

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**GLASS CEILING EFFECT: THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY POST  
GRADUATE FEMALE PROFESSIONALS IN UPWARD CAREER PROGRESSION  
IN DURBAN,  
SOUTH AFRICA**

**by**

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## Declaration

I, Seshnie Reddy, student number 201293967, do hereby declare that this dissertation titled *Glass Ceiling Effect: The Challenges Experienced By Post Graduate Female Professionals In Upward Career Progression Movement in Durban, South Africa* is the result of my exploration and research. It has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree, or to any other University. All the sources that I have used or quoted from have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference list.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to females all over the world, who have experienced challenges and setbacks in their careers.

## **Acknowledgements**

I thank my Lord, Shri Sathya Sai Baba for giving me the strength and courage to complete this study.

### **My sincere appreciation goes out to the following people:**

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## Abstract

Although women have made considerable progress within the labour market, due to education and aggressive employment legislation, they continue to experience a roadblock in progressing to management levels. This study investigates the challenges experienced by post graduate female professionals in upward career progression in Durban, South Africa. The study sampled 134 females of different race, age, work experience and qualification, employed at different hierarchical levels across different industries in Durban. Data was collected through the use of an electronic self-administered questionnaire and analyzed through the use of simple descriptive statistics. The findings indicate that female professionals turn down opportunities due to their domestic responsibilities, whilst mentoring and networking with executives are essential factors in advancement and promotion, yet females do not have access to both these aspects, there is a societal stereotypical perception and assumption that females are meant to be homemakers whilst their male counterparts are viewed to be effective and progressive leaders. It was identified that many career advancement struggles and hardships faced by females are attributed to societal stereotypical beliefs and assumptions, other barriers identified are gender stereotyping and female leaders not effectively supporting other aspiring female employees in their career advancement. Finally, the study revealed that organizations do not provide additional support structures such as telecommuting, flexible work arrangements and child care facilities for their employees. The study recommends that organizations become more engaged in supporting their female employees by providing them with flexible work arrangements, telecommuting and child care facilities to create a more conducive work environment.

**Key words:** career advancement, glass ceiling, multi role conflict, work-life balance, mentoring, social networking, queen bee syndrome, gender stereotyping

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# CHAPTER 1

## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

---

### 1.1 Introduction

In the face of democracy, South Africa has witnessed an era of significant growth and change for females in society. The contemporary world of work has fundamentally evolved over time with more females entering the work force. Despite the success women have achieved in the last decade, very few of them have managed to successfully overcome the impediments and challenges of successfully attaining senior management positions (Conradie, Piesse, Thirtle, & Vink, 2018).

Against this back drop, South African corporate companies are still very much controlled by a male dominated patriarchal system. It continues to dictate the traditional view of male employees being 'superior' and occupying the top positions of the organizational hierarchy, thereby placing a challenge in the upward career progression for female employees entering senior management (Osituyo, 2018, Pg. 173). The majority of females continue to represent the occupational hierarchy at entry and lower levels of the organization, due to challenges and obstacles in successfully attaining upward career progression, advancement and ultimately success (Conradie, et al., 2018). The hindrance which females face is a cruel reality which not only limits their personal career progression, but also hinders the advancement of society (Fernandez & Campero, 2017). It is a prevalent topic of global concern and has gained a fair amount of attention in the last decade, however very slow progress has been made to eradicate the gender disparities which exist at the top of the organizational hierarchy (Singh & Naidoo, 2017).

Chapter one is an introduction to the topic and outlines the background, problem statement, motivation for the study, followed by research objectives and questions,

expected outcomes, methodology, focus of the study and expected limitations. Finally, the chapter concludes with the chapter layout and summary.

## **1.2 Background**

South Africa has a tumultuous history of apartheid and colonialism which was characterised by social, racial and economic inequality for non-white people of South Africa. During the Apartheid regime, racial classification was entrenched into social discrimination and the system ensured that there was a racial and gendered hierarchy for the vast majority of South Africa (Jaga, Arabandi, Bagraim & Mdlongwa, 2017). Singh and Naidoo (2017), describe this era as characterised by gender oppression. This ideology has led to women being classified as illegitimate citizens in society (Burt, 1988). This in turn prohibited woman from advancing their careers (Benya, 2017). Woman in particular have suffered at the forefront of this inequality which discriminated against their status within the labour market and the work place since the South African traditional work place operated on white male dominated patriarchal system (Jaga et al., 2017). The lack of justice and access to education imposed by the apartheid government was identified as one of the prevailing factors affected the promotion of females to management positions (Singh & Naidoo, 2017).

In 1994 post-apartheid, the perception of females being classified as traditional homemakers and child bearers had substantially evolved since educational opportunities become more accessible to females (Mabokela & Mlambo, 2017). Post-apartheid witnessed the implementation of aggressive employment legislation by the government such as Employment Equity Act (1997) and the Gender Equality Bill (1996) which aimed to redress the past inequalities of the Apartheid system, redress the past imbalances, deliver equity and guard against the discrimination of woman. In addition to this, the Gender Equity Bill (1996) and Women Equity Bill (1997) advocated for equal participation of women in the public and private sector in South Africa (Jaga et al., 2018). Research suggests that there has been a positive transition in the number of females entering the workforce due to the implementation of employment laws and improved access to educational opportunities (Osituyo, 2018). In addition to this, black females make up the fastest growing segment of the South African workforce

(Conradie et al. 2017). Employment legislation has been used as a catalyst with the intention of bridging the gender disparity gap and creating a multi gendered work force which gives career opportunities to advance females and people of color in South Africa. There has been a slow, yet positive change, due to employment legislation, to alleviate the gender disparities between professional females and their male counterparts across most industries in South Africa (Osituyo, 2018). The Chairperson of the Commission for Employment Equity Tabea Kabinde, reported that 'transformation at senior management level in South Africa is moving at a slow pace,' whilst females in the work place are predominately represented in entry level and administrative roles, as opposed to top and senior management roles despite them being equally or more qualified than their male counterparts (Employment Equity Annual report, 2017, Pg. 4). According to a study conducted by Bain and Company (2017), in South Africa, it was found that there was no female representation in at senior level management in 31% of companies across the country. The challenge was not getting into the organization, but rather advancing through the hierarchy and reaching a management position (Choi, 2018).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

According to Statistics South Africa (2018), South Africa has a population size of 56.6 million, with females constituting 28.4 million whilst males constitute 27.2 million. Females represent more than 51% of the total population size (Statistics SA, 2018), yet their representation within senior management roles in the South African work place is only 22.0% (Commission for Employment Equity, 2017). This indicates a huge gender disparity imbalance ratio between male and female managers within the South African work place. These statistics are an indication that senior level occupations are still male dominated in the work place. Given the factors highlighted above, females are faced with challenges in the work place and ultimately placed at a disadvantage in terms of career advancement to senior management levels (Employment Equity report, 2017).

What are the challenges limiting female professionals from upward career progression into senior management positions?

#### **1.4 Motivation for the study**

This study aims to contribute to an existing body of knowledge by identifying organizational, legislative and personal factors that hinder upward mobility of female professionals in the workplace. This research will enormously benefit employers who strive to improve their employment equity targets at a senior management level, by providing employers with more insight into the challenges, limitations and restrictions which female employees are faced with in their upward career advancement within an organization. This in turn will enhance organizational competitive advantage and improve profitability in the long run.

#### **1.5 Focus of the study**

The focus of the study was to identify the challenges that female employees are faced with in their career advancement journey. The sample group consisted of employed females of different races, age groups 25-45 years, and those with or without dependents, the study was intended to identify the factors which prevent upward career advancement amongst female professional employees.

#### **1.6 Research Objectives**

The study attempts to address the following objectives:

- To investigate the extent to which multi role conflict acts as a potential barrier for career advancement for female professionals
- To determine the impact of social networking and mentoring on female professional's career advancement
- To determine whether female managers support and promote another aspiring female employee in career advancement
- To investigate how gender stereotyping is a potential barrier for upward progression for female employees
- To determine the coping strategies organizations can employ to support female employees in career progression

## **1.7 Research questions**

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- How does multi role conflict affect upward career progression for female professionals?
- What impact does social networking and mentoring have on female professional's career advancement
- What is the nature of support female managers afford to other female employees in upward career advancement?
- How does gender stereotyping affect upward career advancement for female employees?
- What are the coping strategies organizations can employ to support female employees in career advancement?

## **1.8 Methodology**

This study was a quantitative study. A computer -based online questionnaire was used for the purpose of the study. For the purpose of the study, a sample size of 150 respondents was set as the target.

## **1.9 Expected Limitations**

Due to time restraints, the sample setting was limited to the University of KwaZulu Natal and a leading Petroleum company in Durban, South Africa. The participants responding may have not been open and honest in their responses.

## **1.10 Structure of study**

Chapter one of the study provides a background, focus of the study, motivation for the study, expected outcomes and limitations. Chapter two expounds on the literature review of the previous research conducted by scholars on the challenges experienced by female professionals in the work place. Chapter three covers the methodology used in this study. Chapter four presents and illustrates the numerical results of the study.

Chapter five presents the discussion of results, conclusions and recommendations for future studies.

### **1.11 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter the background, problem statement, motivation for study, focus of the study, research objectives and questions, methodology, expected limitations and outline of the study was discussed. Chapter two will provide a description and analysis of the existing body of knowledge.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

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#### **2.1 Introduction**

Women consist of more than fifty percent of the total work force in South Africa (Stats SA, 2018), yet they continue to struggle with challenges in advancing their careers and attaining career success at management levels (Benya, 2017). This chapter is based on the literature review, and analyses the body of previous knowledge from other scholars surrounding the challenges faced by female professionals in upward career progression. The main themes elaborated in the literature review are, multiple role conflict, access to social resource networks, queen bee approach and gender stereotypes which are essentially barriers which limit and hinder career upward mobility for females in attaining a management role. The literature also explores what strategies the organization can adopt to deal with these challenges.

The study is grounded on four theoretical frameworks which include human capital theory, social network theory, upper echelon theory and social identity theories which underpin the study.

#### **2.2 Education and woman**

In the last ten years, woman contributed to more than 50% of graduates, as they discovered that education is the key to attaining the same level of career success as their male counterparts (Khuong & Chi, 2017). Research affirms that women outnumber men in terms of graduating from University and more females in Western Europe have graduated with post graduate qualifications from University over the last five years than their male counterparts (Gronlund & Oun, 2017). According to Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hageman & Josephson, (2017), females in the United States of America earn 60% of Bachelors and Masters degrees, whilst approximately 50% of Doctoral degrees are also earned by women. In South Africa, more female graduates are being produced at universities and tertiary institutions, but have difficulty in

attaining success and advancing their careers at higher levels of organizations (Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report, 2017). Despite this impressive advancement in the access to education by females, men remain as key decision makers and leaders within organizations (Remington & Kitterlin-Leush, 2017).

### **2.3 Challenges to woman's career advancement**

Research findings (Abidin, Penefort, Jusoff, Marzuku, 2008, Pg. 160) from a study compiled by the Women Special Committee within the accounting sector which is primarily male dominated. The seven factors recognised by were that presented deterrents to female gaining upward mobility in the sector were:

- Cultural attitude towards women were old- fashioned: The cultural attitude was negative and outdated and was based on women being socialised as home makers and child bearers with specific emphasis on raising a family and taking care of household responsibilities.
- Denial of occupational barriers and challenges for women: The employer denied that barriers existed in career progression and advancement for women.
- The awareness of success criteria: Not all female accountants were aware of the success criteria to reach management levels, they were not provided with adequate support and encouragement from their managers to progress to the next level of the organization. Child care and family responsibilities conflicted with work responsibilities. The employer did not provider a child facility nor was there an agile work environment created to assist female with their responsibility of being an accountant and a mother to her children. Work -family conflict resulted in high employee turnover for female accountants
- Female accountants demonstrated higher levels of stress: Due to multi role conflicts, females experienced more stress than their male counter parts
- Dating and marriage: Females had little or no work -life balance due to the nature of their jobs. The work responsibilities and load were quite high which affected and spilt over to their personal lives resulting in a lack of a social life.
- Lack of woman involvement in professional associations: Professional association gave accountants visibility amongst their colleagues which could

have possibly impacted positively on their career advancement. Females, however, were not heavily vested in professional associations.

Prior research has attributed multi role conflict such as motherhood and family commitments as reasons why females are not represented at senior level management (Gronlund & Ous, 2017). Many studies cite the challenges for females in upward career advancement as being due to inadequate mentorship, and lack of social networking and resources, such as 'old boys networks' as prevailing factors hindering female career progression (Choi, 2018). Other scholars postulate that the glass ceiling phenomena is a major factor responsible for the under representation of woman at a senior management level (Osituyo, 2018). Arvate (2018) describes the Queen Bee approach, whereby aspiring females are oppressed and discriminated against by other senior female managers which prevents them from climbing up the corporate ladder. Heilman and Caleo (2018) affirm that the challenges experienced by female employees in their careers are deeply embedded within societal norms and expectations which lead to gender stereotyping, and contributes to a blocked career path for female employees. According to Benya (2017), the barriers faced by females are gendered based and reflected through stereotyping and unequal access to resources and differential treatment of groups which limit upward career progression for females.

#### **2.4 Glass ceiling phenomena and woman**

Many studies have attempted to define and explain this phenomenon. Chisholm-Burns et al. (2017), describe the glass ceiling as an 'invisible, yet strong and subtle' artificial barrier which discriminates, stymies and prevents females from advancing their careers, prohibiting upward career mobility and resulting in females being underrepresented in senior management levels of the organization'. Rathore (2017), describes the glass ceiling, as the plight of women in advancing careers through the hierarchical ranks of the organization. Women can only advance to a certain point before they are obstructed in their efforts to reach upper ranking positions, due to non-tangible barriers which serve as impediments to restrict qualified woman in attaining

high level positions, promotions and other opportunities to advance their career (Rathore, 2017). This predicament is an indication that gender inequalities are more prevalent at more senior level of the organization as opposed to lower levels of the organization and women are specifically becoming more disadvantaged as they progress up the hierarchy. Marinakou (2015), views the glass ceiling effect as societal barriers which are prevalent and may differ across organizations and countries, however the way it is managed governs the victory of the organization. This indicates that due to societal norms and expectations, no matter how much effort and education a woman achieves, they may not reach their full potential and achievement. (Galloway, 2012). Abidin et al. (2008) defines the metaphor, glass ceiling as being primarily reflected in discrimination, gender inequality and negative bias specifically directed to women with the intention of hindering their progress to the top of the corporate pile. Fernandez & Campero, (2017) argue that the glass ceiling effect does not only negatively impact on the lives of women being affected in their career advancement, but also on the organization and society as a whole.

Research indicates that the glass ceiling still remains in existence due to the fact (Cho, Mclean, Amornpipat, Chang, Hewapathirana, Horimoto & Hamzah, 2015) that organizations have not managed to successfully employ, promote and retain female employees relative to their male counterparts within specific levels of the organization, thereby cultivating and accepting the glass ceiling effect. Females face adversity more than men, in their journey to attain career success at higher echelons of the organization (Choi, 2018). Against this back drop, female employees will not be able to reach their highest career aspirations, due to the glass ceiling phenomena which prevents females from accelerating up the organizational hierarchy (Galloway, 2012).

Sridhar and Aduri (2014), claim that shattering of the glass ceiling entails the participation of females at all levels of the organization and the elimination of stereotyping. Studies have indicated that shattering the glass ceiling and promoting upward career mobility strategies entails the enablement of social networking and mentorship which can be used for career advancement and development (Choi, 2018).

## **2.5 Theoretical framework**

A theory is a means by which phenomena is explained and predicted, it allows researchers to explain why specific observed regularities happen. The use of the four theories below will help to explain the challenges experienced by female employee in their upward career progression journey into senior management. The theory will also aim to explain the under representation of females at senior levels of the organization.

### **2.5.1. Human Capital theory**

The Human Capital theory is an economic theory which conceives human capital as investments specifically in knowledge and technical skills (Becker, 1964). This theory postulates that the under representation of female professionals in management is due to woman having a 'free choice' of whether to participate in the work force, the type of work they perform and the decisions they make to invest in their training and development (Zhong & Blum, 2017). According to this theory, women voluntarily and consciously place a greater value on their family responsibilities over career advancement (Zhong & Blum, 2017). As a result, their voluntary choices of jobs and careers are significantly different to their male counterparts, since they prefer jobs which allows for the flexibility of their family commitments. The underrepresentation at a management level is advocated by women choosing their family responsibilities over their careers and not having any aspiration to advance in their careers. This theory has not been supported empirically since it fails to answer why women who do not have family responsibilities and commitments and uninterrupted careers are unable to reach management positions. In addition to this flaw, the theory fails to acknowledge the hierarchical power dynamic between an employee and employer which may also limit career advancement and progression for female professionals (Zhong & Blum, 2017).

### **2.5.2 Social capital theory**

Coleman (1990), defined social capital as any aspect of social structure that creates value and facilitates the actions of the individuals within that social structure. Social capital theory is broadly defined as a resource reflecting the character of social

relations embedded in relationships of individuals, communities, networks, or societies (Burt 1992). The theory identifies social networking and other interpersonal relationship dynamic such as bonding with a group of people and building social relationships as a powerful resource (Francis, 2017). Social capital theory indicates connections amongst individuals where there is mutual trust, shared norms, information sharing, understanding and behaviors which are reciprocated in the group (Lutter, 2015). Individuals gain access to social capital through mentorship relationships, social networking and professional associations within the group. This theory assumes that social ties within the group are much stronger than ties outside the group, and the strength of the social ties ultimately affects career advancement and promotions for an individual (Lutter, 2015). This theory suggests that social capital creates more access to information sharing and resources, which also empowers and motivates employee to perform at their best (Francis, 2017).

Individuals who have access to stronger social networks or ties are likely to succeed in achieving career objectives and advancement. This means that females who have access to social networking are more likely to exchange information, plan their careers, receive career support and guidance, and most importantly gain visibility amongst male sponsors within the organization resulting in career advancement and professional growth (Liu, Sidh, Beacom & Valente, 2017) found that top jobs were found by appointees based on 'who knows who' in the industry and not determined by their skill set or qualification levels. Social networking and mentorship are both powerful tools which can be used to increase an individual's personal social capital which can contribute to their career success and advancement.

### **2.5.3 Upper Echelon theory**

Upper echelon theory draws on how macro level external factors such as the role and gender of the Chief Executive Officer's can either hinder or advance an individual's career success (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The theory suggests that the personal characteristics and gender of an organization's CEO are frequently reflected the organizational culture and outcomes (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). These personal characteristics may range from gender, educational and socioeconomic background,

career experiences and age. According to this theory, a leader's personal characteristics, background and gender may influence his or her attitude towards gender inequalities or disparities in the work place (Hambrick & Maso, 1984). This theory postulates that the gender of the CEO is expected to play a substantial role in the advancement of woman in an organization (Hambrick & Maso, 1984)

Female CEO's who may have personally experienced first-hand struggles of gender inequality and discrimination during their career before succeeding as a leader, are more conscious and supportive of the advancement and promotion of woman in an organization (Sears & Ny, 2018). Emanating from this, a female CEO may enforce more comprehensive human resource policies and procedures such as flexible and agile work arrangements, mentorship programs, development programs and other opportunities which support a conducive work environment, and directly benefit and assist women in advancing up the organization hierarchy (Sears & Ny, 2018)

Research claims that the appointment of a female CEO indicates a transition in culture, where females are viewed as equals to their male colleagues, organizational practices mirror a greater inclusion of females in management, and females are inspired to progress and advance their careers (Dwivedi, Joshi & Misangyi, 2018). This theory suggests that the presence of a female with significantly impact on the number of women in management. Furthermore, studies indicate that organizations having higher levels of representation of women on their board of directors report higher levels of representation of women in management (Cook & Glass, 2018).

#### **2.5.4 Social identity theory**

The underrepresentation of female employees within an organization is anchored in the social identity theory. The theory provides predictions and explanations for the discrimination of female professionals which prevent upward career advancement (Seo, Huang, Han, 2017).

The social identity theory was developed by John Turner and Henri Tajfel in the 1970's and based on three cognitive processes which are social categorization, social identification and social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1982) This theory hypothesizes that gender is not just an individual characteristic, but rather a characteristic which is deeply intertwined in a societal hierarchy and individuals classify themselves into

social categories and identify with members within their own category and adopt a specific identity based on gender (Tajfel & Turner, 1982). The social categories are divided into two groups, the all-in group (representing the males) and the all-out-group (representing the females) and the fundamental concept of this theory rests on self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Within an organizational context there are the male and female social groups which are formed. The in-group makes a social comparison between both the groups based on rivalry, prejudice, hostility and competition (Seo et al., 2017). According to the social identity theory, the all-in group (males), will seek to discriminate, stereotype and find negative qualities or aspects of the out-group (females) in order to enhance the self-esteem of the in-group (Seo et al., 2017). This theory advocates that females (out-group) will lose out on career opportunities, promotions, visibility, resources and social networks (Remington & Kitterlin-Leush, 2017). The out group is subjected to stereotyping and lack of career opportunities (Remington & Kitterlin-Leush, 2017).

## **2.6 Factors affecting upward career advancement**

### **2.6.1 Conflicting roles and work life balance for females**

Fifty years ago, it was a traditional norm for a man to occupy the role of a breadwinner, whilst the woman stayed at home and took care of household chores and children (Abramovitz, 2018). Societal norms including marriage, child-bearing and certain career expectations were factors which were believed to restrict and limit a woman's ability to progress and move up the organizational hierarchy (Marinakou, 2015). However, the twenty first century has witnessed a social change within the organizational and societal context, whereby the responsibilities and roles of woman have fundamentally evolved and increased within the family structure (Singh & Naidoo, 2017).

Due to the high cost of living and monthly expenses in South Africa a 'dual earner society' has developed amongst many households. The dual earner society which involves changes in family practices and behaviour, has become more popular in the twenty first century, whereby there has been a redistribution of responsibilities (Olah, Kotowska & Richter, 2018). Both women and men have assumed the role of breadwinners to financially support their families (Gronlund & Oun, 2017). In essence, the female has taken on multiple roles from work responsibilities as well as prioritizing

the responsibilities and commitments of family, which has contributed to the multiple role conflicts (Singh & Naidoo, 2017). Women are facing challenges in balancing these multiple responsibilities including, a full day's work at the office, managing and caring for a family, and other societal obligations. It has become increasingly challenging for working professional females to juggle the dual role reality of their work and family responsibilities, and maintain a healthy work life balance (O'Carroll, 2017).

Work life balance can be defined as the perception of an employee to maintain and integrate multiple domains of personal, time, family care and work commitments with minimum role conflict (Noronha & Aithal, 2017). Work life balance is different for each individual depending on the stage of life that they are at. An individual's ability to balance the demands of their work and family life can be assessed through 'work family conflict (Noronha & Aithal, 2017). Work family conflict is an inter-role conflict can be defined as the incompatibility and incongruency of work and family responsibilities, resulting in the difficulty of participating of both roles simultaneously (Ghislien, Gatti, Molina, Cortese, 2017). Whist Runte and Mill (2004), describe work family conflict, as the 'work domain intruding on the family domain.' Extant research advocates that both men and women experience work family conflicts, although women report higher levels of work family conflict (Gronlund & Ous, 2017, Ruppner & Huffman, 2014). Gronlund and Ous (2017) assert that there is a direct relationship between gender and work family conflict. The spill over of work into family roles and vice versa, can cause negative tangible consequences such as stress, anxiety, burn out, depression, high absenteeism, and low commitment, productivity and job satisfaction (Thorpe, 2018).

Research on work-family conflict showed that the number of work hours has been a central indicator of work demands (Abramovitz, 2018). Chung and Van Der Horst (2018) suggest that women are the primary care giver of families. Whilst Mittal and Sharma (2015), advocate that females are more likely than males. to take time off from work due to family commitments, work part time or leave the labour force due to family commitments. According to Chung and Van Der Horst (2018), many women in senior management roles have opted not to have children since childbearing affects their careers negatively. Conversely, many women have decided to choose their family life

over their careers and have voluntarily become stay at home mothers (Chung & Van Der Horst, 2018).

Measures of strain such as workload have been included in several studies, and findings suggest that a high work load is a consequence of long working hours (Gronlund & Oun, 2018). Certain organizations demand overnight travel and long working hours to accomplish work commitments (Mittal & Sharma, 2015). Mittal and Sharma (2015) further assert that long working hours exert pressure and stress on the female due the pressure of achieving multi responsibilities within her personal and work life.

### **2.6.2 Lack of social networking opportunities**

This section takes a broad outlook at social networking and how networking can aid as a strategy in contributing to upward mobility career opportunities for females. Empirical evidence supports the claim that social networks provide females with access to social resources which are essential components in attaining career aspirations, objectives and success in upward career progression (Dashper, 2017). Liu et al., (2017) investigated the link between career success and networking relationships, and claim that there is a positive link between social capital networks and career advancement. Previous research by Choi (2018), indicates that social networking opportunities have been identified to bring positive outcomes in achieving career progress up the corporate ladder, and social networking is positively associated with an individual's career advancement.

Researchers claim that work practices and also career paths are gendered (Ibarra et al., 2013). However, social networks can provide an opportunity for women to reduce gender inequality and discrimination since these have not been sanctioned by the organization., and women can use them as a podium to promote their career paths (De Klerk & Verreynne, 2017). The process of networking behaviours can be defined as an individual's attempts of developing contacts, and maintaining relationships and linkages with others who have the ability and power to support and provide more visibility to their careers (Brenninkmeijer, 2017).

Researchers have the tendency to compare females and males access to social capital and the consequent implication and influence this has on career advancement

for woman (Birdie & Kumar, 2015, Srivastava, 2015). Burt (1992) argues that a female's career can significantly advance if there is a close link or network to a male sponsor. Choi (2018), claims that the more intensely involved a woman is in social networking, the greater the chance of her receiving promotion opportunities and higher significant roles, which in turn may lead to promotion opportunities and upward career mobility. Lutter (2015), claims that females who build up social capital through networks are more likely to experience reduced gender disadvantages and discrimination in their career advancement. Networks assist them in acquiring new jobs, being promoted to higher level positions, improved job opportunities, visibility and leverage and share knowledge amongst colleagues, especially in markets where recruitment is based on interpersonal networks (Lutter, 2015).

Choi (2018) suggests the more actively visible an individual is in social networking, the greater their chances of career advancement and development opportunities. This evidence suggests that social networking allow females to build social relationships with male sponsors and alliances that could possibly be linked to improving their career opportunities and advancement (Simmons, 2015). Scholars (Liu et al., 2017) have also suggested that it is crucial for woman to build and develop relationships with male sponsors to promote their career success.

The history of female participation in the world of work is much shorter than that of their male counterparts which generally implies less or lack of access to social capital networks which ultimately affects their success in advancing their career (Choi, 2018). According to Catalyst (2017), there is only 5.8% representation of females Chief Executive Officers globally. In South Africa, the representation of female Chief Executive Officers is 7% (Bain & Company, 2017). Females essentially represent a very small percentage of Chief Executive Officers in the business world. The consequence of this reality is that they may have limited access to informal social interaction and networking (Choi, 2018). Women require networks since they are not well integrated into men's networks, and since they do not have access to top level management may be left out from opportunities which may lead to career advancements. (Catalyst, 2017).

Much of the literature and studies have focused on the positive aspect of social networking, but researchers claim that there is a 'dark side' to social networking.

(Galaso, 2018). Other studies (Lutter, 2015) advocate that women who are closed off from social networks find it substantially more difficult to advance or enhance their career within an organization. Lutter (2015) has coined the term 'closure penalty' to describe the difficulties and hindrances presented to career advancement by lack of social networking (Lutter, 2015, Pg. 333). Ibarra (1993) indicates that the way a network is formed has a direct impact for women. Other studies reveal that it has become increasingly difficult for women to leverage of meaningful social networks due to social and institutional impediments (De Klerk, 2017).

Females at a management level are scarce and over the years have come together to form their own network since are rejected by their male counterparts, and somehow reach out to other female networks as a social group to create their own networks (Lutter, 2015). Research argues that female network groups, whether informal or formal, can prove to be futile to their careers since the gender homophilous relationship cannot assist them to advance their career (Lutter, 2015, Pg. 330). This is primarily because women have fewer connections to male sponsors and they occupy low skilled and junior level positions within the organizations (Lutter, 2015). De Klerk and Verreynne, (2017), counter argue against this suggestion and claim that women have unique networking approaches, and strong and diverse ties. Women networking for career and personal advancement can be used to their benefit. It is indeed a reality that women face social impediments and discrimination but they can minimise this effect through the benefit of networking and advance their careers (Joshi, et al., 2015).

According to scholars (Sears and Ng, 2017) the 'Old boys network', still exists as an informal white male social association done through golfing or recreational activities, which acts as a social network amongst males. This group of white males are wanting to create relationships with people who are similar to them (Ibarra, 1993). The term Homophily bias' has been coined 'which indicates that people who have the same culture background, age, gender, race and status are likely to network with each other (Kaushik & Pullen, 2017, Pg. 106). It is considerably difficult for women to enter an Old boy's club. Old boy's networks in the world of business revolve around masculine activities such as golfing, fishing and hunting (Kaushik & Pullen, 2017).

For females it may be important to network in order to narrow the gender equity gap in the work place, however many females may not have time for these activities since they may have limited time, family commitments and child care responsibilities. This works against females who are married with child care obligations and responsibilities, who are unable to fit into male dominated social clubs which operate after office hours (Kaushik & Pullen, 2017). Females who do not have access to these networks miss out on career advancement opportunities. The lack of networks has been cited as a career challenge for females (Francis, 2018, Pg. 270). Females are backward in social networking and connecting with key decision makers who can assist in the advancement of careers (Choi, 2018).

### **2.6.3 Limited access to mentoring opportunities**

Lui et al. (2018), claims that mentorship is an important factor for career advancement and development, success and productivity. Perry and Parikh (2017), defines mentorship as a long term relationship between two parties with both parties having mutual goals, the responsibility of the mentor being to provide support and knowledge which would assist in professional success. Ellen-Washington (2017), describes mentorship as 'a natural phase of personal and professional development' which allows the organization to view the mentee on a more personal level and gain knowledge and insight on their personal and work needs.

Over the years, a large number of studies have been conducted on mentorship (Perry & Parikh, 2017; Raggins & Cotton, 1999 & Linehan and Scullion, 2008). However, a limited body of research has been conducted on how the different mentorship styles affects the career progression or advancement of women. Literature on mentoring across different industries and organizations suggests that it provides substantial benefits to the mentee and the organization (Dashper, 2017). A key benefit for organizations of mentorship programs is that it promotes an organization's cultural values and behaviors, best practices, policies and procedures (Ellen- Washington, 2017). This indicates that employees who have been involved in mentorship programs will be adaptable to an organizations culture. Another benefit of mentorship is that it promotes information sharing amongst employees (Ellen-Washington, 2017). This indicates that employees can leverage off each other's skills and talents, positively impacts on the organizational goals and objectives since employees are re-skilled and

trained with new knowledge. Prior studies have indicated that mentorship programs contribute to greater job satisfaction, by dropping stress levels, facilitation career related decisions, increasing communication skills and ultimately positively impacting on leadership roles (Yedavalli & Shah, 2018). Other studies reveal the positive association between mentorship in supporting career development, as well as acceleration up the ranks at a faster pace and salary increments (Raggins & Cotton, 1999). There is evidence which supports the notion that white males are effective mentors and the relationship between the mentor and mentee yield positive results (Dashper, 2017).

Researchers claims that women who have been given the opportunity of mentorship, have a greater understanding of the organizational culture and receive more visibility, whilst those who have not received mentorship encounter a hindrance to career progression (Dashper, 2017). According to a study conducted by Raggins and Cotton (1999), despite positive conclusions and results associated with mentorship, there is still an unwillingness and lack of commitment from males to mentor females. In order for woman to succeed, they need to find male mentors. Women are still faced with a difficult scenario of sourcing and building a relationship with male mentors.

Prior research suggests that females battle to find mentorship in males because male superiors are anxious that their female colleagues would misunderstand the mentorship relationship as a sexual advance or an inappropriate relationship (Raggins & Cotton, 1999; Lyness & Thompson, 2000). A second study by Raggins, Cotton and Miller (2000) found that females who successfully received a male mentor were less likely to benefit from bonding and networking opportunities outside of working hours. Sabattini (2008) postulated the underrepresentation of females in executive level positions is attributed to limited access to social bonding between females and key decision makers. Other studies suggest that in order for women to advance their careers, a strong network of sponsors and mentors must take responsibility in shaping and developing future female leaders (Brennikmeijer, 2017). A study by Linehan and Scullion (2008), indicated that females incur a difficult path to find a mentor who can support and back them in achieving their career goals and objectives, and advancing their role in the work place. Other researchers suggest that for women to professionally succeed there needs to be a strong mentor which will be responsible in guiding their professional development.

Mentorship can take on different styles which include formal and informal mentorship, development of relationships between manager and subordinate and peer and peer (Simmons, 2016). Formal mentorship can be defined as career mentoring focusing on technical and transactional career mentoring on the job (Simmons, 2016). Informal mentoring takes place when a senior manager or role model in the company who understands the culture of the business serves as a mentor to a protégé (Simmons, 2016). Mentors in most organizations double up as sponsors, careers guides, coaches and role models who equip help their protégé to develop and learn the ropes of the organization (Simmons, 2016).

Judging by the evidence presented above, it is quite a struggle for women to receive mentorship and achieve organizational success. In order for women to reach success, there needs to be a mentorship network to assist in propelling her career up the hierarchy and overcome the career barriers experienced.

#### **2.6.4 Queen Bee approach**

There has been limited empirical studies on the Queen Bee label for women in management. The Queen Bee syndrome was coined by Staines, Tavis, and Jayaratne (1974), and negatively labels a senior woman in a high-ranking position who has managed to prosper and succeed in a male dominated organization. Research (Arvate et al., 2018, Pg. 536), state that she however, plays an undermining and condescending role in the advancement of other females. The Queen Bee dissociates herself with members of the same gender in organizations where leadership is male dominated, often demonstrates bad behavior through alienating females who are seen as potential threats to her power, considers other woman to be her natural enemies and denies that gender discrimination exists (Wiegang, 2015). She displays masculine characteristics such as action orientated aggressiveness, assertiveness and emotional toughness and traits emphasizing her uniqueness to other females (Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers, De Groot, 2015). Queen Bees do not show any solidarity or supportive behaviour to the rise of females in management but rather defend the status quo to protect their own position for career advancement (Wiegang, 2015). A classic example of Queen Bee label can be related to the United Kingdom's first female prime minister, Margaret Thatcher who refused to promote the careers of females in her cabinet (Moreton, 2015). Other studies have indicated, that Queen Bees are far

from likely to include or mentor highly qualified professional females since they are viewed as potential threats to the Queen Bee's position within the organization (Derks et al. 2015).

The Queen Bee rather responds by eroding the confidence and self-esteem of her junior female colleagues. In essence, the Queen Bee attempts to utilise old school behaviour to alienate and demoralise her younger female professionals with the intention of blocking their career advancement to secure her own position as alpha females in the organization (Derks et al., 2015). The Queen Bee approach blames women for failing to support another woman. It would be a viable strategy for woman to support and show harmony amongst each other, however it is bewildering that studies reveal very little evidence of solidarity amongst female managers and other females.

### **2.6.5 Gender stereotyping**

A career is viewed as a complex journey for a woman, primarily due to the obstacles and challenges which is faced in attaining career success. Gender stereotyping and discrimination are two challenges which still persist in the work place (Arvate et al. 2018). Gender discrimination is defined as occurring, when a personnel decision is based on gender, an ascribed characteristic, rather than individual job performance or qualifications (Seo et al., 2017).

Gender stereotyping are unsupported beliefs and assumptions people use to categories other people. Globally, women still face stereotyping due to gender social role expectation where women are still expected to be child bearers and full-time wives to their husbands (Seo et al., 2017). In South Africa, a developing economy, the traditional role of women was to assume the role of a stay at home mother with specific emphasis on raising a family and taking care of the household and did not have much educational opportunities (Mittal and Sharma, 2015). This is seen as one of the reasons that woman do not progress up the organizational hierarchy. Studies claim gender attributes and characteristics also affect career mobility, since leadership has been considered a career for men only (Arvate et al., 2018). Previous studies have argued that the discrimination against females emanates from the home environment (Mittal & Sharma, 2015). Research by Joshi et al. (2015), suggests that women's

performance appraisals were higher than that of men, however where promotions were concerned, men were rated higher in terms of promotion possibilities.

These are norms and expectations of society, and women who display aggressive, independent and confident characteristics are allegedly acting outside of these societal expectations and norms. Many of the hardships women endure in their career progression emanate from societal stereotypical beliefs and assumptions (Heilman & Caleo, 2018)

Academics have noted that masculine characteristics are positively associated with successful managers (Seo et al., 2017). Males who are viewed as strong leaders are alleged to be direct in their approach, if a woman displays the same communicative style she will be deemed as punitive. When it comes to leadership, females are devalued as leaders, because of the stereotypical judgement and view of their abilities. There is a double standard that women have to face, equally if not more competent than their male counterparts and remain feminine (Heilman & Caleo, 2018). Career opportunities for woman are often blocked due to gender stereotyping. According to Seo et al. (2017), affirms that there is a double standard for women in the workplace, in that they are required to be extra competent and at the same time be remain feminine, which makes difficult for females to gain recognition and advancing themselves up the corporate ladder. Gender stereotyping poses an obstacle to woman are over looked and this blocks woman career advancement.

### **2.6.6 Organizations strategies to support woman**

Conditions in a post-industrial revolution, demands a high degree of commitment from employees. Research indicates that organizations globally have become increasingly concerned with achieving a healthy work place which allows individuals to have a work life balance (Noronha & Aithal, 2017). Organizational support strategies should be positively associated with job satisfaction and performance as well as family-work spillover, job performance and satisfaction (Clark, et al., 2018). In South Africa, employers need to be more sensitive to work life balance since it ultimately affects employees, their families and the organization.

### **2.6.6.1 Flexible work arrangement**

Flexible work arrangements exist as a solution which organizations make use to assist women in managing the domains of both work and family responsibilities (Fuller & Hirsh, 2017). Employees can modify their work schedules to compressed work week, whereby they work fewer days in a week and longer hours in order to make up for the days that they are not at work. Flexitime provides employees with the option of changing their times to either start work early and finish work early or start work late and finish work late to accommodate employees with their family and personal responsibilities (Rathore, 2017).

### **2.6.6.2. Telecommuting**

Telecommuting allows a female employee to work from home. This has positive outcomes for working mothers since it allows them to balance their family and work responsibilities whilst working from home (Rathore, 2017) Empirical evidence suggests that telecommuting also reduces work family conflict (Clark, Rudolph, Zhdanova, Michel, Baltes, 2017)). For example, a mother who has to take care of her ill child, can achieve her goal as a caregiver and employee by working from home and at the same time looking after her child. Other studies indicate that telecommuting and flexibility contribute to a positive employer-employee relationship, thereby increasing job satisfaction and commitment (Choi et al., 2018).

O'Carrol, (2017) claims, that the downside to flexibility in the work place can be a challenge since it may hinder organizational deadlines and consequently affecting productivity and individual performance. O'Carrol, (2017) also indicates that the benefits of flexitime and flexi-work arrangements far outnumber the risks and challenges of flexibility and has a positively consequences for both the organization and employee. For an employee it positively impacts on their psychological well-being, thereby reducing stress and anxiety levels and increasing energy, commitment and motivation levels. Other studies (Francis, 2018) claim that flexibility has been linked to reduced employee turnover. Overall, flexibility and telecommuting contribute to increased productivity and a happier work force (Choi et al., 2018).

## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

The literature review reviewed the empirical evidence of the study. The theoretical framework was built on human capital theory which justifies that females consciously chose not to progress and advance in their career due to family commitments. The social capital theory examines the relationship between mentoring and networking and career advancement which claims that the more connected females are to social network the greater the chances of career advancement and success. The third theory is upper echelon theory which suggests that the gender of an organization's CEO is likely to play a role in the advancement of female employees. The fourth theory, which is social identity theory is based on two groups, which are the 'in' and 'out' group. The in group seeks to discriminate against the out group, leading to a lack of resources and opportunities for the out group. This chapter also reviewed the support strategies which an organizational may adopt to eliminate the challenges experienced by female employees. Chapter 3 reviews the methodology employed in the research process.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

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#### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter three examines and discusses the rationale for the methodology adopted to conduct the study. It also reviews the methodology used to test the research problem and ensure that the results produced are of a high quality so as to generalize these across a sample group and add value to body of empirical evidence. This chapter also examines the research paradigms, design, strategy and setting of the study, target population and sampling strategy, data collection methodology and analysis employed in the study.

#### **3.2 Aim of the study**

The aim of the study was to investigate if multi role conflict affects upward career advancement for female employees, to determine if there a positive association between social capital resources and career advancement for female employees, to investigate if female managers support other female employees in their career progression journey, to investigate if gender stereotyping affects upward career progression and finally to ascertain what support strategies organizations can utilize to support their female employees in career advancement.

#### **3.3 Research design and methodology**

The research design refers to the overall strategy that a researcher employs to connect different aspects of the study in a logical way, thereby ensuring that the research problem is addressed and the research questions are answered (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). It creates the strategic 'blueprint' for collecting, measuring and analysing data (Ngunyi, 2015). The most appropriate research design for this study was a survey design, since it allowed the researcher to collect data through obtaining respondents information in order to understand the representative

sample group. A descriptive cross-sectional design was chosen for this study because it is concerned with determining relationship between variables and the frequency with which an event takes place (Terreblanche et al., 2006). The chosen research design also allows for a large number of respondents to participate in the study within a limited time frame (Welman & Kruger, 2001).

The research methodology utilized was a quantitative approach which was selected in order to gain objective and quantifiable results (Terreblanche et al., 2006). A computer-based self-administered questionnaire that provided for descriptive measurement of the challenges experienced by females in their upward career advancement process into senior management was used for data collection. The results generated from the questionnaire were used to identify the support strategies that employers may adopt in order to eliminate or minimize these challenges faced by female employees, as described further in chapter five.

### **3.4 Research paradigm**

The Post-positivism paradigm approach underpins a quantitative study. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016), a positivism paradigm is used in research to determine the causal relationship and provide an explanation of the phenomena being studied. The post-positivism approach is based on a scientific method and uses factual and objective knowledge whereby results can be quantifiable and measurable (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The aim of a quantitative study is to collect data which either support or dispute the theory of the research (Welman & Kruger, 2001). This paradigm was deemed most appropriate for this study because positivist research protects against bias, controls alternative explanations, ensures a high level of reliability, and findings may be generalized across a sample group (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The components of the Positivism paradigm make it an appropriate paradigm for the purpose of this study.

### **3.5 Study setting**

The study setting was the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and a leading petroleum company in Durban, South Africa. The setting was chosen for the research since there are many female students who are studying at the university on a part-time basis and also permanently employed at different industry sectors. The petroleum

company was selected since there was access to professionals which boosted the sample size. The results of the study can be generalized across a sample group.

### **3.6 Population and sample of the study**

The target population included female students at a UKZN campus who were based in Durban, studying part-time at the institution and also employed on a full-time capacity within an organization, as well as female employees at a leading Petroleum company in Durban. The study sample consisted of employed females only. The race group of the represented sample was Indian, African, White and Colored female employees between the ages of 25-45 years old, who were employed within different industry sectors and held a post graduate qualification. The reliability of the results produced from the target population is likely to be high, since the target population was a representative sample, which reduced the risk of sampling related bias (Terre Blanche et al. 2006).

### **3.7 Sampling method**

Random sampling was used as the preferred method of collecting data. The advantage of random sampling is meant to be unbiased surveying technique (Saunders et al. 2016). It is considered a fair way to select a sample from a larger population since each member of the population has an equal opportunity to be selected. As they represent the total sampling population, the inferences drawn from such samples can be generalized to the total sampling population (Ngunyi, 2015). A sample size of 150 respondents was set as the target, to achieve a sample size of at least 100 respondents to ensure reliability of research findings.

### **3.8 Construction of the research instrument**

A sample survey methodology was used for the purpose of the study. The survey instrument was created by brainstorming ideas through the current academic literature. The survey instrument was developed for the purpose of this study and has never been used previously. According to Saunders et al., (2016), survey methodology is feasible for collecting and analyzing standardized data drawn from large sample groups. There was a pilot study done with a small sample group of students to identify problems or difficulties in the interpretation of the questions. Pilot study increases the

validity of a research instrument (Saunders et al., 2016). A Likert scale was used in the development of the questionnaire. The developed questionnaire was then fed into 'Question Pro' which is a web-based program used as software package to create the on-line survey. The first section reviewed the respondent's demographical information. The second section had a list of statements that relate to the objectives of the study and respondents were required to agree, disagree in their responses. The answers on the scale were weighted as follows 1 – Strongly disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Agree, 4 – Strongly Agree. The weighting of the responses allows the researcher to analyze the data at a faster rate (Saunders et al. 2016).

### **3.9 Data Collection**

Data was collected after the instrument was tested for validity and reliability. Gate keeper's approval was granted by two gate keepers and ethical clearance was granted by the University of Kwa Zulu Natal. An online survey allowed for the questionnaire to be sent out to the respondents electronically via email and WhatsApp. A cover letter which served as information to respondents and consent to participate in the study, was sent with the questionnaire. The survey was designed to take an average of approximately five minutes to complete. A follow up email was sent out again two weeks' later to participants who had not yet completed their questionnaire. All completed questionnaires were sent back to Question Pro for the collation of data. The challenge with the online questionnaire lay in obtaining informed consent from participants. To overcome this challenge, the informed consent note, was included into the questionnaire, so respondents were aware of the ethics surrounding the study, and that their participation in the study was fully voluntarily and the responses obtained would be kept confidential.

### **3.10 Data analysis**

The raw data was exported in a CSV file directly from Questionpro. The data was then analyzed using SPSS program. Respondent data was analyzed using inferential statistics, specifically using Pearson's correlation at a significant level of 0.05 and chi square test values which were interpreted using p-values.

### **3.11 Reliability and validity of the study**

Reliability refers to random error in measurement and the accuracy or precision of measuring instrument (Saunders, et al., 2016). In quantitative studies reliability is relatively high, whilst validity may be low. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient is commonly used to evaluate the reliability of questionnaires through the test re-test approach. This approach measures the degree to which the test is consistent over a period of time. To make certain that data quality was not compromised, call backs to respondents were done to get clarity on their responses and gauge how they responded on the research questions. Validity is defined as the extent to which a concept is accurately measured. Both reliability and validity are used for defining and measuring bias and distortion of concepts (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

### **3.12 Bias**

Research has a certain degree of bias which poses a potential limitation in the study. Researcher and respondents bias are the two main limitations of the study. Researcher bias is a prevalent and controversial phenomenon currently being studied around the world (Welman & Kruger, 2001). The researcher must recognize and be aware of researcher bias, as one cannot be completely neutral. Human beings carry their own feelings, emotions and opinions on given topics, hence the use of a quantitative approach for this study. The researcher must develop a neutral stance when capturing data and providing respondents with feedback (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The computer software package minimized researcher bias since data was objectively analyzed. The research did not have face to face contact with the participants which also minimized researcher bias.

Respondent Bias: Respondents were required to acknowledge an indemnity and consent prior to the completion of the study. Participants may have felt a certain degree of an obligation to co-operate and may not have responded to the questions honestly. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale with specific questions and limited responses in an attempt to curb responder bias.

### **3.13 Ethical considerations**

Written consent was obtained from the gate keepers and the ethics committee at the University of KwaZulu Natal and the Petroleum company prior to data collection. All respondents participating in the study have acknowledged an indemnity and consent to participate in the study. The participants were given written information spelling out the nature and purpose of the study, expected benefits of the study, confidentiality and anonymity measures applied during the study, the option to take part or withdraw from participating from the study, and that the research conducted operates strictly on ethical principles.

### **3.14 Chapter summary**

This chapter highlighted an overview of the aim of the study, research design and methodology, research paradigm, study setting, population and sample of the study, sampling method, construction of the instrument, data collection and analysis, reliability and validity of the study, bias and ethical considerations. Chapter four will present the analysis and findings of the study relative to the research objectives.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

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#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates and presents the findings of the results obtained from the online electronic survey. Chapter four illustrates the participants and demographic information, industry sector in which participants were employed, position at work, qualification and years of work experience.

#### 4.2 Rating scale

The Likert scale is a rating scale that was used as a tool to assess and evaluate the challenges experienced by females in the workplace that hindered upward career mobility. The scale also evaluates how organizations can create a more conducive culture for females to accommodate their family responsibilities and commitments. The Likert scale ranged from; 1 – Strongly disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Agree, 4 – Strongly Agree. Mean scores greater than 2.5 indicated that the participant had a positive response, whereas if the score was less than 2.5 this indicated that the result was skewed towards it being negative.

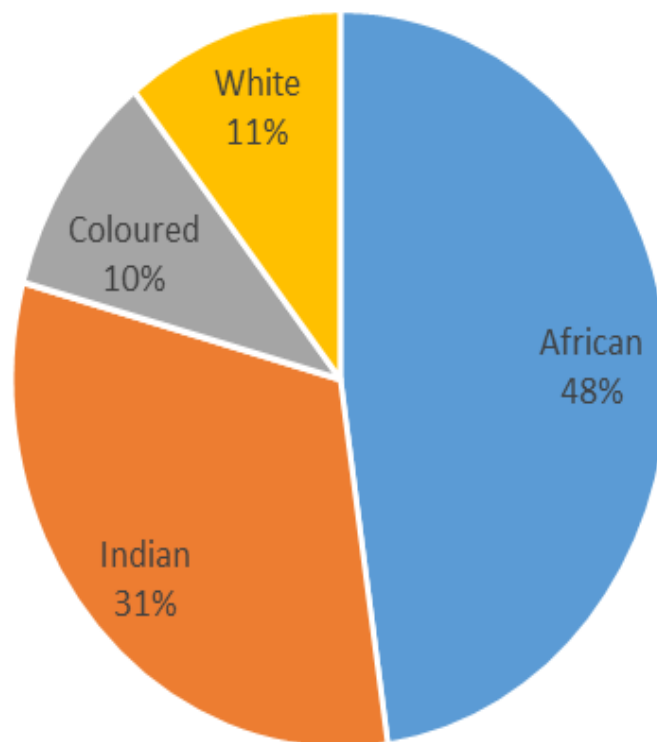
#### 4.3 Participants

The electronic questionnaires were distributed to part time female MBA students at the University of KwaZulu Natal and at a leading Petro-chemical company in Durban via email and Whatsapp communication. A total of 150 surveys were distributed to participants through the use of QuestionPro. The online survey was emailed to participants from 07 September 2018 to 30 September 2018, the total number of completed questionnaires were 134, which represents a completion rate of 89.3% and 10.7% drop out rate. This is deemed to be an adequate response rate for survey type research (Johnson & Wislar, 2012). QuestionPro indicated the average participant time taken to complete the survey was five minutes. Participants were required to complete their demographic information which included their race, age, children

dependents, sector employed within, position at work, years of work experience and qualification. The demographics for the participants are presented.

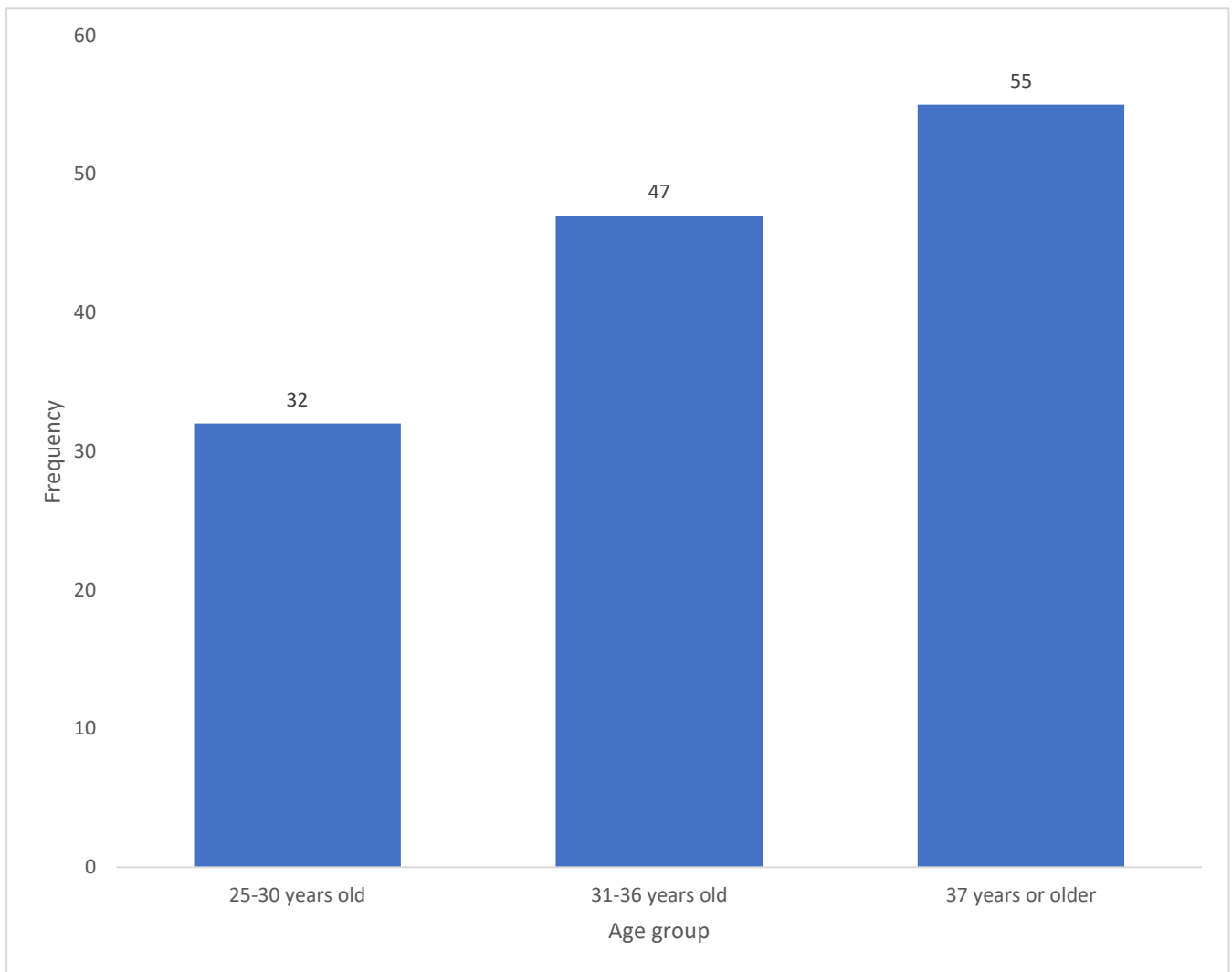
#### 4.4 Respondent characteristics

The results illustrated in Figure 4.1 indicate the race groups of the 134 participants who completed the self-administered questionnaire. Results indicated that the sample group consisted of 48% African, 31% Indian, 11% White and 10% Coloured. The sample collected shows a good representation of the census data which make up Durban.



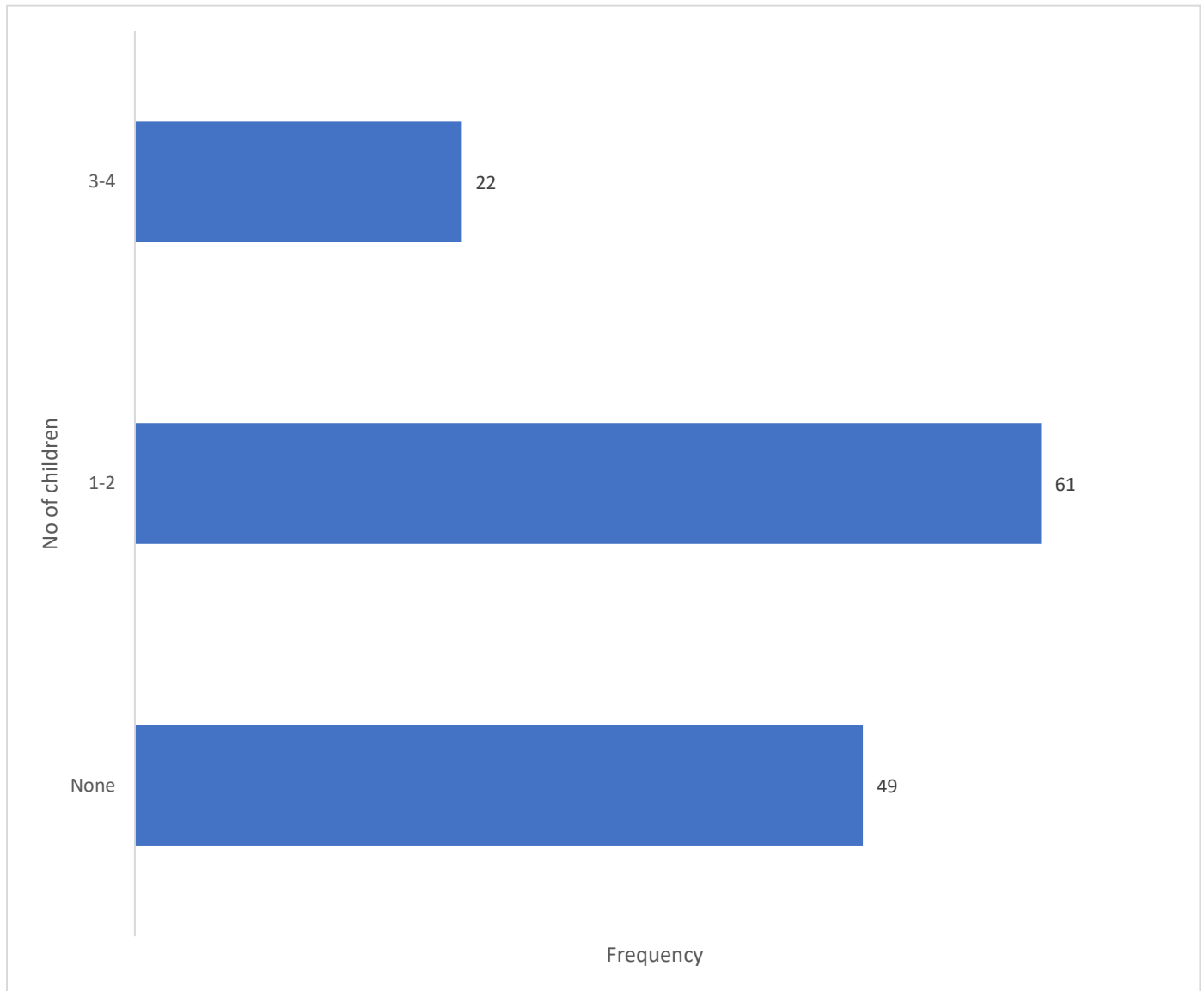
**Figure 4.1: Distribution of race**

Figure 4.2 shows that 76% of the participants were older than 30 years, whilst 24% of the participants were between the age of 25-30 years old.



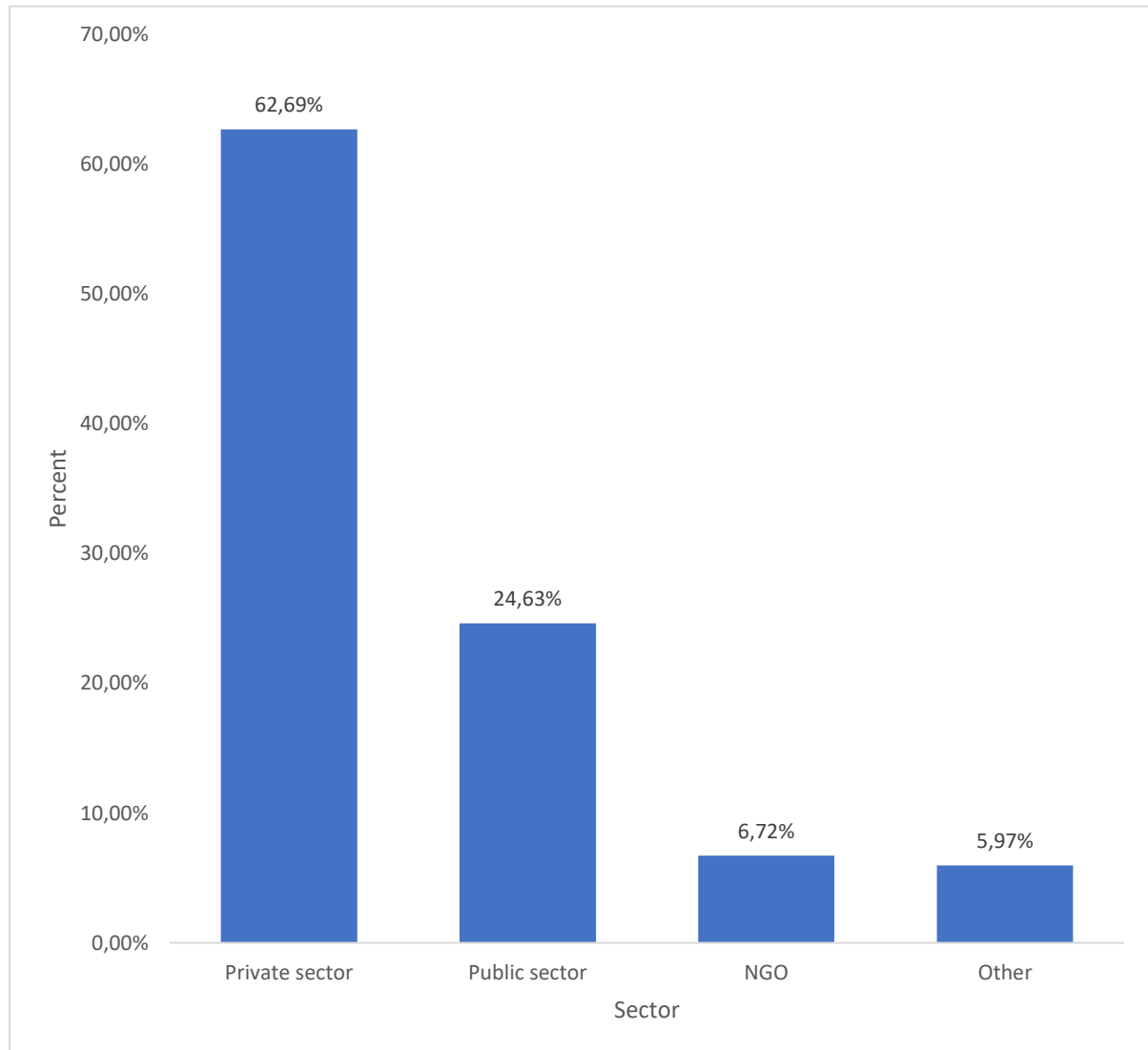
**Figure 4.2: Age distribution**

Fig 4.3 reveals that more than a third of the participants 37% did not have any dependent (children) and 46% had between 1-2 children. Whilst 17% of the participants had 3-4 children who were dependent on them.



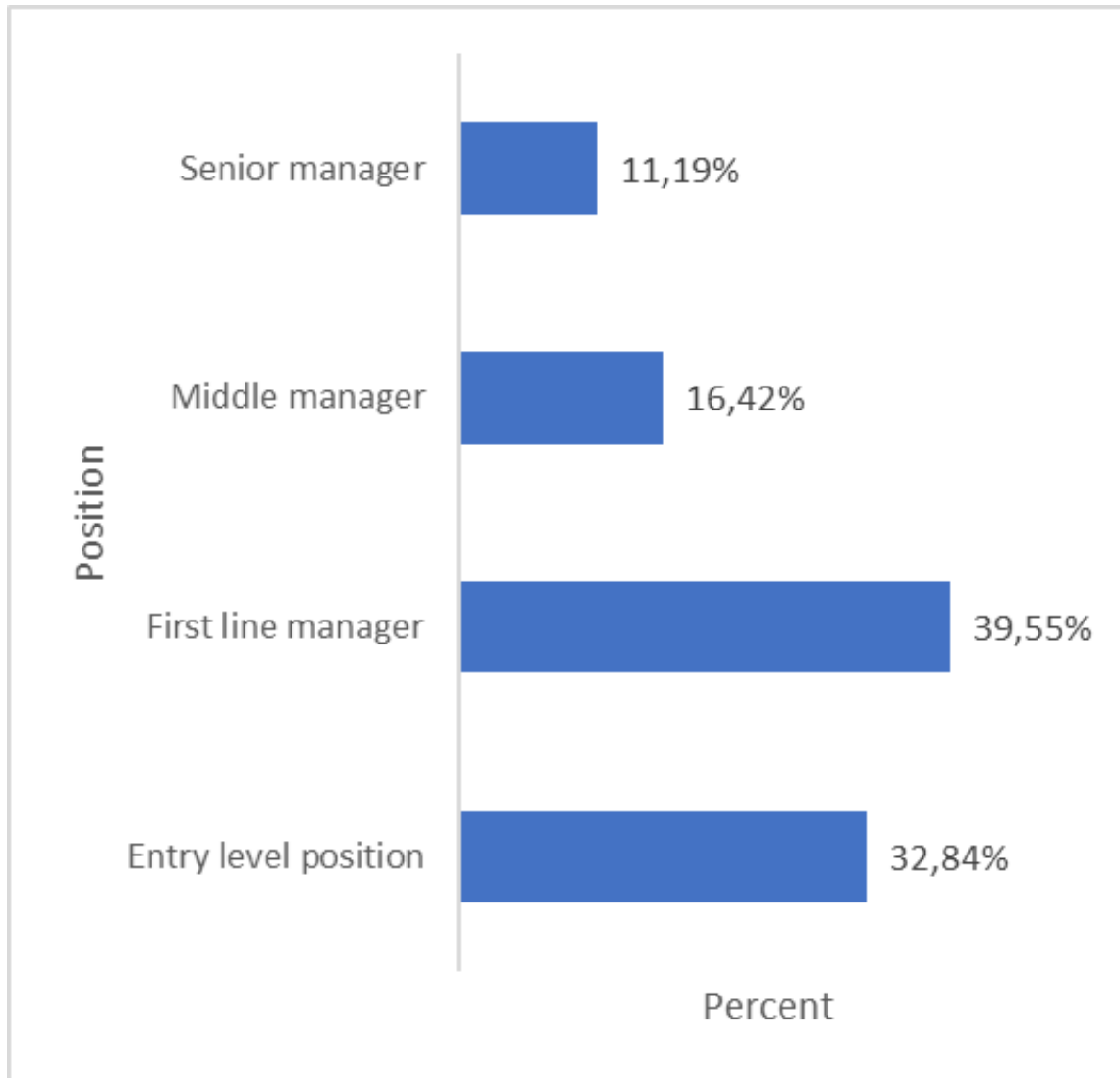
**Figure 4.3: No of dependent children**

Results in Fig 4.4 showed that 63% of the participants were from the private sector followed by public sector 25%, whilst close to 7% were employed within a non-governmental organization and the rest of the participants worked within their own business. Most of the participants in the study were employed in the private sector.



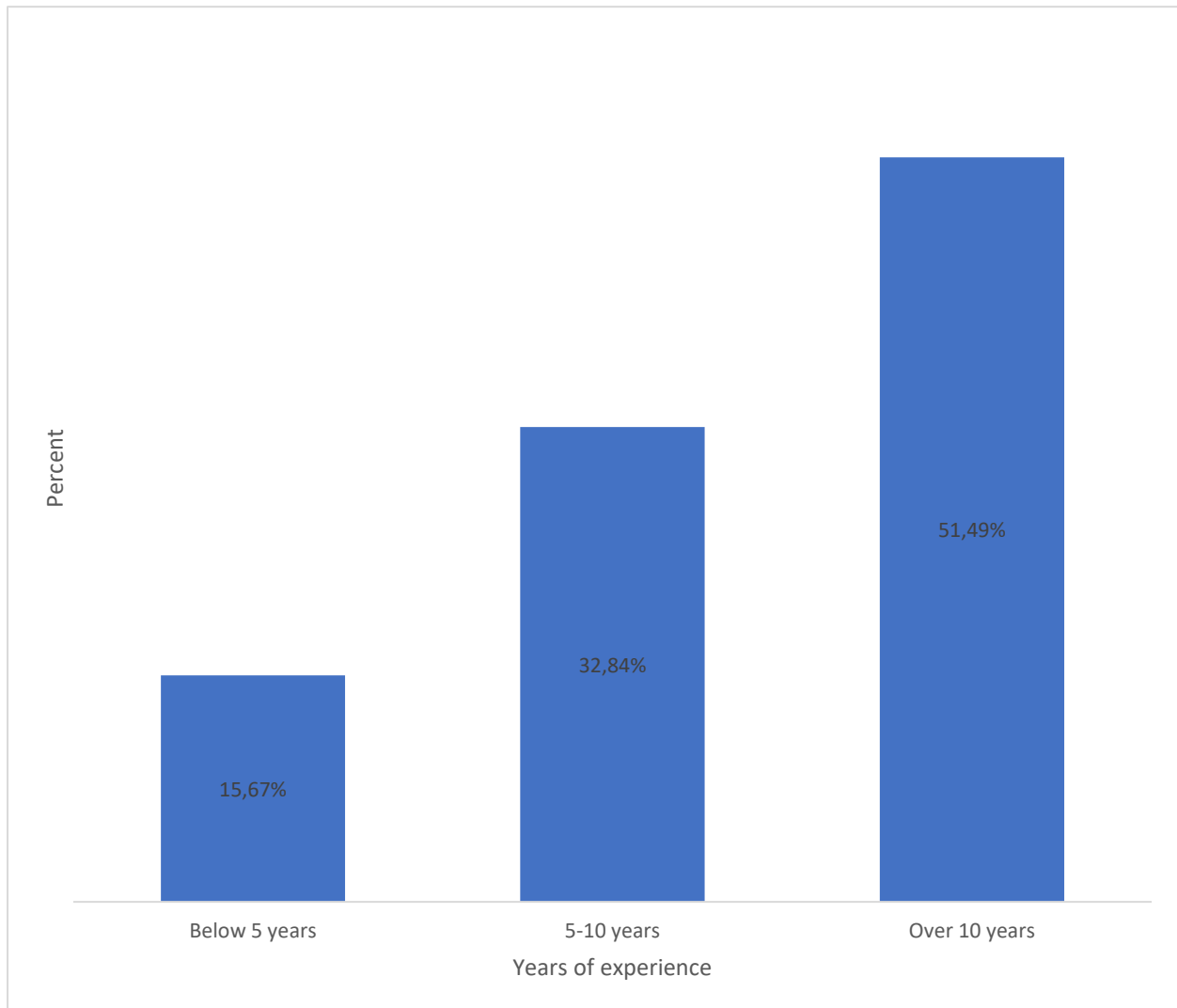
**Figure 4.4: Employment Sector**

Figure 4.5 indicates that 40% of the participants were employed as first line manager followed by entry level position 33% employed at an entry level position. Whilst 16% of participants were employed as Middle Managers. The rest of the sample was employed at a senior management level. Females employed at a senior management level represented only 11%.



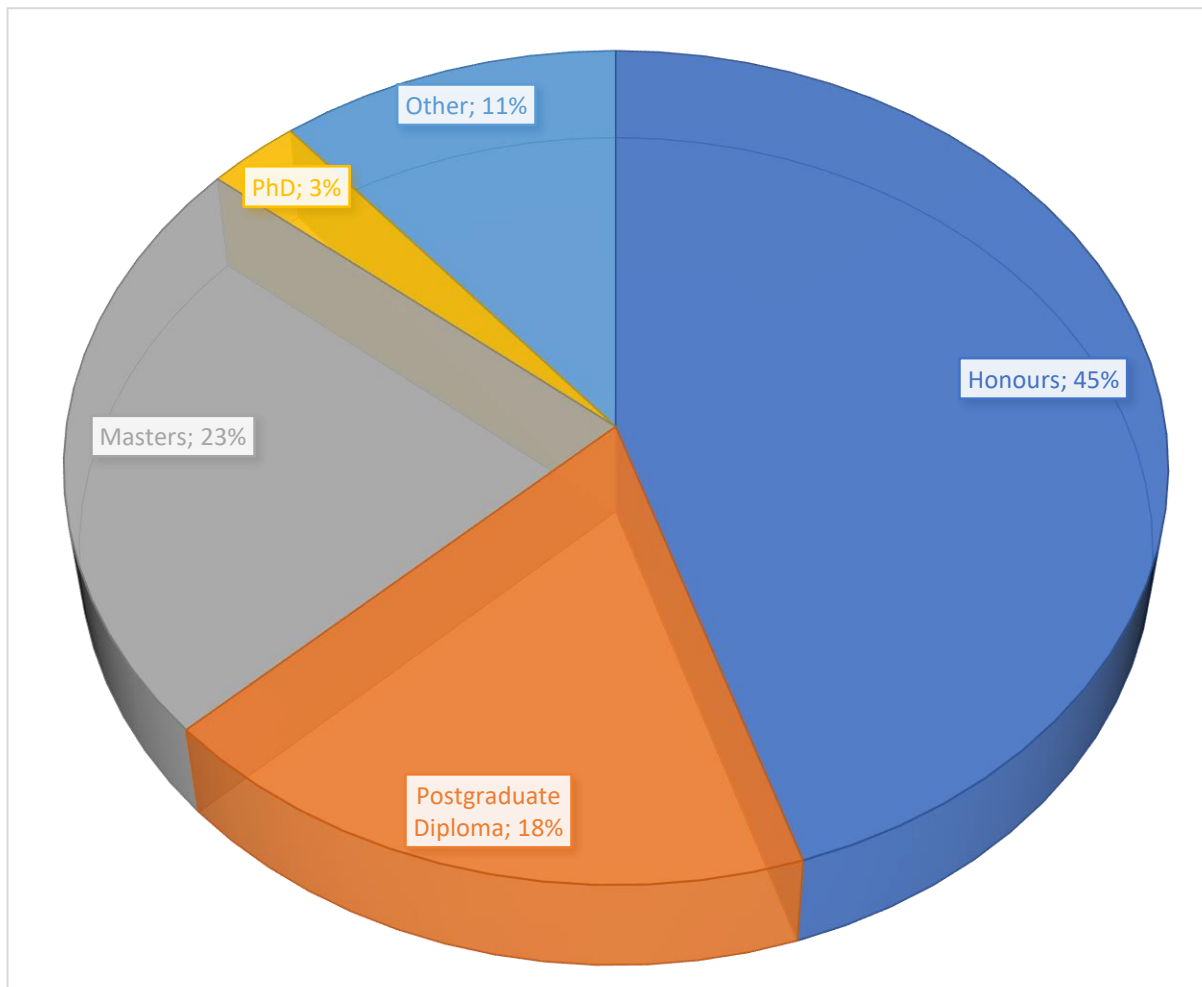
**Figure 4.5: Position at work**

Fig 4.6 indicates that than half of the participants 51% had more than 10 years of experience. Whilst 33% of participants had 5-10 years of experience and 16% of participants had below 5 years of experience.



#### 4.6: Years of experience

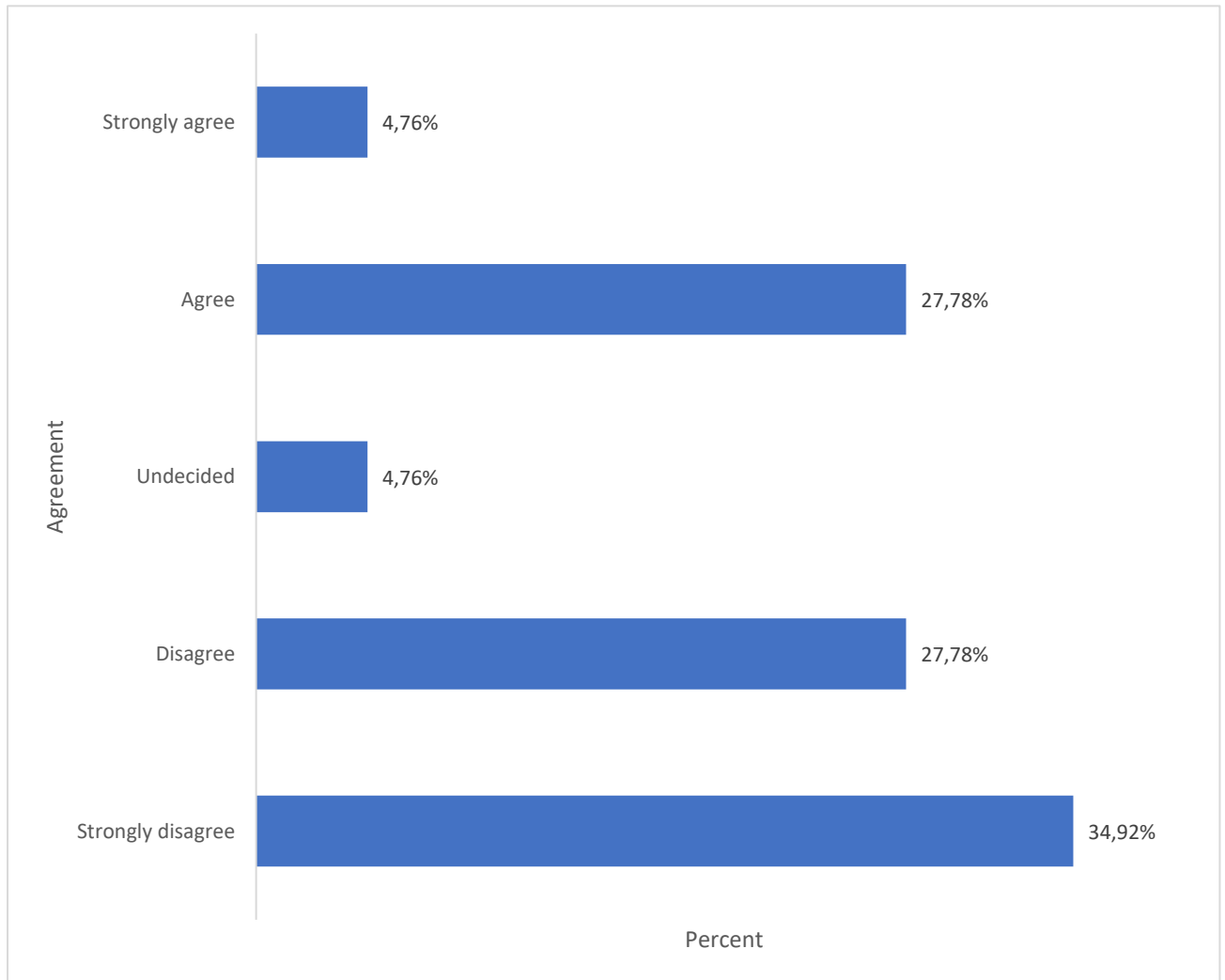
Fig 4.7 illustrates the highest education level that the participants held. According to the results 45% of the participants had honours degrees whilst 23% had Masters degrees. Those with postgraduate diplomas represented 18% of the sample. Whilst PhD graduates constituted 3% of the sample. A total of 11% constituted of other post graduate equivalent qualification.



**Figure 4.7: Highest qualification**

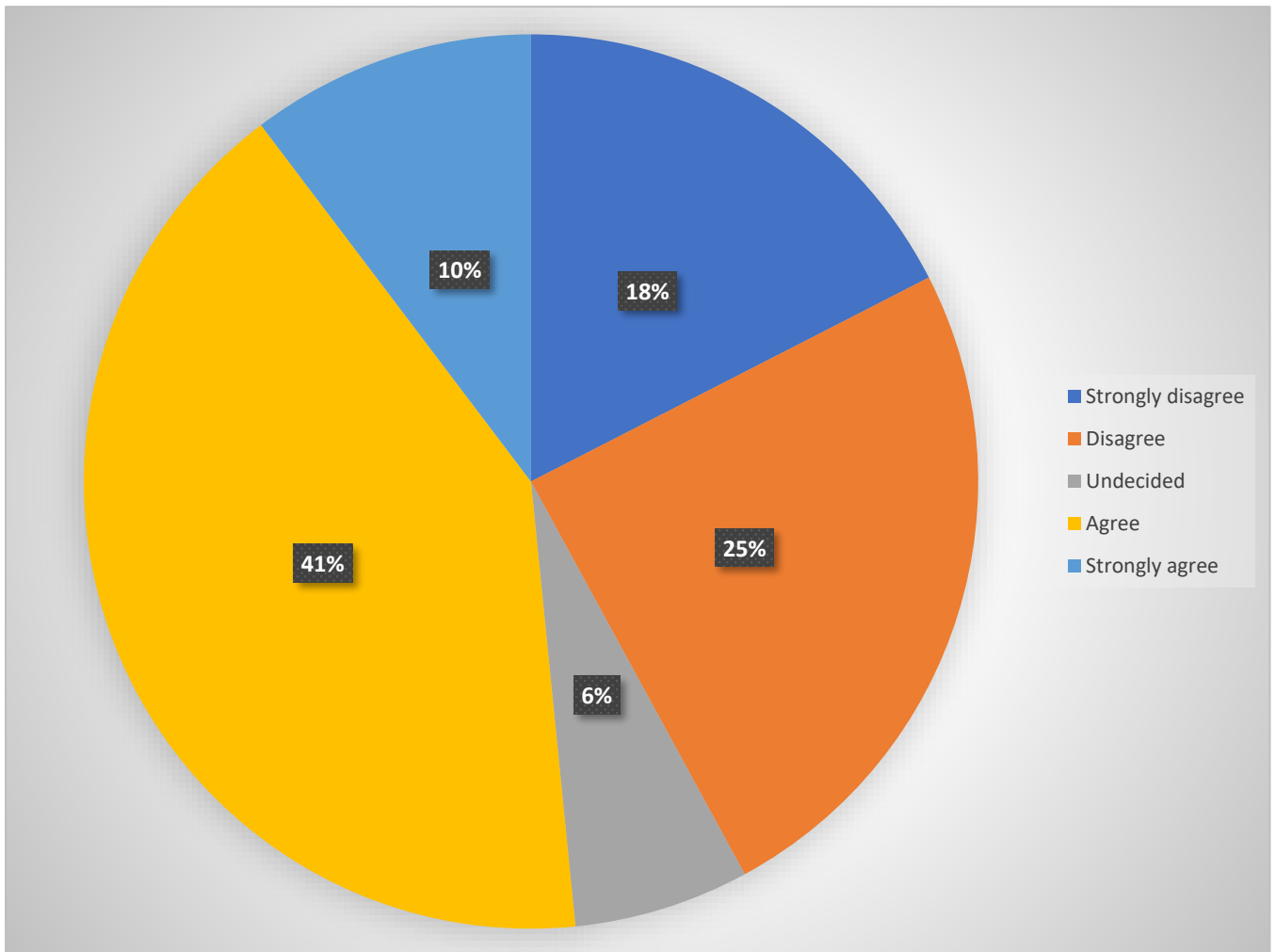
#### 4.5 Hindrances to career progression

The following section presents the findings of responses to questions related to career progression. Results from Figure 4.8 showed that a third of the participants (33%) indicated that they did not seek upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities (Figure 4.8)



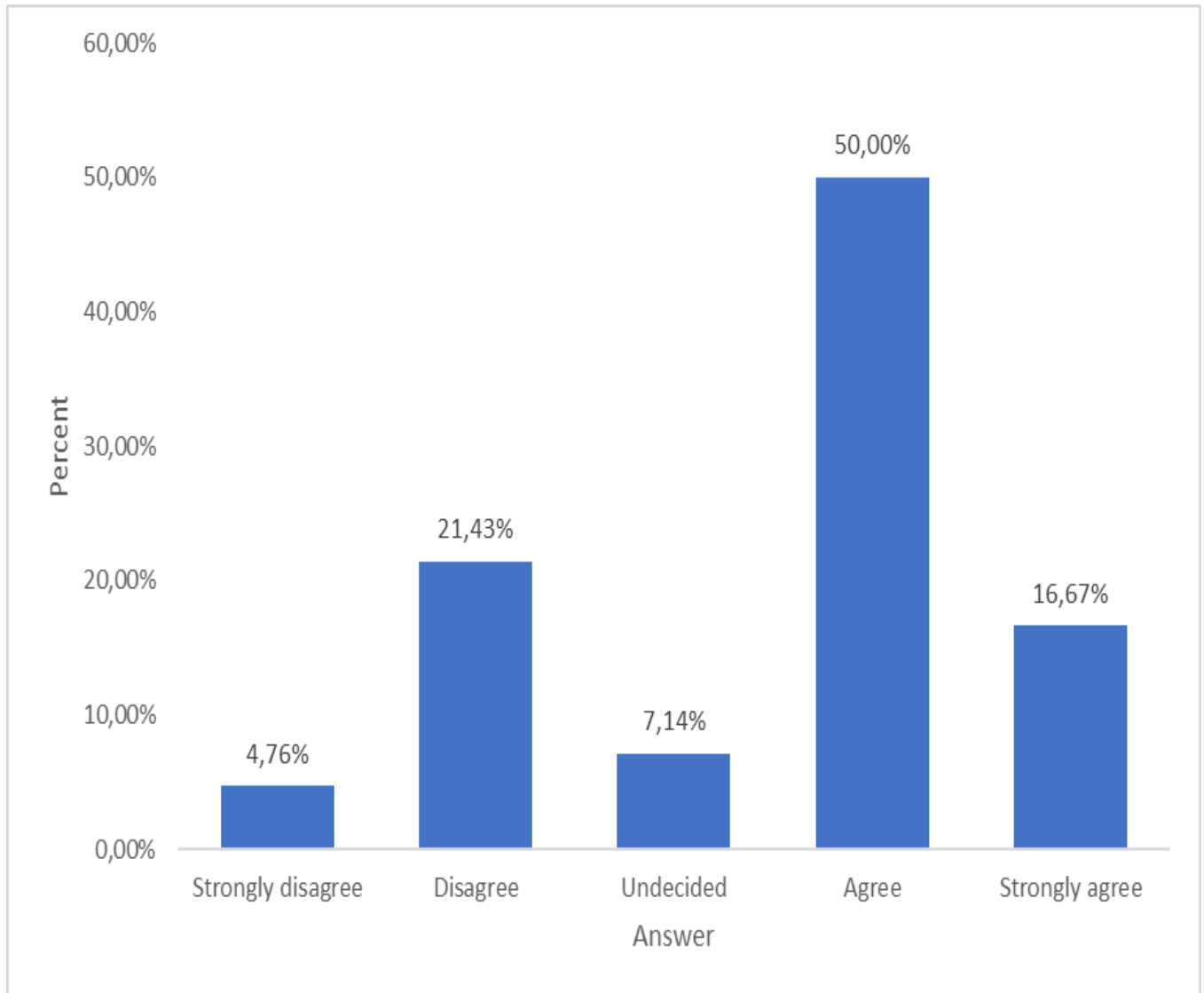
**Figure 4.8: I do not seek upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities**

Figure 4.9 demonstrates that more than half of the participants (51%) turned down job opportunities because of it being too far away from home and did not suite domestic responsibilities (Figure 4.9).



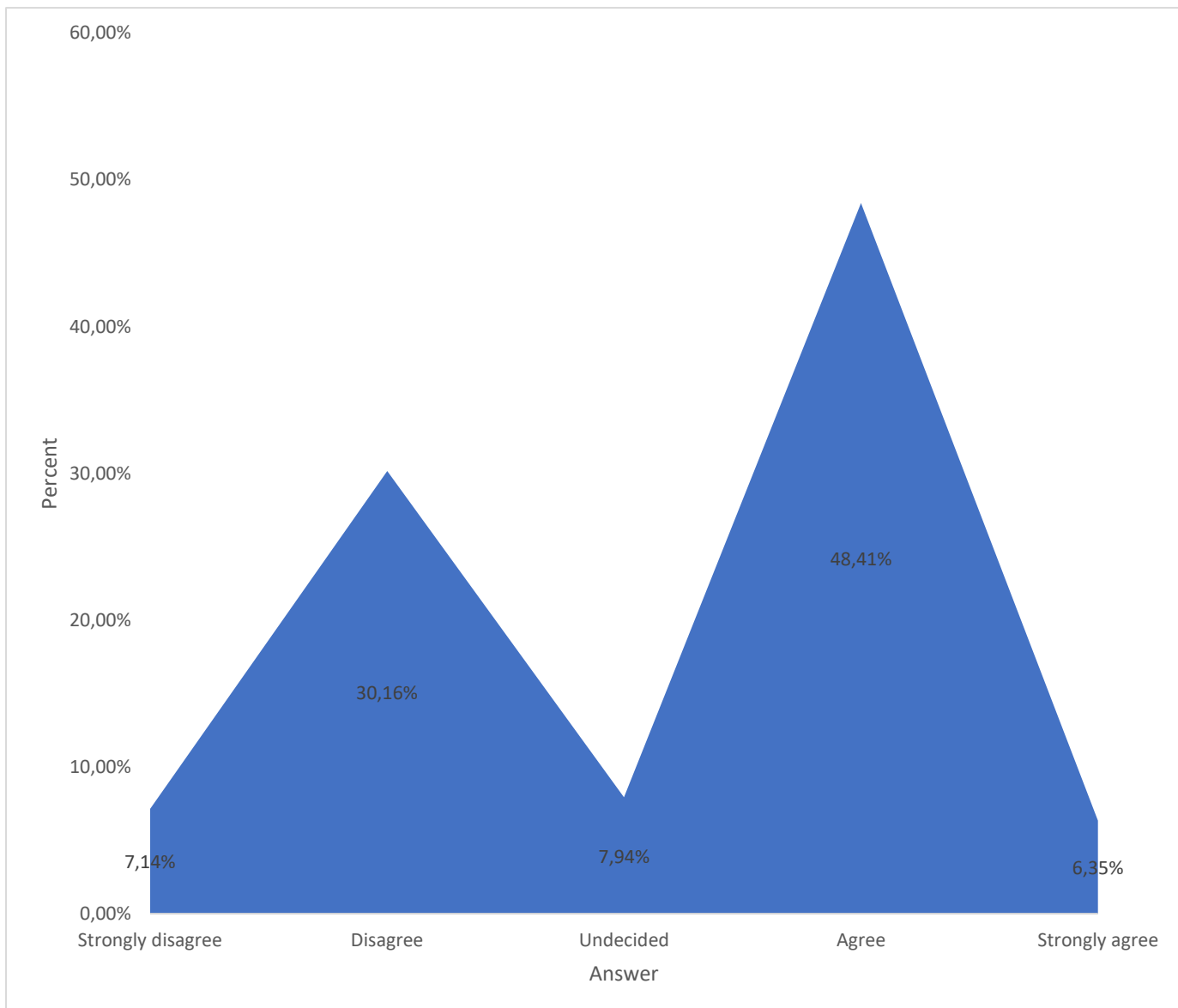
**Figure 4.9: I have turned down job opportunities which are not close to home to suit the needs of my domestic responsibilities**

Figure 4.10 indicate that two-thirds of the participants (67%) of participants reported that their family responsibilities and commitments took precedence over their work life. Whilst 26% of participants disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement (Figure 4.10).



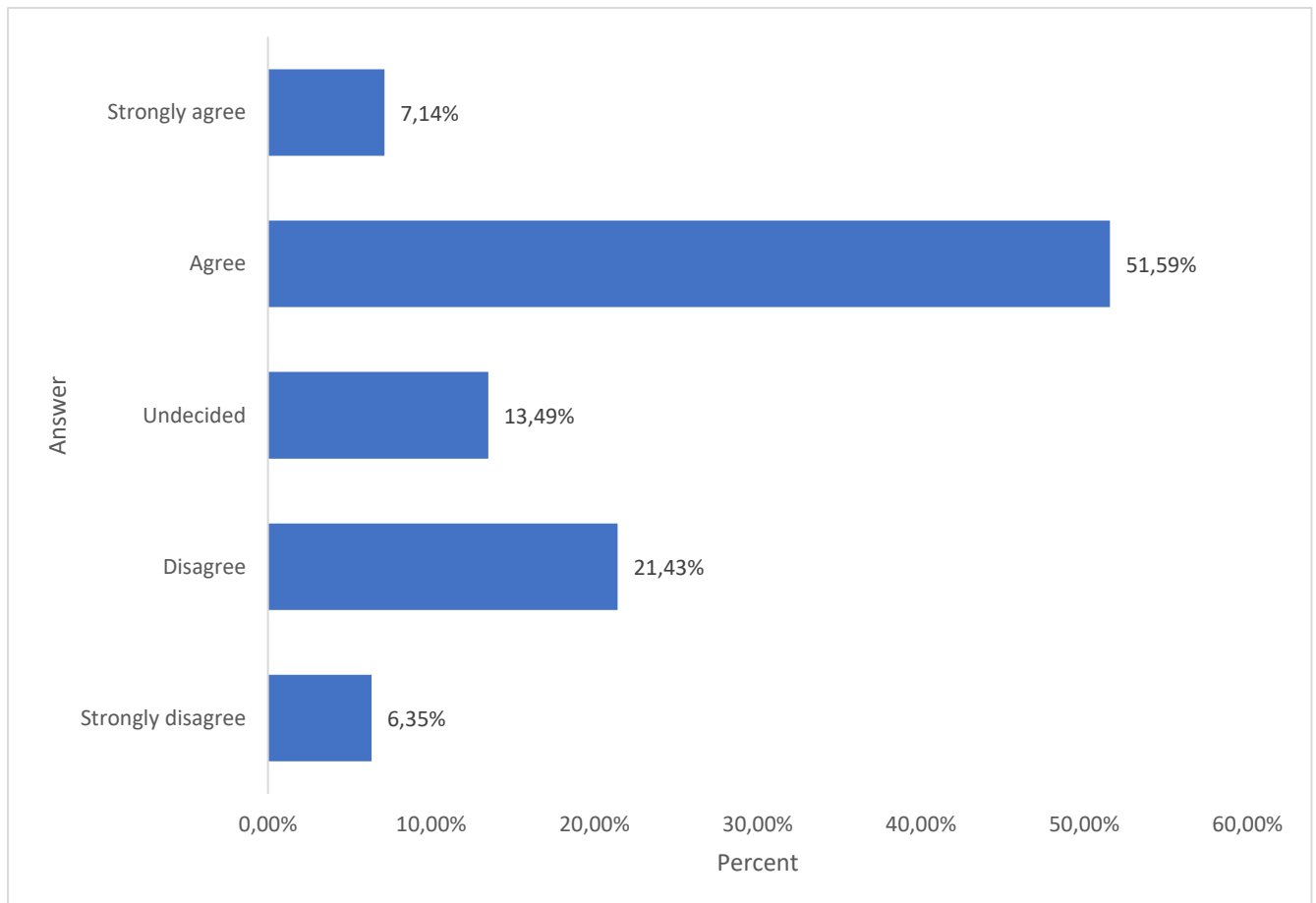
**Figure 4.10: My family responsibilities and commitments take precedence over my work life**

Figure 4.11 indicates that more than a third of the participants disagreed that they had access to mentoring opportunities for the purpose of career development at their organization. Whilst more than 50% of participants agreed that they have access to mentoring opportunities for the purpose of career development (Figure 4.11).



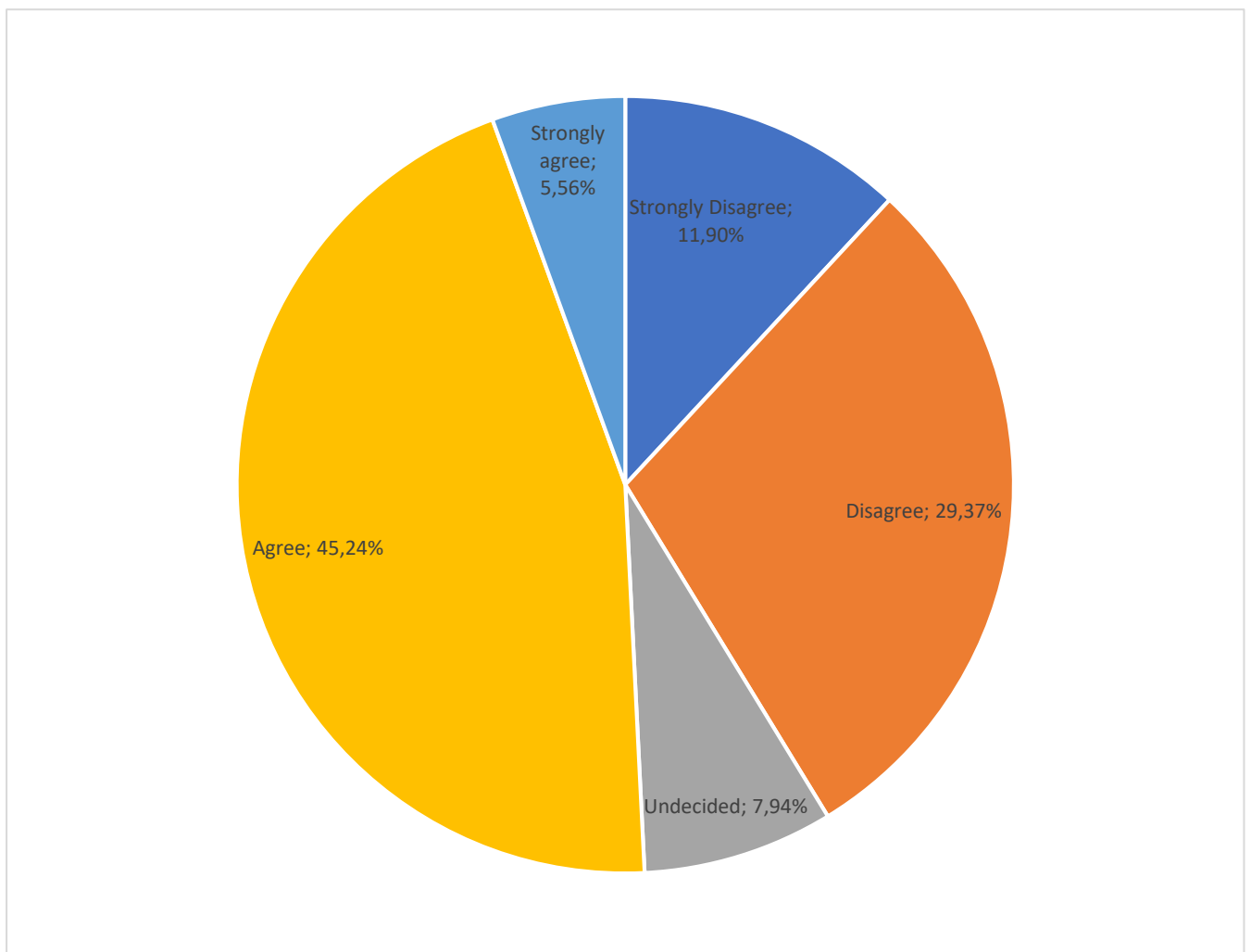
**Figure 4.11: I have access to mentoring opportunities for the purpose of career development at my organization**

Figure 4.12 illustrates that close to 59% of the participants agreed that mentorship is a powerful resource and assisted them in gaining promotion opportunities and salary increments. Whilst 28% of the participants disagreed with this statement. The rest of the responses were undecided on this statement (Figure 4.12).



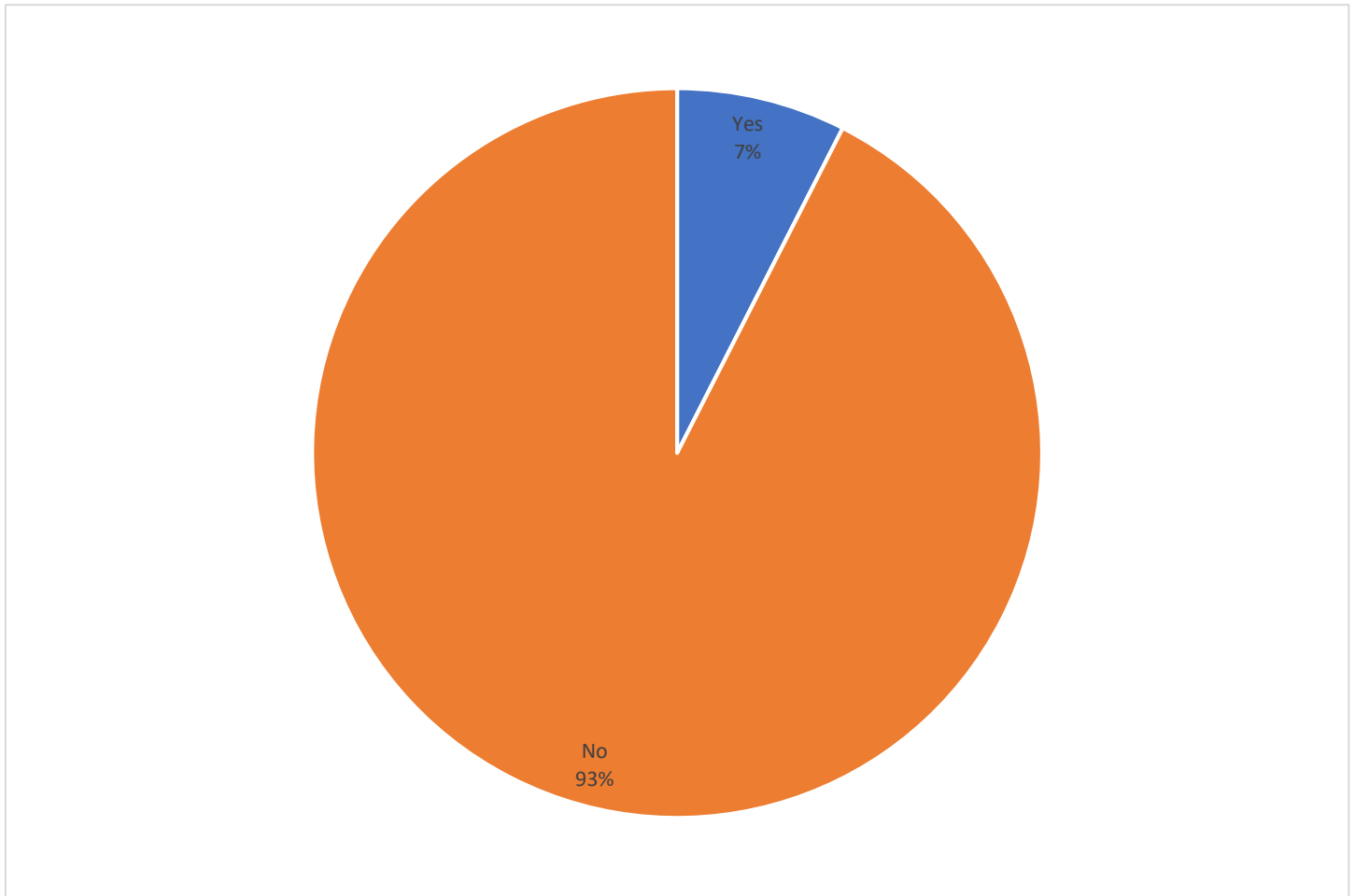
**Figure 4.12: Mentorship is a powerful resource and assisted me in gaining promotion opportunities and salary increments**

Figure 4.13 indicates that 51% of participants have access to mentoring opportunities, network of executives and key decision makers who are able to support their career. Whilst 41% do not have access to mentoring opportunities, network of executives and key decision makers who are able to support their career. 8% of the participants responded by remaining undecided on this statement.



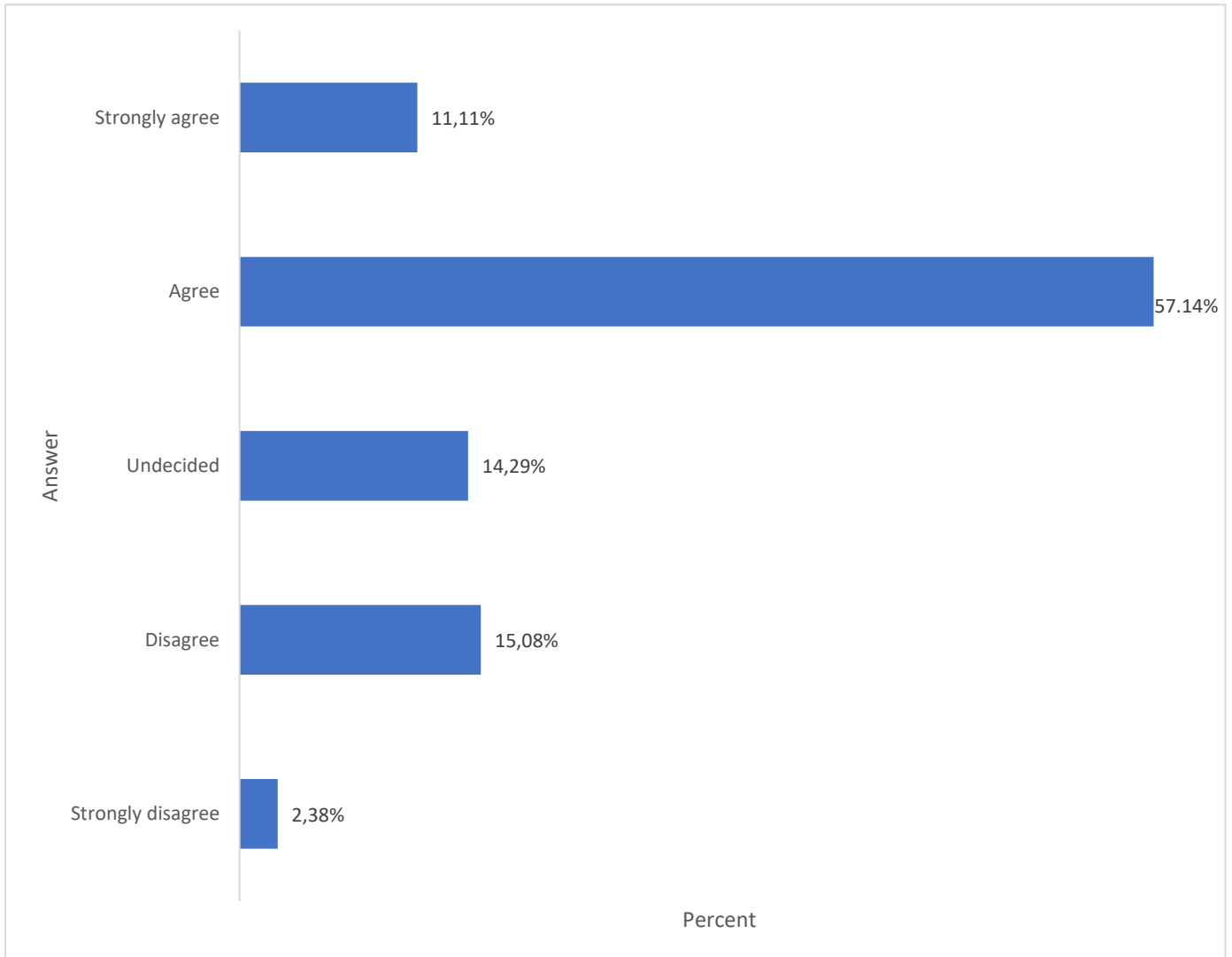
**Figure 4.13: I have access to a network of executives/ or key decision makers within my organization who are able to provide me with career support and mentorship**

Results from Fig 4.14 illustrates that most of the participants (93%) indicated that they do not often socialise with male colleagues/ seniors outside of working hours in social activities that has assisted them in advancing my career. Whilst 7% of the participants responded that they do socialise with their male colleagues and seniors outside of working hours which has assisted them to advance their careers (Figure 4.14).



**Figure 4.14: I often socialise with male colleagues/ seniors outside of working hours in social activities which has assisted me in advancing my career**

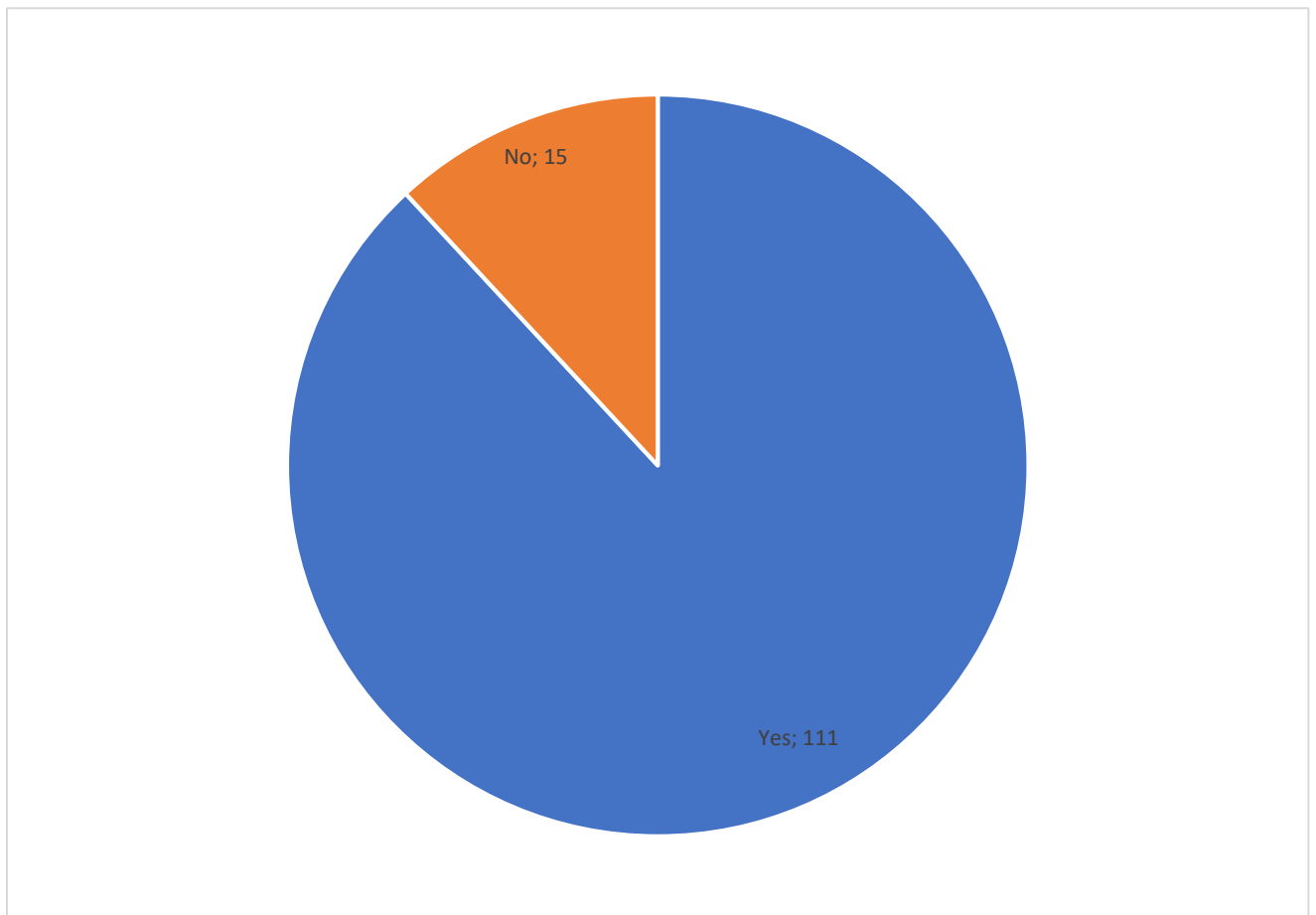
Fig 4.15 reveals that more than two-thirds (68%) of the participants felt that more mentoring and social network opportunities are accessible to males. Whilst 17% of participants disagreed with this statement. 15% of participants remained undecided about the statement below (Figure 4.15).



**Figure 4.15: I feel that more mentoring and social network opportunities are accessible to males**

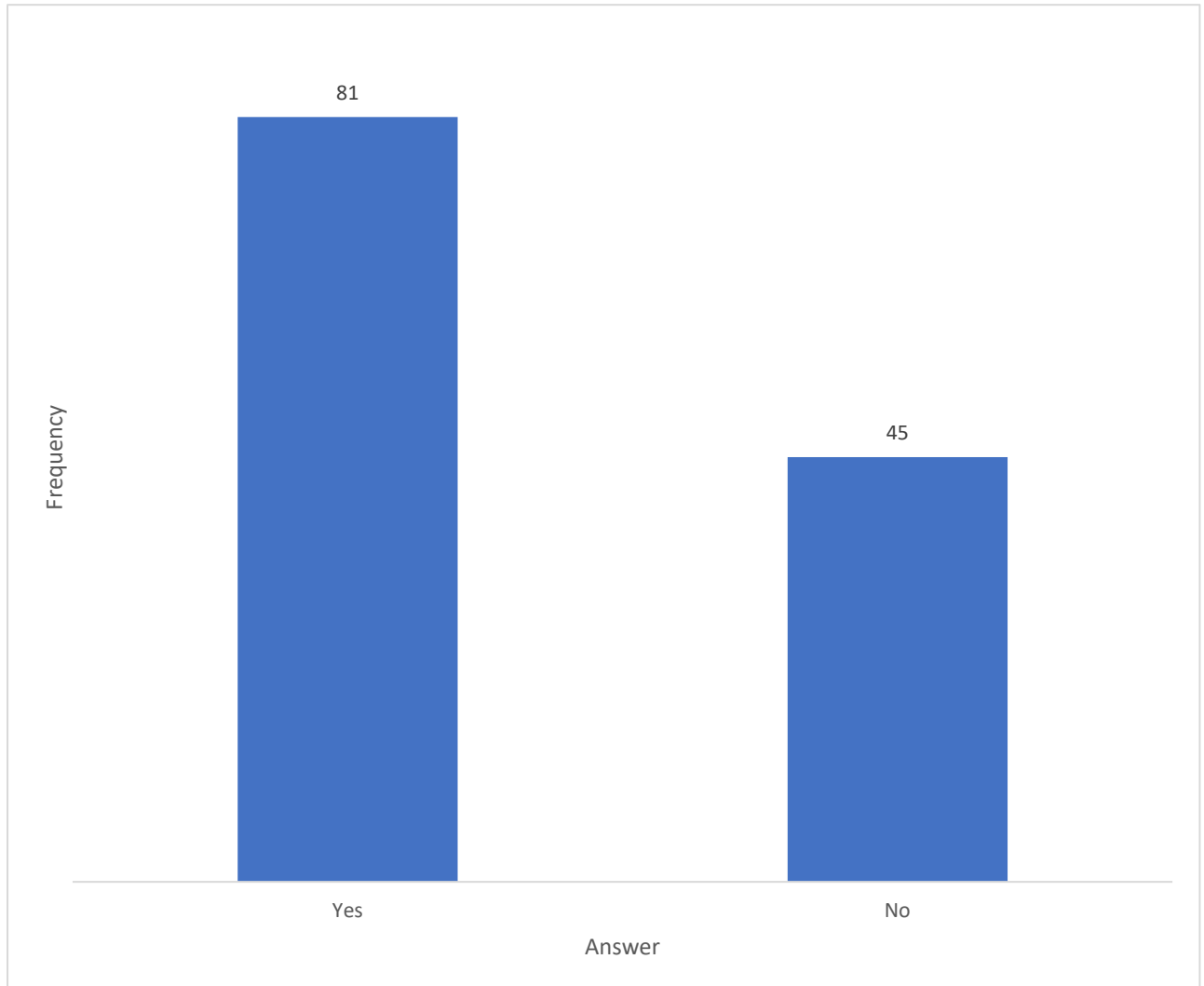
Fig 4.16 results show that 111 of the 134 participants agreed that many of the career advancement struggle and hardships faced by females are attributed to societal stereotypical beliefs and assumptions that females are meant to be a homemaker and child bearer. This indicates that 83% of the participants agreed that female professionals career struggles and hardship are due to societal stereotypical beliefs and assumptions.

Whilst 15 of the 134 participants disagree that female professionals career struggles and hardships are attributed to societal stereotyping and beliefs that females are meant to be homemakers and child bearers. This shows that 11% of the participants disagree with the statement below (Figure 4.16).



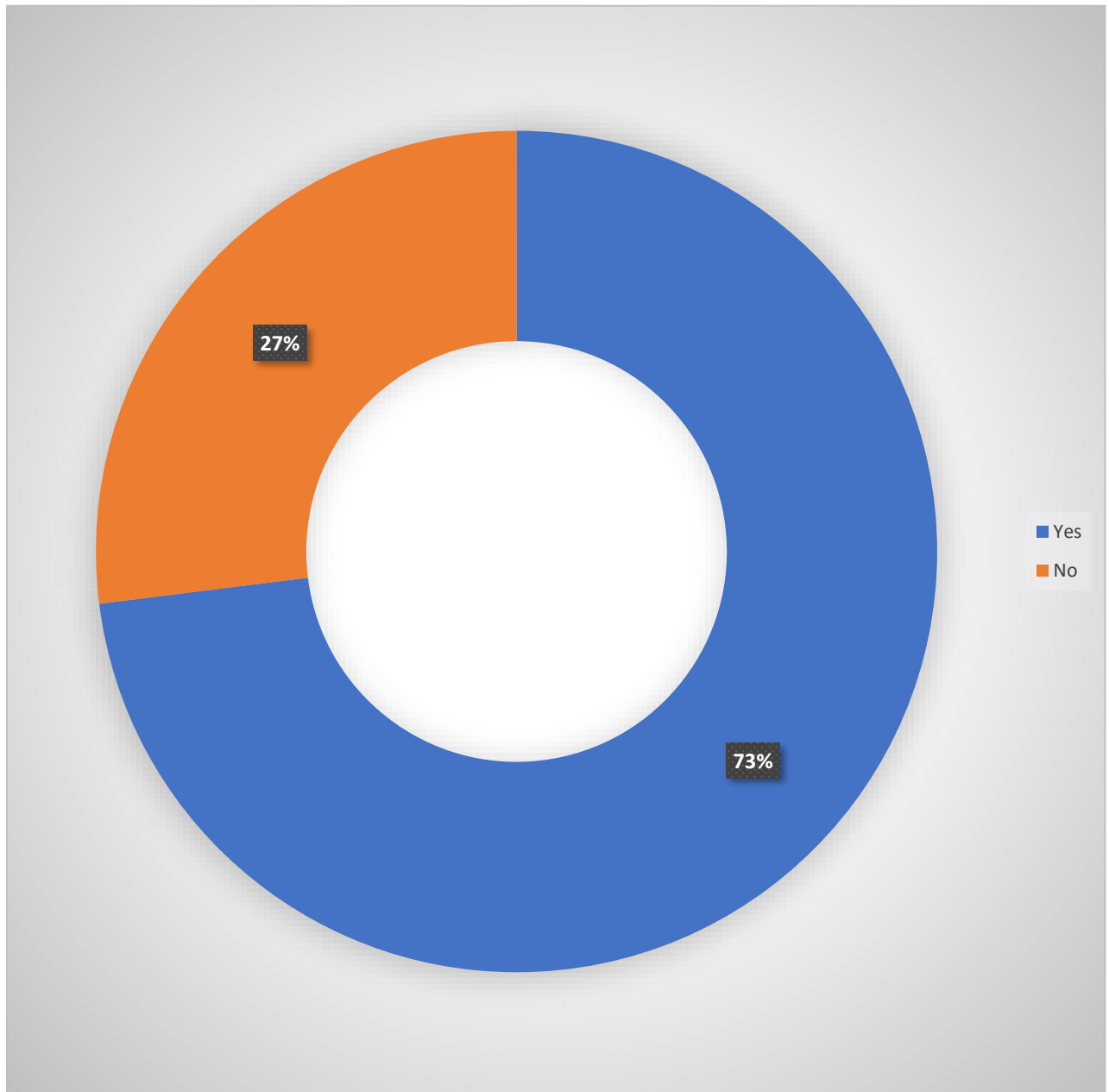
**Figure 4.16: Many of the career advancement struggle and hardships faced by females are attributed to societal stereotypical beliefs and assumptions that females are meant to be a homemaker and child bearer**

Fig 4.17 show that about two-thirds (64%) of the female participants often felt that their work has been questioned due to them being a female. Whilst 36% of the participants responded that they don't feel that their work has been questioned due to them being female (Figure 4.17).



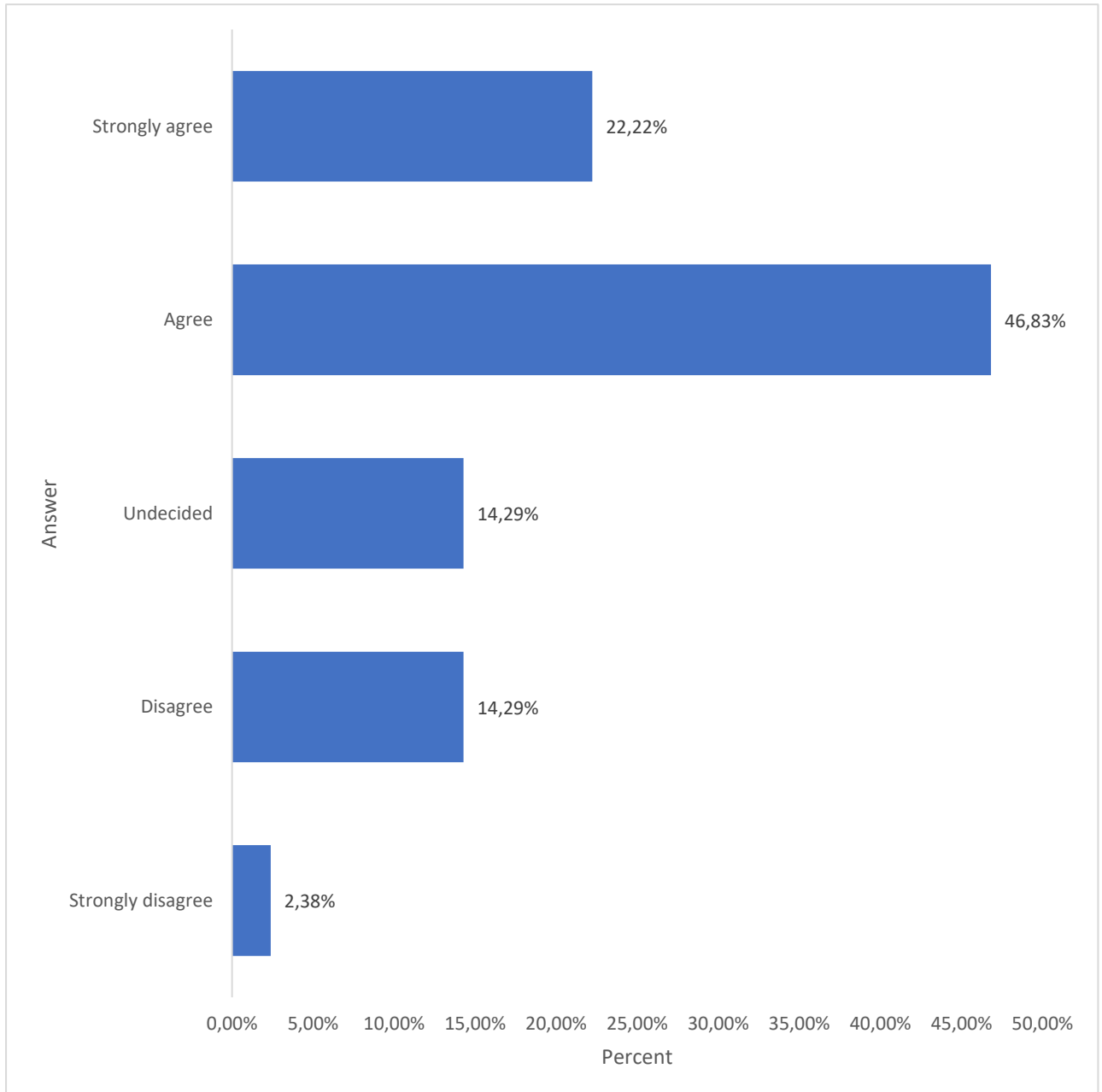
**Figure 4.17: I often feel that my work has been questioned due to me being a female**

Fig 4.18 shows that 73% of the participants felt that they have to work twice as hard as their male counterparts in order to attain promotions. The other 27% of participants disagreed that they have to work twice as hard as their male counterpart in order to attain promotions (Figure 4.18).



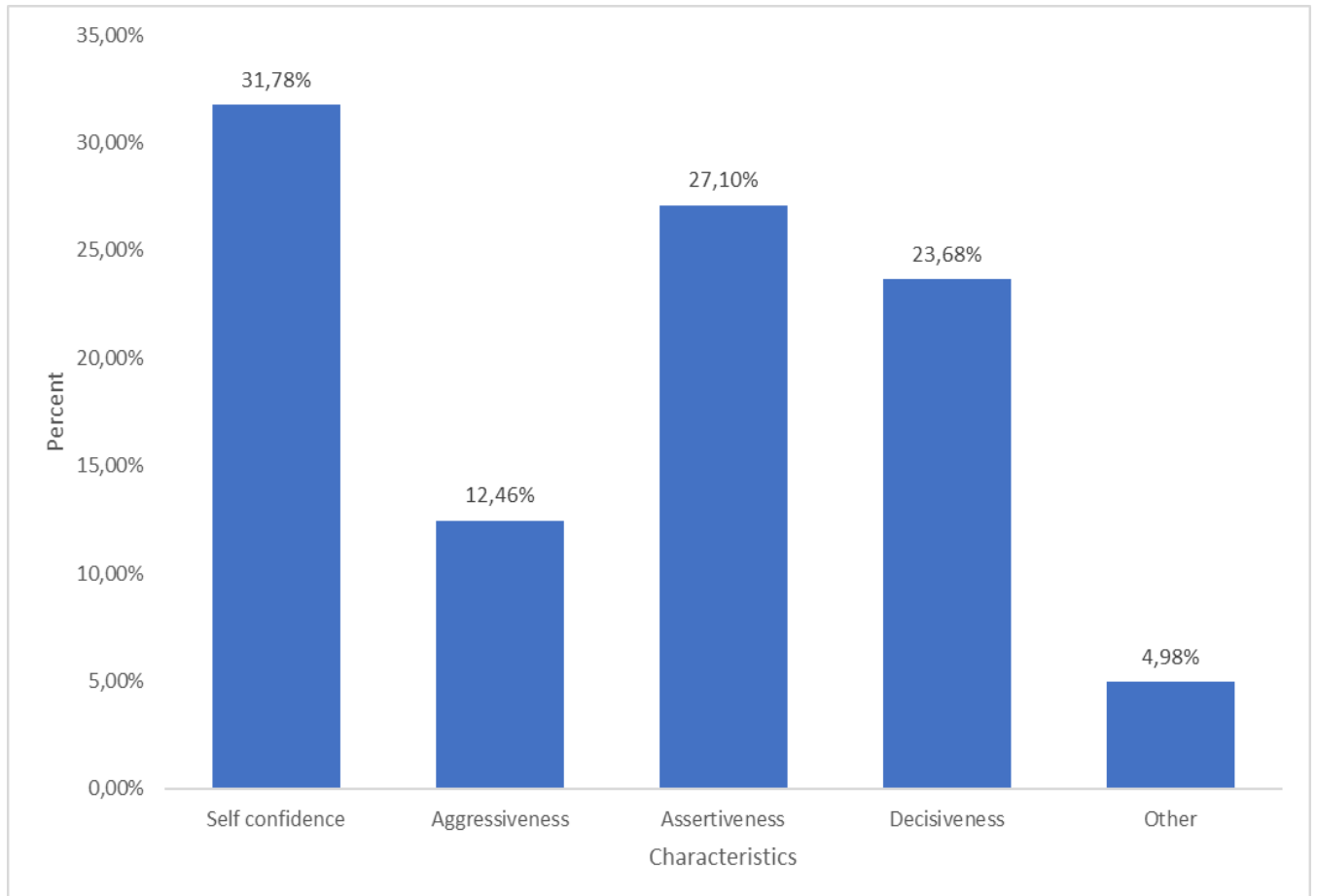
**Figure 4.18: I feel that I have to work twice as hard as male counterpart in order to attain promotions**

Figure 4.19 shows that majority of the participants (69%) reported about management tendency to promote more males within senior management and 17% of participants disagreed that management has the tendency to promote more males within senior management (Figure 4.19).



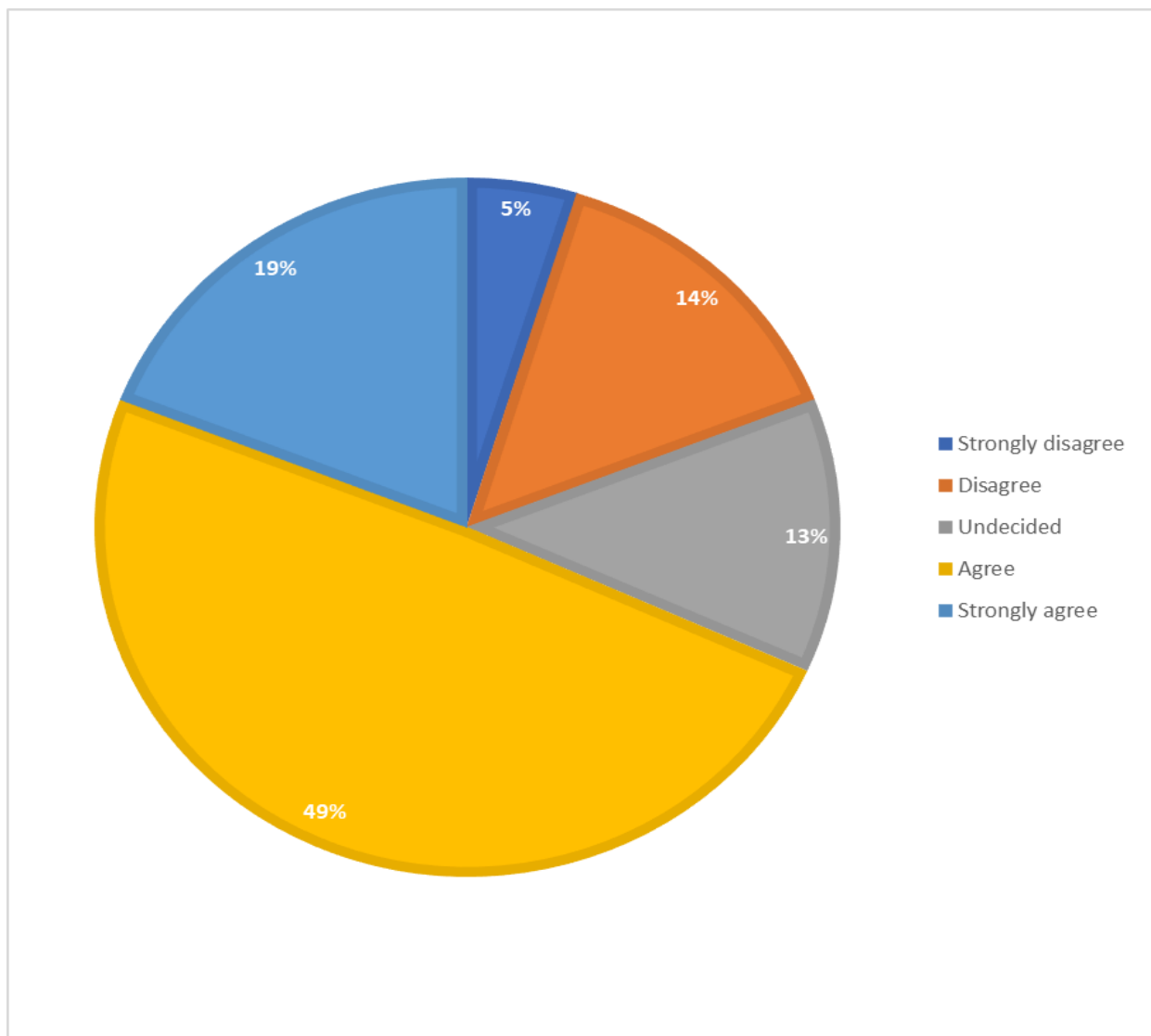
**Figure 4.19: I have noticed that management has the tendency to promote more males within senior management**

Figure 4.20 shows that participants rated the characteristics which they perceived to be essential in order to attain career success and enter senior management. Participants rated self-confidence (32%) followed by assertiveness (27%) and decisiveness (24%) as essential characteristics in order to attain career success and enter senior management (Figure 4.20).



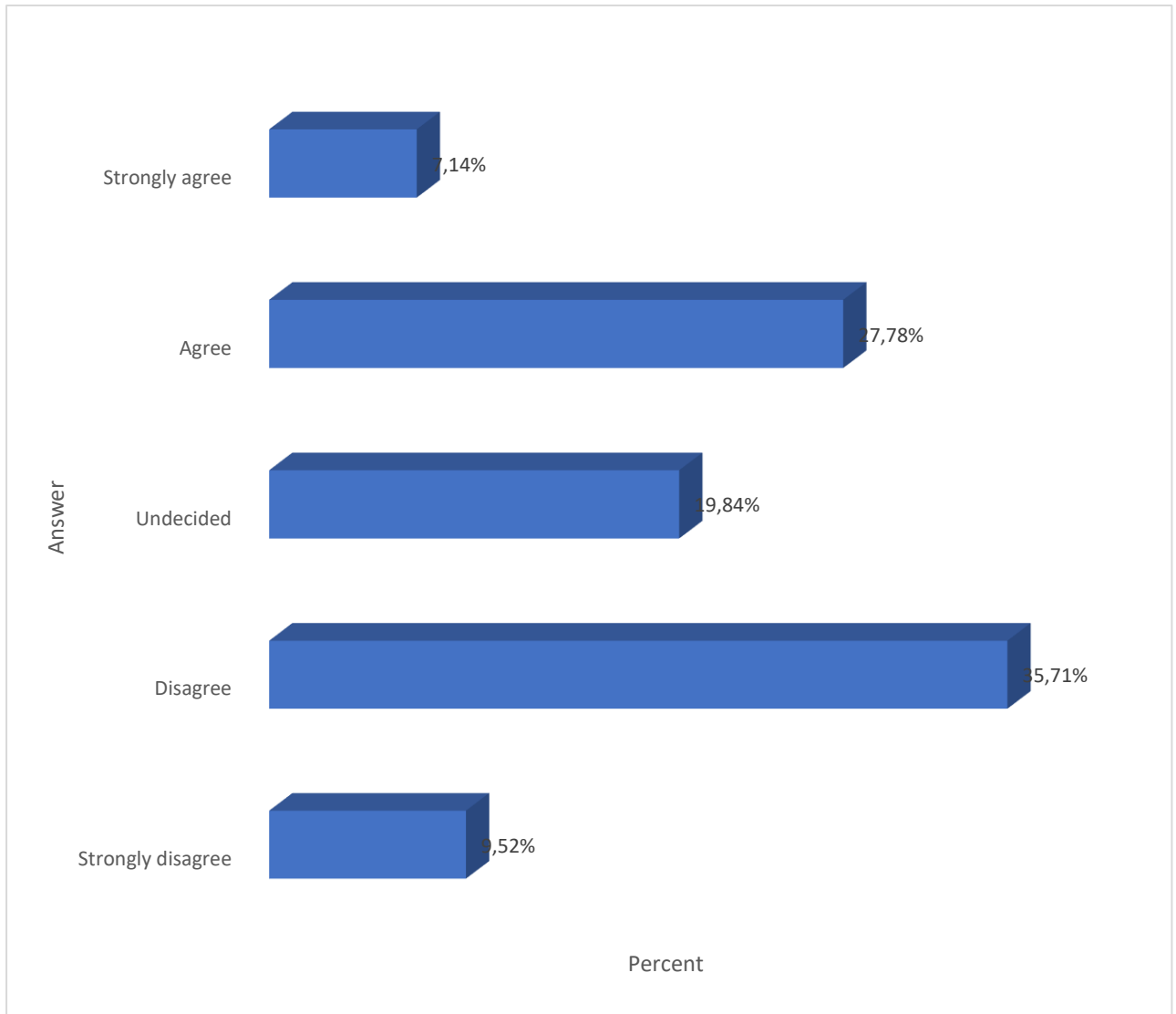
**Figure 4.20: Characteristics or traits do you believe are essential in order to successfully attain career success and entering senior management**

Fig 4.21 shows the results when participants were asked if women who are in top positions do little to help female colleagues to progress. Sixty-eight (68%) of participants agreed that female leaders do little to promote other aspiring female colleagues. Whilst 19% of the participants disagreed that female in top leadership position do little to promote aspiring female colleagues. The other 13% of participants remained undecided in their response (Figure 4.21).



**Figure 4.21: Women in top leadership do little to promote aspiring female colleagues**

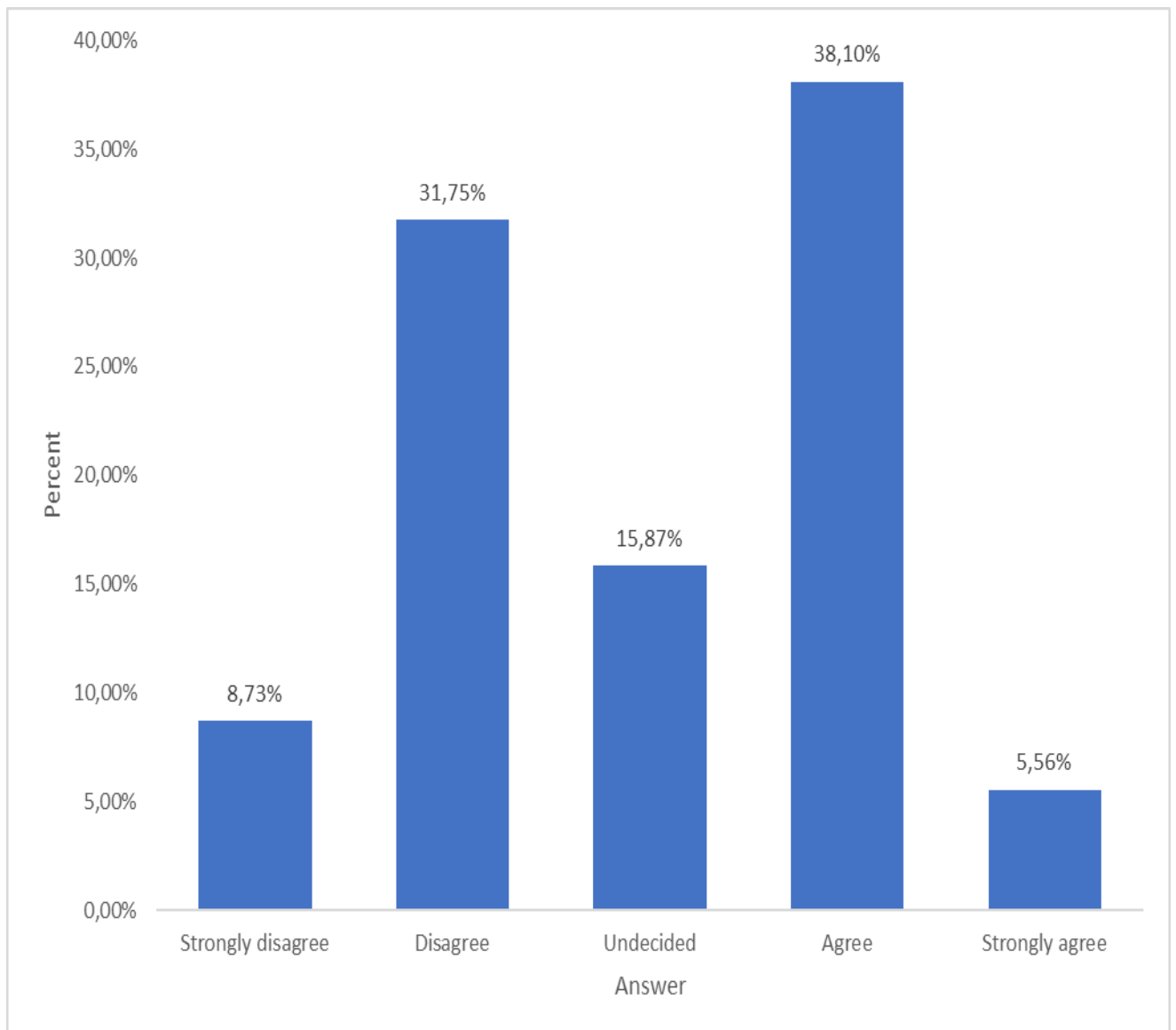
Fig 4.22 shows that 45% of the participants negatively reported to this statement, claiming that female leaders are not supportive to other females career advancement. Whilst 35% of participates reported that women in top leadership positions are supportive when it comes to other females career advancement (Figure 4.22).



**Figure 4.22: Women in top leadership are supportive when it comes to other woman's career advancement**

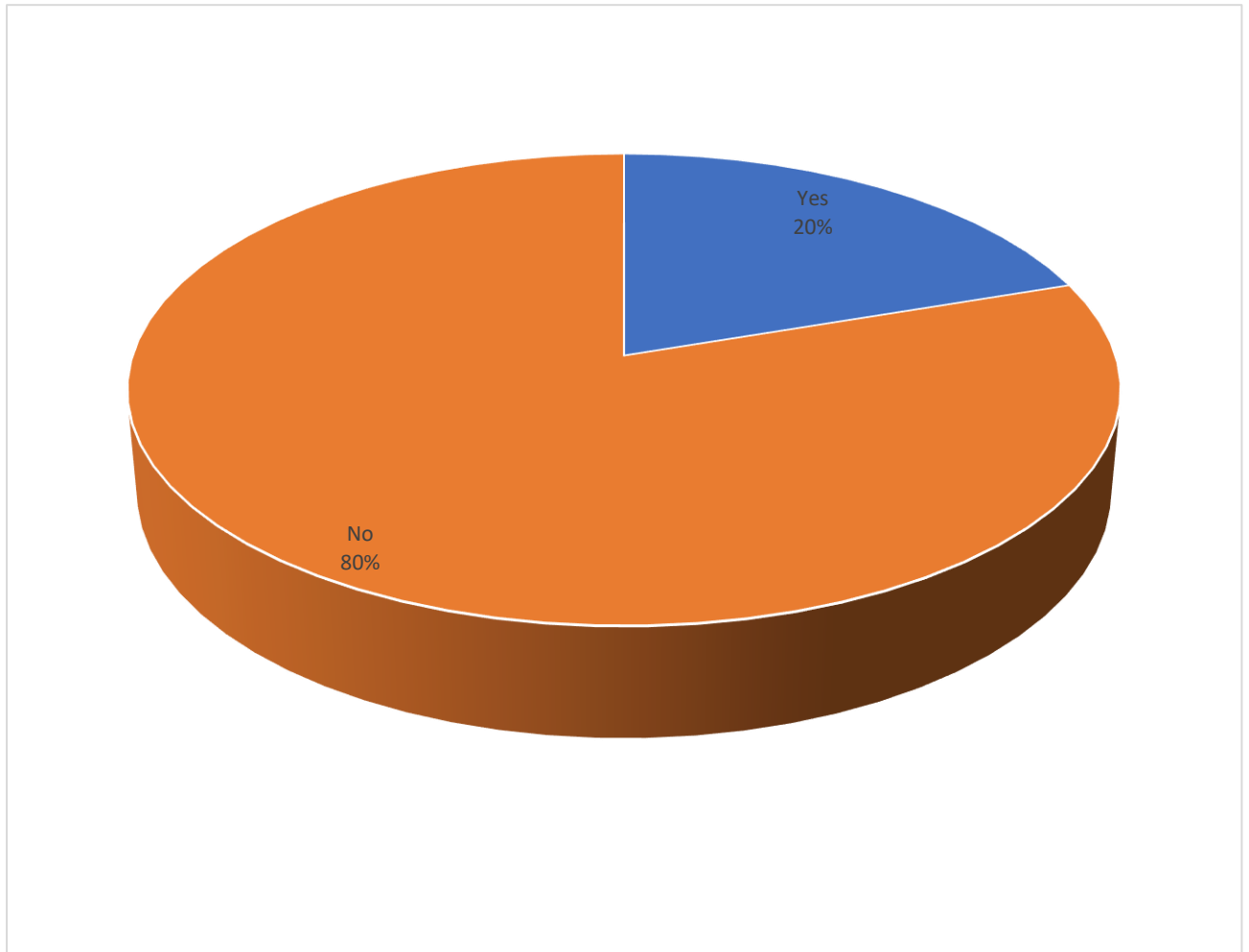
## 4.6 Organizational support

More than a third of the participants (40%) negatively reported that they received adequate organizational support at work in order to manage their professional work and domestic responsibilities. Whilst 44% of participants reported that they receive adequate organizational support in order to manage their professional work and domestic responsibilities (Figure 4.23).



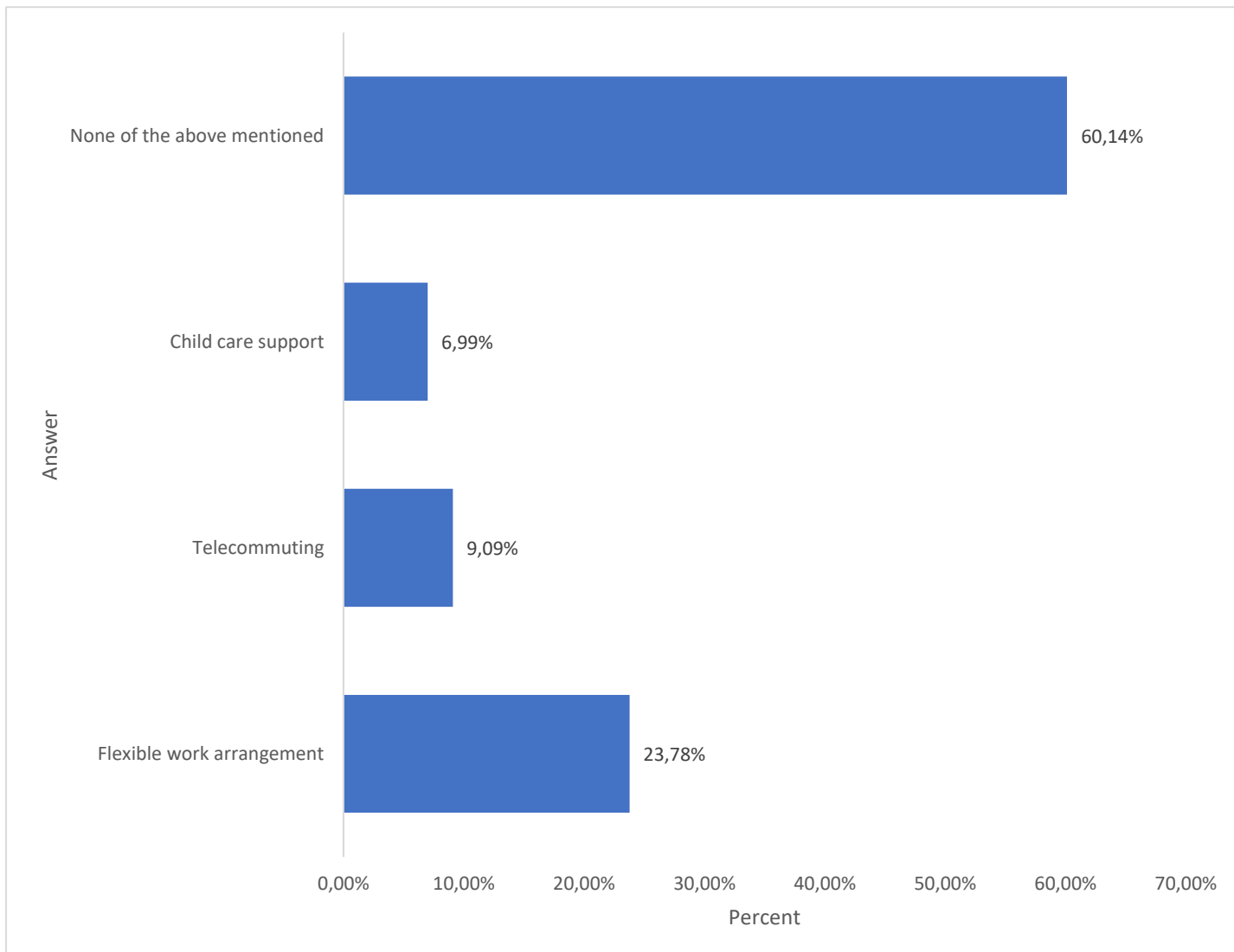
**Figure 4.23: I receive adequate organizational support at work in order to manage my professional work and domestic responsibilities**

Figure 4.24 indicates that 80% of the participants mentioned that their organization had not employed an organizational support mechanism for female employees. Whilst 20% indicated that their organization has employed an organizational support mechanism for female employees (Figure 4.24).



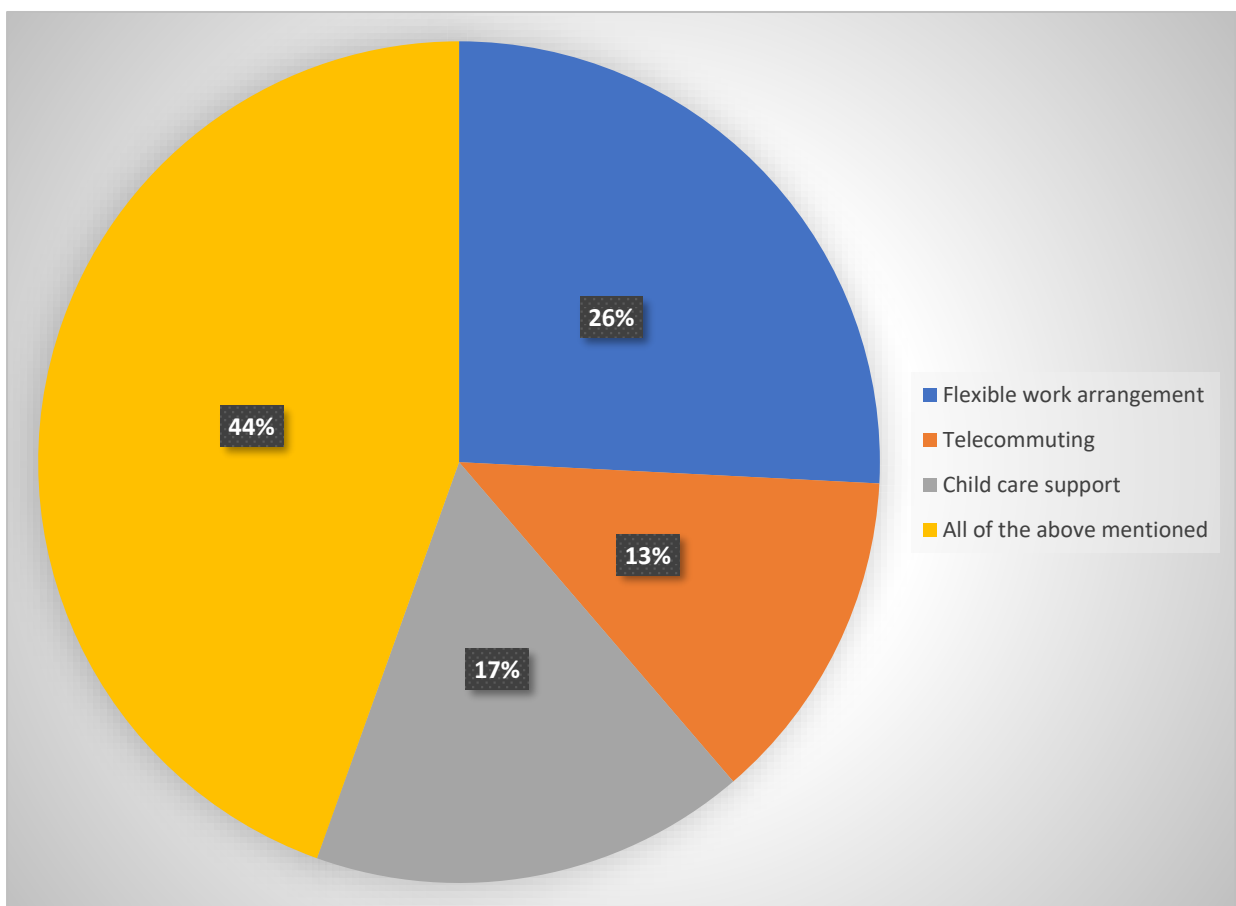
**Figure 4.24: My organization has employed an organizational support mechanism for female employees**

Participants has the option of choosing more than one response to the question. Results showed that only 24% of the participants had the privilege of a flexible work arrangement, 9% had the privilege of telecommuting and only 7% indicated the organization allowed for child care support. More than 60% of responses indicated that their organization did not allow for child care support, telecommuting and flexible work arrangements (Figure 4.25).



**Figure 4.25: The HR policies within my organization allow for flexible work arrangement, telecommuting, child care support or none of the above**

Fig 4.26 Participants were asked to indicate attributes their organization could exhibit which would make work more comfortable for the employee. 17% of participants indicated that the organization could make them feel more comfortable by providing child care support. 13% indicated that telecommuting would make them more comfortable and 26% indicated that a flexible work arrangement would make them more comfortable as an employee. Whilst 44% of the participants indicated that child care support, telecommuting and flexible work arrangements would assist them in creating a more conducive and comfortable environment (Figure 4.26).



**Figure 4.26: Attribute that your organization could exhibit which could make you more comfortable as an employee**

#### 4.7 Presentation of the results

For the purpose these tests the Pearson Chi value test and p-value tests was used. Pearson Chi value is a statistical test which applied to test three types of categories which is goodness of the fit, homogeneity and independence (Saunder et al, 2016). The p-value test is used for the purpose of statistical hypothesis testing used to support or reject the null hypothesis. The p-value helps to determine whether the result of the data is statistically significant (Saunder et al, 2016). A p-value of 0.05 and below is considered to be statistically significant (Saunder et al, 2016).

**Table 4.1: Association between race and seeking upward career progression to senior management due to family responsibilities**

		I do not seek upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities			Total	Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Negative	Positive				
Race	African	47.6%	52.5%	49.2%		8.632	0.035
	Indian	37.8%	17.5%	31.1%			
	Coloured	4.9%	17.5%	9.0%			
	White	9.8%	12.5%	10.7%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 4.1 indicates that race was found to be significantly associated with upward career progression to senior management due to family responsibilities ( $p=0.035$ ). It could be seen that more Indian female participants did not seek upward career progression due to family responsibility than coloured and white females (Table 4.1). This could be attributed to gender stereotyping or societal assumptions and beliefs.

**Table 4.2: Association between race and turned down job opportunities which are not close to home to suit the needs of my domestic responsibilities**

		I have turned down job opportunities which are not close to home to suit the needs of my domestic responsibilities			Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Negative	Positive	Total		
Race	African	46.6%	51.6%	49.2%	8.103	0.044
	Indian	41.4%	21.9%	31.1%		
	Coloured	3.4%	14.1%	9.0%		
	White	8.6%	12.5%	10.7%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

Table 4.2 results found that race was significantly associated with turning down job opportunities which are not close to home to suit the needs of my domestic responsibilities ( $p=0.044$ ). From Table 4. 2 it could be seen that more Indian female participants did not turn down job opportunities which are not close to home to suit the needs of my domestic responsibilities compared to their coloured counterparts (Table 4.2).

**Table 4.3: Association between race and often feel that my work has been questioned due to me being a female**

		I often feel that my work has been questioned due to me being a female			Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Yes	No	Total		
Q1 - Race	African	56.3%	35.7%	49.2%	8.369	0.034
	Indian	25.0%	42.9%	31.1%		
	Coloured	11.3%	4.8%	9.0%		
	White	7.5%	16.7%	10.7%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

Table 4.3 found that significantly more African females felt that their work has been questioned due to being a female, compared to Indian, coloured and white participants (p=0.034). (Table 4.3)

**Table 4.4: Association between race and have to work twice as hard as male counterpart in order to attain promotions**

		I feel that I have to work twice as hard as male counterpart in order to attain promotions			Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Yes	No	Total		
Race	African	52.2%	40.0%	49.2%	8.529	0.036
	Indian	28.3%	40.0%	31.1%		
	Coloured	12.0%		9.0%		
	White	7.6%	20.0%	10.7%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

Table 4.4 results showed that more African female participants felt that they have to work twice as hard as male counterparts in order to attain promotions than other race groups ( $p=0.036$ ). (Table 4.4).

**Table 4.5: Association between management has the tendency to promote more males within senior management**

		I have noticed that management has the tendency to promote more males within senior management			Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Negative	Positive	Total		
Race	African	36.1%	54.7%	49.2%	11.373	0.010
	Indian	38.9%	27.9%	31.1%		
	Coloured	2.8%	11.6%	9.0%		
	White	22.2%	5.8%	10.7%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

Table 4.5 found that more African female participants noticed that management has the tendency to promote more males within senior management than their counterparts ( $p=0.010$ ). (Table 4.5)

**Table 4.6: Association between age and career advancement struggle and hardships faced by females are attributed to societal stereotypical behaviour**

		Many of the career advancement struggle and hardships faced by females are attributed to societal stereotypical behaviour			Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Yes	No	Total		
How old are you?	25-30 years old	27.9%		24.6%	6.197	0.045
	31-36years old	36.0%	40.0%	36.5%		
	37 years or older	36.0%	60.0%	38.9%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

The present study found that age was significantly associated with societal stereotypical behaviour ( $p=0.045$ ). All the females who were below the age of 30 years felt that career advancement struggles and hardships faced by females are attributed to societal stereotypical behaviour compared to other age groups (Table 4.6).

**Table 4.7: Association between having dependent and seeking upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities**

		I do not seek upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities			Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Negative	Positive	Total		
How many child dependents do you have?	None	50.0%	15.0%	38.7%	14.269	0.001
	1-2	35.7%	65.0%	45.2%		
	3-4	14.3%	20.0%	16.1%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

It was found that number of dependents was significantly associated with seeking upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities ( $p=0.001$ ). Results showed that those having dependents were less likely to seek upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities than those who do not have dependents (Table 4.7).

**Table 4.8: Association between having dependent and family responsibilities and commitments take precedence over my work life**

		My family responsibilities and commitments take precedence over my work life			Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Negative	Positive	Total		
How many child dependents do you have?	None	63.4%	26.5%	38.7%	16.033	<0.01
	1-2	29.3%	53.0%	45.2%		
	3-4	7.3%	20.5%	16.1%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

Results found that number of dependents was significantly associated with family responsibilities and commitments taking precedence over work life ( $p < 0.01$ ). It could be seen that those having children were more likely to allow family responsibilities and commitments to take precedence over their work life (Table 4.8).

**Table 4.9: Association between sector and seek upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities**

		I do not seek upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities		Total	Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Negative	Positive			
What cluster does your organization fall under	Private sector	61.2%	68.3%	63.5%	9.530	0.023
	Public sector	27.1%	17.1%	23.8%		
	NGO	3.5%	14.6%	7.1%		
	Other	8.2%		5.6%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

Results showed that there was an association between the sector worked in and seeking upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities ( $p=0.023$ ). It could be seen that those who work in NGOs were less likely to seek upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities (Table 4.9).

**Table 4.10: Association between sector and have turned down job opportunities which are not close to home to suit the needs of my domestic responsibilities**

		I have turned down job opportunities which are not close to home to suit the needs of my domestic responsibilities		Total	Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Negative	Positive			
What cluster does your organization fall under	Private sector	60.7%	66.2%	63.5%	10.111	0.018
	Public sector	24.6%	23.1%	23.8%		
	NGO	3.3%	10.8%	7.1%		
	Other	11.5%		5.6%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

There was a statistically significant association found between work sector and have turned down job opportunities which are not close to home to suit the needs of my domestic responsibilities (p=0.018).

**Table 4.11: Association between sector and career advancement struggle and hardships faced by females are attributed to societal stereotypical behaviour**

		Many of the career advancement struggle and hardships faced by females are attributed to societal stereotypical b		Total	Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Yes	No			
What cluster does your organization fall under	Private sector	66.7%	40.0%	63.5%	8.286	0.040
	Public sector	20.7%	46.7%	23.8%		
	NGO	8.1%		7.1%		
	Other	4.5%	13.3%	5.6%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

Results showed that sectors were significantly associated with societal stereotypical behaviour ( $p=0.040$ ). It was found that more participants from private sectors and NGOs reported of career advancement struggles and hardships faced by females are attributed to societal stereotypical behaviour (Table 4.11).

**Table 4.12: Association between sector and often feel that my work has been questioned due to me being a female**

		I often feel that my work has been questioned due to me being a female			Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Yes	No	Total		
What cluster does your organization fall under	Private sector	69.1%	53.3%	63.5%	10.066	0.018
	Public sector	18.5%	33.3%	23.8%		
	NGO	9.9%	2.2%	7.1%		
	Other	2.5%	11.1%	5.6%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

The present study found significant association between sector and often feel that my work has been questioned due to me being a female ( $p=0.018$ ). Results showed that participants from public sectors were less likely to feel that my work has been questioned due to me being a female than their counterparts (Table 4.12).

**Table 4.13: Association between sector and to work twice as hard as male counterpart in order to attain promotions**

		I feel that I have to work twice as hard as male counterpart in order to attain promotions		Total	Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Yes	No			
What cluster does your organization fall under	Private sector	68.5%	50.0%	63.5%	8.297	0.040
	Public sector	19.6%	35.3%	23.8%		
	NGO	8.7%	2.9%	7.1%		
	Other	3.3%	11.8%	5.6%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

The present study found significant association between organizational cluster and females having to work twice as hard as their male counterpart in order to attain promotions ( $p=0.040$ ) (Table 4.13).

**Table 4.14: Association between sector and access to mentoring opportunities for the purpose of career development at my organization**

		I have access to mentoring opportunities for the purpose of career development at my organization			Pearson Chi-Square	p-value
		Negative	Positive	Total		
What is your level in the organization	Entry level	42.1%	24.6%	32.5%	12.054	0.007
	First line manager	35.1%	46.4%	41.3%		
	Middle manager	7.0%	23.2%	15.9%		
	Senior manager	15.8%	5.8%	10.3%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

The present study found significant association between organizational level and access to mentoring opportunities for the purpose of career development ( $p=0.07$ ) (Table 4.14).

## **4.8 Chapter Summary**

The results of the findings were analyzed through race, age, number of dependents, employment sector, level within the organization, total years of work experience and highest educational qualification. This chapter collected and demonstrated the findings of the study through the use of statistical techniques which included the use of simple descriptive statistics. The Pearson correlation techniques and p-tests were also used in this chapter.

Chapter five will take a closer look at the discussion of results and comparing the findings of the study with previous literature, future recommendations, organizational applications and conclusion drawn from the study.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

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#### 5.1 Introduction

This is the final chapter of the study which provides a discussion of the main research findings from the study, according to the research objectives set out in Chapter one. The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges that female professionals are faced with in their career advancement journey by investigating the extent to which multi role conflict acts as a potential barrier for career advancement for female professionals; determining the impact of social networking and mentoring on female professionals career advancement; determining whether female managers support and promote other aspiring female employees in career advancement; investigating how gender stereotyping is a potential barrier for upward progression for female professionals; and determining the coping strategies organizations can employ to support female professionals in their career progression movement. The chapter will also include future recommendations and conclusion drawn from the findings.

Chapter five will examine the demographics of this study, findings of the study, limitations of the study, implications of the research, recommendations for future studies and organizational applications, conclusion and summary.

#### 5.2 Demographics

The frequency analysis presented in section 4.2 shows that most of the respondents were above 37 years of age (41.04%), followed by those who between the ages of 31 to 36 (35.07%). Ages 25 to 30 years constituted 23.88% of the participants. According to Stats SA (2018) the largest population in South Africa was Black (79.4%), followed by White (9.2%), Coloured (8.8%) and Indian (2.6%). The estimated total population in KwaZulu-Natal was 21.3% made up of 86% Black African, 8.1% Indian, 4.4% White and 1.4% Coloured (The Province of KwaZulu Natal 2010). The findings also confirm that the majority of the participants (Figure 4.7) are holders of an Honours degree qualification.

### **5.3 Findings of the study**

The findings of this study support the empirical evidence discussed in the literature. The objectives below were integrated with the study findings and other empirical studies. Study findings are discussed under predetermined objectives order to make meaningful comparisons, recommendations and conclusions.

#### **Objective 1: To investigate the extent to which multi role conflict acts as a potential barrier for career advancement for female professionals**

The findings in Figure 4.8, Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10 supports the idea of Ghislien (2017), who states that females specifically chose careers or jobs with lesser career responsibilities and career advancement, in order to have a degree of flexibility and less demanding role which allows them to prioritise their family responsibilities and commitments and avoid dual role overload (Ghislien, 2017). The multiple roles assumed force woman to consciously opt for a less demanding roles so that more time and effort can be dedicated to caring for the children (Ghislien, 2017). This contributes to fewer women progressing up management levels (Chung and Van Der Horst, 2018). As a result, females may be either over looked by management when the topic of career advancement arises, or females themselves may choose careers which are more flexible in order to accommodate for family commitments (Chung and Van Der Horst, 2018).

Empirical evidence suggests that women are the primary caregivers of a family (Chung & Van Der Horst, 2018). Whilst other evidence (Mittal & Sharma, 2015) advocates, that females are more likely than males to take time off from work due to family commitments, work part- time or leave the labour force due to family commitments .Research suggests that females continually suffer to seek the balance between work and their family responsibilities and it is the female who ultimately pays the 'toll' for crossing the boundaries between work and family life , and balancing both roles may become increasingly difficult (Thorpe, 2018). Based on this literature, this could be the justification for females turning down career opportunities.

Gronlund and Oun (2018) state that in couples where both partners are employed and have dependents, the separation of work from family living creates role conflict and tension as the increasingly stressed and overloaded workers juggle what have become conflicting obligations of providing for and caring for family members. This affects females primarily and leaves no room for career advancement (Gronlund and Oun, 2018) Research suggests that as time passes, work family conflict for females transforms as older males leave the organization and younger males who have working partners, will be share family responsibilities and domestic work (Gronlund & Oun, 2018). The findings of the study concur with those of Ghislien (2017), Chung & Van Der Horst (2018) and Gronlund & Oun (2018) who found that females may voluntarily choose not to move up the corporate ladder due to their family commitments.

**Objective 2: To determine the impact of social networking and mentoring on female employee's career advancement**

The findings of the results indicated in Figure 4.11 do not support the academic literature of Raggins & Cotton (2000). Figure 4.11 indicates that more than 50% of female professionals have access to mentorship opportunities in their organization for the purpose of career advancement. Raggins & Cotton, (2000) claim that females battle to find mentorship opportunities. Lyness & Thompson (2000) also cited that there is an unwillingness and lack of commitment from male mentors to provide females with adequate mentorship opportunities because male mentors may perceive the interaction with females as a sexual advance or an inappropriate relationship. The findings of the study are not congruent with the work of Raggins & Cotton (2000) and Lyness & Thompson (2000).

The findings in Figure 4.12 concur with Yedavalli & Shah (2018), who support the notion that mentorship programs are positively associated with career growth, job satisfaction and development of employees into leadership roles. The findings also supports empirical evidence cited by Ellen Washington (2017) and Liu et al., (2017) and Dashper (2017). Ellen Washington (2017), claims that there are key benefits of mentorship which yield positive benefits such as promotes an organization's cultural values and behaviors, best practices, policies and procedures which ultimately

enables career growth. Liu et al., (2017), claims that mentorship can be used to increase an individual's personal social capital which can contribute to their career success and advancement. Dashper (2017), claims that mentoring can also assist in shattering fragments of the glass ceiling in enabling woman to progress up the corporate ladder. The findings in Figure 4.13 agrees with empirical evidence from Liu et al., (2017) who found that top jobs were found by appointees based on 'who knows who' in the industry and not determined by their skill set or qualification levels. Social networking is a useful tool for career advancement and progression. Choi (2018) suggests the more actively visible an individual is in social networking, the greater their chances of career advancement and development opportunities.

The findings in Figure 4.14 are supported by Kaushik & Pullen (2017), who suggests that it is difficult for women to socialise with male senior outside of working hours. Kaushik & Pullen (2017), claim males socialise with each other outside of business which involve masculine activities such as golfing, fishing and hunting. Females would prefer to stay at home and invest their time with their domestic responsibilities (Mittal & Sharma, 2015). Females who do not have access to these networks miss out on career advancement opportunities. The lack of social networks has been cited as a career limitation for females (Francis, 2018).

### **Objective 3: To determine whether female managers support and promote other aspiring female employees in career advancement**

Figure 4.21 and Figure 4.22 supports the evidence from Derk et al. (2015) and Sheppard & Aquino, (2017). Derk et al., (2015) claim that females in top leadership positions are not supportive to other female employees. With so few female managers in power, evidence suggests that there is queen bee syndrome which exists within organizations and this is one of the challenges females face in their have upward career progression (Derks et al., 2015). Queen Bees are essentially females in senior managers that have decision making power but would never use their leadership skills to empower and advance the career of another female (Sheppard & Aquino, 2017). Queen Bees actually play an undermining and condescending role in the advancement of other female employees. Studies indicate that these Queen Bees

offer no solidarity to their female colleagues in career advancement (Moreton, 2015). As a result of the Queen Bee syndrome, not many female professionals do not progress up the corporate ladder (Derks et al., 2015).

Quinn and Spreitzer (2015) are of the opinion that women leadership in career development would be made easy by active participation of other women who are already in top echelons in the organisations. Employees need to know and understand the vision and goals of senior management where openness and teamwork are of greater need, and this teamwork works better if women on top recognise their fellow women who have the potential of career advancement (Quinn & Spreitzer, 2015).

#### **Objective 4: To investigate if gender stereotyping is a potential barrier for upward progression for female employees**

The results in Figure 4.16, Figure 4.17, Figure 4.18, Figure 4.19 and Figure 4.20 agree with the empirical evidence provided by Heilman & Caleo (2018), Ezzedeen and Ritchey (2013), Seo et al., (2017) and Adikaram and Wajayawardena (2015).

The results from Figure 4.16 indicate that 83% of participants felt that female professionals career struggles and hardship are due to societal stereotypical beliefs and assumptions. Empirical evidence by Heilman & Caleo (2018), suggests that females face societal stereotyping and stereotypical norms of society and have confirmed to be resistant to change irrespective of the progressive social change which has taken place. Females are seen by society as child bearers and homemakers (Seo et al., 2018). As a result of this societal stereotypical view, their career is affected by a blocked career path (Heilman & Caleo, 2018). It primarily reflects discrimination, gender inequality and negative bias specifically directed to woman with the intention of hindering their progress to the top of the corporate pile (Abidin, 2008). Women face adversity more than men, in their journey to attain career success at higher echelons of the organization which is due to a societal stereotype and assumption (Choi, 2018). The shortage of women in management roles may be affected by the gender-stereotyping perception that female managers lack the skills related to the role of a manager, thus creating a barrier for women's career advancement (Wood 2015). Wood (2015) noted the perception of society is that women are more suited for the

supportive, nurturing role of motherhood rather than the decision -making role of management. Research conducted (Adikaram and Wajayawardena, 2015), indicated women working on a project team primarily consisting of males were treated as outsiders, whereby they had to constantly proof their abilities and skills to their colleagues which can be attributed to the societal stereotype of females.

Ezzedeen and Ritchey (2013) make reference to the fact that women stereotyping clashed with the notion that single- mindedness, and the display of traits like independence, confidence and assertiveness are a prerequisite for executive advancement. Here, women face a double disadvantage, when women display organisational traits, they are said to be not very family oriented, and when family responsibility traits are displayed, they are said not to be organisationally oriented (Ezzedeen & Ritchey 2009).

According to the findings of the study in Figure 4.20, self-confidence and assertiveness were considered the desirable traits in order to successful attain a leadership position. Seo et al., (2017), indicate that a male- dominated patriarchal system continues to exists, and in order for females to succeed in progressing to senior management roles they would have to assume masculine and unfeminine characteristics in order to be an accepted member in the 'old boy's clubs' (Choi, 2018). Men in leadership are meant to exhibit characteristics of such self-confidence, emotional toughness, independence, assertiveness and achievement orientated aggression whereas characteristics such modesty, dependably, passiveness and nurturing features, display behaviours which are consistent with the female gender. (Heilman & Caleo, 2018).

Gender stereotypes generate problems for females pursuing male-dominated roles, as female stereotypes are incongruent with the pervasive masculine characteristics, behaviour and attributes which are associated with success (Heilman & Caleo, 2018). Such stereotypical assumptions may often result in woman being cast aside or overlooked senior- level promotions arise.

### **Objective 5: To determine the coping strategies organizations can employ to support female employees in career progression**

The findings in Figure 4.23 and Figure 4.24 supports the empirical evidence by Shoba and Suganthi (2018), Bourne and Forman (2017), Clark et al., (2018) and Choi (2018). Shoba and Suganthi (2018), claim that support strategies included flexible work arrangements, telecommunication and compressed work week to help support female employees and create a more conducive work environment for female employees.

Clark et al. (2018), claims that the above strategies will result in a positive experience and consequences for females. Bourne and Forman (2017), argue that a flexible work arrangement is a short- term strategy to remedy the struggle incurred by women with growing families, however, this strategy by no means fulfils its promise of a work-life balance. This means that flexible work arrangement assumes that work and other aspects of life are equally valued in our culture (Borune & Forman, 2017). Shoba & Suganthi (2018) suggest that working mothers with young children are forced to make arrangements for childcare facilities during the day. This exerts stress and worry for mothers impacting on their work performance (Shoba & Suganthi, 2018). Teleworking supports working mothers with young children since they are provided with a work arrangement which allows them to blend in their domestic and work domains simultaneously. In addition, females who reside a long distance away from the workplace will also benefit since they will not need to travel from home to workplace which reduces stress (Clark et al. 2018).

O'Carrol (2017) indicates that the benefits of flexitime and flexi-work arrangements far outnumber the risks and challenges of flexibility and has positive consequences for both the organization and employee. For an employee it positively impacts on their psychological well-being, thereby reducing stress and anxiety levels and increasing energy, commitment and motivation levels (Choi, 2018) Other studies claim that flexibility has been linked to reduced employee turnover (Francis, 2018). Overall, flexibility and telecommuting contribute to increased productivity and a happier work force (Choi et al. 2018).

## **5.4 Limitations of the study**

### **The following limitations have been acknowledged**

- The sample of females was drawn from Durban South Africa, and may have limited application, since respondents were selected from one province only. The results cannot be generalised across other provinces and may have regional bias.
- The study used an electronic questionnaire to collect data due to time limitations. The questionnaire had closed-ended questions. Qualitative methodology such as an interview and focus group would have assisted in providing additional information on the study since both these methodologies use open-ended questions.

## **5.5 Implications of the research**

In light of the findings this implication is made for organizational applications. This research has the following implications:

- Sensitizes employers of the challenges, struggle and hardships which female employees are faced with.
- In South Africa, organizations are increasingly trying to retain and attract female employees. This research can be used by employers to create retention strategies to with the intention of retaining key talent.
- Retention of talent has a positive implication for the organization, since it allows the organization to achieve its employment equity targets and thereby create a more competitive advantage for the organization.

## **5.6 Conclusions**

The overall objectives and the findings of this study are indicated below: The conclusion presents a summary of the objectives and study findings.

- i. To investigate whether multi role conflict of a female act as a potential barrier for career advancement for female employees: It was found that their

family responsibilities and commitments take precedence over their career. It was also revealed that females have turned down opportunities in the past due to their domestic responsibilities.

- ii. To determine the impact of social networking and mentoring on female employee's career advancement: It was found that mentoring and social networking is a powerful tool which can assist in promoting females, however mentoring and social networking opportunities are more easily accessible to males. Females do not socialize with their male colleagues after hours and hence get left behind of career advancement opportunities.
- iii. To determine whether female managers support and promote another aspiring female employee in career advancement: It was revealed that females in senior management do not support or assist other woman in achieving career success and advancement.
- iv. To investigate if gender stereotyping is a potential barrier for upward progression for female employees. It has become apparent that stereotyping still exists within the organizations and definitely a barrier in upward career progression, and females work twice as hard in order to attain career advancement. It was found that masculine characteristics such as self-confidence and assertiveness are key characteristics in order to attain career success and progress into management levels.
- v. To determine the coping strategies organizations can employ to support female employees in career progression: It was found that organizations have not employed an organizational support mechanism for female employees. Organizations can improve the work lives of their female employees through flexi-work arrangements, telecommuting and child care facilities.

## **5.7 Recommendations to solve the research problem**

Organizations can solve the research problem through the implementation of new policies and procedures, onboarding and training initiatives and gender sensitivity which must be embedded in the organizations culture.

- **Policies and procedures**

In order to achieve equity and fairness, the current HR policies and procedures must be reviewed by management. The recommended policies for review include maternity leave policy, flexible- work arrangements, telecommuting, in the workplace or any other policy which assists in supporting and empowering a female employee. If the policy does not exist, then policymakers must consider developing that specific policy with the intention of supporting female employees. The policies must be documented and rigorously implemented. Managers must lead by example and practice these policies effectively, so that a new culture which is sensitive to female employees is cultivated by the organization. This will contribute to reduction of stress and creating a more conducive and positive work environment for female employees.

- **Onboarding and training initiatives**

Gender sensitivity, policies should be made part of an organizations onboarding and induction process for new engagements joining the company. New employees must be sensitised to the organizations policies on gender sensitivity, bullying and sexual harassment. Whilst existing employees should have regular training updates on these subjects which create more awareness and sensitivity to female employees.

- **Gender sensitivity must be embedded in organizational culture**

Gender sensitivity should be embedded within the organizations culture and values and practiced by all employees. Any transgression or misdemeanour which is not in line from the prescribed organizational values and behaviours should have disciplinary consequences for employees and positive gender equity behaviours should be rewarded. The organizational culture which operates on 'old boys club' should be redefined by management, because it makes it difficult for female

employees to fit into this culture. The organization should cultivate an acceptable organizational culture entrenched on the foundation of equity, inclusion, respect and consideration for female employees.

## **5.8 Recommendations**

In light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for future studies. The factors listed above are important in this topic and have been left out of this study due to time constraints, however they may be included in future studies.

### **5.8.1 Future studies**

- A triangulation method would be recommended for future research in this topic. It is recommended that a questionnaire, interviews and a focus group be used in this research in order for the research to have a clearer understanding of the problem. This triangulation method increases the confidence of the data generated from the study and also assists in facilitating the validity of data through the use of several research methodology.
- The research should also be conducted in other geographical areas in order get a more comprehensive picture of the challenges experienced by female employees. The responses may be slightly different in other areas, since culture may be differing across geographic areas.
- A large sample group should be used to produce more accurate results and minimises error bias in the study.
- There were a number of other factors that this study was unable to examine which include:
  - a) The impact of gender discrimination on career advancement
  - b) The impact of sexual harassment on career advancement
  - c) The relationship between leadership and career advancement for female employees
  - d) Corporate culture which alienates females and acts as a barrier for career advancement
  - e) Recruitment programs which do not support the employment of female leaders

### **5.8.2 Organizational application**

- a) As part of an employee's succession plan, an organization should allocate a mentor to assist with an employee individual development plan.
- b) The study also recommends gender sensitivity which should be included in a company's business code of conduct and ethics. The sensitization should aim at emphasizing the importance of addressing the stereotypes on women managers and leaders.

### **5.9 Chapter Summary**

The analysis of the empirical data relating to the objectives of the study has been presented and discussed. For each objective the analysis of the results of this study are discussed in relation to the literature review. This chapter also reflected on the limitations of the study, conclusions and recommendations.

### **5.10 Conclusion of study**

The world of work and society is constantly evolving, and female professional are at the forefront of this change. There is a marked improvement in women accessing education more freely however, there is still a need for transformation to take place at senior management levels of work or business organization. It is up to employers to ensure that their female professionals are motivated and happy in order for any business to succeed. In South Africa's tough economic climate, it is essential for organizations to capitalise and leverage off the full potential of its human resource capabilities, by promoting and retaining educated females into management positions.

This study entails five chapters. Chapter one outlined overview and background of the study, Chapter two reviewed empirical evidence from previous literature, Chapter three examined the methodology, Chapter four presented the results of the study and Chapter five provided a discussion, conclusion and recommendation.

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## **Appendix A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER**

## **Appendix B: LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS**

My name is Seshnie. I am a Master of Business Administration Student at UKZN. As part of my master's degree, I have to complete a research. The topic of my research is, "Glass ceiling effect: The challenges experienced by post graduate female professionals in upward career progression movement, in Durban, South Africa". I will be collecting data from working post graduate students at UKZN GSB&L and at a leading Petroleum company in Durban.

The completion of the questionnaire should take about five minutes, and complete anonymity will be ensured. There will be no way to identify whose questionnaire is whose and thus it is not possible for you as an employee to be implicated in any way for the answers that you give.

The aim of the research is to investigate the challenges that female employees are faced with in their career advancement journey. May I therefore take this opportunity to urge you to answer honestly. The results of the study will be provided to the organisation in the form of a report and will be given as overall findings and not individual results.

This research is not compulsory, and you are free to withdraw at any time should you wish. Should you have any queries you are free to contact me. I hope that you will be available and willing to participate in my research. I would like to thank you for your cooperation in this research.

Regards

Seshnie Reddy

## Appendix C: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

This questionnaire requires you to provide demographic information about yourself before completing other sections. Please place a cross (X) in the appropriate box for each question.

### Section A Biographical data

1. What is your Age?

25-30

31-36

37 +

2. What is your highest qualification?

Post graduate diploma

Honours

Masters

PhD

Other

3. What is your job level of position

Entry level position

1<sup>st</sup> Line management

Middle management

Senior management

4. Please indicate your gender

Female

Male

5. Years of service

5 years

5-10 years

10 + years

6. Race

Black

Indian

White

Coloured

7. Sector

Private

Government

NGO

Other

**Section B: To investigate whether multi roles of a female act as a potential barrier for career advancement for female employees.**

	<b>Strongly Agree (5)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>
8.I do not seek upward career progression to senior management due to my family responsibilities					
9. I have turned down job opportunities which are not close to home to suit the needs of my domestic responsibilities					
10.My family responsibilities and commitments take precedence over my work life					
11.I receive adequate organizational support at work in order to manage my professional work and domestic responsibilities					

12. My organization has employed an organizational support mechanism for female employees

**Section C: To determine whether social capital resources contribute to female employee's career advancement**

	<b>Strongly Agree (5)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>
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13. I have access to mentoring opportunities for the purpose of career development at my organization

14. Mentorship is a powerful resource and assisted me in gaining promotion opportunities and salary increments

15. I have access to a network of executives/ or key decision makers within my organization who are able to provide me with career support and mentorship

16. I often socialise with male colleagues/ seniors outside of working hours in social activities which has assisted me in advancing my career

17. I feel that more mentoring and social network opportunities are accessible to males

**Section D: To investigate if gender stereotyping is a potential barrier for upward progression for female employees**

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
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18. Many of the career advancement struggle and hardships faced by females are attributed to societal stereotypical beliefs and assumptions that females are meant to be a homemaker and child bearer

19. I often feel that my work has been questioned due to me being a female

20. I feel that I have to work twice as hard as male counterpart in order to attain promotions

21. I have noticed that management has the tendency to promote more males within senior management

22. Women in top leadership do little to promote aspiring female colleagues

23. Women in top leadership are supportive when it comes to other woman's career advancement

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## Appendix D: TURNITIN REPORT

## **Appendix E: GATEKEEPER LETTERS**