that the National Movement of Rural Women that was established in 1990 aimed at empowering rural women in SA who were exposed to patriarchal customary law practices. More importantly these practices still harshly affect rural women's lives, long after the formal ending of colonialism and apartheid (Gouws & Coetzee, 2019). Women's movements in South Africa have joined the international women movements to campaign for increased representation of women within legislative bodies, this influence has resulted in a fifty per cent quota for women adopted by the African Union (Hassim, 2003).

According to Hassim (2003), the strategies adopted by the women movement are based on the view that if these strategies are adequately constituted, then African democracies will be able to overcome the historical legacies of women's subservience. Furthermore, women will have to challenge the socially constructed divide between the private and the public spheres of society, a consistent and conscious effort must be made to bring women and gender interests to centre stage in decision-making spheres like Parliament (Hassim, 2003).

2.2.2 Leadership Theories

According to Ngcobo (2016), leadership theories propose varied perspectives and highlight how leadership can be understood. The leadership theories selected in

this literature review are viewed through a female lens with the aim of understanding leadership from a gender perspective.

2.2.2.1 The Great Man Theory

This theory states that leaders are not made or transformed and they possess features that they are born with. The Great Man Theory suggest that leaders are born with the necessary attributes that set them apart from others. Historians termed the theory the "Great Man Theory" because, in earlier times, leadership roles were occupied by men however, this has slowly become less-of-a-case with the rise of feminism and other research and studies conducted on leadership (Ngcobo, 2016).

According to West (2017), primitive efforts to discover the origins of leadership seems to have been concentrated on notable figures who proved their worth with exceptional leadership. It was acknowledged that their key to success was initiated from innate qualities and characteristics that particularly distinguished born-to-be leaders from the rest. Northhouse (2016) infers that people who believed they are born with certain traits qualify for leadership positions thus giving rise to the perspective on leadership, referred to the trait approach (cited in West, 2017).

2.2.2.2 Trait Theory

The concept of trait leadership presupposes that the greatest leaders are distinguished by inherent characteristics that they are born with (Ngcobo, 2016). West (2017) suggests that the trait approach seems to be reverting to the concept that leadership is based on specific noticeable characteristics. West (2017) argues that leadership qualities can be acquired, however, an effective leader has certain characteristics that are more receptable thus the trait approach lacks attention to how it describes the prominent gender issues in the modern workplace

Eagly and Carli (2007) point out that notwithstanding the improvement in the representation of women in the workplace, people still prefer male bosses over female ones. As such West (2017) raises the question of why women are still disadvantaged in their goal of climbing the corporate ladder. This raises a further question of whether societal stereotypes of gender possess only certain traits thereby limiting the career development of women. It is suggested that the possession of certain traits could support leadership effectiveness (Ngcobo, 2016).

West (2017) believes that an individual's personal traits influence other's perception of that individual. It is noted that equivalent individual traits of opposing genders can lead to distinct outcomes in leadership development. The question is whether the Trait Theory is an archaic approach that does not take

realities of the current workplace into consideration. West (2017) suggests continued research to redefine what it means to be the "great man" or the "great woman" as the society and the workplace evolves.

2.2.3 Female Leadership

The concept of leadership is vast. As this study aims to address the career barriers that impede the progression of woman into senior management, the researcher will concentrate on the theory of female leadership.

According to Lathi (2013), female leadership represents one branch of the overall leadership concept and is defined in various ways. Njiru (2013) states that, in society and in organisations, the understanding of female leadership is that women have opportunities to be leaders and, in some cases, women are in leadership roles. Others define leadership from a feminist perspective in terms of equality where women have the right to equal opportunities with men. Some may believe that female leadership suggests certain female qualities which are valuable in the modern workplace (Lathi, 2013).

The concept of female leadership is often defined by the disparities in the gender binary. The fundamental traits compared are the level of influence on decision-making and the ability to solve problems (Lathi 2013). Men are reluctant to share equal leadership positions or be equal partners with women in business (Njiru, 2013).

Ngcobo (2016) suggests that leadership has a social influence, for example, it is common in African rural villages for a man to walk ahead of the woman. This confirms the notion that men will forever lead, and woman will follow. It is unmentionable in certain cultures for men to display affection such as carrying a baby or to be seen in the kitchen as it is regarded as a woman's space. Ngcobo (2016) argues that although various reasons may account for this type of behaviour, ultimately this indicates that masculinity is associated with the concept of leadership.

2.2.4 Role Congruity Theory

Eagly and Karau (2002) developed the theory of role congruity and the prejudice toward female leaders. In their research the researchers explain that a potential for prejudice exists when there is a stereotype about a social group which is incongruent with the attributes assumed for success in certain classes of social roles. In other words prejudice towards female leaders follows from the incongruity that many people perceive between the characteristics of women and the requirements of leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

With reference to women in leadership the role congruity theory proposed by Eagly and Karau (2002) suggests two forms of prejudice which are formed by perceived

incongruity towards women: a) women are perceived less favourably than men in potential leadership roles and b) women fare less favourably when evaluating behaviour that fulfils leadership roles. The consequence of this prejudice is that the attitudes towards women in leadership are less positive, creating yet another barrier that makes it difficult for her to advance in her career.

2.2.5 The Social Cognitive Career Theory and Career Development

Several studies suggest that career development is the systematic and progressive change in one's professional career. Career progression is indicated by 'climbing the corporate ladder'. Individuals are well recognised and respected as they move further up the hierarchy (Moeketsane, 2013). Based on this understanding the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is used to illustrate how a connection of variants can benefit career development. SCCT evolved from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1994).

SCCT proposes the key influence of learning experiences on career development. It highlights values and interests interlinked with maintaining self-agency that is exerted in personal career development (Lent *et al*., 2000). The SCCT framework highlights how internal variables intersect with external ones. Internal variables include concept of self or self-efficacy, goals expectations and external variables include the individual's environment that they exist in. The theory explains how variables, for example gender, influence which promotes or inhibits career development (Lent *et al*., 2000).

Figure 6 aims to provide a broad understanding of the steps and intricacies in learning experiences that influence career development.
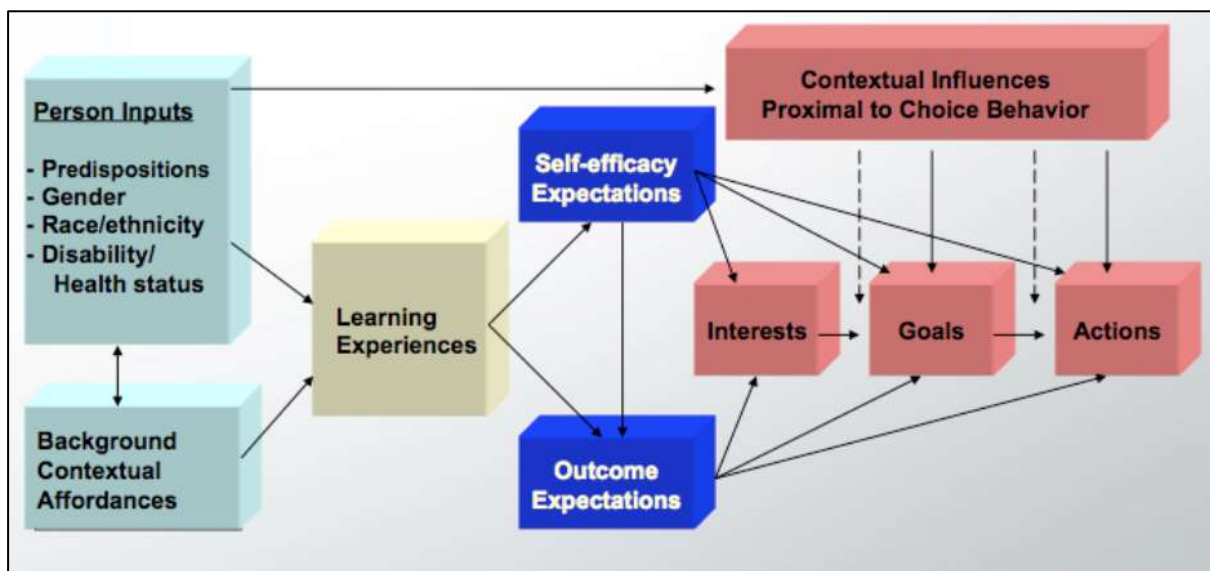
Figure 6:Social Cognitive Career Theory Intricacies
Source: Lent, Brown and Hackett (2000)

Lent *et al*. (2000) suggest that one way of looking at the influence of the environment is through concentric circles where the individual is envisioned to be in the inner-most circle surrounded by his/her immediate circle which includes family, friends and his/her financial condition. The immediate circle is followed by the larger societal circle.

The concept of an individual embedded within a multi-layered environment highlights that individuals are invariably influenced by aspects of the various layers. Lent *et al*. (2002) suggest that an individual's immediate circle interactions (inner layer) can be influenced by family, friends and close associations and it serves as a filter that refines perceptions of structural barriers in the larger environment. It is also a source of information for coping with such barriers.

A typical example to be able to understand the influence of the inner circle better is a young black woman may perceive that racial and gender bias represent intimidating obstacles in the pursuit of her careers in engineering. Nonetheless her access to role models who share the same dream may guide her to persevere regardless of the anticipation of confronting such bias (Lent *et al.,* 2000). Likewise, the larger outer layer, which represents the societal layer, invariably influences the perception of individuals. Through the observation of other people's experiences - in particular, their career barriers - individuals formulate perceptions of the external environment which invariably influence their own career decisions (Lent *et al.,* 2000).

The Social Cognitive Career Theory claims that an individual's career choices are influenced by self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and personal goals (Lent *et al.,* 2000) . It is inferred that an individual's interests are directly related to the positive outcomes and self-competency (self-efficacy and outcome expectation) that is developed over his/her lifetime.

It is well-known that if an individual has a low belief in his/her self-competency then the individual will avoid the activity (Lent *et al.*, 2000). An individual's beliefs about an outcome of their actions is referred to as outcomes expectation. It is through personal experiences and second-hand information - that is received regarding similar situations – that the individual's outcome expectations are formed (Moeketsane, 2013).

In the case of career development, throughout the individual's life he/she - at some point - narrows down their successful skill and forms a career choice. To demonstrate this, an individual in a middle management position has an expectation to receive a promotion to a senior management position that is based on his/her previous experience as well as his/her own exposure to promotions and the organisation's promotion policies.

Career progression - such as promotions and advancement in skills – is based on the system of abilities and can be specified as the belief system developed by an individual. This belief system is informed by past experiences. Such experiences can be described as – for example - barriers in socio-economic status, ethnicity and gender. These barriers can lead to a negative outcome expectation that lowers self-efficacy.

As a result, women in lower levels of management positions who are consistently performing at a high level can anticipate a promotion to a higher level in the organisation should it become available. Expectations for progressing to higher levels are formed by women's work contributions, the experiences of others who have done the same within the same environment as well as their knowledge of the promotions policies (Moeketsane, 2013).

The personal goals variable of the SCCT is described as a way in which an individual sustains their own efforts without external reinforcement. They are able to organise, guide and sustain their personal goals (Lent *et al.,* 2000). The interaction of the three variables (self-efficacy, personal goals, outcomes expectation) foster the career behaviour and consequently career development.

It is apparent that these variables do have an impact on the career development of individuals, with some variables beyond the control of individuals. In relation to this study, 'environment' refers to the working environment. Gender, self-efficacy, and personal goals are the factors that impact the career development of women. Variables in SCCT are represented in Figure 7.
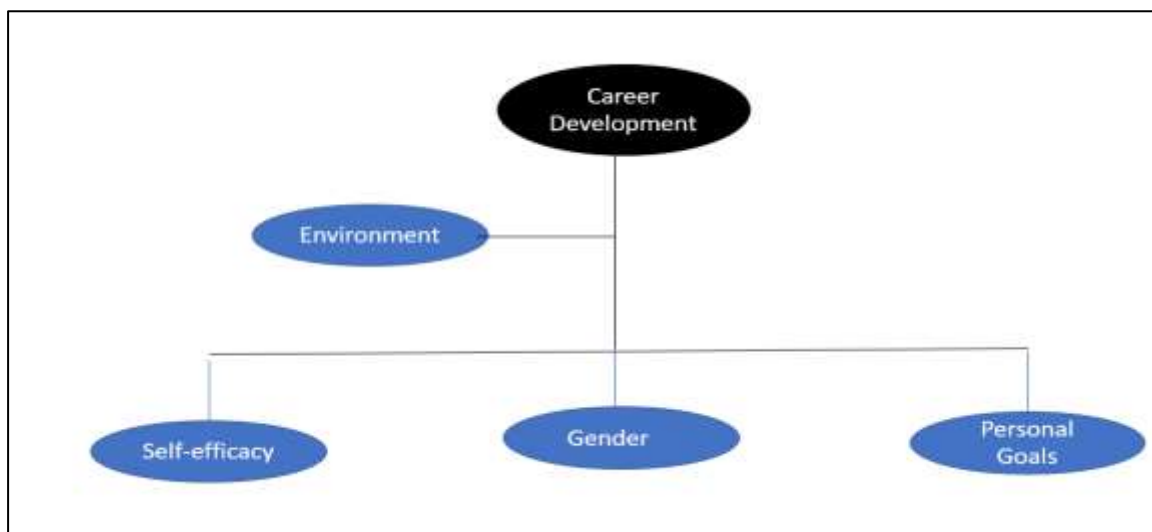
Figure 7: Variables in SCCT
Source: Lent, Brown and Hackett (2000)

In understanding the SCCT, it is interesting to note that SCCT considers the importance of external factors (economic and social) and internal factors (individual belief and self-efficacy) to career development. The interface between

gender, self-efficacy, personal goals and outcomes expectation through a gender lens is significant in understanding the impacts to career development of women. Thus, gender stereotypes and self-efficacy will be explored in this study.

2.3 Gender Socialising

The concept of gender and sex is explained: gender is the idea of femininity and masculinity. It refers to the qualities, behaviours and roles that a society deems appropriate for men and women. Sex, on the other hand, often refers to the physiological and biological make-up of an individual (The Psychology Notes HQ, 2012). Research conducted by Diekmann (2015) confirms that the socially constructed concept of gender begins in early childhood and is evident throughout a person's lifetime.

'Gender socialisation' is defined as the psychological process through which boys and girls learn the norms, rules and expectations about how they ought to behave. This takes into consideration their sex. It is therefore suggested that early childhood sex socialisation prepares young girls for a family-oriented life and encourages the associated characteristics and behaviour competencies required for this role (The Physcology Notes HQ, 2012).

According to Wanigasekara (2016), perceptions on gender, or sex-role stereotypes of what is suitable and unsuitable behaviour for male and female leaders, are associated with the social predictions and conceptual beliefs about the specific traits and characteristics of women and men. Wood and Lindorff (2001) suggest that societal expectations of gender fitness may highlight that women are expected to display behaviours of nurturing and interpersonally sensitiveness while men are expected to show independent, assertive and ambitious behaviour.

Gender stereotypes advocate leadership positions as a non-position for woman, whether women have aptness for a leadership position or not (Eagly & Carli, 2007). As such it is possible to recognise the limiting effects of gender socialisation on the career development of women. From the time she is a young girl considering her choice of career until she is grown up to the point that she actually becomes an adult she faces stereotypes that pressurise her to uphold certain roles within family and work life.

2.4 Gender Stereotype

Research highlights that although there is an increased representation of women in supervisory and management positions, leadership has been predominantly male dominated (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Almost two decades later, the status quo remains the same. Statistics published in the Women in Business 2020 report indicate that males dominate in senior leadership positions, noting that only 29%

of women are represented in senior leadership positions globally (Grant Thornton International Limited, 2020).

In a more recent study conducted by Lathi (2013), the concept of gender stereotyping - where women work less than men, women cannot work in demanding positions or even women are paid less as compared to men - are all still relevant. The traditional gender roles are alive and deeply rooted even with those who are against stereotyping. Society and its people are impacted by gender-dominated roles for their entire lives and as such they habitually act according to their "role" (Lathi 2013). In similar research, Halle (2018) reinforces that when women in leadership are measured against their male counterparts, they are less favoured owing to the prejudice of masculinity.

Jonsen, Maznevski and Schneider (2010) argue that gender stereotypes are advocated by society at large and therefore stereotyping is used to link and predict people's behaviour and abilities. This is because such different expectations are set for men and women (Kayi, 2013). This highlighted the topic of sex roles. Chung and Shagal (2007) explain how gender stereotypes are influenced by sex roles. It is asserted that both sexes have unique traits and abilities which are rooted in their gender.

Gender role expectations and characteristics are formed by learnings from family, society and culture as a result of differences in traits and abilities. As such sex-appropriate preferences and behaviours are formed (Chung & Shangal, 2007). It is argued that, as a result of sex role orientation, certain behaviour traits are apparent. Men are viewed as dominant and aggressive while women are viewed as subservient. Kayi (2013) confirms this by stating that gender roles and identity are moulded by various influences such as family, relationships, societal values, and culture.

It is highlighted that, based on gender differences, men are viewed as domineering while women are viewed as submissive and dependent. Therefore, gender stereotyping occurs when traditional gender norms are violated by women seeking roles in society and the workplace that are traditionally reserved for men (Chung & Shangal, 2007). According to Lathi (2013), successful leadership is often associated with masculinity which results in feminine characteristics being less relevant in the business.

It can be inferred that when traditional gender roles in society are broken by women seeking male-reserved positions, then gender stereotyping occurs. By stereotyping men as more efficient based on their characteristics of competitiveness, focusing and goal orientation to name a few, the significant and valuable characteristics that women have remain undervalued. In relation to the career development of women based on the earliest studies as well as the current

study, it is confirmed that stereotyping can be a major obstacle to women's career possibilities.

A culture shift in changing the gender stereotype and the expectations that women are primary caregivers is needed. Additional studies to understand the key tenets of eradicating the gender stereotype is required.

2.5 Unconscious Bias: The Invisible Barrier

Unconscious bias is defined by the International Labour Organization (2017) as unwitting and impulsive mental associations based on gender. These stem from experiences such as traditions, culture, norms and values. Assessment of an individual - according to gender and gender stereotype - is based on instinctive associations which supplement such decision-making.

Halle (2018) highlights that although there is a growing number of research on unconscious biases in the workplace, there is limited research available on unconscious bias against women in senior positions. The International Labour Organization (2017) surveyed several companies on the barriers women face to leadership advancement. According to the results the key barriers highlighted were related to discrimination and unconscious gender bias, social roles of men and women, masculine corporate culture and stereotypes against women.

In similar research conducted by McKinsey and Company (2016) it was highlighted that besides sexism in isolation, invisible barriers are the most cited that is holding women back. According to Filut, Kaatz and Carnes (2017) unconscious bias arises from stereotypes. Stereotypic behaviour is created from repeatedly activating associations which are reinforced by experiences and societal messages that are embedded in people throughout their lives.

According to a study conducted by Filut, Kaatz and Carnes (2017), gender stereotypes result in unconscious gender bias. The researchers state that throughout our lives people are exposed to gender stereotypes. This is explained through the notion that since birth associations regarding gender is reinforced in the individual and this continues throughout his/her life. These messages lay the foundation for unconscious gender bias that could shape the decisions which impact the career development of women.

Gender bias is culturally entrenched and, in most cases, unconscious. It is noted that everyone in society has biases towards someone, something, or a group. The learnings and associations are hardwired into us and our experience of the world is influenced by this "hard-wired" way of making unconscious decisions (Watson, 2014).

According to Halle (2018), unconscious bias plays a critical role in the formation of barriers which limit women's progression to senior management roles. A recent study by McKinsey and Company (2016) concluded that while organisations see the work-family conflict – which is also known as "the double burden syndrome" as the most fundamental career barrier for women - although the company acknowledges that work-life conflict as a problem, the most fundamental barrier is the attitudes in the workplace which results in them being treated differently from men.

A study by McKinsey and Company (2016) highlights the performance evaluation bias, where men are evaluated on their future potential while women are evaluated more on their current achievement. It is also suggested that some of the biases are held by women themselves, for example in terms of maternal bias, women feel guilty when they are at work as opposed to fulfilling their maternal duties. This gives rise to the assumption that women are less committed to their careers which results in them being held to higher standards and offered fewer leadership opportunities.

Watson (2014) reaffirms this and explains that while women have their own biases, they believe that they are better multitaskers, better nurturers, and are usually not as tough as men. Watson (2014) points out that women stereotype each other too, criticising each other's clothing choices, questioning other women's values when they prioritise work over family and cutting each other down for breaking the rules. Women internalise cultural rules about femininity, allowing it to influence their behaviours, irrespective of whether the assumptions and biases are valid or not (Watson, 2014).

Halle (2018) claims that even though unconscious bias in widely recognised in the workplace, people are often more biased than they think. The author explains that the fundamental problem with unconscious bias is that it is automatic in nature and - in most cases - happens outside of the control of an individual. Unconscious perceptions govern important decisions people make and have a profound effect on the lives of people (Ross, 2008).

Ross (2008) explains that unconscious patterns can emerge in subtle ways and these are difficult to spot. To explain this phenomenon an example of conducting two interviews is used: candidate one who is being interviewed reminds the interviewer of him/herself or someone else that they know. An instant sense of familiarity is created which results in the interviewer liking the interviewee and therefore influencing ease of conversation and integration. Ross (2008) explains that although the interviewer may not know the exact reasons for liking the interviewee his/her mind justifies his action. In contrast, with candidate two there was no connection so resulting in a straightforward conversation.

The interviewer's preference leans towards candidate one and according to Ross (2008) the interviewer's perceptions about the interviews constituted his reality. This influenced the conversation during the interview which is completely invisible. Hundreds of decisions in the workplace face the same dynamic, where leadership influences decisions based on their own background (unconscious) biases that are completely invisible to them (Ross, 2008). In relation to gender stereotype in the workplace it can be inferred that this dynamic is dangerous for women's career development.

2.6 Glass Ceiling or Glass Cage?

Several studies suggest that the "glass ceiling" phenomenon refers to the systematic imperceptible barriers that inhibit the development of women (Moeketsane, 2013). Research conducted by Carli and Eagly (2007) provides an outline of the glass ceiling concept that was introduced in the 1980s. The 'glass ceiling' concept has since been recognised as an invisible but influential barrier that allows women to advance only to a certain level in the organisation.

Owing to the greater emphasis of this discriminatory phenomenon in the workforce, studies have rapidly increased over the last few decades with statistical evidence supporting its existence since then (Halle, 2018). Despite decades of research, the glass ceiling metaphor continues to be debated. Women are exposed to various challenges or barriers along their career paths before they get to a point of being faced with the glass ceiling. Therefore, a "labyrinth" comparison is more suited because it describes the difficulties that prevent women from advancing to higher levels in the organisation. "Labyrinth" can be specified as a complex erratic network of alleys in which it is difficult to navigate for example, a maze.

Warrell (2013) suggests that the larger barrier which is holding women back from growing their influence is not a 'glass ceiling' but a glass cage of women's own making (albeit not consciously). This cage is held together by the misgivings which are had about one's ability to succeed and handle the demands of leadership without sacrificing other aspirations outside the workplace (Warrell, 2013).

According to Lathi (2013) a recent study by Talouselämä (2013) concluded that a woman's own attitude is her obstacle to career development. The study found that women lack confidence. As a result, they will or are not as willing as men to work for senior leadership positions. Therefore, women have a lower representation at higher levels in leadership (Lathi, 2013). The study also highlighted that starting a family inevitably impacts the career development of women as she is often torn between work-family conflict and as a result she may decide to reduce working hours, thereby prioritising family over career.

Studies of the glass ceiling concept are well documented. It is also acknowledged that apart from the glass ceiling metaphor, women create an unconscious barrier

called the glass cage. It appears that previous studies have almost exclusively focused on women breaking the glass ceiling. In relation to this study, career development barriers such as work-family conflict, self-efficacy, gender serotyping, gender socialising are fundamental constructs of the glass cage.

2.7 Self-efficacy

An individuals' achievements are linked to elements such as motivation, self-concept, self-efficacy and performance expectancy (Nwosu, 2014). Besides being cognitive, human beings are also social with principles, emotions and ideas that influence their development. These govern their behaviour and choices (Nwosu, 2014). Therefore, an individual's understanding of the consequence of their behaviour models the environment and personal factors they possess and consequently models ensuing behaviour.

Moeketsane (2013) asserts that the beliefs concerning one's own capability to generate certain achievement levels is influenced by one's own perceptions and beliefs. This is aligned with the definition – proposed by Bandura (1994) - of self-efficacy which is a fundamental component of the Social Cognitive Theory. Self-efficacy emphasises that behaviour is shaped by self-efficacy and highlights that human development is an effective interaction of an individual's behaviour with their lived experiences. When an individual is faced with a specific task, their response is based more on their ideology or personal theories as opposed to his or her knowledge of specific tasks (Nwosu, 2014).

The ideas an individual has about their own abilities inevitably has an effect in the immediate future. On the contrary self-doubts in an individual regarding their capabilities to accomplish the expectations of the job could influence their lives (Moeketsane, 2013). A profound awareness of self-efficacy will strengthen an individual's achievements and their overall welfare. Thus a deep meaning of self-efficacy significantly impacts the approach people take when dealing with difficult tasks (Bandura, 1994).

SCCT confirms that the career development of individuals is influenced by cognitive-person variables such as self-efficacy, outcome expectation and personal goals. People's approaches differ based on their sense of self-efficacy for individuals with an in-depth view of self-efficacy varying with individuals who have a lower sense of self-efficacy (Lent *et al*., 2000). How an individual approaches failure is influenced by their sense of self-efficacy: a person with a strong sense of self-efficacy interprets failure as inadequate determination, lack of knowledge or lack of skills required to execute the job. They view this as a temporary setback (Bandura, 1994).

Furthermore, a person with a deep sense of self-efficacy approaches difficult tasks as challenges that can be mastered rather than threats to be avoided (Bandura, 1994).

The presence of the glass ceiling in this context will not easily discourage the individual with a deep sense of self-efficacy, instead they will be motivated to break the glass ceiling.

Moeketsane (2013) notes that individuals with high self-efficacy foster a deep-seated interest and fixation with activities. They set challenging goals and maintain a strong commitment to achieving them. Their efforts are heightened when faced with failure. Personal accomplishments and lower vulnerability are attributed to an efficacious outlook of an individual with an intense level of self-efficacy. Contrary to this a lack in self-efficacy results in the opposite approach (Bandura, 1994).

According to Bandura (1994), people who have reservations about the own capabilities tend to avoid difficult tasks which they view as personal threats. Their aspirations are low and they often have a weak sense of commitment to the goals they set. They reiterate their personal deficiencies when faced with challenging tasks by focusing on obstacles they will encounter instead of concentrating on achieving the desired results.

The SCCT of Bandura (1994) highlights the relationship between career development, self-efficacy and outcomes expectation. Lent *et al*. (2000) demonstrate the link between self-efficacy and outcomes expectation with the example of an individual with high self-efficacy. For example, a person with a strong mathematical ability might choose to avoid science-intensive career fields if she or he anticipates negative outcomes. Bandura (1994) explains that these individuals do not put in enough effort to successfully complete a task and they give up easily in the face of difficulties. Following failure or setbacks these individuals are slow to recover their sense of efficacy. This is because they view low performance as a deficiency in aptitude (Lent *et al.*, 2000)

Based on the understanding that self-efficacy impacts career development it is necessary to take a closer look at the ways in which self-efficacy can be strengthened. In addition to the relationship between self-efficacy and the career development will be examined.

According to Bandura (1994) the most powerful way of creating a high sense of efficacy is through the mastery experiences. The most authentic evidence available to an individual is mastering a task or concept. One can then draw from their own experiences. Furthermore, this means that having experienced mastering a task in the past will result in the same experience in the future (Bandura, 1994).

Bandura (1994) argues that a resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles. In other words, strong self-efficacy not only develops when an individual experiences the success of tasks with no errors but the success of tasks where effort was required and where failure did occur. First and foremost, success is achieved through perseverance. The expression "no gain without pain" is commonly known by society. It implies that in order to achieve success there will be some challenges however one must persevere to attain the "gain".

Bandura (1994) indicates that obstacles and challenges experienced by humans serves a valuable teaching that success often requires sustained efforts, providing individuals the sense that they can succeed. Once people acknowledge that they have what it takes to succeed, perseverance in the face of adversity allows them to rebound swiftly from setbacks. Sticking through tough times, they emerge from adversity stronger (Bandura, 1994).

In the context of this study, proficiency as a source of self-efficacy is attained through the navigation of the corporate organisation and persevering through challenges to obtain the position that the individual holds. Women with a deep level of self-efficacy will draw on past experiences but above all they have the will to persevere against the obstacles in their path to success. On the contrary women who have a weaker sense of self-efficacy are challenged to assess the processes and efforts in their career journey objectively (Moeketsane, 2013) Consequently, their incapability to assess their efforts most often becomes a barrier to achieving career development (Bandura, 1994).

Based on the research conducted by Bandura (1994) the second way of strengthening self-belief of efficacy is through vicarious experiences provided by social models (Bandura, 1994). What this implies is that by bearing witness to, or observing, the successes of people, it motivates the individual's belief that they too have the capability to achieve in similar activities. In contrast observing others fail - despite maximal effort - lowers the observers judgments of their own efficacy and undermines their efforts (Bandura, 1994).

Vicarious experience in relation to the current study would, for example, be women who are at the same level and who work in the same department finding that their beliefs in their ability to develop are strengthened when they observe that their peers have successfully developed to higher levels. Bandura (1994) notes that the impact of modelling self-efficacy is persuaded by the individual's perceived similarity to the models. The level of influence of modelling is dependent on the level of assumed similarities. The greater the assumed similarity the higher the level of influence of the models' successes and failures. The converse is also true.

According to Bandura (1994) people pursue experienced models who have capabilities to which they aspire. By virtue of their pattern of behaviour and their ways of thinking, competent models provide a platform that transmits knowledge, effective skills and strategies to observers so that they can manage demands of the environment in which they exist.

One of the four pre-defined challenges in career development of women listed in the 2016 Global Gender Gap Report is the lack of role models (Schwab, 2016). The limited literature review shows that women encounter several challenges to developing success. One interesting concept is the "queen bee syndrome". According to Rao (2020), queen bees are the successful senior women who prevent young women from attaining senior positions in the workplace.

Women are more ambitious with fast-tracking their own careers than advancing the careers of their female colleagues and subordinates (Rao, 2020).

The queen bee syndrome could be the result of the lack of role models, but limited research is available. The unexpected findings signal the need for additional studies to understand more about the queen bee syndrome and its link to the lack of role models for women.

2.8 Self-Efficacy and Careers

The types of environment and activities people choose is influenced by their beliefs of their personal efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Throughout their life journey people develop unique competencies, interests and social networks. Factors that influence choice behaviour can strongly affect the direction of personal development (Bandura, 1994).

By considering the resources of efficacy and comprehending the link to an individual's behaviour it is clear that individuals with a strong self-efficacy will readily partake in challenging activities while people with low self-efficacy avoid challenging activities that they believe exceed their capabilities based on the choices they make. Therefore, it can be argued that lower levels of self-efficacy or a lack thereof could be a career development barrier for women hence the presence of strong self-efficacy in women provides a solid path to career development.

2.9 Lack of Confidence

McKinsey and Company (2016) state that results of the women matter Africa survey indicate that women are often not recognised for their successes and are criticised more for failure in comparison to men. This results in a lack of confidence

and poor self-efficacy which means women are less likely to put themselves up for promotion.

A study conducted by Lathi (2013) highlights that one of the most influential obstacles in a woman's career progression is her own attitude. It is noted in her study that many women lack confidence and will. The study also confirms that women do not desire to be leaders and are not enthusiastic to work for it as much as men. It is implied that this could be the reason for the low representation of women in senior leadership positions. Studies conducted by the BBC News (2011) suggest that women anticipate discrimination even before it happens. As a result, they have lower self-confidence and low career ambitions when compared with men.

2.10 Work-Family Conflict- The Double Burden Syndrome

This study aims to address the factors that impede the career progression of women into senior leadership positions. It is therefore important to consider the concept of career development in terms of family responsibility. Research conducted by Wang and Cho (2013) emphasises that even though women have begun to cut the "glass ceiling" and gain entry into senior levels of management there is however a low representation of women at the higher level of the organisation in comparison to men.

The "double burden" syndrome, whereby working women also have to take primary responsibility for domestic duties, was highlighted in the 2016 Women Matter Report as a fundamental barrier to their success (McKinsey & Company, 2016). Extensive research in western countries has demonstrated the reality of work-family conflict and its impact on women (Wang & Cho, 2013). However Wang and Cho (2013) indicate that the majority of the research on work-family conflict has almost exclusively focused on the relationship of work-family conflict to job satisfaction or life satisfaction therefore limiting the attention of work-family conflict on career development for women. This gap signifies a requirement for researching how work-family conflict influences the career development of women.

Njiru (2013) affirms that, in contrast to men, women are faced with the career versus family decision. It is noted that the very same women strongly support the men in their lives so that they can top leadership positions which are - in some instances – challenging and offering little time to spend with their families. Women put in effort to perform extra duties in the home to make sure that their men succeed in their jobs. In contrast men do not go the extra mile for women leaders. They often get side-tracked by the negative comments made about their wives by their fellow men (Njiru, 2013).

Research conducted by Grant Thornton International Limited (2020) depicts that even though more women are joining the workforce, the representation of women in senior leadership is low and this highlights the need to research the relationship between work-family conflict and career development. The work and family domains are often in conflict. This occurs when demands in one domain - for example, the work domain - limits the individual's ability to complete tasks in the other family domain.

Research conducted by Halle (2018) confirms that the conflict between work and family is still prevalent in the 21st century. With dual-income families becoming the norm, women are challenged to keep both a successful career and a balanced family. Women are mainly responsible for homemaking and parenting while being employed. Furthermore, Halle (2018) argues the work-family conflict that often prevents mothers from reaching top leadership positions is commonly referred to as the main reason behind the lack of female leaders in upper levels of the organisation.

Married women are often expected to be employed in demanding jobs while single women are likely to advance rapidly in their careers (Moeketsane, 2013). Moeketsane (2013) suggests that single women have fewer family responsibilities in comparison to their married counterparts and are therefore able to dedicate more time on work responsibilities thus favouring career development. Wang and Cho (2013) add that owing to childbirth woman carry majority of the responsibility for both childcare and maintaining their home structure. As a result, woman have temporary interruptions for maternity leave and resort to part-time work in an attempt to balance their family-work life.

In other research, Wood and Lindoff (2001) highlight that family responsibility creates a barrier for women to progress in their careers. The authors further suggest that it is believed that for one to be a productive worker, one is expected to be available at all times thus implying that working long hours is an indication of being ambitious and committed.

Although woman attempt to maintain balance, the burden of work-family conflict impacts their career choices and career development. In a bid to balance family responsibilities, the work performance drops hindering promotions and rewards (Wang & Cho, 2013). It is noted that women are not engulfed in a workplace that limits flexibility of working hours. As such career development decisions are generally directed by the concern of family care. In contrast research indicates that men change careers to earn more money and to climb the corporate ladder (Wang & Cho, 2013).

2.11 Conclusion

The theories in this study provide a means to understanding firstly the rise of women into the workplace by exploring the concept of feminism and secondly the barriers women face in developing their careers. The literature review indicates how concepts - like self-efficacy, confidence, gender socialising and unconscious bias - can be integral to how women approach tasks and challenges in their path to career development. These concepts are also integral to how society and the workplace perceives women in their roles

The literature highlights that a lack of self-efficacy, confidence as well as role models may present as key career barriers for women who aspire to progress to higher levels in management. Another barrier to note is the conflict that women experience between work and family. This is also known as the double burden syndrome which has a significant impact on the career progression of women as they are torn between their maternal duties and their work duties. The literature review highlights that there are several barriers to career development, some of which are unconscious but detrimental.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research approach for this study, the design, population selected, sampling method, data collection and analysis method. Furthermore, ethical considerations are highlighted.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The term 'research philosophy' refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). According to Saunders *et al*. (2019), the process of exploring and understanding an individual's research philosophy requires sharpening the skill of reflexivity. In other words, to question one's own thinking and actions as well as learn to examine one's own beliefs with the same scrutiny as one would apply to the beliefs of others.

Thus, the researcher needed to develop reflexivity in order to become more aware of - and to aggressively shape - the relationship between the researcher's own philosophical position and how the research was undertaken. Phenomenology provides a theoretical guideline for researchers to understand phenomena at the level of subjective reality (Qutoshi, 2018). It is an approach to educate one's own observation and vision by broadening how one sees the world around by gaining a deeper level of understanding through lived experiences. Based on the researcher's ontological and epistemological stance the best suited research design and methodology for this study is a phenomenological qualitative study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) concede that the researcher is considered an instrument of data collection in a qualitative study. The researcher's role in this study was to gather career progress-related information from participants and examine the different perspectives and opinions of these participants based on their experiences.

Given the researcher's direct experiences with this phenomenon, she believed that a qualitative phenomenological study is appropriate as her objective is to understand the career challenges women in leadership experience. It must however be noted that the role of the researcher is elicit meaning from an outside view and from the perspective of an objective viewer.

The researcher has contextual knowledge and an understanding of the phenomenon therefore it is important that the researcher's personal bias is bracketed (Newing, 2011). Bracketing is essential for this study as it aims to limit the researcher's personal bias to this phenomenon so that any conclusions in the research data will only consider the perspectives of the selected participants.

3.3 Research Design & Methodology

Mouton (2001) states that there is a clear distinction between research design and research methodology. Research design guides the manner in which the research will be conducted, and research methodology refers to the specific processes that are executed in conducting the research (cited in Kayi, 2013).

In order to answer the research questions and to explore the variables of the career barriers, this study will focus on gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomena embedded within each research participant. Therefore, the research design of this study is a qualitative phenomenological study. This design is also influenced by the researcher's desire to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of female leadership with a special interest in exploring the career challenges experienced by female leaders as they progress through their careers.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) explain that methodology in research refers to a systematic way of gathering data from certain population groups in order to understand a phenomenon and to generalise facts obtained from a larger population (cited in Ngcobo, 2016).

According to Schwandt (1994), interpretivist research provides a means to gain a deeper insight into the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who have lived in it (cited in Andrade, 2009). Stangor (2011) states that researchers who select the responsible qualitative research paradigm want to study phenomena as they arise in their natural settings and more importantly the significance that people bring to phenomena (cited in Moeketsane, 2013).

The purpose of interpretivist research is to create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and context (Saunders *et al*., 2019). Correspondingly the researcher has chosen the qualitative research design to gain a closer and intimate understanding of the career challenges of female leaders in theory as well as in practice.

3.4 Research Approach

The outcome of this study is dependent on the researcher's careful selection of the participants in the research. Since this study relates to the career progression challenges of female leaders it is appropriate that the participant's demographics are defined.

The participants in this research are women who are in leadership positions with a particular focus on women in middle management and senior management. Thus, all participants identified will enable the researcher to answer the primary

research question of this study: What are the key barriers that impede the career advancement of woman into senior levels of management?

Qualitative research uses many methods including interviews, observations, action research, discussions, focus group meetings and text analysis (Newing, 2011). The focus is on gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomena embedded within the research participants' views and perspectives (Qutoshi, 2018).

The main objective of this study is to gain an understanding of the factors influencing the progression of women to senior levels of management. While the topic of the career barriers women face has been widely researched, research into the current topic of barriers that women face as they progress from middle management to senior management has not yet been thoroughly investigated by other scholars.

The primary data source for this study is semi-structured interviews. The insightful details provided by qualitative interviews provides a deeper understanding of the situation by offering a clear understanding of the personal views, beliefs and perceptions (Qutoshi, 2018). As such the qualitative interviews will allow the researcher to acquire deep insights of the phenomena through the lived experiences of women as they progress through their careers. The secondary data source is a questionnaire aimed at gaining additional data for the purpose of supplementing data collected from the interviews

3.5 Research Population and Sampling

Population

A research population is an explicit collection of individuals who have similar characteristics (Explorable.com, 2001). All individuals within the identified population often have similarities in their characteristics and behaviours. They share similar values and opinions. Since the study relates to the career barriers that women experience it is appropriate that the population of the study identified are women.

The selected population in the study is made up of women in middle management and senior management positions within the organisation. Insights and views of executive management were sourced. The reason for the chosen population is to gain a deeper understanding into, and insight of, the following:

- The career challenges women in middle management experience. The researcher will establish - from this population - the reasons why they have not yet broken through the glass ceiling to get to senior management levels.

- The observation and career growth experience of women in senior management. The researcher would like to explore the topic of career progression into senior management roles and learn how this population progressed from middle management to senior management, in other words how they managed to break through the glass ceiling. The researcher will gain insights into this sample group based on their observations and perceptions of reaching the executive levels.

Sampling

Non-probability sampling focuses on sampling techniques where the units that are investigated are based on the judgement of the researcher (Crossman, 2020). According to Crossman (2020), a purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. It is stated that homogeneous purposive samples share common characteristics such as gender, occupation and roles.

Since the objective of the study is to understand the reasons for the under-representation of women in senior leadership positions the sampling technique that was adopted by the researcher is homogeneous purposive sampling. Therefore, the sample for this study included people who had characteristics required.

The main goal of using purposive sampling is for the researcher to collect in-depth perceptions and descriptions of targeted populations. This study focuses on women in middle management and senior management. The sample will best enable the researcher to answer the research questions. Crossman (2020) states that when purposive sampling is utilised as a sampling technique the sample population must qualify with a set of criteria for the purpose of being included in that sample.

Therefore, the sample chosen for this study is made up of ten women in middle management and nine women in senior management. Views of women who have reached executive levels were also sourced. The research required the level of management to be specific, however views from women who had attained the highest level were sourced to establish if the challenges persisted even at the highest level in the company. The sample includes women from different ethnic backgrounds and from different age groups. Participating in the study was entirely voluntary, which was explained to participants upfront.

The researcher used an open-ended questionnaire to allow for the generation and analysis of additional qualitative data. The questionnaire was distributed to 12 women in middle management and senior management.
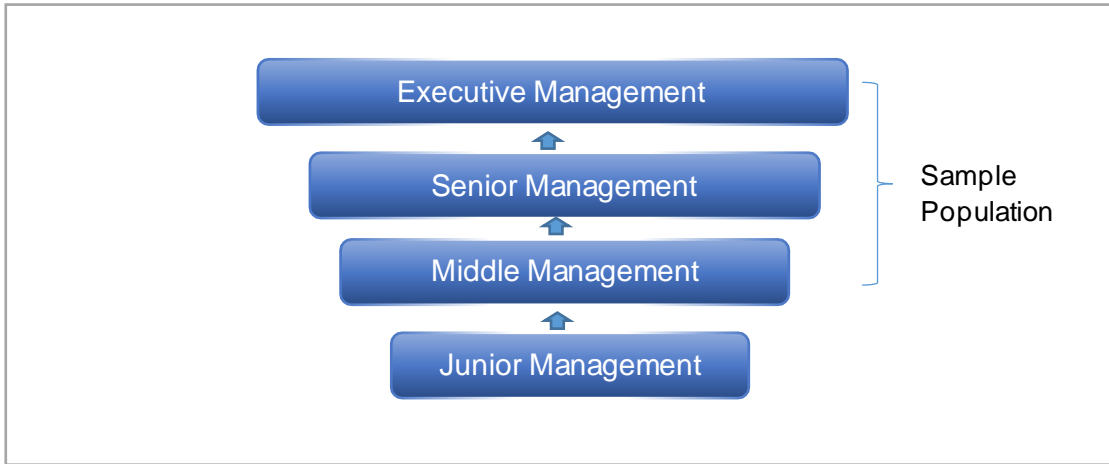
Figure 8: Research Sample Population

3.6 Data Collection

The research was conducted at First Bank. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included semi-structured interviews that was useful for collecting data from participants on their experiences, observations, and perceptions of female leadership career challenges. In addition, the open-ended questionnaire allowed for the researcher to obtain additional data from the same population group. For the theoretical section of the study, the researcher referenced secondary sources such as previous literature, Internet sources and articles related to the topic. Three sources of data that were used in this study are represented below:
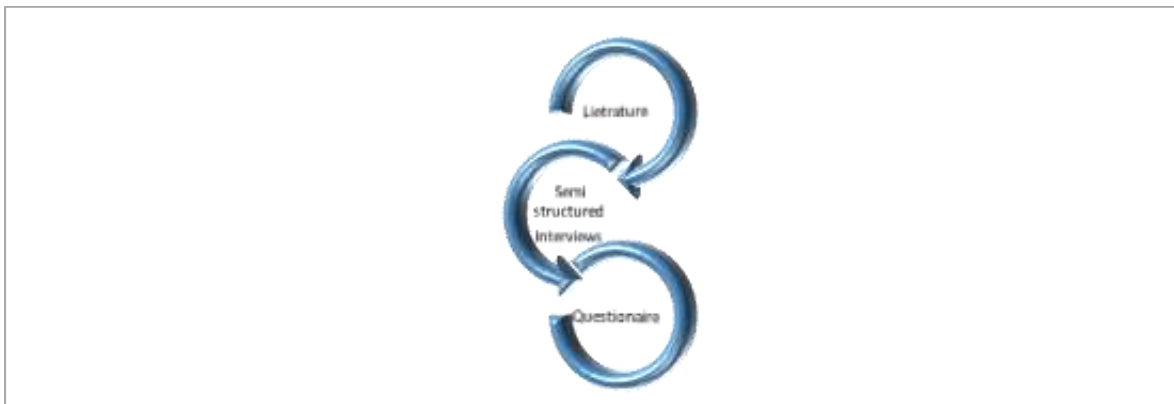
Figure 9: Research Data Sources

Semi-Structured Interviews

According to Adams (2015), semi-structured interview participants are afforded the opportunity to express their opinions, views and past experiences in a controlled way. It is stated by Adams (2015) that semi-structured interviews are most valuable if the researcher wants to gain knowledge of the independent thoughts of individuals.

Creswell (2009) identifies key questions that are required to collect relevant data, what the participant has experienced in terms of the phenomenon and what situations or contexts have influenced or affected the participants' experiences (cited in Qutoshi, 2018).

Therefore, the researcher chose semi-structured interviews for this study. Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic all interviews were conducted electronically via the Microsoft teams app. The participants in the semi-structured interviews were given the flexibility of having their say without being curtailed by direct questions. The semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions which defined key areas to be explored and discussed. The semi-structured interview schedule is listed in Appendix A of this paper.

Prior to conducting the actual interviews with the selected participants, a pilot test with a randomly selected participant – who fulfilled the same criteria of the selected sample - was conducted. The purpose of the pilot test was to review and edit the interview to ensure a quality interview was conducted with participants. The pilot interview provided insights into the duration of the interview and highlighted any difficulties that could arise in answering the questions. Feedback received from the pilot interview was incorporated into this study.

3.7 Data Analysis

Bhasin (2019) describes 'data analysis' as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the collected data. It is useful in extracting certain conclusions about the variables that are present in the research data. To ensure the reliability and validity of data collected, interviews were conducted electronically with an audio recording that was transcribed using Temi.com online transcribing services. In addition, notes were taken during the interview. Where it was found that information was not clear, the researcher emailed the participant for verification.

Data collected from interviews was analysed using Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). Anderson (2007) describes TCA as a descriptive presentation of data. Through textual data TCA will extract the thematic content by identifying common themes (Anderson, 2007). TCA was an appropriate method to analyse data because it allowed the researcher the ability to be objective while analysing the data (Anderson, 2007). Furthermore, TCA enabled the researcher to minimise personal bias in the interpretation of findings. Ultimately the TCA method allowed the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the views and lived experiences expressed by the participants (Anderson, 2007).

Thematic data analysis allowed the researcher to identify common themes. This was done by analysing data from each interview transcript, line by line and coding these (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes were grouped and were linked to the research questions.

Respondents' interview transcripts are listed in a dashboard on Temi.com and the interview participants are referenced as P1-P11 in the quotations listed in chapter 4.

3.8 Validity

Saunders & Lewis (2012) state that 'research validity' refers to the extent that data-gathering methods precisely measure what these were designed to measure with research findings that are indeed what they claim to be about. The definition of research reliability is the extent to which data collection methods and analysis procedures will produce consistent findings (Heerden, 2015).

To ensure validity, the sample chosen was diverse. Women from different backgrounds and age group were selected particularly to examine the consistency and frequency of the responses to the questions asked. The researcher ensured that the structure of the interviews conducted was similar with all participants. Furthermore, participants selected were at similar levels of seniority which ensured consistency in the data collected.

To test the validity of the responses, the researcher interviewed a participant who has reached an executive level in the organisation. The participant's views and lived experience of reaching the top level of management provided validity to the responses from participants who are still striving to reach higher management levels in their career.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The key ethical considerations for this study are informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality

Informed Consent

Before data was collected the researcher obtained written permission from First Bank to conduct research on site. Participants were approached after approval for research was obtained. The researcher was responsible for ensuring that participants of the research are well-informed about the purpose of the research in which they were being asked to participate.

A research information letter was shared with participants to explain that participation in the study was at no risk to them because responses or interview transcripts were safely stored and would not be shared with anyone in the organisation, including their colleagues and immediate superiors. This protected them from victimisation. Considering that data was collected in the form of interviews and a questionnaire it is obvious that the participants were known to

the researcher so compromising anonymity. However, the researcher has guaranteed anonymity in the report write-up. The selected participants were asked to sign an informed consent form indicating voluntary participation.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

The protection of participants through a formal consent process guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher provided a consent form to the participants prior to the interviews and they returned the signed form via email to the researcher. Owing to the deliberate selection of participants, they are known to the researcher and the raw data collected is only accessible by the researcher. The participants were appraised of the details and procedure of the study. To protect the identity of the organisation and participants, this study makes use of pseudonyms to ensure that the data provided by the participants cannot be traced back to them in reports, presentations, and other forms of dissemination.

Other ethical considerations for this research are:

Honesty: The researcher will be honest and transparent with the participants.
Bias: The researcher will view data collected subjectively and remove all biases. The thematic content analysis will also aid in removing the researcher's own bias towards the topic.
Respect: Participants in the research will always be treated with the utmost respect.

All 11 interview participants were requested to complete a formal consent form prior to the scheduled interviews. As a result of one participant, an executive manager, not being available for the face-to-face interview the interview schedule of the interview questions was forwarded via email to the participant. The researcher explained to the participant that by submitting a completed interview schedule it would be deemed as consent to participate in the study.

Prior to the commencement of the interview questions, a brief synopsis of the study was given to participants. The participants were briefed of the right to withdraw from the study or stop at any point during the interview. They were also informed that should they feel uncomfortable responding to certain interview questions they could choose not to answer them by informing the researcher.

3.10 Conclusion

The main objective of this chapter was to outline the research design and methodology and understand the career progression challenges women in leadership experience. Based on the researcher's strong belief that truth is socially

constructed this qualitative study draws from the experiences and perceptions of female leaders.

It is through lived experiences that it is possible to understand the career challenges that women in leadership face. The researcher explained certain information to the targeted research population and explained how they had been selected to participate in this study as well as why they were selected. The important function of the research design is to ensure that evidence obtained enables the researcher to answer the research questions without bias and ambiguity. In this chapter the data collection and data analysis processes were elaborated on. Issues of validity and reliability of data were addressed. The chapter concluded with the ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 4

Research Results and Analysis

4.1 Introduction to the results

This chapter examines the results received from the data collected - including data from respondents - during the interview process as well as responses received from the questionnaire. The interview included biographical information and 25 open-ended questions. The interview questions were guided by the primary and secondary research questions. Each interview lasted between 50 and 60 minutes. Interviews were conducted online via the Microsoft Teams app. Audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed online via Temi.com. Transcripts were utilised in the data analysis through Thematic Content Analysis.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part focuses on the biographical data of the research participants which covered age, marital status, educational qualifications and dependents. The second part of the questionnaire focuses on obtaining the opinions of women in management on a list of variables that may be contributing to career barriers that women face. The third section of the questionnaire required women in management to share their views on statements related to career challenges experienced as they progress to higher levels in the organisation.

For the objective of data reliability as well as a key focus on the findings, the research questions are restated below:

Primary research question: What are the key barriers that impede the career progression of woman into senior leadership positions?

Secondary research questions
1. What are the career challenges experienced by female leaders?
2. What are the factors that influence career progression of female leaders?
3. What are the opinions of women in middle management and senior management regarding the low representation of women at the senior levels?
4. What support systems and frameworks are available to women in leadership positions?
5. How have women who are in senior management advanced in their careers?
6. How can women overcome the career advancement barriers?

4.2 Description of sample

The respondents include 11 women in management who were interviewed and eight women in management who responded to the questionnaire. Nineteen

participants in the research include representation of women in middle management, senior management, and executive management.
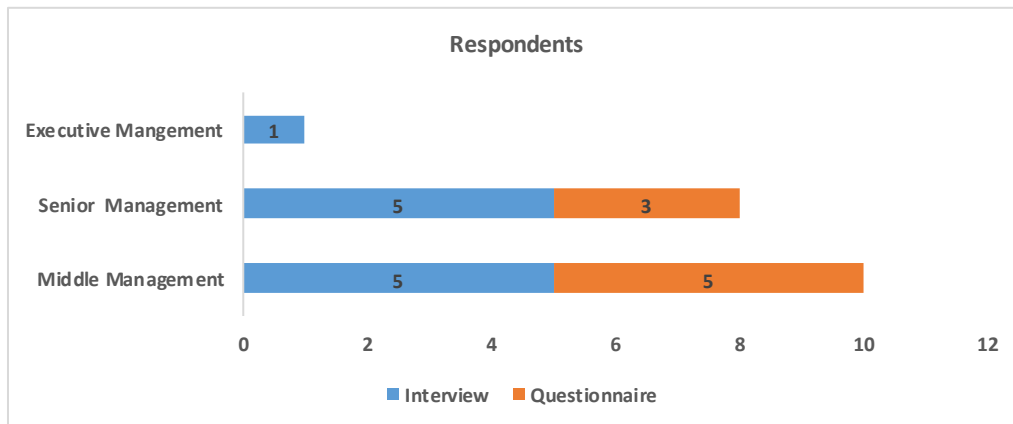
Figure 10 Sample Description

Age Group of Respondents
The age group of respondents varied between 30 and 55 years: 28% were between 30-40 years, 66% were between 40 and 50 years and 6% were over 50 years.

Years of service
83% of participants interviewed had been in the organisation for longer than 10 years and 17% of participants had less than 10 years' service with the organisation.

Marital Status of Respondents
Breakdown of marital status of participants: 22% single, 11% divorced, 67% married.

Qualifications
Eighty-nine per cent of participants have tertiary qualifications while 11% have no qualifications.

Dependents
Sixty percent of participants have children.

4.3 Analysis of Data

Thematic analysis is often used in qualitative research as it provides a simple interpretable and concise description of the emergent themes and patterns within a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic content analysis records important elements of information regarding the data in correlation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

An inductive approach was used to identify themes. This means that data was specifically collected for this study. According to Saunders *et al*. (2019), data collection in an inductive approach is used to explore a phenomenon as well as identify themes and patterns. The researcher has not addressed the data with specific themes in mind but instead identified themes that emerged while data was analysed and based on how participants answered the research questions in the interview.

Therefore, inductive analysis is considered a process of coding data without trying to fit into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions (Moeketsane, 2013). The researcher drew common themes and patterns from the data and determined how these patterns and themes helped to answer the research question.

Steps in Analysis
To conduct TCA the researcher was guided by the prescribed steps for Thematic Content Analysis by (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Step1: *Collect Data*
The researcher transcribed the interview audio recordings. All 10 of the interview audio recordings were transcribed.

Step2: *Familiarise oneself with the data*
The researcher acquainted herself with the interview data. This was achieved by reading and re-reading the transcripts as well as listening to the audio recordings.

Step3: *Generation of codes*
According to Braun and Clarke (2006) 'codes' are defined as any aspect of the data that appears intriguing to the researcher. This includes the basic components of the raw data collected or could include data that can be analysed implicitly taking the phenomenon into account (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By reading the transcript line by line, the researcher identified interesting and meaningful keywords and phrases. These notes and phases were recorded/highlighted on the transcript. This is also knowing as coding. The coding followed the structure of the research meaning. Keywords and phrases linked to the barriers recorded.

Step4: *Themes*
Guided by the researcher's skill of reflexivity, the researcher collated common codes and phrases together in meaningful groups. These groups formed the themes. (The skill of reflexivity is about questioning one's thinking and actions and learning to examine one's own beliefs with the same scrutiny as one would apply to the beliefs of others (Saunders *et al*., 2019).

Based on the themes that emerged, the researcher identified repeated themes by considering how multiple codes could be combined to form one theme. In line with

the coding process, the theme-developing process followed the structure of the research. Themes were categorised based on the type of barrier. Subsequently themes were examined and categorised.

In TCA themes relate to the way that messages of importance are captured in relation to the research question (Braun & Clark, 2006). In the current study, coding of themes was recorded according to their frequency across the sample. Therefore, the most frequent responses were captured, organised and analysed. The researcher integrated overarching themes; thus, certain sub-themes arose.

Themes were reviewed and refined by identifying and defining each theme. The main themes and sub-themes are represented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: TCA Themes & Sub Themes

THEMATIC CONTENT ANALYSIS - THEMES & SUB THEMES							
	1.Support Structure	2. Work Life Dynamic	3. Role Models	4. Self Concept	5. Leadership Styles	6. Society and Culture	7. Biases
Theme &Sub Themes	1.1 Male Support	2.1 Work Life Conflict	3.1 Lack of Role Model	4.1 Career Influencer	5.1 Higher level vs Lower level leadership	6.1 Religious and culural beliefs	7.1 Pregnancy & parenting
	1.2 Female Support	2.2 Career vs Family	3.2 Career Champion/Advocate	4.2 Career hinderanc	5.2 Behavior of Women in higher leadership	6.2 Society expectation	7.2 Gender Sterotype
	1.3 Organisational Support				5.2.1 Queen Bee Syndrome	6.2.1 Generational influence and child-rearing	7.3 Glass cage
						6.3 Culture Shift	7.4 Unconcious and Concious biases

4.4 Interview vs Questionnaire Results

This section compares the results of the primary data source – interviews - with the results of the secondary data source - questionnaire.

Overall, the results from the questionnaire strengthen the results from the interview. Themes that emerged from the interviews were echoed in the views of respondents who answered the research questionnaire. The use of dichotomous questions, together with an opportunity to gain insights of the respondent's views and opinions, allowed the researcher to gauge the level of dominance of the themes that emerged. No additional themes were identified in the questionnaire.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the research results and data analysis approach were discussed. A description of the sample was provided. A comparison of the interview results and the questionnaire results were discussed. The analysis of data which was

presented highlighted key themes and sub-themes that emerged in the literature review, a discussion of the theories in the literature review and its relation to the themes that have emerged from the data collected will be discussed in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher discusses the findings from the interviews and questionnaires. The researcher explains the key themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. Key findings are highlighted.

5.2 Interview Results Discussion

The results from the interviews presented rich data, underlining personal concerns which were highlighted by participants around the topic of career progression of women. Certain participants expressed their gratitude for the interview discussion as they found the questions to be thought-provoking and enlightening in terms of their own personal career progression. Therefore, the researcher found it pertinent to provide a few respondents' quotes to capture their beliefs, observations, personal views and perceptions in respect to the topic of this research study.

The interview discussion points are based on the key themes that were highlighted during the thematic data analysis.

5.3 Career Barriers: Key Themes and Sub Themes

5.3.1 Self–Concept

The theme of self-concept emerged repetitively with all participants. Participants felt that their personal self-concept either helped them progress or was a hinderance. Career influencers highlighted by participants are:

High Confidence

The majority of the participants believe that high levels of confidence are fundamental in progressing to higher levels. Participant 2, a senior manager, stated *"I feel that most women are confident, in most households, it's women who actually run the household, but I think the biggest challenge with the lack of confidence with most women in corporates is that you can easily say it's made to challenge or make women feel less competent to their male counterparts".*

Participant 10, an executive manager, stated*: "I am confident, and this has most certainly contributed to my success".*

Participant 1, a senior manager, stated: "*I think you've got to have confidence in your own ability and what you can achieve and even with just confidence in putting*

your views out there and, making mistakes, I think a confidence to me does play a large role in career growth".

Participant 5, a middle manager: "*I don't think that I'm confident I sometimes do doubt myself, especially now in my new role".*

Four of the eleven participants indicated that as they have become more mature with age and experience so too did their confidence levels increase. "*Confidence takes a while and it takes continuous reinforcement because you see certain behaviours and you ask yourself if, I were to get to the next level, it means this is what I have to do. With age certain things become clearer and you more grounded in who you are and not easily moved".*

Hard work

All participants stated that they work hard, and they feel that hard work has significantly contributed to their success. They highlighted that they have worked hard, long hours and have been dedicated to their work to get to the position that they are at.

A drive to succeed

Participants in senior and executive management are driven to succeed. Participant 10 stated: "*I really self-motivate by affirmations, by setting goals and focus on achieving them. Having a clear sense of direction and confidence to achieve the goals".* Middle managers who have "arrived" had the same drive to succeed which has resulted in them getting to their current position. They did however indicate that although the drive to succeed is still there, circumstances have changed in their lives resulting in the conflict of family versus career growth.

Participant 3 stated: "*I think naturally when it comes to me having to make a choice, unfortunately, always, the family suffers because the choice is always career first and I think, the two are probably sometimes to our detriment, but I think it is because, you have guilt because you feel like, okay, I'm not being the best mom".*

Skill and knowledge

Participants indicated that having adequate skills and knowledge contributes to their success. Participants measured their abilities based on their knowledge and skill. Eighty percent of participants are studying and have professional qualifications.

Upbringing

Upbringing and values learned as a child influence career choices and growth. Fifty-five percent of the participants felt that their upbringing played a role in their career achievements.

Strong role models in the workplace

The general view from majority of the participants is that role models are necessary in career progression. Certain participants felt that the lack of strong role models inhibits their career growth.

Participant 2: *"I think I have the skills and attributes required to get me to the higher level and the drive to get me there. However, looking at the work environment it is absolutely important that you either have a mentor or advocate to get to the next level"*.

Participant 5, a middle manager, said: *"I realise that the leadership a level higher, don't actually provide support, so we profess that as leaders you need to be supported, you need to be respectful, you need to be all those leadership qualities but at the same time, that's not exactly what's being modelled coming down to my level"*

Career hinderances highlighted by participants:
- Low confidence or being overconfident
- Doubt in own ability
- Lack of knowledge and skill
- Lack of support

5.3.2 Support Structure

An overwhelming majority stated that given the demands of work and family, a good support structure has immensely contributed to their success. Some participants expressed how overwhelmed they become which makes it necessary for the support structure. Male support, female support and organisational support are sub-themes that emerged from the discussion.

Male Support

Personal Space
Thirty per cent of participants indicated that they do believe that men support women. Participant 1: *"I'm lucky, I have a supportive partner, so I think we get each other's demands. We understand that sometimes I will be working 20 hours a day and other times not and vice versa"*.

Workspace

One participant has had personal experience of career progression right up to senior management with male support. Another participant felt that male support is given only up to the point. *"I think men can view you as competition, so they'll support you as long as you're not going for their piece of bread"*.

Female Support

Participants in middle management believe that women support each other at lower levels of management however as you get to senior and executive levels the support from female leaders drops. Participant 5: *"For me, we are not yet at that point with women in an executive level, having that voice to stand up for other women and actually promote other women into those positions. They get in there and they start speaking the same language as men, and that's how I feel"*. It is however noted, by the majority of the participants, that there is more support now than what was available earlier in their careers.

The literature review confirms such behaviour. Research conducted by Rao (2020) suggests that 'Queen Bee' syndrome is prevalent where women who have made it to the top prevent young women from attaining senior positions in the workplace, therefore confirming the lack of female support.

Organisational Support

Participants have confirmed that they have observed a shift in support from organisations as the organisation becomes more flexible. *"It's definitely gaining momentum whether it's to enter its full potential within the next five, 10, 15 years, we will wait and see. But the foundation is being laid for society and corporates to be more supportive of women"*.

It must be noted that some participants felt that while organisations have well-documented policies for supporting women in their career, it is limited in practice. *"I guess from a regulation point of view, these things are well documented, they are reported on, but whether it happens on the ground and to what extent it happens, I'm not sure, especially when it gets to a higher levels"*.

5.3.3 Work-life dynamics

All the participants indicated that at some point in the careers, work-life dynamics have played a role where life-changing decisions had to be made. Personal sacrifices and personal choice play a role in decision-making in relation to work-life dynamics. Two sub-themes emerged from the interviews which are work-life balance and career versus family.

Work-Life Balance

Despite that fact that both the male and the female of a household work, people are inclined to live life in accordance with traditional gender roles set by society where the mother is the primary care giver, responsible for the running of the household and the children. The father is the primary breadwinner. Decisions are made based on the traditional gender roles, consciously or unconsciously.

The majority of the participants have children, and all have indicated that they are challenged with work-life balance. Many felt that they often feel guilty for not allowing enough time for family.

Participant 2 expressed her personal sacrifices: *"My daughter started day-care at three months. I had to cut my maternity leave short because my employer needed help. But in all the years, she's nine now, she was one of the last kids to be fetched from aftercare. I would be the mom that just drops off by the gate and rush to get to work on time".* Participant 1: *"I wish I had more time to spend with my kids and I feel guilty".*

Literature review highlighted the concept of the double burden syndrome, the "double burden" syndrome, whereby working women also have to take primary responsibility for domestic duties such as taking care of the running of the households as well as taking care of the children. The double burden syndrome was highlighted in the 2016 Women Matter Report as a fundamental barrier to the success of women (McKinsey & Company, 2016).

Career vs Family

Not all women have the same level of confidence and desire as men when targeting leadership positions which influences their ability to even try. While some participants indicated that starting a family or delaying a family life was based on their personal choice others indicated the same as a sacrifice.

Participant 1: *"I'll be honest with you though, we just had kids late in life. It probably ties into the fact that I was working, and it was not something high on my agenda to get married and have children".*

The decision to build a family inevitably impacts a women's career development. As result many women may make the decision rather to reduce working hours to prioritise family over career. Some women in middle management indicated that, based on where they are at with their family life, the decision not to pursue higher levels in the organisation is related to the observed and perceived pressure as well as time demands. These demands at higher levels are not appealing to women with family responsibilities.

5.3.4 Role Models

Participants indicated the need for role models in their career progression. They confirmed that good role models - especially women - inspire and motivate them to achieve their own successes. *"If she can do it I can too".* The lack of role models and a career champion or career advocate are sub-themes that emerged from the primary theme.

Lack of role models

While participants have noticed more women in higher levels of management, they believe that there is still an inadequate number of role models available to them. Middle managers believe that in lower levels of management there are good role models available. However, as you move up the corporate ladder, the perceived behaviour of women at higher levels is not appealing and therefore they are not likely to be good role models.

Participant 5, a senior manager, said: *"I find that there's minimal female representation at executive level that would stand up for women. Instead, when they're all sitting in that boardroom, they all look like men in their behaviour. They remove the softness that a woman comes with, and it feels like you, speaking to a bunch of men and some are just wearing dresses, and I think that's one of my fears to say, when you reach that position this is expected from me, I don't want to reach that position".*

Participant 3: *"To be honest lately, there are role models and I'm going to go back to, is it a case of women willing to put other women up? It's a question mark".*

Career champion/Advocate

Some participants shared their view that it is not enough to have role models and mentors to support you in getting to the top. What they believe is needed is someone who will champion career growth all the way to the top. This person is *"a career advocate"* as one participant explained. Four participants indicated that in their observation women who make it to the top levels had a champion or advocate at higher levels who almost paved the way for them to get the positions that they are in. A middle manager shared her view: *"The obstacles in getting to my next level is not to do with being female, no one knows me well enough to help me progress to the next level".*

5.3.5 Leadership Styles

In terms of the interview question that was asked - *"Do you believe in order to achieve success a leader needs to be authoritative or passive? Please elaborate"* - the rationale for this interview question was twofold. It was to establish if a

particular leadership style influenced career progression of women. Secondly the researcher wanted to test the perception or observation of masculinity and authoritativeness associated with higher levels of management.

Higher-level vs lower-level leadership style

The majority of the respondents highlighted that different situations and people require different approaches. Therefore, the most prevalent leadership style is situational leadership. However, it was indicated by middle managers that at top levels in the organisation a more dominating, authoritative leadership style is observed. Women in senior management did indicate that they can be dominating when the situation arises as - at senior level - demands are high. Middle managers were further probed if they would change their leadership style to get to the top. The overwhelming response was: *"No, I would not".*

Perceived behaviour of women in higher levels of leadership

Women in middle management as well as women in senior management felt that women who reach the very top are not approachable. They are perceived to be cold and some even portray masculinity to fit in with the *"old boys club".* As such these women who get to the top levels of management are not good role models and do not let other women in. *"I think you need to be a certain person and maybe this is just my perception to be in an executive level position, you need to be a certain [way] but it also requires a certain level of - if I can use the word - ruthlessness and I don't believe I have that in my personality to be like that".*

Queen Bee Syndrome

Research indicates that in terms of the concept of the queen bee syndrome, where the queen bees are the successful senior women who prevent young women from attaining senior positions in the workplace (Rao, 2020). This implies that women are more ambitious to fast-track their own careers as opposed to advancing the careers of their female colleagues and subordinates.

The majority of the participants could identify a "queen bee" in the organisation thus confirming that the concept of the queen bee syndrome is very much alive. Participant 6*: "Women who get to the top reserve that space only for themselves; they are the first women to get there. Now, if they pull another one, there's going to be competition and they won't be getting as much spotlight".*

The researcher has indicated that there is limited research on this topic and has suggested further research to investigate the reasons behind the queen bee syndrome and its impact for future generation of women.

5.3.6 Society and Culture

Societal expectations

It was considerably reported by participants that, during their career as managers, at some point they had to deal with the lack of belief in their own abilities to lead. Participants felt that their abilities to perform is scrutinised. Tinklin *et al.* (2005) suggests that society assigns certain traits to gender roles which are attributed to specific roles that are considered to be more suited to a particular gender. This is based on stereotypes created by societal expectations that management positions are more suited to men.

Wood and Lindorff (2001) suggest that societal expectations of gender fitness may highlight that women are expected to display behaviours of nurturing and interpersonally sensitive while men are expected to show independent, assertive and ambitious behaviours.

This perspective could be vital in explaining why women in middle management and some in senior management felt that they were not competent enough for higher levels of management. The experiences shared by most of the women supported this.

"The obstacles, I think is work-life balance. I think we work in an extremely difficult environment and I think, in the last decade and a half, it's been also hard at times. I have been raising my family and studying because I think in this environment you need to continually learn. So, studying and, keeping that work-life balance has been extremely difficult. I think this obviously has, in my mind, delayed a little bit of that natural career progression for me".

"The past two years have been very difficult because I had to find a system of doing things, of doing my work, of attending to my kids to a point that I actually felt for the longest of time that I'm not doing enough at my job".

" So, you compromise as a women because you think differently, you think of the family as a whole, women think about they have a home to run, then there are the children to look after, so in that regard, women's progress or education or careers have been compromised".

It is noted by Tinklin *et al.* (2005) that standards, expectations and customs are set by society, organisations and individuals and are the most difficult to change as they have an effect on various dimensions of life and cannot be easily controlled However it was noted by some participants that as more women are represented at higher levels and with the focus of female leadership, perceptions of society are shifting and stereotyping is slowing changing.

Generational influence and child-rearing

Women and men are biologically different. The traditional role of men as accepted by society is to support their family while the role of women is giving birth and being responsible for child-rearing as well as taking care of all duties in the home. Throughout history we have observed that female and males gender roles are strengthened and shaped by culture and society.

The current generation of women interviewed highlighted that even though they were raised in an era where parents played traditional roles - where a woman's place was in the kitchen - they were fortunate to be in circumstances where, as a young girl, they were taught that they can achieve anything they set their minds to. As such their upbringing has contributed to their successes.

A senior manager reported: *"My mom was very much of the opinion that she wanted her daughters to support themselves and work themselves, have their husbands depend on them and not the other way around. it was a very weird upbringing and I think that to an extent, has contributed to my success because I'm almost 50 and I think that has obviously shaped how I've approached things and my view of the world".*

Participants who are parents reported the importance of shaping and moulding the next generation of the workforce with no biases thereby eliminating gender stereotyping. They highlighted the need to steer and motivate young women to achieving successes that previous generations could not.

Culture Shift

Although participants were of the opinion that they themselves are in a transition period of a culture shift of women empowerment and visibility of women in higher levels of management, there is still a long way to go. These sentiments were shared by a participant: *"I have a son and two daughters, so I teach my child, how to care for a woman, he observes how I look after my own husband. You need to start teaching them from a young age how to socialise. I just thinking that quite a huge percentage of the society we have today is based on the upbringing, how we bring up the children at home. So, to me, I think that our young boys should be taught what it means to be great leaders, how to handle women starting by how they look after their own sister".*

Based on the opinions of mothers, the culture shift that is currently happening is a challenge for them owing to lessons that was embedded in them from their upbringing. They are concerned about the future generation and the impact of the culture shift. This raises a topic for further research. *"I was raised by a single woman, single working mom so there were no stereotypes, I had to make sure that the weeds were taken out, the lawn is cut so from my background, personal*

background, I think it's always been, you will have to go out there and make it work so there were no stereotypes".

Religious and cultural beliefs

The sub-theme of religion and cultural beliefs was highlighted by most participants. They expressed concern that although they support the culture shift of women empowerment and growth of women in the corporate world, religious and cultural teachings to young women and society is that of traditional roles in the household. The concern that this can become conflicting and confusing for their children and subsequently impact their behaviour and the culture shift.

It was however highlighted by one participant that it is behaviour that is emulated by the younger generation – more than verbal lessons. *"For us as parents, we are in that difficult position to, transition, and kids actually don't listen to what you say, but they mimic how you behave. And we've been taught by religion and culture that a man is up there. if you are married, this is how you should be behaving in the marriage yet at the same time, I want to tell my daughter, you are equal to a man, but the way I am behaving is probably different to what I'm saying".*

5.3.7 Biases

Gender Stereotype

Stereotypes of gender traits and gender roles exist strongly in modern society. Whether it is at work or at home, women still feel that they need to prove themselves much more than their male counterparts. Women feel that, owing to their gender role, they are responsible to ensure that their households are well run, and their children are taken care of despite having a career. A participant at exco level stated: *"I believe I can contribute at the Exco, however sometimes it feels as a female you constantly having to fight for a seat at the table, especially when you are not buddies with your boss, i.e., socialising/drinking every Friday".*

Women's own anticipations and observations about gender role impact their careers and potential to be leaders. Reports indicate that traditional gender roles are prevalent even for women themselves who attempt to steer away from stereotyping, generally find themselves acting according to their "gender role". Conscious and unconsciously stereotyping impedes change and can be a barrier for the career progression of women.

Unconscious and Conscious Biases

Unconscious and conscious biases arise from the perspective of gender roles. Reports from participants indicate that biases exist with both men and women. Women often create their own biases based on their perceptions. This could result in self-efficacy problems especially with confidence, as indicated by majority of the participants. Biases highlighted by participants are: 1) Women are too emotional to lead, 2) pregnancy and parenting mean that women are not interested in a career, 3) women at the top are cold.

Women themselves can stand in the way of their leadership or, at the least make, progress slower by questioning their abilities. This phenomenon derives from the traditional expectations that both society and culture set on genders and individuals

Women in a glass cage

Rather than breaking through the glass ceiling women are confining themselves into a glass cage. Some are aware of the barriers that keep them caged and have become complacent in this "glass cage" because they feel it is not worth the effort to break through. Their perception of the demands at higher levels are much more daunting than being caged in a glass box. *"At this stage in my career, I do feel that I am in a glass cage, as I could see people who lacked experience, skills and knowledge surpass me. I did have doubts on my ability".*

Women who have managed to break through the glass ceiling to senior levels of management do not necessarily feel they are caged in a glass box. Their levels of confidence are much higher now that they have reached a higher level and they have the self-motivation and drive to get to the very top. *"When I look at my challenges, I always look at somebody else who had overcome them. I benchmark myself against this person"*

5.4 Questionnaire results discussion

The questionnaire was administered to 15 participants however only eight responded. The questionnaire was in three parts: a) biographical data, b) variables that impact career progression, and c) statements on career barriers impacting career progression. The results for section B and section C - as well as the key themes that emerged - are below.

Variables that impact career progression

Respondents indicated their opinion on the listed career barrier variables in table 2 below.

Table 2: Career Variables

Theme	Carrier Barrier	Not a barrier	Could be a barrier	A major barrier
Self Concept	Attitude towards work	38%	38%	25%
	Lack of Confidence	13%	38%	50%
	Career goals	25%	75%	0%
	Personal sacrifice	13%	50%	38%
Support	The lack of role models	13%	75%	13%
	Family support	25%	63%	13%
	Conflict with family responsibility	25%	50%	25%
Biases & Gender Stereotyping	Personal performance bias	13%	38%	50%
	Gender Stereotyping	25%	38%	38%
	Unconscious Bias	0%	50%	50%
Leadership	Leadership Style	25%	25%	50%

Career Barriers Impacting Career Progression by Theme – Respondents Views

Table 3: Theme 1- Biases

Career barrier statement	Respondents Level of Agreement		Results	
	Agree	Disagree	Respondents Views	Summary of results
My own unconscious bias has impacted my career growth.	57%	43%	R6 *"My personal journey where I come from had a huge impact in my personal growth and how I expressed myself, many times I deserved better however due to personal unconscious bias I sold myself low thinking I do not qualify. I have reached a place in my life and heart that I know there is absolutely nothing that I put my heart and soul to and not be able to achieve or do."*	57% of women agree that their own unconcious biases have impacted their career while 43% indicated that unconcious biases have not impacted their career. An intresting perspective received from respondent 6 is the acknowledgement of personal unconcious bias and the impact it had on her career and the subsequent growth.
Unconscious bias in the workplace impacts my career growth.	88%	12%	R6 *" Not anymore, Personal development have allowed me to grow to an extent where I know my place and time to achieve my goals."*	R6 indicated that based on her maturity and personal develovement, unconscious bias does not impact her career growth. 88% who agreed did not provide further explanations for their view.
Women leaders in my organisation are emotional and therefore make emotional decisions.	29%	71%	R1 *"Not all of them are emotional but the ones I have interacted with and the ones I worked closely with are and they do make emotional decisions especially when you challenge a decision they make."* R2 *"Not in my experience"* R6 *"Which isn't always a bad thing, some decisions require head & heart"* R7 *"In my personal experience, this is not the case."*	Majority (71%) of the respondents were in disagreement with this statement. Some respondents highlighted that it is okay to be emotional implying that emotions are needed avoid hard decisions *"some decisions require heart and head".*

Table 4: Theme 2 - Female Support

Career barrier statement	Respondents Level of Agreement		Results	
	Agree	Disagree	Respondents Views	Summary of results
I feel that women make valuable contributions to the organisation.	88%	12%	R6 *"I am a fan of this organisation because I have seen women having fair opportunities and adding value to the organisation, e.g. Mary Vilakazi, I have read her story and I am inspired of where she comes from and what she has managed to achieve as a woman."*	An overwhelming 88% of women agree that women make a valuable contribution to the organisation. 12% that disagreed did not provide explanations for their views.
Women in management support each other to progress in their careers.	37%	63%	R1 *"To far and few to really get this support."* R2 *"Not all women do, some are supporting and play a mentorship role, but others are not at all they fail to see the potential in one and they turn to somehow block opportunities for other women and therefore lack to offer support and guidance to."* R5 *"No, we need women leaders to be more mindful that if in positions of power/authority that other women may view them as role models therefore support is important"* R6 *"I am not quite sure about this one, I have no experience around it however I believe that everyone has to work hard, and hard work is recognised at some point by someone, either woman or a man. I think the perception of looking at woman and supporting each other my drive again a wrong perception in the working environment but we should look at both genders and see if there is support from both angles."* R7 *"Not more or less so than they would support male*	63% of women believe that women do not support each other to progress in their careers. It was reported by one respondent that the availability of women in management is rare. Interestingly two respondents indicated that support should be viewed objectively, irrespective of gender "we should look at both genders and see if there is support from both angles." "not more or less than they would from male counterparts"

Table 5: Theme 3 - Organisational Support

Career barrier statement	Respondents Level of Agreement		Results	
	Agree	Disagree	Respondents Views	Summary of results
I feel that women are given equal opportunities in hiring and recruitment process for senior management positions.	75%	25%	R1 *"No this is not true they will never earn the salary a male would have earned and yet many women are the bread winners"* R3 *"There is still a boys club to an extent in some disciplines when recruiting especially in the sales environment"* R4 *"For the mere fact that in our country the alignment of gender in senior management is not yet met and it is still expressed to be met by Public and private organisations, it means that there is still a gab that needs to be filled."*	Although 75% of women agreed that women are given equal opportunities in the hiring and recruitment, 25% disagreed based on their opinion of gender disparity that still exists despite internal and external interventions.
I have the necessary support from my organisation to achieve my career goals.	50%	50%	R6 *"Limited growth opportunities within my scope of work within the organisation. In addition, the operating model has not been redesigned to create aspirational roles with my discipline"* R7 *"My organisation have played a huge role in supporting me to get to the next level not only to the next level but giving me opportunity to grow as person too."*	The view on whether organisations provide adequate support is spilt equally. 50% agree while 50% disagree. R6 feels that there is limited growth opportunities while R7 has expressed the role that the organisation has played in her career progression.

Table 6: Theme 4 - Self Concept

Career barrier statement	Respondents Level of Agreement		Results	
	Agree	Disagree	Respondents Views	Summary of results
Self-confidence is a necessary quality to progress in one's career.	100%	0%	R1 *"absolutely"* R6 *"I highly agree with this, if you show self-confidence on what you are doing and drive your attitude the right way, self-confident is never missed by the ones that are looking."* R7 *"It is a necessary quality to progress in any aspect of one's life."*	100% respondents were in agreement that confidence is necessary for career progression
My believes about my abilities creates obstacles in my career growth.	75%	25%	No views expressed for this statement	75% respondents agree that their own believes are views regarding their ability to suceed in their career can be an abstacle . 25% dsagreed.
I have clearly defined goals that will assist me to progress to a senior level.	88%	12%	No views expressed for this statement	Majority of the respondents have defined goals.

Table 7: Theme 5 - Society and Culture

Career barrier statement	Respondents Level of Agreement		Results	
	Agree	Disagree	Respondents Views	Summary of results
The cultural notion that women are not supposed to lead, influences women in leadership positions.	63%	37%	R2 *"Women in leadership positions have to work twice as hard to be recognised and taken seriously or influence change due to the fact that males have held such leadership roles in a while, and they are struggling with change."* R5 *"We have reached a certain place of achieving understanding of leadership by women in our society however the perception has not completely died, meaning we still have a long way to change the cultural notion around women and leadership."* R4 *"I think this is more prevalent than we would like to acknowledge. My view is based on corridor talk."*	Overall 63% of women indicated that cultural and societal norms still exist making it harder for women to succeed. *"the perception has not completely died, meaning we still have a long way to change the cultural notion around women and leadership."* *"I think this is more prevalent than we would like to acknowledge"*

Table 8: Theme 6 - Work life Balance

Career barrier statement	Respondents Level of Agreement		Results	
	Agree	Disagree	Respondents Views	Summary of results
I have necessary support from my family to achieve my career goals.	88%	12%	R6 "Although agree there are times where I am called out in terms of life work balance"	88% of respondents feel that they have adequate support from their family to achieve their career successwhile 13% are in

Table 9: Theme 6 - Gender Stereotyping

Career barrier statement	Respondents Level of Agreement		Results	
	Agree	Disagree	Respondents Views	Summary of results
There are more males in senior leadership positions than women in my organisation.	71%	29%	R1 *"That's the truth in every level of management and the majority being white."* R2 *"I think its slowly changing but its always been males most senior leadership positions."* R4 *"the alignment of Gender in our working environment is still an issue in our society."*	71% of women have indicated that they have observed more men in senior leadership than women while 29% are in disagreement. R2 indicated that while the representation at senior level is changing, it is still male dominated.
I feel that gender stereotyping is still prevalent and impacts career growth.	100%	0%	R2 *"I completely agree personally I feel like managers are more likely to give males opportunities versus females."* R3 *"This goes beyond my organisation, there are jobs or work opportunities that are still gender identified, meaning the stereotype is still prevalent and impact career growth from certain groups of people."* R4 *"I suspect is it still an issue, even though it may be unconscious. I also believe that younger people are more aware of gender stereotyping and its negative results."*	100% of women responded in agreement that gender stereotyping is still prevalent. Respondents indicated that gender stereotyping is a career barrier in the internal and external environment. An interesting view recorded from a respondent highlights that it might be unconscious and also believes that younger generations are more aware of the topic and its impacts.

5.5 Key Findings

The career barriers that were predominant in this study are discussed below.

5.5.1 Self-Concept and Self Confidence

It is suggested that behaviour is shaped by self-efficacy and confirms that human development is an effective interaction of an individual's behaviour with their lived experiences (Bandura, 1994). When an individual is faced with a specific task, their response is based more on their ideology or personal theories instead of his or her knowledge of specific tasks (Nwosu, 2014).

Through observation of other people's experiences, in particular their career barriers, individuals formulate perceptions of the external environment which invariably influences their own career decisions (Lent *et al.,* 2000). Reports from this study is reflected in the reviewed literature. Women who are in middle management, and some in senior management, felt that they could not get to the next level because it was not easily attainable according to their own personal theories.

Middle managers display lower levels of confidence in progressing to the next level of management. This was based on their observation and perception of the next level. While senior managers reflected higher levels of confidence, which they indicate has not always been the case. High confidence levels for this sample were attained through years of experience and exposure to the working environment.

5.5.2 Gender Stereotyping

The gender battle is ongoing. Research confirms that it was prevalent a few decades ago and still relevant in the 21st century. According to a study conducted by Filut *et al*. (2017), gender stereotypes result in unconscious gender bias. The authors state that throughout our lives we are exposed to gender stereotypes. This is explained through the notion that since birth associations regarding gender are reinforced into individual - and this continues throughout life - these messages lay the foundation for unconscious gender bias that could shape the decisions which impact the career development of women.

 An overwhelming number of participants at all levels in this study confirm that gender stereotyping is very much alive and does indeed impact their career progression. However, it must be noted that there has been a shift as more women enter senior management levels. Executive levels are still under-represented. Ultimately the current view is that the shift is not significant.

5.5.3 Biases

Unconscious and conscious biases are key barriers preventing career growth. Women in middle management are prone to biases which are mostly self-inflicted. This creates career barriers which they are aware of but are not confident enough to overcome thus confining themselves in a "glass cage". Studies of the glass ceiling concept are well documented. It is also acknowledged that apart from the glass ceiling metaphor, women create an unconscious barrier called the glass box. In relation to this study career development barriers - such as work-family conflict, self-efficacy, gender serotyping and gender socialising - are fundamental constructs of the glass cage.

Women who are in senior management are more aware of biases and in some instances choose not to notice certain biases. This is linked to their confidence levels in a male-dominated workplace. Some women in senior management - as well as middle management - suggest that it is difficult to escape biases as these are entrenched from early childhood.

5.5.4 Support Structure

5.5.4.1 Family Support

A study by McKinsey and Company (2016) suggests that some of the biases are held by women themselves. For example, with maternal bias women feel guilty when they are at work instead of fulfilling their maternal duties. This gives rise to the assumption that women are less committed to their careers and results in them being held to higher standards and offered fewer leadership opportunities.

The majority of women who are mothers are conflicted between work and family. Owing to career demands women often are left sacrificing personal time with family for work demands thus leaving women feeling guilty for not always being there for their families. Fundamental to career success is a good support structure - both family support structure as well as support in the workplace. A support structure is directly linked to work-life dynamics. Aided by a good support structure, work-life balance can be achieved so allowing women to succeed to higher levels in their career.

5.5.4.2 Work Support

Watson (2014) points out that women stereotype against each other too, criticising each other's clothing choices, questioning other women's values when they prioritise work over family and cutting each other down for breaking the rules. Women internalise cultural rules about femininity, so allowing these to influence their behaviours, irrespective of whether the assumptions and biases are valid or not (Watson, 2014). This could be the reason why majority of the respondents felt that there is a lack of role models available to support them.

5.5.6 Society, Culture and Religion

Women in management believe that their gender biases, self-concept and confidence are attributed to their upbringing which is linked to the behaviour and expectations set by the generation that their parents belonged to. The theme of society, culture and religion emerged from this study as women in management feel that it has a direct impact on their career progression.

Women acknowledge that they are in the midst of a culture shift where women are more empowered and are recognised for higher positions. However, the concern that is being raised is the responsibility of the current generation of the workforce to groom and shape the next generation with high confidence levels and without stereotyping and biases. The conflict of culture and religious teachings on gender behaviour – versus the transition of gender roles observed in homes - can be confusing for the younger generation. This highlights the need for further research on this topic.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher highlighted the findings of the research conducted using personal interviews and questionnaires. The analysis and interpretation of results was structured in a step-by-step process. The results were investigated and interpreted in a structured manner in order to answer the research questions. The research questions have been answered by the data obtained from the research conducted as well as the literature review in chapter 2. An interesting

point to note is that the career challenges that emerged from the data collected at First Bank link to the theories identified in the literature review thus confirming the relevance of the theories identified in the literature review. These include gender socialising, unconscious biases, work-family conflict, self-efficacy and role congruity. The interview schedule and questionnaire are available for review in Appendix A and Appendix C, respectively.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to establish the career barriers that impede the progression of women through the lived experiences of women. The study was focused on women in middle management and senior management with an interest in understanding the challenges faced in career progression as well as views of women who have overcome some of these challenges. To answer the research questions, literature was reviewed and data was collected and analysed. The chapter will present the conclusion and recommendation of the study, as well as suggestions for further research.

6.2 Discussion of study

This study set out to explore and understand the challenges that women face as they progress to senior levels of management in their career. The idea of the study was based on the researcher's observation of the low representation of women in higher levels of management despite attempts by public and private sector to promote and empower women in leadership. The aim of this study was to determine the key factors that contribute to the low representation of female leaders in senior management positions. Moreover, this study was to gain insights on the topic through lived experiences of women in middle management and senior management.

By gaining an understanding of, and interpreting, the behaviour, experiences and perception of women in middle management positions and senior management positions, the researcher was able to gain insights on the career hindrances and career advancement experienced.

6.3 Research Questions Answered

The research questions posed for this study are answered, taking into consideration the data collected and analysed above, as well as the theory from the literature review.

Table 10: Primary Research Question Answered

Primary Research Question What are the key barriers that impede career progression in women?	• The lack of self confidence in one's own abilities. • Lack of strong role models, a career champion that supports women throughout their career growth. • Gender Stereotyping. • Unconscious and conscious gender biases by both men and women. • Expectations of women set by culture, religion, and society. • Lack of a good support structure to aid work life balance.

Table 11: Secondary Questions Answered

Secondary Research Question 1 What are the career challenges experienced by women in management?	• Work life conflict resulting in imbalance and stress. • Lack of support from work and family. Women are expected to be "superwomen" working extremely hard in all aspects of life. • Women are challenged with self-doubt caused by perceptions of themselves and their abilities. • Women find it challenging to break through the glass cage due to conscious and unconscious
Secondary Research Question 2 What are the factors that influence career progression to higher levels?	• Hard work • Constant self-drive and self-motivation to achieve success. • High levels of confidence. • Child rearing that teach lessons of goal attainment and no stereotyping. • Good support structure.

Secondary Research Question 3 What are the opinions of middle management and senior management regarding representation of women at higher levels?	Majority of the women have observed a shift in the representation of women at higher level, however, they still believe it's a "all boys club" at the highest level. Women strongly believe that gender stereotyping still exists creating a barrier for more women to reach higher levels. Women who reach the top do not support other women. The concept of "the queen bee" syndrome is very much alive further limiting women progressing to higher levels.
Secondary Research Question 4 What support systems are available to women in leadership?	*Organisational Support:* Motivational talks for women, formal mentoring programme to all employees. The covid-19 pandemic has forced flexibility in the organisation, mothers are less stressed about missing family time. *Women Support:* Support from other women more prevalent in middle management. At senior levels support is limited. *Male support:* Limited support from males.
Secondary Research Question 5 How have women in senior management advance in their careers?	• Hard work and perseverance against all challenges. They have managed to overcome the challenges highlighted by women in middle management. • High levels of confidence, enhanced skills, and knowledge which they gained over the years as they matured. • Personal sacrifices, some examples include delaying a family life and missing important family time. • A good family support structure with no judgement.
Secondary Research Question 6 How can women overcome career barriers?	• Improve self-confidence. • Improve self-efficacy. Reduce self-doubt. • Self-motivate and preserve against barriers that are consciously or unconsciously created. • Align with a good career champion that will recognise their hard work, skill, and ability. • Formulate a good support structure at home and at work. • Reduce insecurity and take risks.

The results of the interviews and questionnaire mostly aligned with the literature review. However, what was interesting to find out was the challenges that women in middle management experience are comparable to the challenges that women in senior management experience. Remarkably, the fundamental difference

between middle management and senior management is their perception of their own ability to overcome these challenges. Moreover, senior management displayed higher levels of confidence than middle management.

The perspectives of a woman in an executive level confirmed the challenges highlighted by women in middle management and senior management. Furthermore, it was highlighted that some of these challenges still exist even at the highest level. The results from the interviews and the questionnaire indicate similar opinions and views on the topic from all levels of management. The reports were intriguing and an integral part of the study, as they provided insights into women's sentiments and how they have navigated through their career progress and the challenges that they faced.

6.4 Recommendations

Initiating a culture shift

Data analysis from this study highlighted that a culture shift has been initiated and a transitioning phase is being experienced. The recommendation is for child-rearing with a specific influence on young girls and their ability to achieve anything they set their minds to despite being a female. Child-rearing should also focus on building confidence in young girls with an intent to shift the culture of women empowerment and growth of women, thereby dismantling the patriarchal views that still exist today. The new generation of women who enter the workforce must be groomed to avoid barriers such as lack of confidence, gender stereotyping and biases.

Society, religious groups, the private sector, and the public sector need to assist and contribute to building confidence and changing mindsets that women can indeed be successful leaders without sacrificing their femininity or being forced to start a family from an early age. "Take a girl child to work" day must be expanded to include both young boys and girls and must be scheduled often. Broadening the opportunities for them to visit different organisations and familiarise themselves with different business sectors which are either male dominated, or female dominated. Regular interactions allow for observations of gender division and sparks interest in initiating a mindset change.

Career champions in organisations

The need for talent to be recognised and championed all the way to the top is recommended to improve the representation of women at higher levels. Women in this study have observed that the few women who have reached the top had a career champion or advocate who recognised their potential and helped them land in their current position. An executive woman herself confirmed the same.

6.5 Suggestions for further research

Some suggestions for further research are discussed below.

A study on the global gender gap listed the lack of role models as one of the pre-defined challenges of career development in women (Schwab, 2016). The literature review suggested that the queen bee syndrome could be the reason for the lack of role models available to women (Rao, 2020). A finding in this study confirms that there is indeed a lack of role models available to women. Women who get to the top are more ambitious about fast-tracking their own careers as opposed to advancing the careers of their female colleagues and subordinates. It was also noted that once women earn a spot in the "old boys" club they do not make space for more women. These findings signal the need for additional studies to understand more about the queen bee syndrome and its link to the lack of role models for women.

A key theme that was extracted from this study is the influence of society, culture, and religion on a woman's career progression. A notable culture shift has started where female empowerment and equality are widely discussed and - to some extent – is practised. The culture shift will inevitably impact the next generation of workers where women are more empowerment and are recognised for higher positions.

However, the findings in this study reveal the concern that women have raised is the challenges with child-rearing during this transition phase. The conflict of culture and religious teachings in traditional gender behaviour – versus the transition of gender roles observed in homes - can be confusing for the younger generation. This highlights the need for further research on this topic.

6.6 Conclusion

After a thorough analysis of the themes and results, the researcher has identified the key factors that limit the career progression of women. With insights from senior levels of management, key factors that influence career success was also identified. It can be concluded that none of the barriers identified are totally out of the control of women to overcome. Barriers such as self-concept, self-confidence, conscious and unconscious biases as well as lack of support structures can shift with women firstly becoming aware of these barriers and secondly working consciously on overcoming them.

This phenomenological study has achieved its objective and delivered insights into the lived experiences on the phenomena. The researcher anticipates further studies from other authors that will build on this body of knowledge and contribute to the culture shift of women empowerment and equality.

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Interview Schedule

The interview questions are framed by the themes extracted from the theoretical framework. The interview questions can be further modified or developed, guided by aspects that could be raised during the interview.

Message to Participants

Thank you for your participating in this study. If you feel uncomfortable at any point during the interview, please inform me and please feel free to ask any questions that you may have. The Interview with begin with a quick biographical data collection and will then proceed to a series of open-ended question.

a) Biographical Data Collection

Please Indicate the following:
Race: _____
Age: _____
Qualification: _____
Marital Status   _____
Dependents   _____
Position occupied   _____
Number of years in organization   _____

b) Self-reflection and Career Challenges

1. What in your opinion has contributed to your success in landing your current position?
2. What are your views on your abilities to achieve success in future career aspirations?
3. How do you self-motivate?
4. Do you have any personal biases in relation to yourself and your work?
5. What are the obstacles that you have experienced with your career progression and how did you overcome them?
6. What are the obstacles you are experiencing in your current position?
7. What is your leadership style?
8. Do you believe in order to achieve success a leader needs to be authoritative or passive? Please elaborate.
9. How confident are you in your job? Do you believe confidence has contributed to your success?

10. What are your views on gender serotyping in the workplace and how has it impacted your career?
11. How do you maintain your spot as a member of a male dominated exco team?
12. As a woman and a mother occupying a demanding position how do you deal with your professional life and your personal life?
13. What are some of the personal sacrifices that you have made along your career progression?
14. How do you juggle motherhood and work?
15. Do you think you cope well with both roles?
16. What aspects of your career development are within your control and which are beyond your control?
17. What are your opinions on the lessons that society teaches young girls and women in terms of their behavior and place in society? Do you believe this has an influence on a women's career? (Please explain).
18. What did your glass ceiling look like and what did you do to cut through the glass ceiling to get to your current position?
19. The concept of a glass cage highlights that women have doubts about their ability to succeed and handle the demands of leadership without sacrificing other aspirations outside the workplace, in your experience did you ever find yourself in a glass cage?
20. Do you believe there are adequate role models available for women who aspire to progress to higher levels in the organization?
21. Do you believe women support each other in overcoming career challenges or obstacles?
22. Do you believe men support women in their career progression?
23. Do you believe there is adequate support from society and organizations to aid your career progression?

Thank you for the time taken to participate in my research. It is greatly appreciated.

Appendix B: Cover Letter for Questionnaire

Questionnaire Title: **Barriers to the career progression of women into senior leadership positions**

Dear participant

This questionnaire forms part of my master's research entitled: Barriers to the career progression of women into senior leadership positions for the master's degree in Management of Technology and Innovation at the Da Vinci Institute. You have been selected by a purposive sampling strategy from the population of women leaders in middle management and senior management. Hence, I invite you to take part in this survey.

The aim of this study is to investigate the career barriers experienced by women as they progress into senior levels of management. The findings of the study may benefit women in understanding and perhaps overcoming certain career barriers. You are kindly requested to complete this survey questionnaire, comprising of three sections as honestly and frankly as possible and according to your personal views and experience. No foreseeable risks are associated with the completion of the questionnaire which is for research purposes only. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

You are not required to indicate your name or organisation and your anonymity will be ensured; however, indication of your age, gender, occupation position etcetera will contribute to a more comprehensive analysis. All information obtained from this questionnaire will be used for research purposes only and will remain confidential. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you have the right to omit any question if so desire, or to withdraw from answering this survey without penalty at any stage. After the completion of the study, an electronic summary of the findings of the research will be made available to you on request.

Permission to undertake this survey has been granted by the risk officer of First National Bank and the Ethics Committee of the Da Vinci Institute. If you have any research-related enquiries, they can be addressed directly to me or my supervisor. My contact details are: 083 736 1138 e-mail: csaygran@gmail.com and my supervisor can be reached at 083 267 0480 and email: jean@davinci.ac.za

By completing the questionnaire, you imply that you have agreed to participate in this research. Please return the completed questionnaire to csaygran@gmail.com before 01 December 2020

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Section A: Demographics:

Please mark the appropriate selection with an "X"

1. Age group

Under 35	36-45	46-55	Over 55

2. Educational Qualifications

None	National Diploma	Degree	Postgraduate	Masters	Doctorate	Other

3. Marital Status

Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Other

4, Level of Management Position

Junior Manager	Middle Manager	Senior Manager

5. Length of service

0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	Over 20 years

Section B: Variables that impact progression.

Please indicate your opinion on each of the variables that may be contributing to the career barriers that women face. Please mark your selection with a "X"

Carrier Barrier	Not a barrier	Could be a barrier	A major barrier
Attitude towards work			
Lack of Confidence			
The lack of role models			

Personal sacrifice			
Personal performance bias			
Family support			
Career goals			
Conflict with family responsibility			
Gender Stereotyping			
Unconscious Bias			
Leadership Style			

Section C: Statements on career barriers impacting career progression

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Please mark your selection with a "X"

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Comments *(Please share your views)*
I feel that women are given equal opportunities in hiring and recruitment process for senior management positions.			
There are more males in senior leadership positions than women in my organisation.			
I feel that gender stereotyping is still prevalent and impacts career growth.			
The cultural notion that women are not supposed to lead, influences women in leadership positions.			
My own unconscious bias has impacted my career growth.			
Unconscious bias in the workplace impacts my career growth.			
I feel that women make valuable contributions to the organisation.			
Women leaders in my organisation are emotional and			

therefore make emotional decisions.			82
Women in management support each other to progress in their careers.			
Self-confidence is a necessary quality to progress in one's career.			
My believes about my abilities creates obstacles in my career growth.			
I have clearly defined goals that will assist me to progress to a senior level.			
I have necessary support from my family to achieve my career goals.			
I have the necessary support from my organisation to achieve my career goals.			

Appendix D: Ethical Consent for Research

Request to conduct research at First Bank, Core Banking Platform

Request for permission to conduct research at First Bank in the Core Banking Platform department.

Date: 03 November 2020

Mr Barry Nabal
CBP Risk Department
Email: bnabal@fnb.co.za

Dear Mr. Barry, Nabal

I, Claudette Saygran am doing research under supervision of Ms. Jeann Dickinson, a senior lecturer towards a master's degree in the Management of Technology and Innovation at the Da Vinci Institute. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled Barriers to the career progression of women into senior leadership positions.

The aim of the study is to determine the key factors that impede the career progression of women into senior leadership positions. Your department has been selected because it is convenient for the researcher to collect data as the researcher is a currently employed by the department. The research sampling technique is purposive as the researcher seeks to gain a deeper understand of the phenomena through lived experiences, sample selection is convenient and informed.

The study is a qualitative study that will draw from the experiences and perceptions of female leaders. It is through lived experiences that we can understand the career challenges that women in leadership face.

The benefits of this study are for women in middle management positions to gain knowledge and awareness of the barriers to career development. The study aims to provide guidelines on overcoming these barriers.

There are no risks associated with this study. Participation is voluntary and information of participants will be kept confidential. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Feedback procedure will entail written feedback to participants.

Yours sincerely

CSaygran

Claudette Saygran

IT Programme Manager

Appendix E: Information Letter to Participants

Date: 03 November 2020

Title: Barriers to the career progression of women into senior leadership positions.

Dear prospective participant

My name is Claudette Saygran and I am doing research under the supervision of Ms. Jeann Dickinson, a senior lecturer towards a master's degree in the management of technology and innovation at the Da Vinci Institute. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled Barriers to the career progression of women into senior leadership positions.

What is the purpose of the study?
This study is expected to collect important information that could benefit women in their career progression. The study is to explore the interpersonal and environmental career barriers that women face as they progress in their careers.

Why are you being invited to participate?
You are invited because you are a representative of the target population for this study. The study's main aim is to explore the carrier barriers that women face as they progress from middle management to senior management.

I obtained your contact details from the group directory services. A total number of eight female leaders will be interviewed and a total of fifteen female leaders will be requested to complete a survey.

What is the nature of your participation in this study?
The study involves semi-structured interviews and a short survey. The questions are related to your views and opinions on the barriers that impede career progression for women. The semi-structured interviews are estimated to be 1.5 hours long while the survey can be completed in approximately 20min.

Can you withdraw from this study even after having agreed to participate?
Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?
Data collected from this study will add to the body of knowledge relating to career barriers woman face in the workplace. The study aims to provide insights into the

career barriers women face and benefits them in creating awareness of these barriers so that they can be better managed in favor of their career progression.

Are there any negative consequences for participating in the research project?
Participation in this study will be through electronic means. The interviews will be set based on the availability of the participant thereby removing any inconvenience to the participant. The protection of participants through a formal consent process guarantees anonymity and confidentiality. A consent form will be provided to the participants prior to the interviews, you will need to sign this form.

Due to the deliberate selection of participants, they will be known to the researcher, the raw data will only accessible by the researcher. The participants will be fully briefed on the content and procedure of the study.

Will the information that the participant conveys to the researcher and his/her identity be kept confidential?

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research. The researcher will protect the identity of the organisation and participants with the use of pseudonyms to ensure that the data provide by the participants cannot be traced back to them in reports, presentations, and other forms of dissemination.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Data from this study may published for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings, however individual participants will not be identifiable in such reports.

How will the researcher protect the security of data?
Hard copies of notes taken at the interview will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard in the researcher's personal property, electronic information collected such as transcribed notes will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. If necessary, information collected will be destroyed, hard copies will be shredded, and electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer with a relevant software programme.

Will the participant receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?

There are no payments and incentives for participating in this study.

Has the study received ethics approval?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Da Vinci Institute. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

How will the participant be informed of the findings/results of the research?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Claudette Saygran on 0837361138 or email csaygran@gmail.com.The findings are accessible for 5 years.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact csaygran@gmail.com.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Jean@davinci.ac.za

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

_____
(insert signature)
_____
(type your name)

Appendix F: Consent from Participants

Consent/assent return slip to participate in a study

I, (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the semi-structured interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print)

_____

Participant Signature   Date

Appendix G: Ethical Clearance Certificate

daVinci institute

Reference: 002920
Date: 09 December 2020

Ethical Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the Masters Research of the student named below has received ethical clearance from The Da Vinci Institute Ethics Committee. The student and supervisor will be expected to continue to uphold the Da Vinci Institute's Research Ethics Policy as indicated during the application.

Proposed Title: Barriers to the career progression of women into senior leadership positions

Student Name: Saygran Claudette

Student number: ███████

Supervisor: Dr Jeann Dickinson

Co-Supervisor:

Period: Ethics approval is granted from 2020/12/09 to 2022/05/14

███████████

_____

Chairperson: Research & Ethics Committee

Prof HB Klopper
Executive Dean: Research and Institutional Partnerships