

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**THE INVISIBLE GLASS CEILING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN IN  
MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR IN KWAZULU-  
NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA**

**BY**

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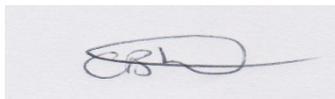
**2019**

## DECLARATION

I Buhle Charlotte Khwela declare that

- i. The work reported in this dissertation is, except where otherwise indicated is my original research.
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Date: 10-06-2019

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I appreciate many others also

**DEDICATION**

To Him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly..... Ephesians 3: 20

## **ABSTRACT**

The participation of women in the workplace has increased immensely around the world, and this is also evident in South Africa. Women are no longer employed as unskilled or semi-skilled labor. Women's access to education and training, as well as legislation enforced by governments, has afforded women opportunities to penetrate occupations that were previously male-dominated. Women continue to enter into all the functional areas of organizations, even as line managers. Whilst female representation in lower and middle management is on the increase, there is still a yawning gap between the percentages of men and women in both public and private sectors in senior management. This under-representation of women in senior management has been attributed to what is termed the 'glass ceiling'. This study explores the existence of the 'glass ceiling', and compares its existence in the public and the private sectors in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. The study adopts an exploratory approach and is qualitative. In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty-four (24) women managers who are employed in the public and private sector in lower, medium and senior management positions. The study revealed that a glass ceiling exists in the public and private sector, however, it is more evident in the private sector. Organizational culture emerges as the main barrier that hinders women's progress in the private sector, while in the public sector, historical patriarchy is the main reason why women are clustered in middle management. The study found that while 'old boy's networks' exist strongly in the private sector, women working in the public sector are successfully reaping the rewards of their education. In addition, the study revealed that some women are not confident that they are cut out for the boardroom, and others do not aspire to progress to top management. Further, women applaud the government for legislation to redress the marginalization of women and have benefited from such, but they are unanimous about the need for more women in top management positions. It is recommended that similar research be carried out in all the provinces of South Africa since a literature gap exists. These studies could assist in creating more awareness about the existence of the 'glass ceiling'.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AA	Affirmative Action
BMF	Black Management Forum
BWASA	Business Women Association in South Africa
CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EU	European Union
HRM	Human Resources Management
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MSCI	Morgan Stanley Capital International
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PR	Public Relations
QLFS	Quarterly Labor Force Survey
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
STATSSA	Statistics South Africa
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR STUDY**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background information pertaining to the study. The chapter provides an introduction, the background and context of the study, the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, motivation of the study, and limitations of this study.

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The twentieth century marked a transformation for women and gender relations (Mancini-Billson and Fluehr-Lobban, 2005). Globally, women struggled towards new identities and new freedoms during this century (Mancini-Billson and Fluehr-Lobban, 2005). This allowed women's participation in the labor force to increase enormously, with women penetrating occupations, professions and managerial jobs that were previously male dominated (Wirth, 2001; Yukongdi and Benson, 2005; Umolu, 2014; Mudau and Ncube, 2017). Women continue entering education and training, thereby gaining important capabilities to take on jobs at higher management ranks (Dimovski, Skerlavaj and Kim Man, 2010).

While most segments of the current society yearn for the achievement of gender equality, discrimination related to gender lingers on (Aneke, 2015). Moreover, women find various boundaries to their progression to top management positions entrenched in organizations, family and society at large (Yukongdi and Benson, 2005). These boundaries include past stereotyping and patriarchy that entrenches discrimination of women (Barragan, Mills and Runte, 2011). These are culturally embedded in societies around the world (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). As indicated by the International Labor Organization (ILO), occupations such as Human Resource Management (HRM), Public Relations (PR) are fields where women are predominantly represented (ILO, 2016). Conversely, women are underrepresented in occupations such as finance, engineering, research, construction and management in general (ILO, 2016).

Research from the Grant-Thornton International Business Report indicates a global increment of women holding senior management positions – up by one percent in 2016 from 24 percent in 2015, a change of 6 percent since the research began in 2010 (Lagerberg, 2017). However, the number

of organizations which are entirely without women at the top has escalated – up to 34% in 2017, from 33% in 2016 (Lagerberg, 2017). In South Africa, only six percent of all the executive director's positions in Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) listed companies are occupied by women (Mathur-Helm, 2006).

Therefore, this study aims to investigate if there is glass ceiling experienced by women in management, among those who are employed in private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, which hinders their progress to senior management and executive positions. The study also aims to compare the progression of women to senior and top management positions in the public sector to those in the private sector.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF STUDY**

Numerous studies have shown the underrepresentation of women in higher management positions worldwide despite advances they have made in organizations as well as initiatives they have undertaken for better education and skills over the past century (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010; Lowe, 2011; Toor and Ofori, 2011; Kiaye and Singh, 2013; Manwa, 2014; Auster and Prasad, 2016). They face barriers as they attempt to ascend the organizational hierarchy, which prevents them from growing in the respective organizations and therefore hinders their career development (Tandrayen-Ragoobur and Pydayya, 2015; Hurley and Choudhary, 2016). Even though various studies have been carried out on this phenomenon, subjective evidence suggests that organizations globally do not hold a good track record of employing women in top management positions (Hurley and Chudhary, 2016; Aneke, 2015).

The term “glass ceiling” was first used by Gay Bryant in 1984 in his book entitled “The Working Woman Report” which observed how women are ranked in the workplace (Padavic and Reskin, 2002). Another popular article on this subject was written by Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1984), titled “The Glass Ceiling: Why women can't seem to break the invisible barrier that blocks them from the top jobs” (Padavic and Reskin, 2002; Eagly and Carli 2007). The metaphor “glass ceiling” explains the failure of numerous women to make progress in their careers irrespective of their credentials and accomplishments (Inman, 1998; Eriksson-Zetterquist and Styre, 2008; Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010; Dimovski et al., 2010; Purcel, MacAthur and Samblanet, 2010; Barragan et al., 2011; Kiaye and Singh, 2013; Auster and Prasad, 2016; Hurley and Choudhary, 2016; Sabharwal and Varma, 2017). Other authors (e.g. Kee, 2006; Feng and Sakellarice, 2015) relate this metaphor

of glass ceiling to gender wage differentials, where gender pay gaps are commonly more extensive at the highest point of the wage dispersion. The United States Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) defines the glass ceiling as “the unseen, yet unbreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements” (p. 4).

In South Africa, former President Nelson Mandela devoted himself to empowerment of women in his fight for freedom (Viviers, Mans-Kemp and Fawcett, 2017). The struggle concluded with a social revolution which culminated in the acceptance of the constitution that granted South African women one of the most comprehensive sets of rights globally to redress the disadvantages and discrimination experienced by especially black women during the apartheid regime (Van Niekerk and Van Royen, 2005; Viviers, Mans-Kemp and Fawcett, 2017). Although the government of South Africa introduced various laws and legislation to redress this discrimination, there is still a lot to be done in almost all the sectors of life (Khwela, 2017).

Therefore, this study aims to deepen the understanding of barriers encountered by women occupying management positions in private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa that prohibit them from progressing to senior management positions. To answer the research questions of this study, data is drawn from women in all management positions, including women in lower and middle management positions as well as women who managed to break the glass ceiling and are already occupying senior management positions in private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

### **1.3 NEED FOR THE STUDY**

The overall imbalance between men and women in socio-political and economic life has been demonstrated. The existence of the challenge of patriarchy is global and is evident in all sectors of life (Aneke, 2015). While a great deal of research (e.g. Dimovski, Skerlavaj and Kim Man, 2010; Maseko, 2013; Furno, 2012; Smith, Caputi and Ctittenden, 2012; Jarmon, 2014; Kiaye and Singh, 2013; Sabharwal and Varma, 2017) has been conducted on gender imbalances and in particular the existence of glass ceiling in different sectors, most of the studies were conducted in the western parts of the world. While researchers (e.g. Marthur-Helm, 2006; Booysen and Nkomo, 2010; Moorosi, 2010; Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012; Kiaye and Singh, 2013) have looked at the glass ceiling in different perspectives in South Africa, it evident that there is insufficient literature published

regarding this phenomenon. There is a need, therefore, to conduct a study to add to the body of literature in South Africa, particularly from women who work in private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal.

Previous studies underline some of the limitations faced by women. For example, Dimovski, Skerlavaj and Man (2010) studied women mid-managers in organizations in Singapore, highlighting the glass ceiling type of barriers. Findings indicated that women lack adequate assistance from organizations, including networking, coaching and conditions that are conducive to supporting those who are raising a family (Dimovski, et al., 2010). The findings inhibit the promotion of women mid-managers to senior management positions.

Furthermore, Purcell, MacArthur and Samblanet (2010) looked at the condition of the glass ceiling, its methodological and hypothetical uncertainties. Their findings revealed that choice impacts, social capital, homophily, networking, gender stereotypes, gender discrimination, occupational segregation and qualities of organizations contribute to the glass ceiling effect in the organizations (Purcell, et al., 2010).

Feng and Sakellrice (2015) looked at the metaphor of glass ceiling as the pattern of gender wage differentials in Asian and Latin American countries, but did not look at glass ceiling as a barrier to career advancement. Findings revealed that collectively, Latin American countries show a glass ceiling, no unambiguous evidence of glass ceilings were found in the group of Asian countries where sticky floors (where it is difficult to advance to executive level) or mixed patterns is a norm (Feng and Sakellrice, 2015). Similar research conducted in Australia by Kee (2006) looked at wage gap distribution in the public and private sector. The findings detected a strong glass ceiling in the private sector (Kee, 2006). The findings also revealed that the acceleration of a gender gap across wage distribution does not show signs of disappearing (Kee, 2006).

Furthermore, Nixdorff and Rosen (2010) conducted a research study in the United States to better understand the glass ceiling faced by both women in entrepreneurship and in leadership positions. They examined women's issues at different vantage points (Nixdorff and Rosen, 2010). It was found that both women entrepreneurs and women in leadership positions in the corporate environment tend to portray similar leadership styles, and they lacked role models as well as self-efficacy [defined as an individual's confidence in their ability to accomplish a task or deal with challenges in life] (Nixdorff and Rosen, 2010).

Dammam, Heyse and Mills (2014) conducted research on non-profit organizations in Netherlands on gender equality and promotion decisions between men and women. Findings revealed that women made the transition to management less rapidly than men (Dammam, et al., 2014). It is evident therefore, drawing from these findings, that there are barriers preventing women from advancing into higher positions in top management. In addition to these barriers, there are gender wage gaps in favor of men that the researchers revealed.

Ajala and Wulemat (2013) examined the marginalization of women in Nigerian politics. Findings revealed that patriarchal politics in Western Nigeria include the nature of Yoruba politics, women being pitted against in politics, gender stereotypes, and household labor (Ajala and Wulemat, 2013).

Focusing on South Africa, Kiaye and Singh (2013) sought to determine whether the glass ceiling exists in organizations in Durban. Findings revealed the existence of some elements of glass ceiling which included situational factors (Kiaye and Singh, 2013). Clear barriers to the progress of women that emerged included gender discrimination, lack of respect from the male colleagues and insensitive handling of the multiple roles played by women (Kiaye and Singh, 2013). Social roles such as family responsibility and transfers to different geographical locations contributed to hindering women's growth (Kiaye and Singh, 2013). Kiaye and Singh (2010) did not however look at the challenges that women face in management positions. In addition, the sampling frame utilized in the study, which suggested selecting women who fitted the participant profile at random, did not specify how the researcher reached the participants (Kiaye and Singh, 2013). Another question the study did not address was whether women occupying middle management positions aspire to progress to the senior management positions. Kiaye and Singh (2013) looked at women working only in organizations located in Durban. This study expands the geographical proximity to include women occupying management positions in organizations in Pietermaritzburg, as the capital and second-largest city in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The inclusion of Pietermaritzburg in the sample is important because provincial government offices are located in Pietermaritzburg.

This study, therefore, intends to contribute to the body of knowledge by filling this research gap. Specifically, the study examines the barriers that prevent women from advancing into top management positions, the challenges that women face when trying to break the glass ceiling, and

attributes required to break the glass ceiling, with special reference to the private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

The motivation of the study stems from the researcher's interest in gender equality. It is also rooted in the researcher's experiences with women friends who work in management positions. This has raised numerous questions for the researcher, which compelled the researcher to undertake this study.

## **1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Women count for 51% of the population of South Africa, while 44.3 % is employed (BWASA, 2017). In the post-1994 period, South Africa has witnessed a vast integration of women into influential public-sector roles, particularly in parliament and in ministerial positions (Human, 1996). This leads to a conclusion that government is committed to ensuring gender equality (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010). Despite the commendable efforts of government, there remains significant obstacles to women's progress en-masse into corporate or institutional hierarchies. Women are underrepresented in executive positions in relation to their population in general (Mathur-Helm, 2006). According to BWASA (2017), census finds that only 20.7% of directors are women. In addition, only 4.7% of JSE-listed companies have female CEO (BWASA, 2017). Organizations lack strategies and plans that are intended to improve women's careers as well as their development prospects (Mkhize and Msweli, 2010). Employers are slow to respond to and implement labor legislation concerning gender equality in the workplace (Schein, 2007). This suggests a real problem in the field of management that is worth exploring, and leads to the question: Could the "glass ceiling" phenomenon be the obstacle that hinders progression of women up the corporate ladder? This study aims to investigate the experiences of women in management positions, more specifically the challenges they face, and the obstacles to progressing in their respective organizational hierarchies.

### **1.4.1 Research objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

- To analyze the factors affecting the advancement of women to top management positions in the private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa;
- To analyze the challenges faced by women in management with reference to the public and private sector in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa;

- To determine the role played by organizational culture in the advancement of women to the top management positions with reference to private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa;
- To determine the possible attributes required for women to advance to top management in private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa; and
- To determine how women are represented in management with reference to private and public sectors in South Africa.

#### **1.4.2 Research questions**

In order to accomplish the objectives of this study, the researcher will address the following questions:

- What are the factors affecting the advancement of women to top management positions?
- What are the challenges faced by women occupying the management positions?
- What role does the organizational culture play in the advancement of women to top management positions?
- What attributes are required from women to advance to top management positions?
- How are women represented in management positions?

All the above questions are in the milieu of private and public sectors in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

#### **1.5 LIMITATION OF STUDY**

The sample used is not representative of the population of the study because a non-probability sampling technique was used to select the participants. As a result, the researcher did not reach out to all the women who occupy management positions in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Further, this study was conducted in the cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg, which encompasses a small portion of the women who occupy management positions in South Africa. The implications are that the findings cannot be generalized. However, the study revives the debate for gender discourse on women occupying managerial positions in private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

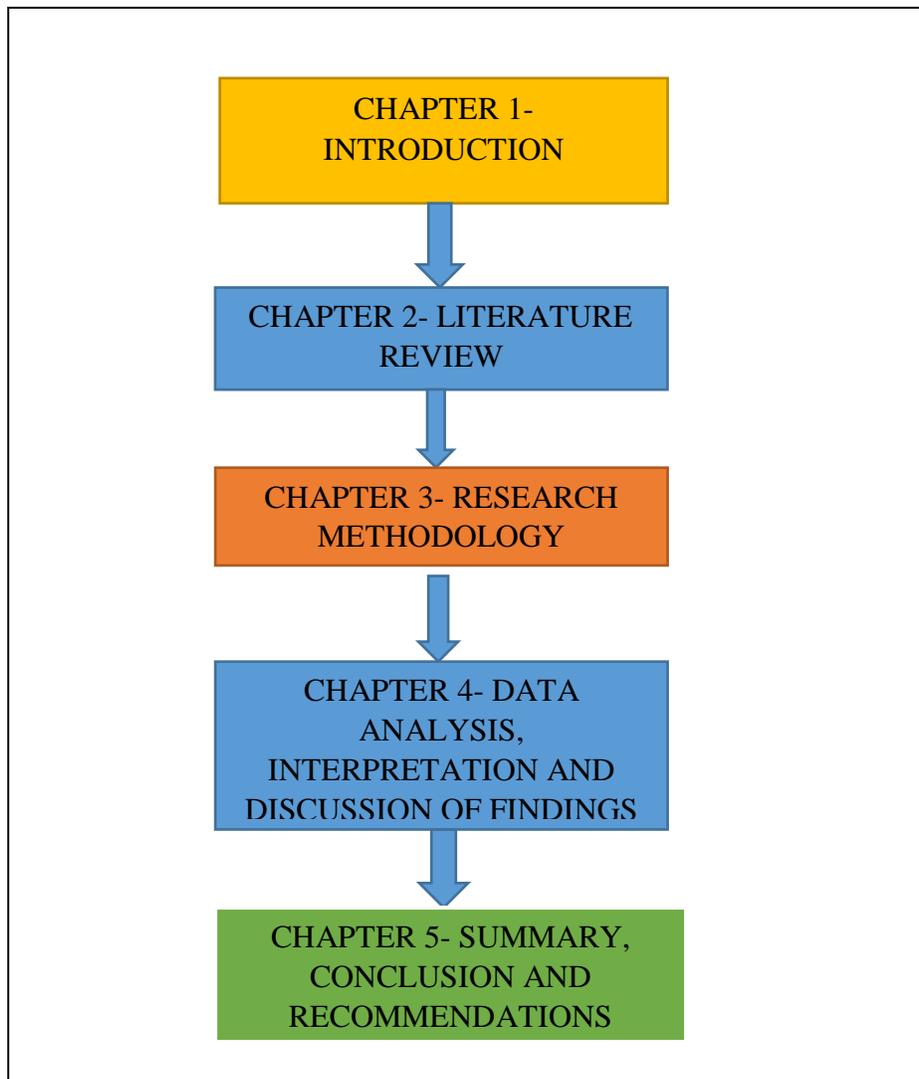
## **1.6 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study uses the exploratory study method. An exploratory study is a means to discover what is occurring, to pursue new insights, to make inquiries, and to evaluate singularities in a new light (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). It is especially valuable in the event that the researcher wishes to illuminate his/her comprehension of the issue; for example, on the off chance that there is uncertainty around the issue (Saunders et al., 2009). The study utilized both primary and secondary data to engage the matter under exploration. Primary data was collected from in-depth interviews while secondary data comprised published journals and relevant books. The primary strategy of the in-depth interviews was to capture salient and burning issues of women; further, in-depth interviews dig deep into meaning of participant's experiences in their own words (Marshall and Rossman, 2011).

A non-probability sampling technique referred to as snowball sampling was used to identify participants for this study. Thirty (30) participants were targeted for this study. However, during data collection, some were no longer available or not keen to continue with interviews, some withdrew from participation after they cancelled a number of arranged meetings. The researcher was obligated to respect the rights of the targeted participants because participation is voluntary. Therefore, twenty-four (24) in-depth interviews were carried out with women who occupy lower, middle, and executive management positions in the private and public sectors in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews was analyzed using both thematic and content analysis. They were further compared between private and public sectors.

## **1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

The diagram below illustrates how the dissertation is structured, followed by the outline of chapters.



**Figure 1. 1: Structure of the dissertation**

Source: (Author's own illustration)

This dissertation is organized into five chapters as illustrated below:

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter provides the introduction of the study and situates the study within the chosen field of inquiry. It provides the groundwork for the study and a reference point for the successive chapters. It provides a brief overview of the main research questions, the aims and objectives, the need for the study, the background and the motivation of the study and the limitations of the study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter reviews extant literature on the subject matter. Gender equality is explored in the global context and narrowed down to the South African context. It explores factors that affect the advancement of women into executive positions, challenges faced by women in management in general, the role played by the organizational culture in the advancement of women, the attributes required from women to advance to top management, and finally the representation of women in top management.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This chapter discusses the steps taken in the research to realize the aim and objectives of the study. This includes the research paradigms, approaches to theory development, research design, time horizons of the research, target population, sampling procedure, data collection methods, reliability and validity, data analysis, and finally, ethical considerations.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion of Findings**

This chapter presents, analyzes and discusses the empirical findings of the study. Data collected by means of in-depth interviews was analyzed using both thematic and content analysis and findings were linked to existing literature.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations**

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the empirical findings discussed in the study. The chapter also presents recommendations related to the subject under study. Recommendations for future studies are presented and limitations related to the study are offered.

## **1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

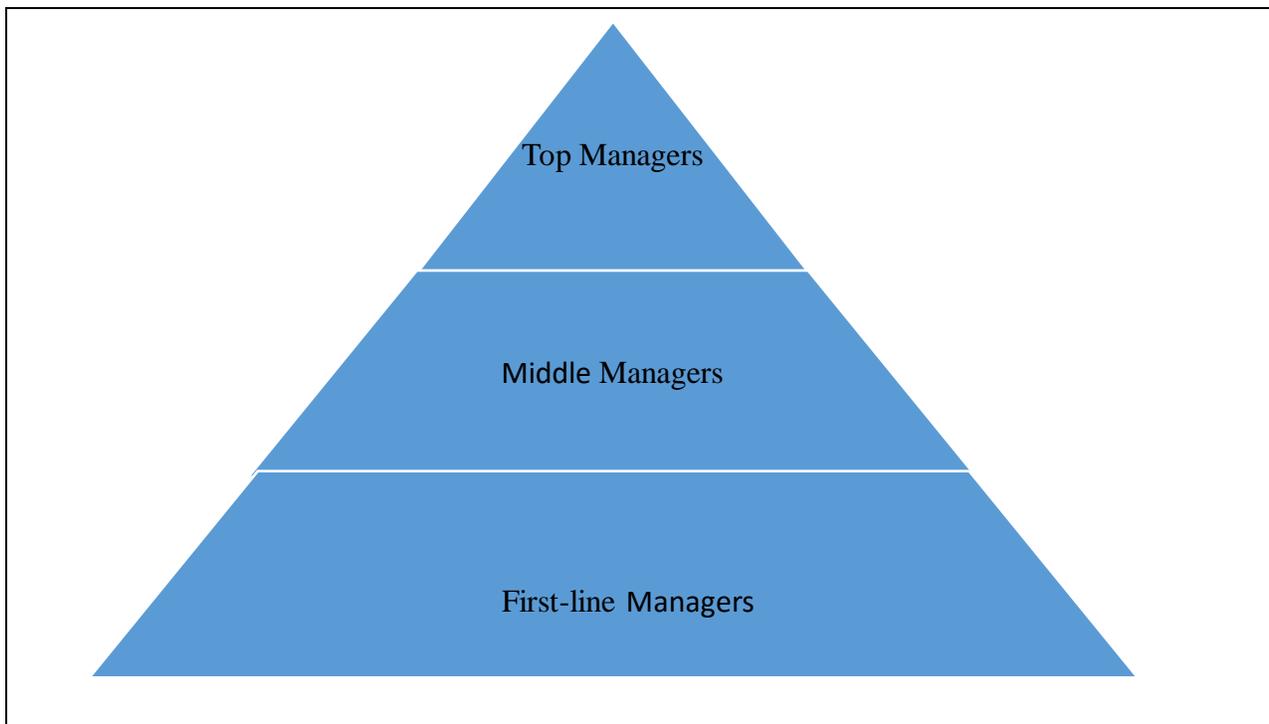
This chapter introduced the study. The chapter delineated the background of the study, the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, justification of the study, summary of research methodology and the structure of the dissertation. The next chapter reviews literature on gender equality, and literature relevant to the study.

## CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW: GLASS CEILING AND WOMEN OCCUPYING MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a comprehensive review of extant literature on women in management. The term management explains the manner of getting things done, successfully and productively, by means of delegating other people (Hellriegel, Slocum, Jackson, Louw, Staude, Amos, Klopper, Louw, Oosthuizen, Perks and Zindiye, 2012). Smit, Cronje, Brevis and Vrba (2011) define management as a distinct process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling the work of organizational members and utilizing all the resources to reach stated organizational goals. Smit et al. (2011) further elaborate that the term manager is used to include any individual who carries out the four fundamental functions of management, namely, planning, organizing, leading and controlling. Management has different hierarchies, as is illustrated by Figure 2.1 below:



**Figure 2. 1: Management Hierarchy**

Source: (Hellriegel et al. 2011:11)

The above figure illustrates different levels of management. Top Management signifies a comparatively small group of individuals who lead the organization and with whom the final power and accountability rests (Smit et al., 2011). Middle Management takes responsibility for certain departments and mainly deals with executing strategies formulated at top management level (Smit et al., 2011). Middle Management normally includes the functional heads, such as the operations manager, financial manager, the purchasing manager and the human resources manager (Smit, et al., 2011). Lower / first-line managers are responsible for even smaller segments of the organization, namely the different sections within an organization (Smit et al., 2011). For example, the marketing department could be further subdivided into a product design section. In other sectors, for example, mining and manufacturing, supervisors are referred to as first-line managers (Smit et al., 2010). First-line managers deal with the monthly, weekly and daily management of their sections (Hellriegel et al., 2012).

## **2.2 GENDER EQUALITY**

Gender equality is a term that embraces equal involvement of both men and in the economic, cultural and social dimensions (Stearns, 2015). Different countries label gender equality diversely. The labels used encompass equivalent opportunity or the promotion or the advancement of women, emancipation, equality or empowerment of women (Lombardo, Meirer and Verloo, 2009). The concept of gender equality is often connected to political and procedural goals (Lombardo et al., 2009).

During the 1960s, the European Union (EU) associated gender equality with fair and unfair competition (Mancini-Billson, 2005). During the 1980s, to battling unemployment, and during the 1990s to the Lisbon criteria of full employment and knowledge economy (Mancini-Billson, 2005). Most recently, the EU associated gender equality with fighting discrimination and endorsing diversity (Mancini-Billson, 2005). The United Nations (UN) has associated it with advancement and demography (Fleur-Lobban, 2005). Individual countries have related it to civil rights and labor market conditions (Fleur-Lobban, 2005). Governments all over the world have displayed new approaches to incorporate women into legislative issues and policymaking, subsequently enabling their movement into higher echelons (Squires, 2007). Women's access to training and development and this freedom has decreased wage differences related to gender (Squires, 2007). Having said that, however, as traditional and social standards persist, women are seen to have their

place in the kitchen, minding children and tending to other household obligations (Benya, 2009). This point is underlined by development theory which is grounded on the conviction that historical and traditional cultures are classified by segregated gender roles that do not permit women to be employed outside their homes (Inglehart and Norris, 2003).

The twentieth century was a transformable one for female and gender relations. Virtually everywhere in the world, women struggled towards new freedoms and new identities. The century witnessed a surge of consciousness, a proliferation of women's organizations and global conferences, the flourishing of sophisticated feminist scholarship, and the movement of millions of women into the public sphere (Mancini-Billson and Fleur-Lobban, 2005). For example, in 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing called all governments to develop implementation strategies or plans in support of the Platform for Action (Mancini-Billson and Fleur-Lobban, 2005). In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were officially adopted by 191 states of the UN General Assembly, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank (UNDP, 2015).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) set a definitive international standard for gender equality to which national governments can comply by signing the convention (UNDP, 2015). Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals was aimed at encouraging gender equality and the empowerment of women (Masango and Mfene, 2015). Consequently, when countries accepted the convention, they were devoting themselves to outlaw all forms of discrimination against women, including: ensuring equality in all legal systems; establishing public institutions aimed at shielding women against discrimination; and exclusion of all discriminatory actions against women either by society, organizations or enterprises (Mancini-Billson and Fluehr-Lobban, 2005).

While gender equality is advocated at international levels, there is no doubt that governments similarly draw policies and laws that are practiced at organizational levels (Aneke, 2015). Therefore, policies that are operational at organizational levels are aligned with those formed at the governmental level (Squires, 2007). In France, EU law to uphold an adjusted gender percentage of executives on board's quotas is extensively discussed (Singh, Point, Moulin and Davila, 2015). By proposing sanctions on organizations that fail to assign no less than 40 percent of their

controlling board seats to women, this EU proposition is fundamentally the same as new necessities requirements that were to be enforced by the French government on French organizations by 2017 (Singh et al., 2015). The richness of writing on the topics of gender imbalance and the sidelining of women in various segments and the developing enthusiasm for these issues is an impression of the real world and the way that a lot of its multifaceted quality is yet to be sufficiently investigated (Aneke, 2015). Gender inequality in organizations leads to the glass ceiling, as discussed extensively below.

### **2.3 GLASS CEILING**

Authors define the phenomenon of 'glass ceiling' in diverse ways. The United States Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995: 4) views glass ceiling as "the unseen, yet unbreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements". Clevenger and Singh (2013) describe "glass ceiling" as an expression that regularly applies to women in their work environments who are paid unreasonably low remuneration and come up against boundaries that keep them or minorities from acquiring upper-level positions. Smith, Caputi and Crittenden (2012) view "glass ceiling" as a metaphor used to explain the undetectable obstacle confronting women who seek to climb the hierarchical chains of command. Similarly, Shabarwal and Varma (2017) understand "glass ceiling" to refer to illegitimate boundaries based in attitudinal or hierarchical predispositions that keep qualified people from progressing upward into upper managerial ranks in their corporations.

In a global context, the last sixty years has marked a gradual increase in employment for women (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012). However, their advancement to senior management positions is at a snail's pace. Traditionally, a normal family comprised a father as provider, a mother who takes care of household duties, and two or more children (English and Hay, 2015). However, because of the policies introduced by governments which have allowed women to enter the workforce, this traditional family barely exist (Elacqua, Beehr and Hansen, 2009). Owing to the growth of women in the labor force, it is therefore vital to understand matters that concern their promotion into the top levels in their organizations (Fritz and Van Knippenberg, 2017). While the numbers indicate that the number of women in the workforce has improved (Murray and Syed, 2010), including women who occupy lower and middle management positions, the number of women in top positions has remained insignificant (Murray and Syed, 2010; Dimovski et al., 2010). This

insignificance is proved by vertical segregation, a common feature in organizational life across the globe, and results in the underrepresentation of women in positions at the top echelons (Cross, 2010; Toor and Ofori, 2011; Auster and Prasad, 2016).

While acknowledging that men and women have distinctive management styles is a critical positive development, it has not really helped in improving women's advancement (Broughton and Miller, 2009). Women are expected to imitate male leadership behavior (Vanderbroeck, 2010). While history may suggest that the approach bears some value, women who get through the "glass ceiling" by adopting male characteristics are judged harshly by their peers (Broughton and Miller, 2009).

Women are involved in just 10 percent of managerial occupations in Europe, however they stay amassed in low and middle management positions and a limited number penetrate upper management rungs (Vinicombe and Sturges, 1995). In the Brazilian labour market there is a clear situation of imbalance of opportunities amongst men and women (Lazzaretti, Godoi, Camilo and Marcon, 2013). The 2011 women's employment rate in Brazil's urban communities was still 35 percent beneath that of Brazilian men (Lazzaretti, et al., 2013). Supporting this, literature further shows gender discrimination in organizations. In other words, men earn more than women regardless of similar qualifications and similar rank in management (Broughton and Miller, 2009). In addition, women are underrepresented in top management positions (Lazzaretti et al., 2013).

In South Africa, according to Chiloane-Tsoka (2012), women constitute 52 percent of the total population and contribute 41 percent to the national labor force. In this manner, almost certainly, the more women participate in the economic gains, the better the economy of South Africa will become (Mkhize and Msweli, 2010). Chiloane-Tsoka (2012) further argue that even in South Africa, women are still underrepresented regardless of growth in 2010 over the 2009 figure where women accounted for 19.5 percent of leadership positions.

### **2.3 REASONS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF A GLASS CEILING**

There is an abundance of literature regarding the absence of female progression in the workforce (Barragan et al., 2010; Murray and Syed, 2010; Clevenger and Singh, 2013; Fritz and Van Knippenberg, 2017). However, there are contending opinions in the field with regards to the reasons that reinforce the "glass ceiling" phenomenon (Tandrayen-Ragoobur and Pydayya, 2015).

Instead of focusing attention on diversity issues, women's socialization, or the environment inside, the organizational culture may propagate covert discrimination (Nixdorf and Rosen, 2010). While there has been a rise in women holding lower and middle management positions, there are conspicuously low numbers of women at executive levels (Wood, 2008). In an effort to justify this low representation of women in senior management, previous research has considered career impediments experienced by women all through their management professions (Cross, 2010). These career impediments have been considered through different hypothetical points of views (Wood, 2008).

Career exit ramps (for example leaving professional highways to accomplish better work life balance under the supposition that there will be able to continue one's career path at a later time), and the mommy track syndrome (for example an unwillingness to take posts that require travelling or extended working hours) are explanations why certain women are not able to achieve top executive positions inside their corporations (Auster and Prasad, 2016). Some studies propose that these hindrances are a repercussion of inadequate quantities of women in the pipeline (Hurn, 2012; Auster and Prasad, 2016). These insufficient numbers in the pipeline may perhaps be due to the corporate culture, corporate practices, corporate climate and cultural stereotypes (Dimovski et al., 2010; Baragan et al., 2011).

Some studies reveal that women lack the necessary qualifications that allow them entrance into top management positions (April, Dreyer and Blass, 2007). However, other views and theory contradict this assertion (April et al., 2007). If women were deprived of authority just because they lacked qualifications or they were stereotyped by their managers as lacking personality traits, on the other hand, ongoing changes in women's education and work experience together with campaigns to refute stereotypes should have enhanced their success and access to positions of authority and benefits (Cross, 2010). The human capital and status accomplishment approaches that prevailed a decade ago perceive that rewards, including authority, were distributed unequally in view of women's inadequacy in fundamental capabilities and important experience (April et al., 2007). However, the experience gap has contracted (Cross, 2010). As indicated by this point of view, contrasts in employment speculation clarify why women don't make it to executive positions (Cross, 2010). These might incorporate differential access to training or the absence of

opportunities that are accessible to candidates that assist them in preparation for advancement (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012).

Research suggests that male managers deny women positions of power to save men's monopoly on authority in organizations, and this increases women's power deficiencies (Reskin and Ross, 1995). Furthermore, the fact that men are able to change the rules as well as distribution of authority will not vanish effortlessly (Reskin and Ross, 1995). These institutional barriers and organizational inertia therefore slow any development towards equality (Reskin and Ross, 1995).

Mathur-Helm (2006) suggests that women are frequently unable to comprehend change when succeeding from middle management to executive level. They are oblivious to the difference between middle management functions and executive level functions (Mathur-Helm, 2006). In this way, while occupying senior management positions, they are still executing responsibilities that are designed for lower and middle management (Wirth, 2001). Moreover, women enter their careers with an absence of clarity regarding their jobs and limited information pertaining to their responsibilities, which also become a barrier to advancement (Wirth, 2001). April et al., (2007) note three factors that yield the result of 'glass ceiling': corporate practices such as recruitment, retention and promotion; behavioral factors which include stereotyping leadership style; and structural and cultural explanations entrenched in feminist theory.

Flyn, Earlie and Cross (2015) note that deeply entrenched in 'glass ceiling' are corporate practices and cultural hindrances. Cultural hindrances are associated with perception and stereotyping (Flyn et al., 2015). For example, a corporate perception persists that suggests child-bearing is the main obstruction to the growth prospects of women (Flynn et al., 2015). Women are not judged on their capabilities and accomplishments in relation to promotions and career development, but are judged on banal suppositions regarding domestic responsibilities as well as their prospects (Lupu, 2012). Advancement criteria and evaluation which are in line with corporate culture and practices are composed generally around male properties, subsequently hindering women (Lupu, 2012).

## **2.5 FACTORS AFFECTING THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN TO TOP MANAGEMENT POSITIONS**

### **2.5.1 Family-related factors**

The division of labor compels society to assume that domestic responsibilities are associated with women and any commitment undermining this role results in role conflict (Ismail and Ibrahim, 2008). In contrast, the division of labor frees men from domestic responsibilities (Ismail and Ibrahim, 2008). The efforts of balancing work and family life was revealed to be the main hindrance to female development in studies conducted with female engineers (Maskell-Pretz and Hopkins, 1997; Miller, 2004). Maskell-Pretz and Hopkins (1997) note that women in the engineering field are faced with career movement obstructions as soon as they are eager to start a family. According to research conducted by Miller (2004), women engineers experience strain due to prolonged hours. This forces them to forgo their private lives, yet, they were only willing to do that when their children had grown (Miller, 2004). A study conducted in an oil company revealed that organizations are obligated to strengthen male dominated systems, gain temporary personal benefits, and fail to dissolve values that favor males in this industry (Miller, 2004).

### **2.5.2 Societal Factors**

These factors comprise lack of opportunities for individuals, such as women, to attain the necessary education and work experience, which renders them disadvantaged in competition with their male counterparts (Ansari, 2014). It is assumed that good mothers are less determined to prioritize work demands, therefore they are seen to be less dedicated workers (Clevenger and Singh, 2013). Contrary to this judgement against women, the society perceives working fathers as better parents than women who are also able professionally (Ansari, 2014). Clevenger and Singh (2013) add that the biased nature of this belief generates hindrances to women's progression in the workplace. Lack of opportunities which allow women to share their ideas is one of the obstacles facing women in organizations (Ansari, 2014). Therefore, women are forced to succumb to decisions that are made collectively (Ansari, 2014).

### **2.5.3 Difference Factors**

Difference factors are composed of conscious and/or non-conscious prejudice concerning women's role in the society – that they should be secretaries and care givers – which renders women weak compared to male counterparts (Ansari, 2014). This barrier is further strengthened

by the phenomenon that people are most comfortable hiring people like themselves, and since hiring positions are held by men, they are most likely to hire men over women (Barragan et al., 2011). These stereotypes need to be challenged and rectified because if they are ignored they will gain more strength, become real in organizations, and perpetuate the “glass ceiling” (Clevenger and Singh, 2013).

#### **2.5.4 Organizational-related Factors**

Organizational barriers refer to the internal structure of the business which includes the mentalities and the surroundings of a business as a whole (Clevenger and Singh, 2013). “Glass ceilings” in organizations are not only the result of biased corporate designs, but they are culturally embedded in people’s minds in the society (Ansari, 2014). While it is not clear as to where exactly in the organizational hierarchy which suggest that “glass ceiling” exists, researchers agree that women find it difficult to reach executive levels in organizations (Clevenger and Singh, 2013). It was observed by the U.S. Corporate leadership in their seven-year exercise which monitored women’s progression in corporate leadership that their evolution was at a snail’s pace as compared to their male colleagues (Ansari, 2014).

#### **2.5.5 Governmental Factors**

Governmental factors include the gaps in governmental legislation demonstrated through unfair laws and regulations concerning employment that tend to hamper growth prospects of certain sections of the society (Ansari, 2014). Furthermore, the absence of application and execution of equality laws permits discrimination to prevail in the organizations and spreads the gap even wider between men, women and minorities (Clevenger and Singh, 2013).

### **2.6 BARRIERS THAT IMPEDE WOMEN’S ADVANCEMENT TO TOP MANAGEMENT POSITIONS**

Research reveals a number of barriers that impede the advancement of women to top management positions.

#### **2.6.1 Organizational Culture**

The concept of organizational culture is key to understanding obstructions confronted by women in their careers (Cantarazo, Moore and Marshall, 2010). Organizational culture is defined as beliefs, attitudes, behavior and presumptions adapted by an organization to deal with difficulties

from the outside environment and internally (Cronje, Hugo, Nealund and Van Reenen, 1987; Schein, 1992; Dimovski et al., 2010; Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012). Corporate culture also enhances corporate performance (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012). Hofstede (1998) defined organizational culture as the way of thinking adopted by individual organizations which tends to be unique in each organization. Cantarazo et al. (2010) describe organizational culture as a classification of common connotations, standards, principles, practices, and customs adopted by an organization's members which results in behavioral standards in organizations. In the ongoing debate concerning the barriers that hinder women from advancing to the highest hierarchies of leadership, it is believed that the focus must be on the organizational and societal level rather than the individual level (O'Neil and Hopkins, 2015).

Organizational culture is normally understood to be the main reason that enables or disables work-life policies to function properly because cultural and traditional standards surpass formal policy goals set by organizations (O'Neil, Hopkins and Bilimoria, 2008). This is due to problems being with systems and not individuals. These problems include male-dominated organizational cultures (O'Neil et al., 2008). Therefore, a supportive organizational culture is likely to improve drive and inspire people, lessening stress as well as absenteeism (O'Neil, Hopkins and Sullivan, 2011). Women are now educated, and are hence developing confidence, not allowing themselves to be frustrated by organizational systems that are not supportive. However, it does not change the fact that the organizational culture is their main hindrance to advancement to executive positions (O'Neil et al., 2008). Therefore, employers should change structures and systems to accommodate women and not submit to cultural perceptions against women in the workplace (O'Neil and Hopkins, 2015).

Comprehensively, organizational culture is mostly ruled by male role models which then become the biggest patriarchal hurdle for women to advance to top managerial roles (Nixdorff and Rosen, 2012). This is perhaps due to the fact that traditional organizational cultures are usually seen as the cause of stagnation, maintenance of social cultures and unitarism (Carlström and Ekman, 2012). People usually associate the term manager with the male figure (Nixdorf and Rosen, 2010). As a result, women quickly adapt to masculine attitudes in order to position themselves into management roles (Vickery, 2017). This perpetuates the gender stereotypes that exist in organizations and in the community at large (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010).

If organizations are to retain talented women and minorities, a modified organizational culture is a vital requirement (Nixdorff and Rosen, 2010). This is because male dominated corporations still have viewpoints that are contrary to the development and promotion of women into higher management echelons (Moorosi, 2010). Re-designing human resource strategies, corporate culture and the mind-set of organizational leaders should help corporations to hold on to profoundly capable women (Dimovski et al., 2010). O'Neil et al. (2008) suggested reasons why traditional ways of managing are deeply entrenched in organizational structures and frameworks: (1) structures that are prevalent in organizations are biased in favor of those in executive leadership, most of whom are men. In this manner, there is no convincing reason to change the frameworks since business as usual works for those in control; (2) data in relation to experiences of women who occupy lower level positions in management is not collected that comprehensively; and (3) certain dimensions related to organizational life are superficially gathered (O'Neil et al., 2008).

They postulated that women who are willing to climb the corporate ladder may concurrently be juggling dual life responsibilities and realizing that organizational culture does not support their life choices (O'Neil et al., 2011). This lack of organizational support may be directly related to women "opting out" (Dimovski et al., 2010). Thus, instead of suggesting that the exiting of women in organizational life comes naturally, examining the masculine organizational culture may be the first step in overcoming the challenge of the lack of women in upper managerial rungs (Nixdorf and Rosen, 2010). Further, O'Neil et al. (2011) noted that while structures and systems may change, it frequently takes time to change organizational culture and people's attitudes.

Masculine cultures, in countries such as Japan and Italy, require men to be successful providers or the society observes them as failures; consequently, a minimal number of women occupy executive positions (Cantazaro et al., 2010). In the same vein, in America, when women were entering the workforce, they found themselves disadvantaged in pursuing executive management positions because of the prevailing corporate culture in America which is aligned to masculine competition, self-centeredness and the prioritization of career over family (Rosener, 1990; Cantazaro et al., 2010). In feminine cultures, for example, Sweden and the Netherlands, gender equality in organizations, particularly higher earning careers, is a norm, and the culture supports the prioritization of family above the period spent on organizational responsibilities (Lynness and Kropf, 2005). In these cultures, more women are elevated in organizational hierarchies (Hofstede,

1980). Further, they are not expected by society to display masculine behaviors and these nation's structural cultures do support women in general (Hofstede 1980, Lyness and Kropf, 2005).

South African organizational culture tends to be male-orientated and women are very submissive to men (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2010). The culture has confidence in men being in charge and they are overwhelmingly represented in the corporate world. However, the assumption that men should be decisive, intense and concentrate on material achievement while women should be more unassuming, delicate, and worried about personal satisfaction is biased and outdated (Hofstede, 1998). The ascribed male attributes assumed to be appropriate for management, for example, hostility and aggressiveness that are expressed in the language and ideas of management, are worrying and a challenge to women managers (Lukaka, 2013).

According to the democratic South African society, the culture which encourages personal satisfaction should be supportive to both men and women (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2010). A solid culture is supported by participative leadership from both men and women with the capability to stimulate and empower people (Kahn, 2014). In addition, a culture that drives the company through the product and process innovation to increase organizational effectiveness and exceed organizational goals is embraced by organizations (Kahn, 2014). There is therefore a need for women in management to advance their conventional social qualities, for example, support, compassion and open communication, so as to remain effectively integrated in the corporate culture (Lukaka, 2013).

### **2.6.2 Corporate Practices**

An absence of clear sets of responsibilities for top management positions and the absence of formal frameworks for staffing often create obstacles to improvement of women (Wei, Liu, Zhang and Chiu, 2008). Many organizations also lack practices in training and development, promotion and compensation (Rishani, Mallah, Housani and Ismail, 2015) which adds significantly to the glass ceiling effect. The presence of casual male systems referred to as "the old boys' networks" also tend to exclude women from top positions (Dimovski et al., 2010; Smith, Caputi and Crittenden, 2012). Another reason for inequality at the top is organizations' disregard for the construction of diversity policies to encourage women's advancement (Moorosi, 2010).

Barragan et al. (2010) concur that corporate practices keep women from advancing in the professional bureaucracy and that they incorporate objective structural aspects disadvantage

women amid recruitment, retention and advancement procedures. In the same vein, O'Neil et al. (2008), considering parts of women's careers and lives, proposed that institutional practices are male-dominated as well as one-dimensional, and in this manner disengaged from the context of women's lives. Furthermore, the absence of formal frameworks for recruitment will in general create impediments to women's advancement (Broughton and Miller, 2009).

The status quo of women who sit on the board was explored in Australia, Canada, USA, New Zealand and Israel, and their minimal numbers was ascribed to the "glass ceiling" effect (Wearing and Wearing, 2004). Oakley (2000) blames the absence of women in executive levels to unfair corporate practices which are biased in terms of recruitment, retention and promotion in favor of men (Wearing and Wearing, 2004). Participation in "old boys' networks", viewed as a corporate practice, also tends to disregard women (Wearing and Wearing, 2004).

#### **2.6.2.1 Old Boy's Networks**

Though women enter into the organisations with similar levels of human capital as men, their success is not determined solely by human capital. Rather, their involvement in casual organisational networks is also imperative - for example, "old boy's networks" (Henderson and Stackman, 2010). "Old boy's networks" refer to casual male social systems that stretch across and within the organisation, excluding less powerful males and all women from membership (Risper, 2013). Similarly, Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) describe "old boy's networks" as casual relations that are usually formed over business lunches or deals made out on the golf course. Furthermore, the "old boy's network" encompasses males who have obtained educational qualifications at similar institutions or have achieved upward career mobility together and have a proclivity to promote individuals who are similar to themselves (Brijbans, 2015).

Therefore, women are marginalised from "old boy's networks" and these "inner circles" are not viewed as institutionalised or organised (Brijbans, 2015). Furthermore, men tend to close deals in these networks and such networks may influence senior management's promotion and other employment career decisions (Brijbans, 2015). Therefore, women are denied professional support, access to vital personnel and organizational information when they are excluded from these networks (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010). Corporate practices that support "old boy's networks" are likely to exclude women from top positions who in turn do not benefit from the exposure that such networks offer (Broughton and Miller, 2009; Risper, 2013). Therefore, women who gain access to

executive positions are perceived as threats to their male counterparts since they advocate for change from the status quo (Brijbans, 2015).

### **2.6.3 Cultural Stereotypes**

Cultural stereotyping refers to those beliefs that are culturally embedded within individuals' minds and tend to work against women's promotion to senior management positions (Moorsi, 2010; Hurley and Choudhary, 2016). Women have always been associated by culture with uncompensated household chores as well as caring for children while the husband or father works for a paying job (Floro and Komatsu, 2011; Mudau and Ncube, 2017). Dimovski et al. (2010) observed that men and women might have different thoughts in the manner that they measure their accomplishments and further elaborates that men put their attention on material success and ego while women put their attention on psychological fulfilment and creating stability in their everyday lives. Through the pre-historic period, the patriarchal system of values was at its peak in terms of social, economic and political control of women by men in most communities of the world (Mudau and Ncube, 2017). During this period, gender discrimination norms prevailed and resulted in the exclusion of women and girls from the key streams of socio-political and economic activities, which deprived them of leadership opportunities in both domestic and public domains (Mudau and Ncube, 2017).

The human phenomenon of gender stereotyping is used by both men and women to categorize themselves and others based on social norms and descriptive and prescriptive features that construct the idea of how they should behave (Brijbans, 2015; Masango and Mfene, 2015). The possibility of women in management developing the idea that they are incompetent of assuming leadership in what is considered to be a masculine environment could undermine their motivation and potentially lead to lower performance (Brijbans, 2015). The stereotypes, embedded in the way women are socialized, hinder their movement into leadership positions. Consequently, Wolfram, Mohr and Schyns (2007) also noted that people with traditional gender role attitudes object to female authorities. These stereotypes are therefore perceived to be the main barriers faced by women in the workplace in attaining senior management positions (Berkery, Morley and Tiernan, 2013). Furthermore, in the South African context, gender stereotypes are more dominant in some provinces more than others, for example, in KwaZulu-Natal, the Zulu culture is dominant and gender segregation in favor of men is still highly prevalent.

In Egypt, men have been traditionally observed as possessing the following characteristics: leading, independent, aggressive and dominant, and at the same time, they assumed duties of providing shelter and food for the family (Elsaid and Esaid, 2012). Women have been viewed as passive, dependent, gentle and responsible for household tasks, and they are expected to be stay-at-home mothers after bearing children (Elsaid and Elsaid, 2012). Similarly, in Mexico, research reveals that gender roles such as “machismo” and “marianismo” were prescribed to men and women, respectively (Barragan et al., 2010). “Machismo” explains the exaggerated form of masculinity and responsibility associated with men towards the family, while “marianismo” presents the submissive image and saintly woman devoted to her family as an ideal for other women to emulate (Barragan et al., 2010).

Further, gender stereotyping of administration jobs can predispose women to avoid attempting such jobs and might be powerful in affecting at all dimensions on the professional success of women (Schein, 2001; Eagly and Carli, 2007). Another justification for the existence of the “glass ceiling” has been attributed to gender stereotyping of the managerial position (Schein, 2001, Eagly and Carli, 2007). Proponents of this justification argue that the managerial position is suitable for males, which perpetuates this stereotype even further (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010). Schein (2001) characterized this supposition as the “think-manager, think-male” aphorism (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010). In addition, gender stereotyping of management positions often creates prejudice against women during placement, promotion and training decisions (Schein, 2001: 676).

There is an emerging trend that a substantial number of women occupying management roles choose not to have children, or even choose to go without a partner, in order to progress in their senior or executive management career (Gherardi and Murgia, 2014). A study done in the USA found that about forty-nine percent of top achieving women were without children; this contrasted with their male counterparts where only nineteen percent were childless (Gherardi and Murgia, 2014).

Stereotypes are typical of the manner in which individual’s process information; they tend to ease conscious thoughts and rationalize the individual’s insight process (De Pillis, Kernochan, Meilich, Proser and Whiting, 2008). However, they misinterpret perception, and perceivers are frequently ignorant of the insights they hold (De Pillis et al., 2008). In addition, these stereotypes are frequently utilized to defend and uphold the unfair status quo (Gherardi and Murgia, 2014). In

organizations, individuals in employment decision-making tend to carry an image of the ideal candidate and favor the applicants that best match the prototype (De Pillis et al., 2008).

It is a global phenomenon that women are perceived as nurturing, care-givers of children and home, while men are perceived to be tough and smart for business – traits which are often viewed as required for top management (Schein, 2007; Ansari, 2014). These gender stereotypes, therefore, have negative consequences on women in the workplace environment as they often lead to discrimination (Brijbans, 2015).

Women are led by entrenched cultural stereotypes to opt for ‘pink collar’ jobs that include administrative and support areas, thereby perpetuating the ‘sticky floor’ phenomenon (Schein, 2007; Tandrayen-Ragoobur and Pydayya, 2015). Of late, ‘glass cliff’ has been noticed which argues that women who are employed in male dominated environments are evaluated or judged unfairly when they make mistakes, which puts them at risk of demotion (Tandrayen-Ragoobur and Pydayya, 2015). Furthermore, the double job nature associated with women in the workplace and home is likely to negatively influence the hiring of people (Manning and Swaffield, 2008). In addition, women who are still at the bottom of the corporate ladder have less bargaining power compared to males, thereby the man’s career takes primacy (Manning and Swaffield, 2008).

Some social theories depend on cultural and gender prejudices and deduce the stereotypical picture of a leader to be that of a male (Rishani et al., 2015). This label is in favor of a male managers, viewing women as being less capable of performing their jobs (Hoobler, Lemmon and Wayne, 2011). Further, women are caught between two leadership styles – female leadership styles deem them as not suitable managers while masculine leaderships style judge them as undermining their role as women (Rishani et al., 2015). Subsequently, women frequently espouse a system that does not position them as either feminine or manly, showing to others that they will not outperform their male counterparts – which indicates that they are less likely to advance to upper management rungs (Rishani et al., 2015).

#### **2.6.4 “Queen Bee Syndrome”**

“Queen Bee Syndrome” was formulated to mark women who independently show accomplishment in male-dominated environments (Warning and Buchanan, 2009). "Queen Bee Syndrome" alludes to a female who shows a strong drive to attain an influential position (Warning and Buchanan, 2009). "Queen Bees" do not demonstrate support for female subordinates because they are

threatened by other women's prosperity, in this way they are afraid that other women's prosperity will challenge their leadership (Kanter, 1977). Their conduct might be experienced by other women as female misogyny (Warning and Buchanan, 2009). Misogyny refers to an aversion or deep-rooted bigotry against women (Kanter, 1977). Furthermore, "Queen Bees" display ruthless behavior, more so than their male counterparts, and they lack sympathy to support their female subordinates (Frauenheim, 2007). "Queen Bees" exert pressure on themselves to prove themselves to be rough, tough and resilient (Johnson and Mathur-Helm, 2011).

The Queen Bee syndrome can be attributed to an executive woman who is unsupportive of other women, partly due to the desire to remain as one of a kind in an association (April et al., 2007). Doubtlessly, this disorder is most common where achievement opportunities are constrained, which would show that it is driven by fear of rivalry (Risner, 2013). One of the studies by Staines, Travis and Jayarante (1973) refers to the Queen Bee syndrome as a mentality of hesitance by executive women to advance other women (Johnson and Mathur-Helm, 2011). The hesitance is because of the craving to stay unique to the organization (Davidson and Cooper, 1992).

As pioneers, women who are successful will in general showcase a dimension of confidence that cripples gender cliché expectations (Johnson and Mathur-Helm, 2011). Their high self-image undermines other women who have been unable to overcome external powers over which they had no control. Female executives who display soft behavior and who are supportive of other women are commonly considered to be "too delicate" and not suitable for executive leadership (Frauenheim, 2007).

There have been efforts to explain prejudices against women in the workplace which are usually attributed to the attitudes of male supervisors, ignoring studies aimed at female superiors (Davidson and Cooper, 1992). Because of their influence which comes with power, "Queen Bees" tend to display a level of firmness that violates gender stereotypical expectations (Johnson and Mathur-Helm, 2011). Their exaggerated ego becomes a threat to other women who are less powerful and able to overcome unfriendly societal forces (Fraunheim, 2007). Contrary to "Queen Bee" behavior, women managers who display a nurturing conduct are perceived as "too soft" and not fit to lead (Frauenheim, 2007).

This was initially suggested by Staines, Travis and Jayarante (1973), who recognized that women executives tend to be reluctant to promote other women because of fear of risking their careers

(April et al., 2007). Solidarity behavior tends to be difficult in that it presumes that women see each other as natural supporters regardless of their management level differences (Brijbans, 2015). Further the solidarity hypothesis believes that executive women ought to believe that it is their duty to help other women to obtain a mantle in management (April et al., 2007). It is also noted that the solidarity hypothesis may propel junior women to expect senior women to behave in a certain manner, which at times is impossible (Mavin, 2006). There are tensions between the incongruities of solidarity conduct compared to the 'Queen Bee' syndrome as well as the complexity associated with the life of a woman executive (Mavin, 2006).

Specifically, the tension between the role of being a manager and gender roles has an influence on how women in executive levels view or are viewed by other women in the organization (Mavin and Williams, 2013), and thus their mutual support and solidarity. Solidarity behavior is assumed to show support to other women (Mavin and Williams, 2013). However, there appears to be little space to consider the intricate issue of negative relationships between women in management without another 'fault or fix women's' position (Mavin, 2006). Kanter (1977) noted that women can move toward becoming partners, structuring alliances, influencing the group's culture and creating support networks (Mavin, 2006). Such networks improve probabilities associated with the development of women in organizations (Mavin and Williams, 2013). In addition, these exercises structure the premise of sisterhood and solidarity (Mavin, 2006).

A study conducted by Korabik and Abbondanza in 2004 showed that women do display solidarity by means of coaching, changing authoritative strategies and showing support for the rights of women (Mavin and Williams, 2013). Therefore, solidarity behavior transpires in individual or groups, inside or outside organizations and alliances that are created by women within the organization, which may include tutoring, changing policies that prevail in an organization as well as supporting their own rights (Mavin, 2006).

### **2.6.5 Lack of mentoring for women**

Mentoring is normally considered as a relationship between an individual who is younger and less experienced (protégé) and an individual who is older and more experienced (mentor) (Leck and Orser, 2013). In this relationship, a mentor provides advice, counselling and further improves the quality of their protégé's career development. Mentoring has recently been upheld as a vital tool

for the progression of women (Mustafa, Ronald, Nihat and Jacob, 2014). Ehrich (2008) states that mentoring comprises of two key concepts.

First, mentoring relates to career advancement functions and psycho-social functions; mentoring is assumed to offer career development and psycho-social support to mentees (Mustafa, et al, 2014). Second, mentors are said to perform roles whereby career functions in corporate sponsorship, training, security, exposure, visibility and stimulating work assignments are enhanced (Leck and Orser, 2013). Psycho-social capacities incorporate support, kinship, guidance and input, and assist people to build up a sense of competence, confidence and effectiveness (Leck and Orser, 2013). The mentee learns through observation, socialization, and the mentor poses as a role model (Ehrich, 2008). These theories encourage a diverse perspective of the mentoring relationship, where the mentor plays different roles (Mustafa et al., 2014).

An investigation of one hundred women executives in the United States of America found that they were in agreement about the vitality of mentorship for the enhancement of women's career (Ehrich, 2008). In the same vein, women educational administrators in Canada indicated that mentoring impacted the women positively in their managerial careers (Ehrich, 2008). However, it is noted that earlier studies found that women were excluded from casual mentorship relationships and they found it difficult to obtain mentors as compared to their male counterparts (Ehrich, 2008).

### **2.6.6 Tokenism**

At times women are manipulated by organizations to display positive image than might in all actuality be not legitimized (Broughton and Miller, 2009). According to this assertion of tokenism, women are manipulated by organizations by means of employing women to attain more numbers of women rather than based on women's qualifications and experience (Broughton and Miller, 2009). This manipulation of women prompted Kanter's hypothesis of tokenism, which offers one of the most succinct explanations on why women in male-commanded jobs are stigmatized (Morris, 2010). As indicated by this hypothesis, tokenism happens when a group consisting of an obvious majority group has within it an obviously determinable subgroup (Morris, 2010). Kanter found three negative procedures that match with token status. To begin with, Kanter pointed out that token status prompts the increased visibility of a token, and that such visibility may entail increased attention as well as higher performance demands (Shilton, McGregor and Tremaine,

2010). Such demands might prompt either overachieving to overcome such demands, or underachieving, to remain non-threatening to the dominant group (Shilton, et al., 2010).

Second, Kanter depicted the complexity of the dynamic between tokens and dominant group members (Morris, 2010). Kanter conjectured that their differentiation would prompt a more prominent misrepresentation of the differences between dominant group of individuals and tokens (Morris, 2010). This misrepresentation of differences could then result in the social seclusion of the token group members (Shilton, et al., 2010). Kanter depicted a scenario that token females personal characteristics end up skewed or misperceived that these women would fall in accordance with female gender role generalizations. Kanter named this procedure "job capture" due to the manner in which the female tokens ended up limited by their gender generalization (Shilton, et al. 2010). Clearly, exaggerated perceptions of women are incongruent with the picture of a perfect, fruitful, working person. Accordingly, such stereotypes can be exceedingly problematic to the working woman (Morris, 2010). Moreover, Kanter found that numerous women opted to adhere to these stereotypes instead of challenging them. Both distortion from external sources and self-distortion, have negative consequences to self, and may also serve to further perpetuate negative stereotypes of (Morris, 2010).

Reaction against token gender appointments have been seen in New Zealand where women executives feared that if a large number of organizations opt to choose women for the sake of tokenism, incompetent women would be foisted upon them (Shilton, et al. 2010). In South Africa, the 'token' stigma has been connected to formerly disadvantaged people in South Africa who are being appointed to senior jobs, on account of affirmative action and employment equity policies, therefore resulting in the employment of incompetent women in leadership positions (April et al., 2007). Therefore, organizations ought to hire based on competences such as educational qualifications and experience, regardless of gender.

### **2.6.8 Leadership styles perceived for men and women**

Many scholars have studied the leadership styles of men versus women (Rosener, 1990; Eagly and Carli, 2007; Nixdorf and Rosen, 2010) and deduced that men and women exhibit different management styles. One of the best brief explanations of leadership was proposed by Katz and Kahn (1978) as going beyond mechanical compliance with the normal mandate of the organization. Lowe (2011) describes leadership as a term that denotes the capabilities of an

individual to influence and motivate others to best reach organizational goals. Rowe and Guerrero (2013) express leadership as the ability to impact individuals. In addition, they simply view leadership as good management (Rowe and Guerrero, 2013).

Eagly and Carli (2007) deduced that men and women have different leadership styles. Women are more people oriented, altering people's interests into corporation's goals (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Northouse, 2015). Toor and Ofori (2011) observed women to be transformational leaders who cooperate, mentor and collaborate, and asserted that these qualities are imperative for contemporary organizations. Women are also perceived as being able to influence their subordinates in the pursuit of organizational goals, they are thinkers, skilled in converting companies through their natural personality, and they motivate and inspire their teams (Evans, 2010). Coleman (2010) further observed that women attempt to build harmony in decision making. They are good listeners and therefore establish connections quickly; and they are generally democratic, which is why they can reason with the team members (Coleman, 2010).

The traits and behaviors stereotypically viewed as appropriate and possessed by men, for example, competitiveness, logical and initiating behavior, persuasiveness and aggressiveness, are believed not to be in women, and as such they are not suited for certain positions especially those involving leadership and technical skills (Chovwen, 2003). Male gender characteristics such as fierceness, unconventionality, fairness, conclusiveness, self-confidence, boldness and reasonableness, are in line with transactional, impersonal and task-oriented leadership as opposed to the transformational leadership style for women (Toor and Ofori, 2011).

Generally, assumptions with regard to male leadership attributes continue to shape research on management theories (Lowe, 2011). In addition, numerous American organizations of higher education have propagated these presumptions by appointing more men than women in leadership positions (Tandrayen-Ragoobur and Pydayya, 2015). This approach allows for a more safe and secure environment of communication, development, and mobility (Lowe, 2011). Three major reasons for discriminatory practices were postulated: portraying women as lacking characteristics vital for leadership; overt discrimination by the majority culture; and systemic discrimination whereby organizational practices disproportionately and negatively impact women (Tandrayen-Ragoobur and Pydayya, 2015). These practices create a "hidden" system of discrimination (Tandrayen-Ragoobur and Pydayya, 2015).

Maimunah and Roziah's (2007) study in Malaysia indicated that the workforce in Malaysia is identified by its masculine nature. Men have a more influential style while women show a less influential style, and both these styles are viewed to possess their own advantages in organizations (Maimunah and Roziah, 2007). In Malaysian organizations particularly, the situation of promoting elite professional women to leadership or higher managerial positions remains a sensitive issue that needs to be handled delicately (Maimunah and Roziah, 2007). Organizations' lean, mean, goal-oriented and aggressive culture may lead to women opting out of management and choosing to remain at lower levels (Tandrayen-Ragoobur and Pydayya, 2015).

It was found that women leaders neither essentially lack confidence in their leadership capabilities nor the capability to function commendably as leaders, but they often experience a sense of tokenism, vulnerability, and precariousness (Wood, 2008). Disconnects transpire when diverse bases of cognitive functioning cause different perceptions of common events (Evans, 2010). In addition, masculine leaders are convinced that male leadership characteristics are a perfect match for management positions (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Therefore, since this perception prevails in organizations, recruiters are more likely to select men if leadership positions are open (Evans, 2010). Further, this scenario result in male managers being more favorably evaluated as opposed to women managers (Evans, 2010).

In recent years, a significant amount of sociological research has focused on gender and leadership (Wood, 2008). It has transpired that women show superiority in some aspects of leadership when compared to men (Wood, 2008). For instance, women's transformational leadership style seems correlated with effectiveness and more satisfied subordinates (Rohmann and Rowold, 2009). In contrast, this leadership trait might pose difficulties in women being accepted in organizational practice and put them at risk of receiving less professional respect from their followers than male leaders (Rohmann and Rowold, 2009). Stereotypically accepted leadership attributes are those associated to men (Wood, 2008). Attributes such as achievement orientation, forcefulness and strength in decision-making are commonly ascribed to men, and these traits are considered to be essential to fulfil jobs that are associated with men, such as management and leadership roles (Wood, 2008).

Further, female leaders are judged more severely for utilizing leadership styles that are normally connected with men. Northouse (2013) noted that women who waver from their socially defined

roles are likely to be judged negatively. Therefore, since masculine traits are seen as more essential in the corporate world than female traits, then these stereotypes undermine women in leadership roles (Evans, 2010). This observation may substantiate studies that indicate that women are underrated by male subordinates and counterparts even though they utilize a transformational leadership management style (Evans, 2010). Burns (1998) and Bass and Avolio (1994) are among those who classified and explored leadership behavior as either transformational or transactional.

#### **2.6.8.1 Transformational leadership**

In transformational leadership, leaders emphasize the development of higher motives, and arouse their followers' motivation and positive emotions by creating and representing an inspiring vision of the future (Rohmann and Rowold, 2009). According to McGregor and Burns (1998) transformational leadership is the ability, through natural charisma, to inspire and guide the workforce through change and transformation. It also emphasizes the achievement of goals by gaining employees' trust and respect. Transformational leaders, on the whole, are successful and this fact may help women to excel in leadership (Evans, 2010). Transformational leaders are charismatic (Bass and Riggio, 2006). They motivate subordinates and appeal to their ideals and moral, and transformational leaders take a real interest in the well-being of their employees (Men and Stacks, 2013).

As suggested by Jin (2010), transformational leadership integrates the elements of "empathy, compassion, sensitivity, relationship building, and innovation" (p. 174). It fosters a climate of trust, nurtures employees' confidence, and encourages their individual development (Loughlin, Arnold and Crawford, 2011). McKinsey (2008) also noted that transformational leadership includes the elements of participative decision making and sharing of power. Transformational leadership is considered necessary in developing a global talent pool (McKinsey, 2008). A transformational leader is considerate of followers' individual needs, challenges them intellectually, acts as a role model, and is inspiring (Loughlin et al. 2011).

#### **2.6.8.2 Transactional Leadership**

In contrast, transactional leadership relies on a set of clearly defined exchanges between leader and follower (Rohmann and Rowold, 2009). Transactional leadership, also referred to as traditional leadership, is characterised by a contingent reward relationship between a manager and subordinate where work effort on the part of the employee is motivated by positive rewards, or in

order to avoid the consequences of negative reinforcement associated with manager criticism of the employee's performance (Brijbans, 2015). Transactional leadership also entails a task-focused approach to leadership, based in management, by problem resolution where managers monitor problematic work performance and intervene to resolve such situations (Brijbans, 2015). These two variations of the characterization of transactional leadership are termed contingent reward and management by exception (Men and Stacks, 2013). The essence of transactional leadership is a depersonalized task-based transaction between the manager and subordinate, with a focus on motivating employee behaviour through incentives and disincentives (Rohmann and Rowold, 2009).

Transactional leadership is therefore an exchange process (Men and Stacks, 2013). It is a matter of contingent reinforcement of employees based on performances (Rohmann and Rowold, 2009). This leadership style motivates subordinates by appealing to their personal desires, based on instrumental economic transactions. Transactional leaders generally use organizational bureaucracy, policy, power, and authority to maintain control; furthermore, this style of leadership is occasionally referred to as authoritative (Bennett, 2009). Previous leadership scholars (e.g. Bass, 1999; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman and Fetter, 1990) have identified contingent reward, which involves leaders clarifying roles and task expectations and providing contingent rewards on the fulfilment of contractual obligations, as the principal behaviour to represent transactional leadership because it captures the exchange notion fundamental to transactional leader behaviour (Men and Stacks, 2013).

Transactional and transformational leadership have been widely recognized as not mutually exclusive (e.g. Aldooy and Toth, 2004; Bass, 1999; Bass and Avolio, 1994; Laohavichien, Lawrence, Fredendall and Cantrellet, 2009; Werder and Holtzhausen, 2009; Yukl, 2008). Good leaders should know how to switch between a transformational and transactional leadership style in accordance with the situation (Vera and Crosan, 2004). However, transformational leadership has generated more scholarly attention across disciplines in the past decade due to its relationship-oriented nature and the rich empirical evidence on its positive influence on employee attitudes and behaviours (Men and Stacks, 2013).

Contrary to this argument, there are studies which propose that leadership cannot be attributable to gender (Carless, 1998; Northouse, 2007). This is justified by the definition of a leader in terms

of traits provided by Evans (2010: 349): “L – listening and learning from others; E – energizing the organization; A – acting for the benefit of everybody; D – development of themselves and others; E – empowerment of others to lead; and R – recognition of achievement.” Another area which has generated much research in exploration for answers to the scarcity of senior female managers is the arena of work-life conflict/balance (Cross, 2010).

### **2.6.9 Work-life balance for women**

Work-life balance is characterized as a person's capacity to meet their work and family duties, just as other non-work obligations and exercises (Delecta, 2011). Work-life balance, notwithstanding the relations among work and family-life, likewise includes different jobs in different everyday situations (Brijbans, 2015). Agarwal and Lenka (2015) see work-life balance as keeping up a harmony between a person's work and their own life. Broughton and Miller (2009) define it as fulfillment and great working at work and at home, with the least job conflict.

Women’s obligations at home grow because of marriage, kids and family unit errands together with their climbing to the executive levels, bringing about work-life unevenness (Saadina, Ramlia and Harina, 2016). Work-life conflict is experienced when weight from work and family jobs are contradictory, to such an extent that investment in one job makes it hard to take part in the other (Saadina et al., 2016). Meyerson (2001) clarifies that the issue of work and family conflict does limit women from excelling, however it additionally makes work-related isolation. The explanation behind this is that women still believe that they are entirely responsible for dealing with family duties (Posholi, 2012).

Women often experience more difficulty than men in balancing work and family commitments because they carry a disproportionate burden of the domestic responsibilities and this becomes a major barrier to their career advancement (Rehman and Roomi, 2012). Women may experience role overload and time management problems while trying to fulfil family and work demands simultaneously (Martin and Barnard, 2013). There might be a spillover of meetings that clash with children’s programs and a continual change of deadlines that compete with family time (Brijbans, 2015).

Disaster management both at home and the workplace, requiring full focus, could be in contention, where the workplace is viewed as a priority and supervisors are always expected to be accessible to take care of deferred or crisis gatherings; similarly, spouses/mothers are continually expected

to take care of debilitated family members or see relatives (Malyadri and Sumana, 2012). Rapidly developing organizations require working extended periods of time, which implies loss of value time with families. Women attempt to balance success and battle with work and family struggles, which prompts challenges in career progression (Posholi, 2012).

There are organizations that consent to women working adaptable work hours to help them deal with their home and kids without their work being disturbed (Worrall, Harris, Stewart, Thomas and McDermott, 2010). This causes a high level of pressure since women may need to take leave because of family duties and management regularly considers this to be a burden (Worrall et al., 2010). Numerous versatile techniques are utilized by couples to keep up their association with the workforce while likewise possessing adequate energy for their family life (Lingard and Francis, 2008). These adaptation methodologies may incorporate changes with respect to upgrading jobs and connections, and controlling assets and requests to do so (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009). Women who want to prevail in their vocations generally do not rely upon authoritative help in regards to family requests because of a paranoid fear of strengthening the shared generalization (Subramaniam and Arumugam, 2014).

Different investigations have demonstrated that women continue to assume responsibility for family unit errands and child raising, paying little heed to how long they work outside home (Saadina et al., 2016). Burke and McKeen (1994) additionally presumed that working women experience more worry than working men (Saadina, Ramlia and Harina, 2016). It turns out to be evident that women are in truth torn between work and family requests, since they would prefer not to be housewives, and yet they are expected to be superwomen. They wish for yet dread chances and difficulties which the outer world offers (Posholi, 2012).

Research in the UK and Canada propose that work-life balance impacts organizational retention of female executives (April et al., 2007). The effect of work-life balance in South Africa is probably going to be significantly more noteworthy, because of the societal weight around women's job of child bearing. Women in the UK, USA, Germany, Greece and Sweden are compelled to make sacrifices as far as their profession or their family life goes (Broughton and Miller, 2009). A critical number of women inside the EU workforce work low paying jobs (for example, as secretaries and clerks) in light of the issues around consolidating work, child care and family duties (Vinnicombe and Sturges, 1995). Low maintenance work is viewed as a vocation

executioner since it is commonly accessible at the lower dimensions of the association, and offers no open doors for headway. There is less security in low maintenance occupations than full-time employment, even though much research has shown how dedicated some low maintenance specialists are to their occupations (Vinnicombe and Sturges, 1995).

In South Africa, women decline numerous career opportunities because they are considered to be in charge of most of the family and household responsibilities (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Regardless of whether they do figure out how to deal with the unfair limitations, one of the greatest difficulties that South African women executives face is keeping the harmony among profession and family (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010). This is ordinarily a challenge faced exclusively by women in light of the fact that for most male executives, their partners play the essential role of dealing with family and home. In contrast, numerous executive women have partners who are career driven (April et al., 2007). Posholi (2012) raises a critical point, which is women's lack of enthusiasm to advance to executive level.

#### **2.6.10 Self- perceptions and psychological glass ceiling for women**

Posholi (2012) indicates that not only in African societies, but also in China, men have the propensity to choose family-oriented over career-oriented wives. As a result, women would rather choose to be family-oriented, as they do not want to be viewed as being more capable than their husbands (Posholi, 2012).

Some authors illustrate attitudes in women who normally choose to rather drop top jobs than to sacrifice their families (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Further, Mathur-Helm (2006) contends that the standards utilized for promotion, such as networking and succession planning, are planned and designed by men who do not have any understanding about women's lives (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Thus, women's aims are misinterpreted and block them from progressing to executive management (Marthur-Helm, 2006).

In the spring of 2014, two accomplished female columnists, Kay and Shipman (2014), composed an article in Atlantic Magazine called "*The Confidence Gap*" (O'Neil and Hopkins, 2015). In this article, they argued that women's absence of advancement and powerlessness to get through the "glass ceiling" in substantial numbers is because of what they named women's intense absence of confidence (O'Neil and Hopkins, 2015). They recognized that maternal senses and social and institutional boundaries may be contributing variables, yet expressed that at the most essential

dimension, confidence, is the key missing element to “women’s prosperity” (O’Neil and Hopkins, 2015). O’Neil and Hopkins (2015) countered that while some women may need confidence, and in reality, a few men also, painting all women with the wide brush of lacking in confidence disregards the societal, social and authoritative standards that raise men as pioneers and see women as “less than”. They argue that the “women lack confidence” perspective depends on a “fix the women” attitude (O’Neil and Hopkins, 2015). This infers that organizations require the change in corporate culture and practices that exacerbate lack of confidence (O’Neil and Hopkins, 2015).

Instead of directing focus on the systematic norms of the gendered workplace, attention should be paid to the prevailing model in the workplace of male competitiveness (Hewlett, 2008). This reified model continues to control how individuals behave in organizational life (Hewlett, 2008). What might be seen as women’s absence of confidence is rather male competitiveness, a truly unavoidable, fundamental hindrance women face in the workplace that serves to undermine them as they look to progress into authority positions (Vinnicombe and Colwill, 1995). Proposing that women do not progress to the most powerful positions for the reason that they lack confidence overlooks the dominant structures that encompass work-life together with life-career matters (O’Neil et al., 2008) and subsequently put women in a disadvantage (O’Neil and Hopkins, 2015). The combined impact of this situation is that gendered organizational settings remain firmly entrenched, and women stay underrepresented at higher ranks of management (O’Neil and Hopkins, 2015).

### **2.6.11 Education**

The need to upgrade individual characteristics, for example, education and management abilities, in order to accomplish impartiality and improve career advancement has its premise in liberal feminist insights (April et al., 2007). Entry into better opportunities in management should encompass raising awareness by means of necessary training, competence skills together with necessary qualifications (April et al., 2007).

Elmuti, Jia and Davis (2009) note that the role of women in the US has changed drastically over the last fifty years, in that women matriculating, attending tertiary institutions, with master’s education and acquiring doctorate degrees has expanded significantly (Mudau and Ncube, 2017). Women are no longer connected with low expectations in education, workforce and business sectors (Mudau and Ncube, 2017).

### **2.6.12 Societal Perceptions**

Recent studies in the UK and US indicate that women in executive positions felt the most engrained hindrances stem from the society' women are perceived as incapable of holding executive management positions (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010). The new South Africa has afforded women new opportunities which has resulted in access to more economic power than their male counterparts (April et al., 2007). However, there is speculation that women have been given executive positions as a result of governmental policy related to affirmative action rather than because they have the required skills, experience and qualifications (April et al., 2007).

As indicated by April et al. (2007), the prevalent perspective of the ideal worker is someone who enters the organization immediately after attaining the necessary qualifications and works their way into upper management rungs without disturbances, and who contributes substantially to family and organizational life. When this norm is adopted by an organization, it bears important implications for women aspiring to assume executive level occupations (April et al., 2007). In South Africa, numerous women take breaks during their careers, work reduced hours, or generally contribute a lot of time caring for children and tending to family obligations and needs (April et al., 2007).

They normally do this mid-career, in the period where the "ideal worker" climbs to upper management rungs (April et al., 2007). These disruptions keep women from being viewed as the "ideal worker" and potential contenders (April et al., 2007). The commonly recognized standards of South African society are indirectly biased against women (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010). One of the serious issues confronting women is their perceived roles of caregiving and domestic responsibilities, which are modelled by society (Cross, 2010). Studies on the division of non-market labor point out that women hold an unbalanced responsibility for both household work and childcare, even though at times both partners are employed (Cross, 2010).

## **2.7 THE GLOBAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN TOP MANAGEMENT POSITIONS**

Since women entered the workforce, they have made substantial progress; presently, they account for thirty-five percent of the workforce globally, yet their representation in executive managerial positions are still minimal at twenty-four percent (Clevenger and Singh, 2013). In the USA, about three percent of Chief Executive Officers in Fortune 1000 companies are women. In Canada,

women hold five percent of CEO positions in FP 500 companies (Clevenger and Singh, 2013). Grant Thornton Business Survey Report revealed that four out of ten businesses worldwide do not have women in senior management (Early and Sczesny, 2009). Women count up to about four percent of the presidents and ten percent of the members of the highest decision-making bodies in the largest publicly quoted companies in each of the twenty-seven nations of the European Union (Early and Sczesny, 2009). In the USA, women comprise only about fifteen percent of corporate officers in Fortune 500 companies (Nixdorf and Rosen, 2010; Clevenger and Singh, 2013; Barragan, et al., 2013) and held only about fifteen percent of board seats in the Fortune 5 in 2003 (Clevenger and Singh, 2013). In addition, women make up fifteen percent of members of boards in Fortune 500 companies (Booyesen, 2007).

In New Zealand, researcher uncovered that the mandatory nature of equivalent opportunities in the public sector versus the voluntary nature in the private sector has propelled researchers to perceive that equal opportunities are better in the public sector compared to the private sector (Shilton, McGregor and Tremaine, 2010). The number of women who achieve top positions in Danish private firms is low contrasted with other EU nations (Shilton et al., 2010). In 1996, just three percent of the CEOs in the biggest Danish private firms were women (Smith, Smith and Verme, 2011). After ten years, in 2005, this figure had expanded to 5 percent. This may come as a surprise since Denmark was one of the first nations in the OECD where women entered the workplace and turned out to be full-time individuals from the workforce (Smith et al., 2011).

Denmark was additionally one of the first western nations which presented broad brilliant strategy of providing childcare as a major aspect of a political strategy to support equivalent opportunities for men and women in the workplace during the 1960s and mid 1970s (Terjesen and Singh, 2008). In 2006, Denmark was in a reasonable lead as for the inclusion of publicly funded formal care to children (Ismail and Ibrahim, 2008). Hence it appears as a contradiction that Denmark is not doing very well in universal evaluations of inclusive gender compensation gaps, the proportion of women on private boards, or the number of women in top executive positions (Terjesen and Singh, 2008). Denmark is positioned as number seven of one hundred and thirty-four nations on the “Gender Gap Index” generally, with regards to the gender gap for representation among legislators, senior officials and managers, Denmark is positioned as low as number sixty-eight (Ismail and Ibrahim,

2008). The proportion of women in the classification of executive management expanded from 4.8 percent in 2000 to 5.4 percent in 2005 in Malaysia (Ismail and Ibrahim, 2008).

In South Africa, women held only 18.6% of executive and senior management positions in 2009 (Johnson and Mathur-Helm, 2011). Business Women Association South Africa (BWASA) (2017) compared women at the top of Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) listed companies to those in the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

**Table 2. 1: Comparison between JSE-Listed firms and SOEs**

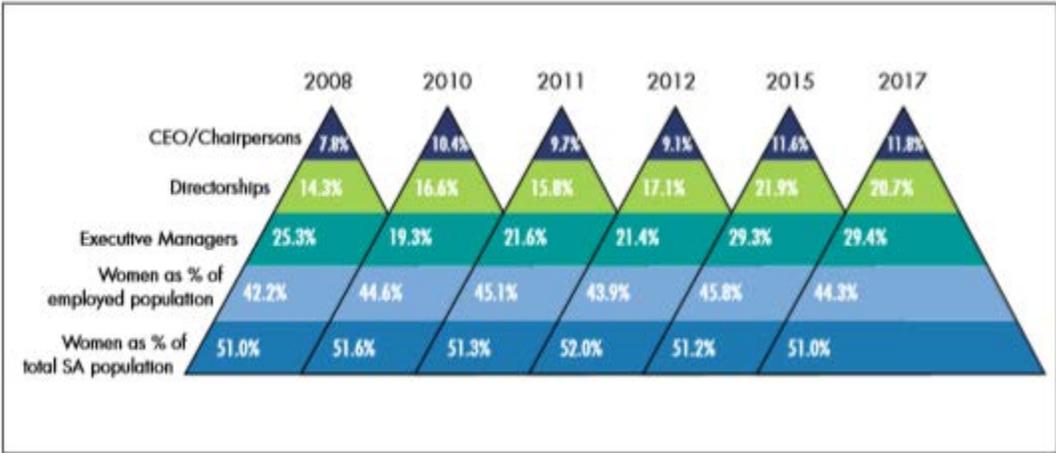
	JSE-listed	SOE
Share of female CEOs	4.7%	5%
Share of female chairpersons	6.9%	10%
Share of female directors	19.1%	41.2%
Share of female executive managers	29.5%	28.5%

(Adapted from BWASA, 2017)

In JSE-recorded organizations, the offer of female directorships has expanded by 6.5 percent to 19.1 percent, while the offer of JSE-recorded organizations has diminished to 25.6% in 2017, from 35.9% in 2015 (BWASA, 2017). JSE-listed organizations are complemented for having higher representation of women in board levels (BWASA, 2017). The number of female executive managers has risen marginally to 29.5% (BWASA, 2017). At SOEs, female directorships have grown at a slower pace than for JSE-listed firms, although from a higher base (BWASA, 2017). Between 2008 and 2017, the share of female directorships has increased by 0.4 percentage points, but female executive directors account for only 9.2% of total female directors (Lagerberg, 2017). It is a concern that the share of SOEs with at least three female directors has also shrunk by ten percentage points to 85% (Lagerberg, 2017). The share of women executive managers at SOEs has decreased to 28.5%. Despite gender equity targets and making up the majority of workers in the Public Service, women account for only 41% of senior management positions (BWASA, 2017). As salaries increase, the gap between the shares of women versus men at the senior management level also increases, with 2.5 men for every woman at the highest salary (BWASA, 2017).

Notwithstanding gender equity targets and making up most of laborers in the Public Service, women represent just 41% of senior administration positions (Lagerberg, 2017). Reassuringly, African women as a proportion of senior administration positions saw the most noteworthy development somewhere in the period 2015 and 2016, expanding by 7.3 percent (BWASA, 2017). The MSCI (Morgan Stanley Capital International) Women on Boards Report 2016 echoes this, with likewise just five nations accomplishing 30% or more representation. In the two reports, the two Nordic nations, Iceland and Norway, have performed the best, enacting at least 40% share of women on records of freely recorded organizations (BWASA, 2017).

Despite the fact that directorships have been expanding at the quickest rate in developing markets, this has been less through presentation, which has usually been the situation in cutting edge economies (BWASA, 2017). Among its BRICS peers, South Africa emerges at the forefront, but is progressively challenged by India, which, on paper, has multiplied number of women on records in two years (BWASA, 2017). As opposed to the developing business sector pattern, India's outcomes have been accomplished by alterations in their Companies Act of 2013 (BWASA, 2017). China has the biggest offer of female CEOs with 12.5%, trailed by India (8.3%), and followed by South Africa. Russia is the best performer when observing the number of women in Senior Management positions (47% of Senior Managers are women), followed by China (31%), and then South Africa (Lagerberg, 2017).



**Figure 2. 2: Comparative Census Pyramid, 2008-2017**

(Adapted from BWASA, 2017)

Women comprise about 51 percent of the total population in South Africa, however, only 7.8 percent occupied CEO positions in 2008. In 2017, this figure increased to 11.8 percent (BWASA, 2017). Different legislation has been introduced by governments to address gender inequality.

## **2.8 MEASURES TO ADDRESS GENDER INEQUALITY**

Gender disparities in the labor market, occupations, and the workplace have been and still remain an element of social and economic relations in many countries (Strachan, Adikaram and Kailasapathy, 2015). Further, it has significant financial implications, as individuals and their abilities are two of the central drivers of manageable and long-term economic development (Masango and Mfene, 2015). If half of the nation's skills and abilities are immature or underutilized, the economy will never develop as it could (Masango and Mfene, 2015). Similarly, organizations who neglect to enlist and retain women and guarantee they have a pathway to positions of authority undermine their own long-term attractiveness (Strachan et al., 2015).

Clevenger and Singh (2013) clarify that, in spite of the developing number of women in the working environment and legislation intended to prohibit segregation based on sexuality, gender, race, color, religion, pregnancy, national root, age and disability, women continue to struggle for equity. Additionally, Clevenger and Singh (2013) note that numerous organizations have been dissatisfied with the outcomes they have accomplished in their endeavors to address the diversity challenge. This might be the after-effect of fundamental social factors that prevent organizations from accomplishing their diversity goals (Clevenger and Singh, 2013).

The introduction of law-making instruments, for an example, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Affirmative Action (AA) in different countries were introduced to organizations to deal with issues about fairness and discrimination (Globler and Warnich, 2011). Employment Equity was viewed as a long-term program designed to ensure fair treatment of all employees in the workplace (Booyesen, 2007). It would be accomplished when no individual is deprived employment opportunities or benefits due to reasons unconnected to their capacities (Booyesen, 2007). Affirmative Action was seen as a short-term strategy whereby employment equity in the workplace would be attained by means of the vigorous eradication of systemic discrimination (Strachan et al., 2015). However, it seemed that inequality persisted (Roodt and Van Zyl, 2003). Roodt and Van Zyl (2003) added that male-dominated occupations still endured, thus depriving women of equality when they attempted to navigate their way in the workplace. Women were unfairly faced

with a dilemma of choosing between career progression and a stable home (Stearns, 2007). So, if this issue existed from the sixties up to the twenty-first century and there was strong commitment to annul it, it would be a related issue particularly for a developing market, for example, South Africa (Venter and Levy, 2011).

Toor and Ofori (2011) criticize this inequality and justify their statement by asserting that female participation nowadays is vital and organizations need to be sensitive and supportive in their policies of equal opportunity and gender balance. It is therefore imperative for organizations to include training and development, coaching, adaptable working hours and domestic support services, which could be utilized together with legislation to redress the discrimination and patriarchies of the past (Dimovski, et al., 2010).

With the purpose of accelerating improvement towards gender equality on corporate boards, numerous countries are creating methods aimed at providing equal opportunities regardless of their gender (Nater and Sczesny, 2016). The South African Employment Equity Act 1988 tipped the balance in favor of previously disadvantaged individuals in respect of access to opportunities in the workplace (April et al., 2007), exerting pressure on companies to meet Employment Equity quotas (Booyesen, 2009). Equal opportunities in organizations suggest that there is room at the top, which supposedly implies the movement of women from their traditional horizontal jobs to vertical executive jobs (April et al., 2007).

As far as effectively shrinking the gender gap, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and New Zealand were the highest of the ten regions selected (Wood, 2008). Clear nonappearances in the top ten were the UK, US and Australia (Wood, 2008). The question remains as to how this slow ongoing moderate and uneven career growth can be justified given the fact that Equal Employment Opportunity strategies have been existing in the USA for four decades, the UK since 1975 and in Australia for more than 20 years (Wood, 2008). As a signatory to the United Nations Millennium Declaration, South Africa conferred itself, in 2000, to seek to reach the Millennium Development Goals, with the goal of accomplishing them in 2015 (Masango and Mfene, 2015). In addition, South Africa set gender equality into the law after the elections in 1994 (Masango and Mfene, 2015). The legislative framework on gender equality made a way for institutions that have been given the duty to execute the strategies on gender balance (Masango and Mfene, 2015). However, gender equality is still far away in most societies.

## **2.9 THEORY UNDERPINNING THE STUDY**

This study draws from two theories, namely, gender-organization-system perspective theory and the feminist theory. The first, gender-organization-system perspective theory, is rooted in the culture of organizations as well as the behavior of women in the organizations. The second, the feminist theory, aims to redress the discrimination and patriarchy that results in gender inequality. Furthermore, the exposure of gendered social, political and economic disparities in organizations by feminism deconstructs power systems (Pompper, 2011).

### **2.9.1 Gender-organization-system perspective theory**

Questions on the underrepresentation of women in higher organizational tiers are frequently asked in research in the field of management (Fagenson, 1990). According to Fagenson (1990), the answer to this question are dependent on the theoretical viewpoints embraced by women in management researchers. These theories determine the factors that they scrutinize, the approaches they use, the results they obtain and the conclusions they reach (Fagenson, 1986).

The traditional person-centered (gender-centered) perspective attributes the restricted progression of women in corporations to elements that are internalized in women (Fagenson, 1986). This viewpoint suggest that women are compelled by social norms to assume behaviors and attitudes that nurture commitments that oppose their becoming an effective manager, worthy of promotion (Kanter, 1977; Schein, 1975). Specifically, the person-centered perspective contends that women's commitments pertaining to their families, careers, jobs, organizations, subordinates and the leadership role contradict the work-load associated with the executive management position (Kanter, 1977). For instance, people who occupy top jobs in an organization's tiers are extremely dedicated to their jobs, careers and organizations (Kanter, 1977). Contrary to this, it is observed that women consider their family lives over their careers, give priority to same status relationships over their jobs, and lack a strong sense of organizational commitment (Kanter, 1977).

Opposing the personal view, the organization-centered perspective (systems theory) believes that a person's position in the organizational tier shapes their attitudes (Fagenson, 1990). The organizational centered perspective is grounded on the premise that these structures shape how women behave in work spheres (Jogulu and Wood, 2006). Kanter (1977) noted that there are advantageous and disadvantageous work situations. Advantageous positions offer occupants authority and better career prospects (Kanter, 1977). Kanter (1977) further argued that these

positions are normally held by people of the majority gender (that is, men). Additionally, Kanter (1977) noted that disadvantageous positions are normally held by people who are a minority in organizational settings (that is, females). Individuals who hold advantageous jobs try to advance themselves by changing attitudes and behaviors, whereas those who occupy non-advantageous positions create conducts and attitudes which hinder their advancement prospects (Fagenson, 1990). This perspective contends, then, that contrasts among people in their attitudes and conduct are because of distinctions in the opportunities and power structures in associations as opposed to gender (Kanter, 1977).

Failure of the organization centered perspective to control factors besides the structure of an organization has been widely criticized, while the gender-centered perspective was criticized for overlooking situational variables (Jogulu and Wood, 2006). Fagenson (1990) believed it was compelling to implement a broader and extra all-inclusive method, which is the gender-organization-system perspective (Fagenson, 1990; Yukongdi and Benson, 2013). Fagenson, (1990) advanced this perspective as a system-oriented approach which recognizes the simultaneous interaction between an individual, the organization and society.

Gender-organization-system perspective theory is considered to be the most valuable theoretical framework to examine women who occupy management positions (Omar and Davidson, 2001; Yukongdi and Benson, 2005). This theory argues that people's conduct in organizations is a consequence of the correlation between gender, circumstances and social institutional frameworks in which these links occur (Yukongdi and Benson, 2005). Gender-organization-system perspective adds that the conduct of women in the organization is the result of both their gender and the structure of the corporation (Fagenson, 1990). This view expands and further points out that corporate structure incorporates more than power, work circumstances, and the quantity of people that women manage; rather, it includes authoritative factors such as corporate culture, history, belief system, and strategies (Yukongdi and Benson, 2005).

Organizational structure suggests that the underrepresentation of women in executive positions are likely due to social and institutional frameworks in which associations operate (Fagenson, 1990). For instance, the influence of culture differs from nation to nation (Fagenson, 1990). It can be found that in nations where there is an exaggerated social preference for boys, then there is a more prominent level of gender disparity (Kanter, 1977). Cultural values, societal and institutional

practices and stereotypes attributed to the role of men and women in the society are likely to influence the structures and organizational procedures (Fagenson, 1990).

Therefore, these elements are directly related to women's attitudes and behaviors at work (Fagenson, 1990). In general, the gender-organization-framework view argues that communication between gender, circumstances, and social frameworks is a constant and repetitive procedure (Fagenson, 1986). People are influenced by circumstances and social frameworks, which thus, are influenced by people. The attributes of people, circumstances, and frameworks mutually decide singular attitudes and conduct which influence each other after some time (Fagenson, 1990).

Thus, as indicated by the gender-organization-system-perspective, women are underrepresented and underutilized in organizations for a number of reasons: women have been set in disadvantaged positions in organizations; women have been socialized to show traits, conduct and attitudes that are contended to be contrary to executive positions; and women have diverse expectations put on them by society (Fagenson, 1990). These components cannot be considered in seclusion as they, in turn, influence each other. Lastly, the gender-organization-system-framework recommends that people, associations, and social frameworks change at various rates because of natural changes, and in this way, women in various nations have not advanced into managerial positions at a similar pace (Fagenson, 1986).

### **2.9.2 Feminist Theory**

Feminist theory, in seeking to comprehend human conduct, centers on women and their issues in contemporary society, and adopts a framework that values women and confronts systematic injustice (Lay and Daley, 2007). Feminism holds that men and women are naturally equal (Winslow, 2006: 186). As most societies privilege men as a group, social movements are necessary to achieve equality between men and women; this view is undergirded by understanding that gender always intersects with other hierarchies (Lay and Daley, 2007). Feminist thought is usually characterized as happening in waves (Cudd and Andreasen, 2005). The first wave concerned itself mainly with increasing equal political rights and economic prospects for women, for example, the right to vote and the right to work outside home and for pay (Lay and Daley, 2007). Since at that time the possession of rationality was taken to be the appropriate basis for the attribution of rights, liberal feminists contended for women's equality to men based on the fact that men and women

have the same ability to reason (Cudd and Andreasen, 2005). First wave feminism was based in the west and coincided with the years after the war (Cudd and Anderson, 2005).

Second wave feminists upheld that, though imperative, political and legal equity is not sufficient to end women's oppression (Cudd and Anderson, 2005). They argued that gender mistreatment is not just concerned with legal and political activity, rather, its causes are inescapably and profoundly embedded in every aspect of human life, including economic, political and social activities and structures as well as unchallenged norms, habits, everyday interactions and individual connections (Cudd and Andreasen, 2005). Second wave feminists criticized first wave women's liberation for not going sufficiently far in its financial changes (Cudd and Andreasen, 2005). They contended that women's liberation must insist on full equality for women, instead of basic economic survival (Cudd and Andreason, 2005). What's more, second wave feminists tested the general public/private division by investigating areas of human public activity that were recently observed as political (Cudd and Andreason, 2005). Subsequently, as opposed to endeavoring to change existing political structures, second wave women's activists expected to fundamentally change every aspect of personal and political life (Cudd and Andreason, 2005). The second wave feminism was based on birth control, division of labor, which was likewise based on the west, and more about the realities of working class and middle-class women (Cudd and Anderson, 2005).

The third wave feminism started in the late 1980s by women's activists who insisted women's diversity or diversity must become more central to feminist theory and politics in general (Cudd and Andreason, 2005). For instance, women of color argued that their experiences, interests and concerns were not even more strongly, not represented nor adequately addressed by second wave feminism (Cudd and Andreason, 2005). Historically, second wave feminism was to a great extent represented by working class white women who tended to focus on shared characteristics among women and their experiences of oppression without considering social conditions (Cudd and Anderson, 2005). Because of this pattern, feminists of color contended that women from various social groups, racial, sexual and financial contests experience distinctive kinds of oppression (Cudd and Andreason, 2005). They likewise addressed whether it bodes well to discuss "women" as a solitary collective class or "women's oppression" as single collective phenomenon (Cudd and Andreason, 2005).

Men are quite often in the most significant ranks of organizational power (Pompper, 2011). Exercise of social power by elite groups produces social disparity, a lose-lose situation, where those in dominant positions secure their social power by restricting other's entrance into it (Pompper, 2011). In general, feminism uncovered gendered social, political and financial imbalances in associations, and were able to deconstruct such frameworks of control (Pompper, 2011), as well as clarify private and open circle belief systems. Generally, women's liberation advances thinking as far as a kaleidoscope of new dreams, structures and connections (Pompper, 2011). Feminist scholars point out that traditional male models of research privilege the concepts of rationality and objectivity, ignoring the reality of subjectivity and experience; this has historically diminished or render invisible women's subjectivity and experience in scholarly research (Barragan, et al., 2011). During the period of the 1970s and late 1980s, feminists sought to explain and account for the subordination of women (Jackson and Jones, 1998; Bowman and Schneider, 1998; Nienaber and Moraka, 2016). Marxism was investigated by many feminists hoping to answer the question (Jackson and Jones, 1998). This subordination could have its roots in social origins, Landes (1998) discusses feminist theory in terms of four common categories:

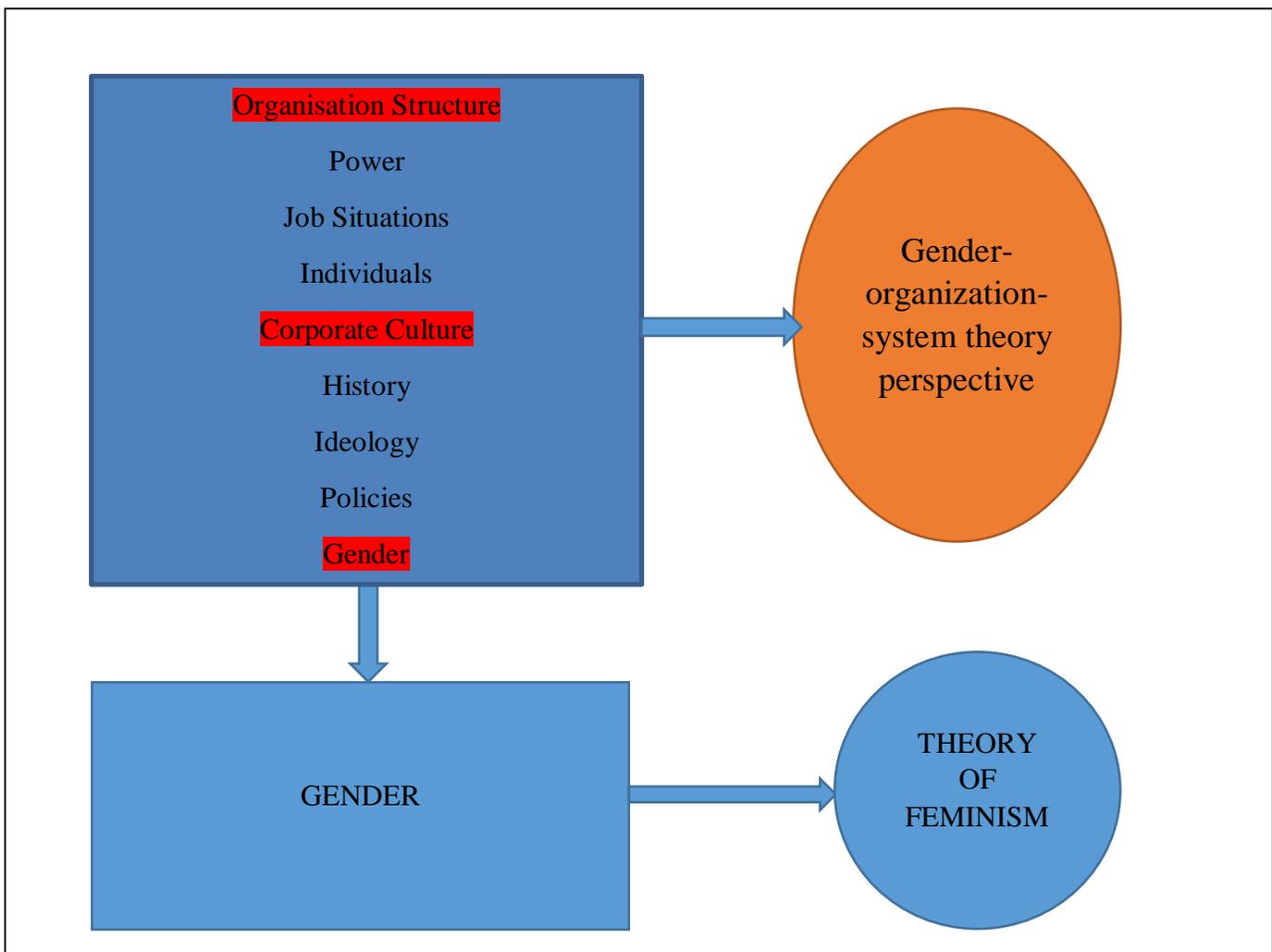
**Liberal feminism:** “Liberal feminism focuses its attentions on visible sources in gender discrimination like gendered job markets and inequitable wage scales whilst making it possible for women to attain positions of authority, in professions, governments and cultural institutions just like their male counterparts” (Nienaber and Moraka, 2016:145). Liberal feminist traditions propose that in the public sphere, women mold their identities and shape their lives in the workplace to conform to organizations mainly dominated by Caucasian men; and in the private sphere, they work a “second shift” as key caregivers and homemakers for their families (Pompper, 2011). Liberal feminism is a specifically Western version of feminism that argues that women are as intelligent and competent as men (Masango and Mfene, 2015).

**Marxist feminism:** Marxist theory could not easily accommodate feminism. Marxism was developed to explain capitalist class relations and the exploitation of the proletariat, and required considerable modification to accommodate gender relations (Jackson and Jones, 1998).

**Social feminism:** “Political and economic oppression is acknowledged by social feminism” (Peterson and Runyan, 1999:27). Social feminists set out that the issue of patriarchy constructs the divisions in private and public, production and reproduction (Peterson and Runyan, 1993)

**Radical feminism:** “Radical feminism goes beyond discrimination to deal with oppression and devise a gender politics of resistance to the dominant gender order, which is often called patriarchy” (Nienaber and Moraka, 2009:148).

Proposed theoretical framework for the study.



**Figure 2. 3: Proposed theoretical framework**

Source: (Author’s own illustration)

From figure 2.3 above, the gender-organization-system-perspective postulates that women are underutilized in organizations because of: (1) organizational structure which includes power, job

situations and individuals' attitudes and behaviors; (2) corporate culture which includes history, ideology and policies; and, (3) gender. The feminist theory seeks to redress gender inequality in organizations that are discussed by the gender-organization-system-perspective and in society as a whole. Below is the concept matrix which highlight research objectives and the main authors that discussed concepts under these objectives.

**Table 2. 2: Concept matrix**

Authors	Factors affecting advancement	Challenges faced by women	Role played by organizational culture	Attributes required for women to progress
Dimovski et al., 2010	✓	✓	✓	
Booyesen and Nkomo, 2007	✓	✓	✓	
Marthur-Helm, 2006		✓		✓
Northouse, 2015		✓		✓
April, et al., 2007	✓	✓		
Vinicombe, 2014	✓	✓	✓	
Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012			✓	
Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010).	✓			
BWASA, 2017	✓	✓		
Posholi, 2012	✓	✓		
Broughton and Miller, 2009	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mudau and Ncube, 2017	✓	✓		
Brijbans, 2013	✓	✓		
Clevenger and Singh, 2013	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 2.2 above, illustrates four research objectives and the main authors that addressed concepts that were discussed in each research objective.

## **2.10. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Chapter 2 reviewed extant literature on women in management and glass ceiling. The main topics that were explored included reasons for the existence of glass ceiling, factors affecting the advancement of women to top management positions, barriers that impede women from advancing to top management, leadership styles that are perceived as required from women to assume top management ranks, and global representation of women in management. The chapter also discuss the theoretical framework proposed for the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

“Research is a process that involves obtaining scientific knowledge by means of various objective methods and procedures” (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005:2). The term objective postulates that the methods and procedures depend on an individual’s ideas (Blessing and Chakrabarti, 2009). In addition, these methods are employed throughout the research process (Goddard and Melville, 2004; Welman et al., 2005). Alasuutari, Brannen and Bickman (2009) state that research is a process which encompasses a different range of strategies and procedures that: (1) embrace envisioning the pragmatic setting; (2) are inquisitive about the world hence developing questions into researchable problems; (3) finding the best means of doing that involve choices about methods and data to be sought; and (4) the development and use of concepts and the interpretation of findings. Research methodology, therefore, deliberates and clarifies the logic behind research methods and techniques (Silverman, 2016; Alasuurati et al., 2009). The purpose of doing research is to improve knowledge and understanding with regards to the world (Matthews and Ross, 2010; Flick, 2015). Therefore, an outstanding research methodology achieves the purpose and objectives of a research, as it makes sure that the research is rooted with a clear purpose and specifies the resources available for use (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Gomm, 2008).

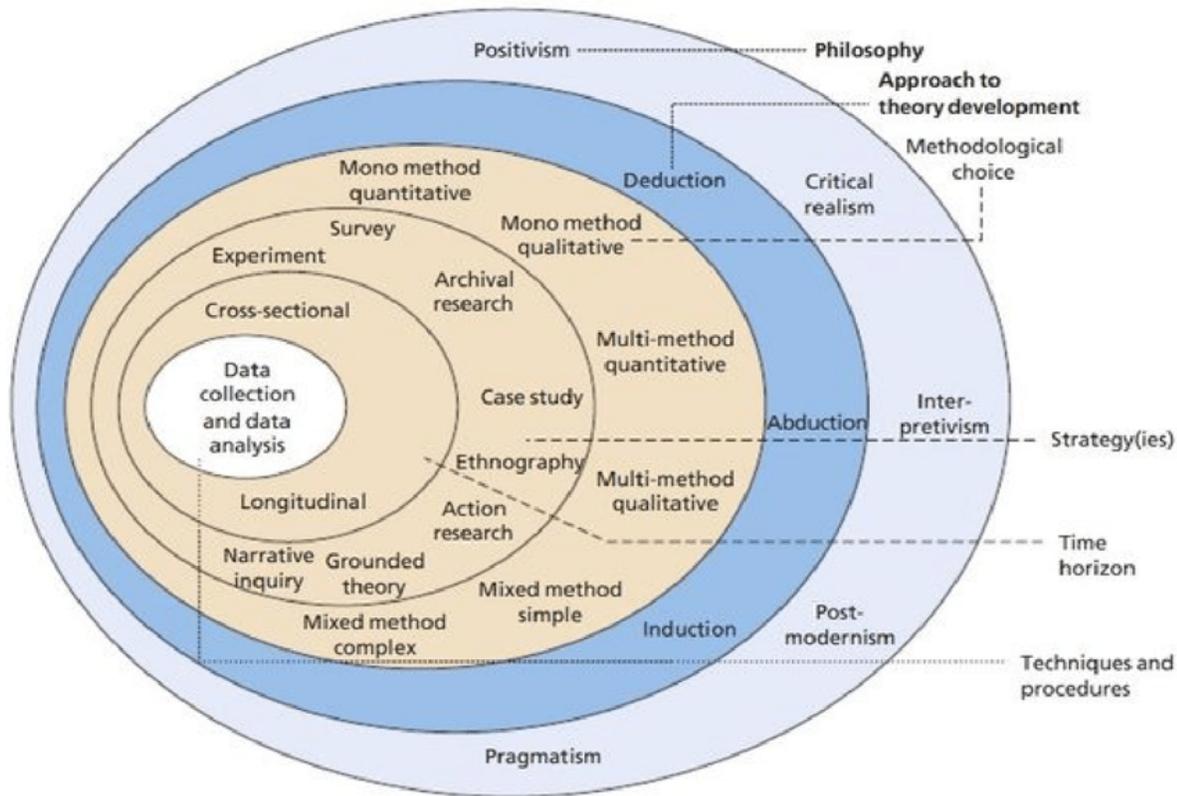
#### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM/PHILOSOPHY**

In this section, the paradigm or philosophy that motivates the study is discussed and the basic assumptions of the researcher are explored. Social scientists approach research problems from different hypothetical and methodological viewpoint by means of research paradigms (Blaikie, 2007; Gomm, 2008). Supporting the decision of a research problem, conceiving the research questions, and the choice of research strategies, underlies the research paradigm (Blaikie, 2007; Hussain, Elyas and Nasseef, 2013). Each research paradigm embodies a specific combination of ethics (axiology), ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions which have an impact on the results achieved by the research (Blaikie, 2007, Hallebone and Priest, 2009).

A research paradigm explains the logic that directs the behaviour of the researcher (Wahyuni, 2012; Antwi and Hamza, 2015). By subscribing to a particular paradigm, a researcher adopts a

specific way of studying a phenomenon that is relevant to their field (Niehaves and Bernd, 2006; Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Furthermore, paradigm refers to “a cluster of beliefs and dictates what researchers in a particular discipline what should be studied, how research should be done and how results should be interpreted” (Matthews and Ross, 2010:34).

So as to comprehend diverse methodologies embraced by social researchers, it is valuable to understand philosophical debates underpinning the development of social research in general (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard and Shape, 2014). Axiology is concerned about how individuals become moral in the world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Ontology is concerned about the idea of the real world and what there is to think about it (Ormston et al., 2014). Epistemology is concerned about methods for knowing and finding out about the world and what shapes the premise of knowledge (Punch, 2014). Methodology focuses on the best means for gaining knowledge about the world (Killam, 2013). Any paradigm encompasses three elements: a belief about the nature of knowledge; a methodology and a criterion of validity (Killam, 2013; Waliman, 2015). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) explain paradigms by means of the research onion. The research onion is explained further after figure 3.1.



**Figure 3. 1: ‘The Research Onion’**

Source: (Saunders et al., 2016: 124)

**Positivism:** positivism can be defined as a research philosophy that is normally utilised in the natural sciences, which looks to be objective and free of predisposition (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016; Saunders et al., 2016). Ontologically, positivists expound and foresee their surroundings in terms of cause-and-effect relationships between casual occasions and appearances as well as the underlying order of universal events (Tobin and Begley, 2004; Ahmad, Bello, Kasim and Martin, 2014; Waliman, 2015). Epistemologically, positivists use scientific and normally quantitative methods to understand the phenomenon under study (Tobin and Begley, 2004; Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, the researcher is detached, neutral and independent of what is researched (Crook and Garrat, 2005; Lindsay, 2010; Saunders et al., 2016).

**Critical realism:** critical realism centres around clarifying what is seen and experienced as far as fundamental structures of reality that shape the perceptible occasions (Berryman, Soohoo and Nevin, 2013; Saunders et al., 2016). Critical realism additionally holds that real structures exist, which are independent of human cognizance (Krauss, 2005; Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

Furthermore, critical realists propose that the individual's information of the truth is a consequence of social moulding (Blundel, 2007; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). On the other hand, critical realism perceives that the natural and social sciences are dissimilar, that the manner in which the truth is experienced depends on how individuals observe reality (Scott, 2007; Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

It endeavours to blend both objectivism and subjectivism, actualities and values, definite and thorough information and unmistakable contextualized experiences (Biesta, 2010; Saunders et al., 2016). Critical realism further accomplishes this on assumptions, ideas, thoughts and learning is esteemed for empowering activities to be done effectively (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Denzin, 2010).

**Pragmatism:** pragmatism states that ideas are only relevant when they support action (Saunders et al., 2016). It endeavours to blend both objectivism and subjectivism, actualities and values, definite and thorough information and specific contextualized experiences (Biesta, 2010; Saunders et al., 2016). (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Denzin, 2010). For pragmatists, research begins with an issue and plans to contribute practical solutions that illuminate future practice (Biddle and Schaftt, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016).

**Postmodernism:** postmodernism highlights the role of language and of power associations, looks to address accepted outlooks, and offers alternative marginalised views (Saunders et al., 2016). Postmodernists go further than interpretivists in their scrutiny of positivism, attributing more significance to the role of language (Lash, 2014; Saunders et al., 2016) They dismiss the contemporary objectivist, realist ontology of things, rather accentuating the disorganised primacy of flux, movement, fluidity and change (Denzin, 2008; Saunders et al., 2016). They are certain that any awareness of order is conditional and ungrounded, and can only be accomplished through language with its categories and classifications (Ramey and Grubb, 2009; Saunders et al., 2016). Concomitantly, they acknowledge that language is always fractional and insufficient (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

**Interpretivism:** Saunders et al. (2016) describe interpretivism as a research paradigm accentuating that individuals differ from physical singularities since they create meanings and interpretivists study these meanings. Interpretivism contends that it is impossible to examine individuals and their social settings in the same way as the physical, that social sciences research

therefore needs to be different from natural sciences, and one cannot be emulated by the other (Denzin, 2010; Henderson, 2011; Du Plooy et al., 2014). Interpretivism looks to clarify how individuals comprehend their conditions in a social world, and further holds that human behaviour is deliberate (Lindsay, 2010; Waliman, 2015). Various individuals of various social foundations under various conditions and diverse occasions make unique associations, thus make and experience unique social meanings, thus interpretivists study these social meanings (Waliman, 2015). Interpretivists scrutinize positivist endeavours to find unequivocal, widespread laws that apply to everyone (Broom and Willis, 2007; Sekaran and Bougie, 2013).

Rather interpretivists rely on human thoughts about phenomenon under investigation (Wayhuni, 2012; Saunders et al., 2016; Silverman; 2016). Partly due to unsettled tensions among their positivist and sentimentalist origins, interpretivists struggle with maintaining the resentment of prejudgment and objectivity, engagement and objectification (Denzin, 2010). Interpretivists conduct research to create greater understanding and interpretations of the social world and perspectives (Nguyen and Tran, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, interpretivists contend that every individual consistently comprehends social and material conditions inside a social structure and is socially developed with shared implications (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

**Constructivism:** constructivists share a similar mind-set with interpretivists; they focus on the world of experience as it is lived, felt and undergone by the social actors (Saunders et al., 2016). However, their specific outlines are the ideas of objectivism, target truth and essentialism (Lincoln and Guba, 2013). Constructivism explain that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as they construct or make it individually (Duffy and Jonassen, 2013; Glasersfeld, 2013). It holds that people imagine ideas, models, and plans to understand involvement, and individuals consistently test and alter these developments (Bryman and Bell, 2007). This approach thus emphasizes how people construct knowledge. Constructivism studies the accounts that people give on issues and topics, and considers how people construct these accounts (Lincoln and Guba, 2013; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Furthermore, constructivism embraces a relativist ontology, transactional epistemology and a hermeneutic, dialectical methodology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Researchers who employ this paradigm are focused on the production of recreated understandings of the social world (Duffy and Jonassen, 2013). This paradigm links action to

praxis and expands on antifoundational controversies while encouraging experimental and multivoiced texts (Ramey and Grubb, 2009; Ormston et al., 2014).

### **Research paradigm adopted for the study**

This study adopted the interpretivism paradigm because of its base in social construction. Further, due to the nature of the study, which is based on individuals, the interpretivist approach understands that people are different from objects. It therefore aims to study reality subjectively, and as a result, uses methods that are sensitive to the context and that will assist in gaining in-depth understanding of the phenomena (Du Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014).

This paradigm was considered most appropriate for this study which focuses on women occupying management positions and the challenges that they face on a daily basis. The issues faced by these women are subjective and can best be accessed through a dialogical method, such as in-depth interviews, and later interpreted by the researcher. Moreover, the study employs a feminist framework which deals with gender issues in society. Recent studies in gender have widely theorized it as a social construct rather than a natural reality (Aneke, 2015). Thus, the phenomenon of the glass ceiling and its surrounding beliefs and practices are more appropriately treated within the interpretivist paradigm that acknowledges its constructed foundations.

### **3.3 APPROACHES TO THEORY DEVELOPMENT**

There are three approaches to research design, namely, deductive, inductive and abductive approaches. Deductive reasoning includes testing a current theory while in inductive reasoning the theory transpires from the study and in this way, the research conclusions are developed into the theory (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Deductive processes are mainly applied in quantitative studies while inductive approaches are relevant where a particular phenomenon is observed and the researcher reaches general conclusions (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Abductive approaches utilize both deductive and inductive approaches by moving from empirical to theoretical dimensions of analysis (Lipscomb, 2012). Further, an abductive approach is able to elucidate, develop, or change the theoretical framework before, during or after the research process (Awuzie and McDermott, 2017). Since the nature of this study is mainly qualitative and exploratory, inductive reasoning was utilized.

### **METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES IN RESEARCH**

The three broad categories of research methods are discussed in detail below:

## **Quantitative Research Method**

Bryman (2015) describes quantitative research as a research strategy that emphasizes the quantification of data. The quantitative technique does not involve a thorough investigation of the issue, rather, it is subjective and seek to measure relationship among variables apply examination processes (Welman, et al., 2005; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2009). Similarly, Creswell (2014) notes that quantitative research is a methodology usually employed to test objective theories by means of examining relationships among variables. In addition, these theories can be measured on instruments so that numbered information can be explored using measurable techniques (Gorard, 2003; Goertz, 2006; Creswell, 2014). In other words, quantitative researchers test theories.

## **Types of Quantitative Research Approaches**

### ***Mono Quantitative Method***

A mono quantitative strategy uses a single information gathering system and comparing investigation methodology to answer questions (Saunders et al., 2009). It is a strategy in which the researcher attempts to understand the topic and decides the sort of research procedure to apply (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). The data collection process and other theoretical views affect the mono technique (Saunders et al., 2009). Because of single research type, the research process is simple and it helps to simplify the whole research procedure (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

### ***Multi Quantitative Method***

Multi quantitative methods refers to the situation where the researcher utilizes more than one data collection and analysis procedure to answer research questions (Saunders et al., 2009). It is a progressively unpredictable type of research type as the researcher can apply both subjective and quantitative sorts of research (Saunders et al., 2016). The complexity is high as the researcher may apply both methods but end up centering the research on one research type (Lincoln and Guba, 2013).

## **Qualitative Research Method**

Contrary to quantitative methods, qualitative methods are applied when the researcher tries to comprehend, clarify, investigate, find and illuminate circumstances, sentiments, recognitions, demeanors, qualities, convictions and encounters of people (Sayer, 2010; Kumar, 2011). Jarmon (2014) depicts qualitative research as the investigation of the empirical world from the perspective of the individual under examination and recognizes two fundamental ideologies. The first principle is that conduct is impacted by the physical, sociocultural, and psychological environment, which is the basis for naturalistic inquiry (Durrheim, 1999; Bryman, 2004). The second principle is that conduct goes beyond what is observed by the investigator (Lewis, 2015). Subjective meanings and perceptions of the topic are critical in qualitative research, and it is the researcher's responsibility to access these (Hussein, 2009). The investigation frameworks predominantly encompass the choice of individuals from whom the data, through an open edge of enquiry, is investigated and assembled (Maxwell, 2008; Kumar, 2011).

Creswell (2014) notes that qualitative research seeks to investigate and comprehend people or groups and how they interact with a social or human problem. Furthermore, the word qualitative infers emphasis on the characteristics of entities and on procedures and implications that are not experimentally analyzed or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency or recurrence. (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative researchers emphasize the socially created nature of the real world, the close connection between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational limitations that shape inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014:229-230) highlight some distinct and unique characteristics regarding qualitative research, which include the following:

- ***Qualitative Research is textual***

When analysing qualitative data, whether collected through interviews, field notes or observation, it is referred to as analysing text. The term “text” indicates the form and content of the message itself (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

- ***Qualitative research is iterative***

In qualitative research, “iterative” and “iteration” mean repeating the analysis and interpretation processes over and over again in a continuous cycle (Du Plooy, Cilliers et al., 2014). Thus, the researcher moves through successive cycles of analysis and

interpretation, gaining new insight after each cycle, which allows the researcher to gain thorough understanding of the meaning of these patterns (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

- ***Qualitative research is hermeneutic***

The hermeneutics include a thorough construing or inspection of transcript that may pertain to dialogue, which could refer to conversation, transcribed texts, or images (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). It implies an interpretation from the general to the specifics and from the specifics to the general of a text (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

- ***Qualitative research is subjective***

The goal of qualitative research is achieving an insight regarding subjective experiences of the participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). However, the processes of data analysis and interpretation are symbolic and rigorous (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Here the responsibility rests on the shoulders of the researcher to motivate the outcomes of his or her study (Silverman, 2011). An interpretative approach to data analysis and interpretation rests on the foundation that there can be no absolute right or wrong answer for human behaviour (Taylor, Bogdan and De Vault, 2016). Hence, qualitative analysts assume that there is no absolute, factual truth independent of human interpretation (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Rather, they (qualitative analysts) regard and describes human behaviour in the context of the person who experiences a situation or phenomenon subjectively (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

- ***Qualitative research is constructed and symbolic***

When qualitative data collection and interpretation is said to be constructed and symbolic, it means that the researcher, the research instrument and the participant interpret phenomena subjectively and express it symbolically (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Symbolic interactionists view subjective experience as symbolic and constructed through social interaction. Symbolic interactionism emphasises the social dimension of symbols and views meaning as a product of social life using significant symbols (such as language) in a society (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014).

Bauer, Gaskell and Allum (2000) highlight some distinct differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

**Table 3. 1: Differences between quantitative and qualitative research**

	<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Qualitative</b>
Data	Numbers	Texts
Analysis	Statistics	Interpretation
Prototype	Opinion polling	Depth interviewing
Quality	Hard	Soft

Adapted from Bauer et al., (2000:7)

As indicated by Bauer et al., (2000) quantitative research is concerned with numbers, utilizes measurable models to clarify the information, and is considered “hard” research. The most recognized model are interviews (Bauer et al., 2000). Conversely, qualitative research maintains a strategic distance from numbers, it manages to translate social substance, and is considered “soft research” (Bauer et al., 2000). The most recognized model is likely the in-depth interview (Bauer et al., 2000).

### **Types of Qualitative Approaches**

#### ***Mono Qualitative Method***

A researcher may choose to use a single qualitative data collection technique and corresponding analyses procedures (Saunders et al., 2009); this is referred to as mono qualitative method. If a researcher chooses to use a mono method, they are obligated to combine a single qualitative data technique, such as in-depth interviews (Saunders et al., 2016).

#### ***Multi Qualitative Method***

In this method, a researcher chooses to use two methods for data collection (Tashakorri and Teddlie, 2003). This involves a choice to gather qualitative data using, for example, in-depth interviews and diary accounts and to analyze these data using non-numerical (qualitative) procedures (Saunders et al., 2009).

## **Mixed Method Research**

Creswell (2014) describes mixed methods research as a style of analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data, assimilating these forms of datasets as well as utilizing discrete strategies, which are likely to include logical conventions and hypothetical contexts. The main derivation of this type of inquiry is that the amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative methods yields a comprehensive understanding of the research problem rather than one individual research method (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) a mixed method study involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data is collected concurrently or sequentially. Creswell (2014:212) refers to characteristics of mixed methods. These are: “(1) collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in response to research questions; (2) use of rigorous qualitative and quantitative methods; and (3) combination or integration of quantitative and qualitative data using a specific type of mixed method design, and interpretation of this integration and sometimes framing of the design within a philosophy.”

### **Types of Mixed Method Approaches**

#### ***Mixed Method Simple***

A mixed methods simple design consolidates both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis processes (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). In a mixed method simple design, a researcher could begin with a qualitative data collection and analysis technique (for instance, a series of focus groups) to help decide the prevalence of possible factors, and follow with quantitative data collection and analysis techniques (for instance questionnaires) to determine the relative recurrence of these elements (Saunders and Tosey, 2013).

#### ***Mixed Method Complex***

In this method, a researcher could alternatively utilize quantitative information examination procedures to dissect subjective information (Saunders and Tosey, 2013). This should be possible, for instance, by contrasting factually the recurrence of event of various focus group meetings between various gatherings or the other way around (Saunders et al., 2016).

## **Research Approach Adopted in the Study**

In consideration of these different methods, this study used a qualitative research approach in view of its broad scope and ability to thus investigate the social phenomenon most comprehensively. Its distinct categories are naturalistic, interpretive and progressively critical (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). The qualitative research approach is considered relevant for this study because the researcher requires understanding, discovering, explaining, and exploring of barriers that hinder women in management from progressing to top management positions in the private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In addition, the qualitative research approach is ideal for the study as it allows the researcher to capture the relevant voices of women in management positions.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN/STRATEGY**

A research design is a plan, structure or strategy of inquiry that is considered to attain answers to investigate questions or problems (Kumar, 2011:94). The plan is a comprehensive order of research which involves a framework of what the investigator will do, from composing theories to the final analysis of data (Kumar, 2011; Lewis, 2015). In addition, a research design implies a practical outline that is espoused by the researcher to answer truly, impartially, precisely and economically, the research question (Kumar, 2011; Maxwell, 2012; Creswell, 2014). Simply put, research design is a blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data based on the research questions of the study (Miller and Salkind, 2002; Creswell, 2014).

#### **Types of research designs**

There are several research designs employed in research, as expounded below:

**Descriptive studies:** Descriptive studies attempt to depict a precise profile of people, occasions and circumstances (Durrheim, 1999; Creswell, 2003). This description of singularities may be done by means of narrative form descriptions or evaluating relationships (Durrheim, 1999; Neuman, 2006). It is, therefore, essential for the researcher to have a clear grasp of phenomena prior to gathering of data (Saunders et al., 2009). Moreover, descriptive studies pursue exact observations and the study should focus on the validity and reliability of the observations (Durrheim, 1999).

**Explanatory research:** Explanatory research concentrates on studying a situation or a problem in order to elucidate the relations among variables (Saunders et al., 2009; Kumar, 2011). An explanatory study further tries to illuminate why and how there is a relationship between two features of a situation or phenomenon (Kumar, 2011). Therefore, explanatory studies plan to deliver casual explanations of phenomena (Durrheim, 1999). This is accomplished by distinguishing causality; and the focal point of the design ought to be on eliminating alternative explanations of causality (Durrheim, 1999).

**Grounded theory:** Grounded theory is a methodical research strategy which creates a hypothesis from information (Matthews and Ross, 2010; Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton, Nicollis and Ormston, 2014). This procedure includes utilizing numerous phases of data collection and interrelationship between classes of data (Creswell, 2003; Creswell, 2014). Two key qualities of this design are continual contrast of information with evolving classifications, and hypothetical sampling of various gatherings to augment similitudes and contrasts of data (Creswell, 2003). Researchers use the grounded theory approach when theories on a specific subject are rare and requiring advancement (Charmaz, 2013; Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Grounded theory in this way tries to bridge the gap between theory and research (Matthews and Ross, 2010; Birks and Mills, 2015).

**Experiment:** Experiment is a type of structure that has value to the logical investigation, and with the assistance of statistical devices and strategies, the exploratory plan could be set up (Matthews and Ross, 2010). Here, the causal impact of one phenomenon on another phenomenon is assessed (Goddard and Melville, 2004). It is comparatively perplexing kind research structure (Creswell, 2014).

**Survey:** This design is useful when a researcher aims to gather a lot of information or data (Rossi, Wright and Anderson, 2013). A great deal of information could be effectively gathered through reviews like online study as it has a wide reach (Sapsford, 2007). Different measurements and zones of any subject like who, what, where, when and how could be explored (Lavrakas, 2008). Survey design is a very prominent method in breaking down the quantitative information or data (Punch, 2003).

**Action research:** action research is very specific, where the researcher attempts to find the answer for the specific issue or issue (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). Additionally, the researcher intends to implement solutions for the issue (Stringer, 2013). In this manner, in action research, both

finding and execution of solution gain special consideration along with the identification of a problem (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). Further, a researcher has a chance to be part of the organization that is studied as the organization or case study may entail issues that can only be resolved by the researcher to become part of organizational strategic management or case study may involve issues which can only be resolved by the researcher (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Similarly, the organization can gain genuine attention from the researcher (Creswell, 2014). Here, coordinated effort between the organization being researched and the researcher should be possible (Birks and Mills, 2015). The action research begins from the goals, then reaches determination of the issue, and finally, expresses some significant and viable arrangements towards the issue, dependent on the outcomes (McNiff, 2013).

**Archival research:** in archival research, the analyst gathers information from chronicles or existing informational collections (Timothy, 2012). The utilization of accessible data is extremely high in this sort of research structure. It incorporates the exploratory, the logical and involves examination (Moss, 2009). These study designs have their advantages and applicability inside the examination (Stake, 2008). In exploratory research, the nature of research configuration is a greater amount of burrowing the topic from various measurements (Neuman, 2006). Despite what might be expected, the exploratory research includes the definite clarification of the current data (Silverman, 2015). Besides, it won't not be right to state that it manages the optional information or data (Silverman, 2015).

**Ethnography:** Ethnography is a field research approach that includes the depiction of a specific culture that the researcher is keen on investigating (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Flick (2014) notes that ethnography comprises comprehension of the social world or culture, the mutual practices, convictions, beliefs and values of a particular group, typically, via engagement in their community. The researcher is normally driven by an interest to be there and observe events and processes while they occur, and this allows the researcher to achieve better understanding of the population involved (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Flick, 2014). The research procedure is adaptable and normally develops logically because of the lived actualities experienced in the field setting (Creswell, 2003).

**Case study:** Case study is an in-depth investigation into a topic or phenomenon within its real-life setting (Saunders et al., 2016). A case study strategy has the ability to create insights from

thorough and in-depth research into the study of a phenomenon in its real-life context, prompting rich, empirical explanations and the development of theory (Stake, 2008; Saunders et al., 2016). The 'case' in case study research refers to a person, a group, an organisation, an association, a change process, an event as well as many other types of case project (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Matthews and Ross, 2010). The interaction between a phenomenon and its context is best understood through in-depth case studies (Silverman, 2016). An in-depth case study can have as its intention, to recognize what is occurring and why, and to comprehend the impacts of the circumstance and repercussions of activities (Houghton, Casey, Shaw and Murphy, 2013; Matthews and Ross, 2010).

**Narrative research:** Narrative research transpires when either existing stories are gathered and scrutinised or they are produced for research purposes in particular forms of interviews (Chase, 2008; Flick, 2014). The main contextual postulation is that narrative is a manner of knowing and recalling events and processes as well as a way of communicating about issues (Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk, 2007; Flick, 2014). Narrative research is used in research settings where the researcher believes that the experiences of her or his participants can best be accessed by gathering and scrutinising these as complete stories, rather than gathering them as bits of data that stream from specific interview questions and which are then fragmented during data analysis (Saunders et al., 2016).

**Exploratory study:** An exploratory study is a significant means of discovering what is occurring. Its purpose is to pursue new insights, to make inquiries, and to evaluate singularities in a new light (Saunders et al., 2009; Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). It is especially valuable in the event that the researcher wishes to illuminate his/her comprehension of the issue, in case, for example, there is uncertainty about the exact idea of the issue (Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore, an exploratory study is convenient when the researcher does not have a clear idea of the complications they will encounter throughout the study; its advantage is that it is flexible and compliant to change (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Exploratory research can be carried out in three ways: an exploration of literature; interviewing specialists in the subject under study; and leading focus group interviews (Tashakorri and Teddlie, 2003; Saunders et al., 2009). Exploratory studies are used to make preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research (Harrison and Reilly, 2011; Durrheim, 1999). Exploratory studies are designed as open and flexible investigations (Durrheim,

1999; O’Sullivan, Rassel, Berner and Taliaferro, 2017). Exploratory research designs should detail how the researcher intends to gather the data and where it will be collected from (Durrheim, 1999; Bryman, 2004). In addition, an exploratory study is necessary when some facts are known, but more information is required for developing a feasible theoretical framework (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013).

### **Research design adopted for the study**

In the context of this study, an exploratory approach was deemed necessary; to find the important factors and challenges that hinder women from advancing to top management positions. An exploratory study was considered appropriate because there is a need to explore all variables around the phenomenon of women who occupy management positions and who have managed to advance to executive positions. After exploring variables that exist in managerial careers where women are concerned, the empirical findings of the data collected using in-depth interviews from women working in the private and the public sectors were compared.

### **3.5 TIME HORIZONS IN RESEARCH**

According to Saunders et al. (2009), time horizons are needed for the research design, independent of the research methodology used. They are discussed below:

#### ***Cross sectional studies***

These studies are intended to acquire data on factors in various setting (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Typically, various organizations or individuals are chosen and an investigation is directed to discover how factors contrast (Saunders et al., 2009). Accordingly, it deduces gathering on more than one case at a solitary purpose of time (Levin, 2006). Cross sectional investigations are led when there are imperatives of the assets (Saunders et al., 2016). Subsequently, information is gathered once, over a brief timeframe, before it is breaking down and deciphered (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Thus, cross sectional examinations take a picture of a progressing circumstance (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This study was a cross sectional study because it was a “snapshot” of woman managers who are employed in the public and private sector. This study described the experiences of these women in different management levels in which they are employed. Furthermore, these women were of different ages, income and employed in different organizations.

In addition, because this study was cross sectional, it therefore provided a useful springboard for future research which is discussed later in this study. The study was conducted within a year.

### *Longitudinal studies*

Longitudinal investigations are studies done over a period of time, of a variable or gathering of subjects (Welman et al., 2005). The point is to inquire about the elements of the issue (Du Plooy et al., 2014). This is achieved by researching a similar circumstance or individuals a few times or ceaselessly over the period in which the issue runs its course (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Repeated observations are taken with the view to uncovering the overall stability of the phenomenon (Menard, 2008). This enables the researcher to analyse change processes (Welman et al., 2005; Menard, 2008).

### **3.6 TARGET POPULATION**

DuPlooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:98) define a target population as, “consisting of all units, or the universe, people or things possessing the attributes or characteristics in which the researcher is interested”. Welman et al (2005:126) define the target population as, “the population to which the researcher ideally would like to generalize his/her results”. The population can be people, groups of people, or other elements (Bickman and Rog, 1998). Bryman (2004: 90) depicts target population as, “the universe of units from which the sample is to be selected”. The term “units” is employed because it is not essentially people who are sampled but could be nations, cities, regions and organizations (Bryman, 2004; Teddlie and Yu, 2012).

The target population for this study are all women who occupy management positions in private and public sectors in the province in the two cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg situated in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. These areas were chosen by the researcher due to their geographical proximity, for the convenience of the researcher. Additionally, since in-depth face-to-face interviews were proposed for this study, the location was convenient for the researcher to be able reach the participants. According to Statistics South Africa QLFS (Quarterly Labor Force Survey, 2018), the number of women occupying management positions in private and public sectors in the two cities of KwaZulu-Natal is 9227 (STASSA, 2018).

### **3.7 SAMPLE SIZE**

A sample indicates a segment of the population (Kumar, 2011). It involves a number of individuals chosen from the target populace; however not all components of the populace form a sample (Bryman 2004; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). In qualitative research, the sample size selection does not follow that of quantitative sampling because the issue is about exploring different opinions at various points on an issue (O'Reilly and Parker, 2012; Robinson, 2014). Sampling in qualitative research is concerned with the abundance of information and the number of participants required; therefore, it depends on the nature of the topic and the resources available (Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Martin, Eccles and Grimshaw, 2010). There are two key considerations that guide the sampling methods in qualitative research – relevance and adequacy (O'Reilly and Parker, 2012). The researcher should be pragmatic and flexible in their approach to sampling, and an adequate sample size is one that sufficiently answers the research question (Hays and Wood, 2011).

Sample size signifies the number of observations or replicates to include in a statistical sample (Terre blanche and Durrheim, 1999). Furthermore, the sample size serves as a significant portion of any empirical study where the intention is to create extrapolations about the population of the sample (Terre blanche and Durrheim, 1999). The sample size highly relies on the shape and form of the data that a researcher desires to amass, and the objectives of study (O'Leary, 2014). For instance, the in-depth nature of qualitative data will generally limit sample size since it is difficult to gather data from thousands (Payne and Williams, 2005; O'Leary, 2014). Qualitative data analysis strategies are not dependent on vast numbers but on richness of information (O'Leary, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2014).

The primary objective of the qualitative enquiry is to investigate diversity, therefore sample size and sampling strategy do not play a substantial role in determination of a sample (Anyan, 2013). If chosen cautiously, diversity can be comprehensively and precisely described as grounded on information acquired even from one individual (Kumar, 2011; Francis et al., 2010). Furthermore, Kumar (2011) notes two discrete sample size qualities in qualitative research: first, the researcher usually does not have a sample size in mind because the data collection is based upon the predetermined sample size and the saturation point distinguishes their use; and second the

researcher is guided by the judgement as to who is likely to provide the researcher with the best information. Therefore, the sample size of this study was guided by the following principles:

1. **Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination:** The Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination calculator states that when the target population is 9227, then the sample size should be 368 (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970).
2. **Research approach:** The study uses the qualitative approach, which involves small samples of people, studied by means of in-depth methods (Welman et al., 2005; Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant and Rahim, 2014). Creswell (1998) proposes a sample size of between 5 to 25 participants, while Morse (1994) suggests a sample of at least six participants. Bertaux (1981) argues that fifteen is the smallest acceptable sample for qualitative research studies.
3. **Data saturation:** Data saturation implies the point at which no additional information is observed from the data collection process (Boddy, 2016). Therefore, the researcher will collect data until the data saturation point is reached. Kumar (2011) notes that the concept of data saturation is highly subjective. Therefore, it is the researcher who decides when the point of data saturation is attained (Kumar, 2011; May 2011). Data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study (Neuman, 2006; Fusch and Ness, 2015), when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained (Fusch and Ness, 2015), and when further coding is no longer feasible (Fusch and Ness, 2015). Though the researcher mentioned that some of women managers pulled out of the interviews, the interviews that were carried out were adequate to deem the study replicable. This is due to that there was no new information from the 20<sup>th</sup> interview onwards. Thus, this constituted data saturation.

The sample size for this study was further justified in terms of other similar studies illustrated in the table below.

**Table 3. 2: Justification of the sample size used in the study**

Authors	Topics	Sample Sizes
Mathur-Helm (2006)	Women and the Glass Ceiling in South African Banks: An Illusion or Reality?	40
April, Dreyer and Blass (2007)	Gender Impediments to the South African Executive Boardroom	22
Yukondi and Napatsi (2015)	A Study of Thai Female Executives: Perceived Barriers to Career Advancement	30

Adapted from (Aneke, 2015).

Based on the four principles stated above, the sample size is estimated between five (smallest acceptable sample size for qualitative studies) and thirty (the largest sample size based on Yukongdi and Napatsi study in 2015). Therefore, the sample size for this study is estimated at 30 participants.

### **3.8 SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

Sampling refers to a set of methods for accomplishing representativeness (Bauer and Aarts, 2000). It is a method used to obtain the participants.

#### **3.8.1 Sampling technique**

There are two types of sampling techniques, namely, probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling technique is grounded on utilising a prearranged number of units from a sampling frame which embodies the target population (Bernard, 2000). In probability sampling, each individual has the same chance as another individual of being selected for the sample (Bernard, 2000; Daniel, 2012). Non-probability sampling technique can be defined as a case where the elements of the population have a known, nonzero chance of being chosen as subjects in the sample (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Because the study is qualitative, a non-probability sampling technique was employed. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013) and Cooper and Schindler (2014), there are three types of non-probability samples:

##### **3.8.1.1 Purposive sampling**

Purposive sampling is where the researcher decisively selects elements that are incorporated in the sample dependent on the attributes which are recognized by the researcher (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., (2014). The benefit of purposive sampling is that the researcher guarantees uniqueness of each element of a sample in the research, because every element is suitable for the population restrictions of the study. If the element is not suitable, then it is omitted (Levy and Lemeshow, 2008; Oppong, 2013).

### **3.8.1.2 Accidental/convenience sampling**

In accidental/convenience sampling, the sample comprises of components that are involved only because they happen to be at the right place at the right time (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Furthermore, Kruger et al., (2005) suggest that the accidental sample is the best appropriate collection of members of the population that are near and readily accessible for research purposes. Simply put, convenience or accidental sampling implies elements that are available at the researcher's convenience (Bryman, 2004; Ruane, 2005).

### **3.8.1.3 Snowball sampling**

“In snowball sampling, the researcher approaches a few individuals from the target population, these individuals then identify other members from the same population such as acquaintances or friends for the inclusion in the sample” (Welman et al., 2005:69). The latter may, sequentially identify additional sets of individuals so that the sample, like a snowball, grows in size until it reaches its saturation point (Welman et al., 2005). In this sampling technique, the researcher begins with an index individual who is identified as having the key characteristics required by the research design, and asks that individual to recommend others with comparable attributes (Trotter, 2012).

In view of this, this study employed the non-probability sampling technique known as snowballing sampling to select women occupying management positions in different private and public sectors in Pietermaritzburg and Durban. The non-probability sampling technique is subjective and therefore the likelihood of choosing sample is indefinite (Cooper and Schindler 2014). Snowball sampling was employed to select units of the study because the participants were managers who are busy people and therefore difficult to reach. Due to the feasibility of data collection, the Black Management Forum (BMF) was used only as a point of departure. The KwaZulu-Natal BMF chair was contacted by the researcher, the BMF chair was responsible for identifying other women who hold management positions. Therefore, not all women who were interviewed belonged to BMF.

BMF is a non-racial entity, and the first corporation set up for the improvement of the administrative authority, with the intention to propel financial change of companies in South Africa and beyond (BMF 2018).

### **3.9 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

For the purpose of this study, it is important for the researcher to know the type of data collection methods required in identifying the sample and which will likewise strengthen the understanding in answering the questions of the study. Cooper and Schindler (2014) describe data as the evidence, conduct, inspirations, and qualities collected from participants or explanations that may be mechanical or direct from secondary sources. Data collection instruments or tools are devices that are employed when data is collected (Welman et al., 2005). There are numerous tools normally employed by researchers to collect data, which is prerequisite to make conclusions in a particular study (Cooper and Schindler, 2014).

#### **3.9.1 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are a form of data collection where the researcher designs an instrument that the participants respond to in relation to the inquiry (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). Questionnaires encompass closed and open-ended questions (Ritchie et al., 2014). Simply put, the participants read the question, interpret the meaning and record their responses (Kumar, 2011). Therefore, it is imperative for the researcher to be clear and concise when writing the questions so that the participants understand what they are being asked (Kumar, 201; Ritchie et al., 2014). Questionnaires are normally distributed to participants by means of email and hand delivery (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

#### **3.9.2 Focus Groups**

According to Kreuger and Casey (2015), a focus group is basically composed of a small number of participants. A group normally ranges from five (5) to eight (8) people but the size can range from as few as four (4) to as many as twelve (12). This group is normally facilitated by a moderator. The topic is defined clearly and precisely by the researcher (Saunders et al., 2016). The objective is to create an enabling and an interactive discussion between participants, and the resulting discussion and interaction are recorded (Saunders et al., 2016). Similarly, Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) adds that in focus groups, a number of participants gather for the explicit purpose of voicing their

perspectives and thoughts vis-à-vis scheduled, open-ended questions related to a specific phenomenon. The main goal of conducting a focus group is to gain a better understanding on how individuals feel and think regarding a specific issue, idea, product or service (Kreuger and Casey, 2015).

### **3.9.4 Observation**

Saunders et al., (2016) describe observation as the methodical observing of people's behaviour for the purpose of discovering connotations attached to their actions. Observation signifies a determined, methodical and selective manner of observing and listening to a collaboration or phenomenon as it occurs (Kumar, 2011). In observations, the researcher takes field notes on the conduct and activities of people at the research site (Creswell, 2003; Angrosimo and Rosenberg, 2011). In capturing field notes, the researcher records unstructured or semi-structured activities at the research site (Ritchie et al., 2013).

### **3.9.5. Interviews**

Interviews are a method of data collection that entail a specific research conversation that occurs at a time and place and with a colloquial face to face interaction (Wengraf, 2001, Kvale, 2007). Interviewing is commonly employed when data is collected from individuals (Kumar, 2011). These interviews in turn yield interesting insights into people's involvements, objectives and approaches on how they judge the phenomenon based on their feelings (May, 2010). In the interviews, the researcher draws their own interview questions and decides on the manner and order these questions will be asked (Kumar, 2011). There are a variety of interviews that are used in qualitative studies, as discussed below:

#### **3.9.5.1 Structured Interviews**

Structured interviews consist of standardised ways of asking questions; they are thought to lead to answers that can be compared across participants and possibly quantified (Leavy, 2014). The interviewer provides a collection of questions to a participant and then records the responses (Kruger et al., 2005). The interviewer has to adhere to the questions and has limited freedom to deviate from them (Kruger et al., 2005). Structured interviews use pre-formulated questions; these are strictly regulated with regard to the order of questions and sometimes regulated with regard to the time available (Myers, 2013).

### **3.9.5.2 Unstructured Interviews**

Unstructured interviews are easy-going and utilized with a specific end goal to find area of deliberation intensely (Kruger et al., 2005). In addition, participants are allowed to generously convey what needs be conveyed in terms of the topic (Wengraf, 2001). An unstructured meeting generally begins with a wide, open inquiry concerning the area under investigation, with succeeding inquiries relying upon the interviewee's reactions (Holloway and Wheeler 2010). The term 'unstructured' is deceiving as it implies an interview is altogether without structure; if it were, the information accumulated may not be appropriate in terms of the examination question (Britten 1995). Subsequently, while the meeting is informal and adaptable, the researcher follows a meeting guide, containing subjects as opposed to explicit inquiries. This empowers the interviewee's contemplations, which, thus, creates rich information (Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin, 2009, Holloway and Wheeler 2010).

### **3.9.5.3 Semi-structured Interviews**

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher and the participants take part in a formal meeting where the analyst builds up an interview guide (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Likewise, the researcher can pursue topical directions in the discourse that may stray from the guide (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured interviews comprise of a few key inquiries into the area to be investigated, yet in addition enables the questioner or interviewee to veer off so as to seek after a thought or reaction in more detail (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008).

### **3.9.5.4 In-depth Interviews**

In-depth interviews are a research technique that comprises thorough individual interviews with a limited number of participants to ascertain their perspective on a phenomenon under investigation (Byce and Neale, 2006; Morris, 2015). They are purposeful interactions in which an investigator endeavors to understand what another individual has encountered, what he/she considers and feels about it, and what significance it might have (Mears, 2012; Guest, Namey and Mitchee, 2013). The primary strategy of the in-depth interviews is to understand what the participant's experiences mean to them in their own words (Marshall and Rossman 2010). Kumar (2011: 160) further elaborates that "in-depth interviews involve face-to-face, repeated interaction between the researcher and his/her informants". In reality, although a good in-depth interview will appear realistic, it will encompass little sameness to an everyday conversation (Legard, Keegan and Ward,

2003). As such, it replicates a major procedure through which knowledge about the social world is constructed in a typical human interaction (Legard et al., 2003; Seidman, 2013). It is necessary to audio-record the interview; this allows the researcher to dedicate the entire attention to listening to the interviewee, taking note of the body language and probing in depth (Angrosimo and Rosenberg, 2011).

### **3.10. STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

In-depth interviews were the main tool of data collection for this study. The term in-depth reveals that the researcher intends to get deep answers about the issue (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013). In addition, in contrast to other qualitative data collection methods, in-depth interviews are well suited to asking questions about sensitive, confidential or highly personal topics (Mears, 2012). The interview guide is attached as Appendix C. The interview guide was divided into six sections which are discussed below:

#### **3.10.1 Section A: Demographic information**

This section intended to find out the demographic information about the participants. This information pertained to age category, marital status, educational qualifications, number of children they have and the position they occupy in their organizations.

#### **3.10.2 Section B: Career profile**

This section sought to find out the career history of the participants. This assisted the researcher to understand the opportunities that were at the participant's disposal in the previous five to ten years. The researcher also sought to find out the career history of the participants, the time it took for them to become managers, and if they were promoted by the same organization in which they are currently employed.

#### **3.10.3 Section C: Factors affecting the advancement of women to top management positions**

This section sought to probe women about what they perceive as factors that hinder women from advancing to top management positions. Participants were asked to discuss any factors that they perceived as preventing women from advancing to top management positions. These factors were drawn from several authors like Ismail and Ibrahim (2008), Barragan et al. (2011), Clevenger and Singh (2013) and Ansari (2014).

#### **3.10.4 Section D: Challenges faced by women occupying management positions**

In this section, the researcher sought to find out the challenges that women face day to day in their careers as managers. These challenges were drawn from several authors who studied women in management; some of these authors are Henderson and Stackman (2010), Risper (2013), Brijbans (2015) and Mudau and Ncube (2017).

#### **3.10.5 Section E: The role played by the organizational culture in the advancement of women**

This section sought to gather information about the cultures adopted by the organizations where the participants are currently employed. The participants were asked about the beliefs, attitudes, behavior and presumptions adapted by an organization. They were further asked if the organizational culture adopted by their organisation prevented women from advancing to top management positions. Some authors who have studied organizational culture are Schein (1992), Cantarazo et al. (2010), Dimovski et al. (2010), and Chiloane-Tsoka (2012).

#### **Section F: Attributes required for women to advance to top management positions**

This section sought to understand the leadership styles of the women in their managerial careers. Some authors believe that in order to be an effective manager, a certain leadership style is to be adopted. A number of authors have studied leadership styles of men versus women and found that these leadership styles differ in relation to gender; however, others opposed this view. These authors include: Rosener (1990), Eagly and Carli (2007), Nixdorf and Rosen (2010), Lowe (2011), Toor and Ofori (2011), and Northouse (2015).

### **3.11 PRETESTING**

A pretest or pilot test can be defined as a test with a minimal number of participants that acts as a trial prior to the main exploration; it is intended to reflect on the competence of the research design and of the instruments to be used for data collection (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006). Pilot testing is therefore performed to check the strength of the design, and the appropriateness of the data instruments and probability sample (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Therefore, the pilot testing should draw subjects from the target population and simulate the procedures and protocols that have been designed for data collection (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Pilot studies are used to produce an understanding of the notions and theories held by the people the researcher is studying (Bickman and Rog, 1998). Creswell (2007) states that among strategies for ensuring validity in the

qualitative inquiry, carrying out a pilot test ensures the validity of the results. In the present study, the researcher selected three women from the target population to conduct pretesting of the research instrument. These interviews formed part of data analyzed and presented in the succeeding chapter. There were no changes in the instrument. However, some questions were reworded during the interviews for clarity purposes.

### **3.12 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

It is imperative for the researcher to create the correctness, eminence and exactness of the processes that were embraced in the attainment of answers to the research questions (Kumar, 2011). This theory of quality, correctness and precision as applied to the research process relates to two concepts: validity and reliability (Kumar, 2011). Furthermore, the absence of rigor results in research that is valueless, hence a great deal of attention is focused on reliability and validity in all research methods. Objectivity is another measure for qualitative research; its requirement is that no matter who carries out the research, the findings should be the same (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

#### **3.12.1 Reliability**

Reliability implies the level of exactness or correctness in measurements produced by instruments of the enquiry on certain periods and several objects in the instrument (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Reliability is understood to concern the replicability of the research findings and whether or not, if another study using similar methods was undertaken, they would be repeated (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Furthermore, the reliability of a measure indicates the consistency and steadiness of the instrument (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). In other words, when reliability is achieved, it means that the results are not just once-off. The results will be the same under repeated trials, given that the circumstances stay constant (O’Leary, 2014). Reliability requires the research finding to be trustworthy, thereby making the research findings dependable (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). In-depth interviews were used for this study to collect raw data. The interviews were recorded in order to ensure the reliability of the instrument used. Recording while the interview was being conducted assisted the researcher with accuracy because it tends to be difficult to take notes while there is a conversation taking place. Recording also assisted the researcher to study the body languages of the participants. There are a number of forms of reliability that a researcher can employ in an investigation:

### **3.12.1.1 Test retest reliability**

In the testing for reliability, the similar instrument that was used in conducting a particular research can be used again and if the results are the same then the reliability can be said to be achieved (Brickman and Rog, 1998; May, 2011). Studies also shows that outcomes of research findings can be said to be reliable if a research instrument used in collecting data is used again and produces same results (Kumar, 2011). This was ensured during the pilot study.

### **3.12.1.2 Parallel form reliability**

These are measures which are actually equal to one another (Durrheim, 1999). Rather than managing a similar test on two distinct events, the researcher tests the trustworthiness of the test by overseeing two comparable proportions of the trait on a similar event (May, 2011). When responses on two comparable sets of measures tapping the same construct are highly correlated, then parallel-form reliability is achieved. Both forms have similar items and the same response format, with the only changes being wording and the order or sequence of the questions (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Simply put, parallel form reliability assesses different questions and question sets that seek to evaluate a similar concept.

### **3.12.1.3 Split-half reliability**

In split-half reliability, participants are asked the same questions twice and the correlation is measured (May, 2011). Alternatively, the split half method can be used when the measuring tool has many similar questions or statements to which the participant can respond (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Reliability is assessed by the strength of the relationship between two halves (Durrheim, 1999).

### **3.12.1.4 Trustworthiness**

To further ensure the reliability of the findings, the concept of trustworthiness was applied. The participants were asked some questions twice, however structured differently to ensure that the participants tackled these questions in the same manner. Question 30 and question 34 in the interview guide as well question 25 and question 26 were utilized to ensure trustworthiness of the responses by participants.

## **3.12.2 Validity**

Validity is about the truthfulness of the theories, which are produced from an examination (Bryman, 2004). In qualitative research, researchers are keener in accomplishing genuineness than

understanding a single version of the truth (Neuman, 2011). Genuineness means offering a fair, honest and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of the people who live in it every day (Neuman, 2011). One of the strengths of qualitative research is that it emphasizes validity; which is looked at the viewpoint of the researcher, participant and readers account (Creswell, 2014). Validity simply means that the instrument is measuring what it intends to measure (O’Leary, 2014). In its broadest sense, validity refers to the degree to which the research findings are sound (Durrheim and Wassenaar, 1999). According to Neuman (2011) in qualitative research, there are four types of validity:

#### **3.12.2.1 Face Validity**

Face validity is a judgement by the scientific community that the indicator really measures the concept (Neuman, 2011). This type of validity is a subjective evaluation of whether the measurement technique used in a study seems to be a valid measure of a given variable or a construct (Denzin and Lincoln, 2010). Furthermore, face validity portrays the correctness, responsiveness or significance of the test and its items as they appear to the persons answering the test (Neuman, 2011).

#### **3.12.2.2 Content Validity**

Content validity guarantees that the measure incorporates a sufficient and representative set of things that tap the idea (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The more the measures speak to the area or realm of the idea being estimated, the more prominent the content legitimacy (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). To say it in differently, content validity is a component of how well the measurements and components of an idea have been outlined. A board of judges can authenticate the substance legitimacy of the instrument (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

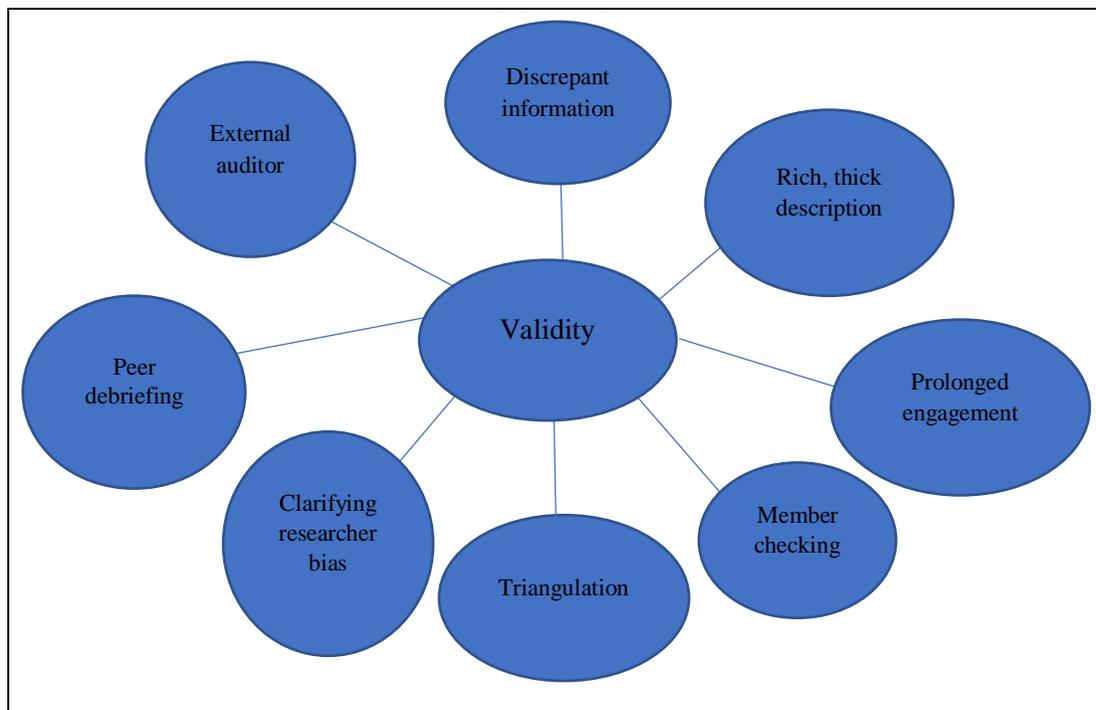
#### **3.12.2.3 Criterion Validity**

Criterion validity uses some standard or criterion to indicate a construct accurately (Neuman, 2006). The validity of an indicator is verified by comparing it with another measure of the same construct in which the researcher has confidence (Neuman, 2006).

#### **3.12.2.4. Construct Validity**

Construct validity testifies how well the results obtained from the use of the measure fit the theories around which the test is designed (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). In strengthening the degree of validity, this study thoroughly investigated relevant literature on the subject under investigation.

This discussion was guided by the information gathered from various literature studies on the subject matter. Creswell (2014) illustrates strategies used to ensure validity, in figure 3.2 below.



**Figure 3. 2: Strategies for ensuring validity**

Adapted from Creswell (2007).

From the figure above, Creswell (2007:196) elaborates on strategies that a researcher can utilize in order to ensure validity of the findings:

- **Triangulation:** Triangulation is utilized to check various data sources of information through analysis of data from the sources to justify themes that emerge (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). If themes are recognized as being derived from numerous sources of data or different angles, then this process can be deemed as adding value to the validity of the study (Creswell, 2014).
- **Member checking:** Member checking helps the researcher to decide the precision of the subjective discoveries through taking the last report or explicit depictions of topics back to the participants and deciding if they feel that they are accurate (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

- **Rich, thick description:** Rich, thick description may be used to convey the findings (Creswell, 2014). This description may transport readers to the setting and give the exchange a sense of shared encounter (Cope, 2014). At the point when qualitative researchers provide detailed depictions of the setting, for instance, or offer numerous viewpoints about a topic, the results turn out to be progressively practical and clearer (Doz, 2011).
- **Clarifying researcher bias:** this method involves transparency and accountability of the researcher (Onwuegbzie and Leeh, 2007). The researcher discloses how the interpretation of the discoveries is formed by their experience, for example, sexual orientation, culture history and financial starting point (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).
- **Prolonged engagement:** Prolonged engagement refers to extended periods a researcher spends in the field (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). With prolonged engagement, the researcher builds up an inside and outside comprehension of the phenomenon under examination and can pass on insight regarding the site and the general population (Creswell and Miller, 2000). The more experience that an analyst has with members in their settings, the more exact or legitimate will be the discoveries (Creswell and Miller, 2000).
- **Discrepant or negative information:** Discrepant or negative data is the data that runs counter to the topic and is exposed by the researcher (Creswell, 2003). In disclosing alternative points of view or data that may arise from the research, the researcher adds to the authenticity of the study (Creswell, 2014).
- **Peer debriefing:** Peer debriefing helps the researcher to improve the precision of the interpretation (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). This process includes finding a person who reviews and asks questions about the qualitative study so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher (Babbie and mouton, 2001).
- **External editor:** The external editor evaluates the whole project (Creswell, 2014). In contrast to a friend's questioning, this examiner is not acquainted with the researcher or the undertaking and can give a focused evaluation of the undertaking throughout the research process or at its completion (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

- To further ensure the validity of the present study's findings, member checking was utilized to ensure the accuracy of the findings. The researcher emailed the transcribed texts back to the participants for this purpose. The researcher further employed triangulation in the form of thematic analysis and content analysis.

### **3.13 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis involves decreasing the collected data into a more manageable dimension (Shamoo and Resnik, 2009). This process is imperative so that collected data is defined, shortened and appraised (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Shamoo and Resnik, 2009). In addition, several processes offer a way of drawing inductively from the data and characterizing the phenomenon of interest present in the data (Shamoo and Resnik 2009; Ritchie et al., 2014, Silverman, 2016) to answer the research questions. Data analysis in qualitative research is defined as the process of methodically examining and positioning the collected data, or other non-textual materials that the researcher gathers to enhance the knowledge of the phenomenon (Wong, 2008)

According to Welman et al. (2005), there are two methods that are commonly used to analyze qualitative data, and these are thematic and content analysis. Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis are two methodologies normally utilized in data analysis, yet boundaries between the two have not been clearly indicated (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). These methods are often used interchangeably, thus posing a challenge for the researcher to choose between them (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Despite similarities between the two methodologies, including diagonal information and searching for examples and topics, their primary contrast lies in the evaluation of information (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The estimating of the recurrence of various classes and subjects is conceivable in content analysis, yet with attention as a proxy for implication (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

#### **3.12.1 Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis is the process where the investigator thoroughly examines the data by repeatedly searching data with the intention of discovering evolving patterns, themes as well as sub-themes (Smith, 2015). Such an exercise enables the researcher to divide data into different sections, which can be a tiresome exercise because the researcher searches the data repeatedly until the themes and the sub-themes of the research are finalized (Smith, 2015). Furthermore, thematic analysis goes beyond including clear words or articulations and emphasizes the perception and expansion of

both explicit and implicit thoughts inside the data (Guest and MacQueen, 2012). It is obvious that thematic analysis includes the pursuit and distinguishing proof of ongoing themes that reach out over a series of interviews (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

### 3.12.2 Content analysis

Content analysis is the method to the examination of documents and transcripts that pursues to enumerate the content in terms of prearranged groupings, this is done in an organized and replicable manner (Bryman, 2004). Content analysis can also be described as a quantitative analysis of qualitative data (Welman et al., 2005) which determines the frequencies of the occurrence of categories (Marks and Yardley, 2004). “The procedure comprises the occurrences and arranging of precise wordings, expressions or notions in order to identify keywords or themes” (Welman et al., 2005:200). Content analysis applies an expressive approach to both coding of the information and its clarification of quantifiable amounts of the codes (Krippendorff, 2013).

**Table 3. 3: Processes of data analysis in qualitative thematic analysis and content analysis**

<b>Thematic analysis</b>	<b>Content analysis</b>
<i>Disseminating information</i> Record information, interpretation and observing original ideas	<i>Groundwork</i> Researcher being absorbed in data and making sense of the gathered information
<i>Producing original encryptions</i> Encrypting stimulating features of data traversing the entire data set, and organizing information that is applicable to each encryption.	<i>Arranging</i> Assembling of encryptions in order and articulating an overall explanation of the research topic; producing groupings and sub-groupings.
<i>Searching for themes</i> Ordering codes into possible themes, putting together all data pertinent to each potential theme.	

<p><i>Defining and naming themes</i></p> <p>Continuation of scrutiny of individual themes and the general story that is implied by analysis.</p>	
<p><i>Creating the report</i></p> <p>The conclusion of analysis, providing examples of selected quotations linking back to research questions and concurring literature.</p>	<p><i>Reporting</i></p> <p>Writing about observations in the analysis process and the results through replica, theoretical systems, theoretical map and a story line.</p>

Adapted from: (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013:402)

Data collected through in-depth interviews was analyzed using both thematic and content analysis comparatively to explore the existence of “glass ceiling” in the private and public sector in KwaZulu-Natal. This is because both methods share the similar point of logically analyzing described materials from biographies by breaking the content into smaller units and submitting them to analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Simply put, content analysis enabled the researcher to understand what participants were trying to say during in-depth interviews, and thematic analysis enabled the researcher to extract themes from the content of the interviews.

**ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Participants have the right to be shielded from any harm by the researcher regardless of how data is collected (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). According to Kumar (2011:242), “ethical means in accordance with principles of conduct that are considered correct, especially those of a given profession or group”. In general, a research design is to be formed in a way that ensures participants will not suffer physical harm, discomfort, pain, embarrassment, or loss of privacy (Cooper and Schindler 2014; Sapsford and Jupp, 2006). Anonymity means that research participant’s identity and responses cannot be identified (Ogden, 2008). Cooper and Schindler (2014) highlight three guidelines which researchers should follow in order to safeguard against unethical treatment of the participants.

### **3.13.1 Benefits**

The researcher must be sure to discuss the benefits of the study with the participant, being cautious to neither overstate nor understate the benefits (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). This sets the participants at ease by revealing the researcher's motives, thereby motivating participants to respond to questions truthfully (Ogden, 2008). In summary, having an idea about the inquiry enhances cooperation (Ogden, 2008). Inducements to participate should not be disproportionate to the task or presented in a fashion that results in coercion (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

### **3.13.2 Deception**

Deception occurs when participants are not informed of the whole truth regarding the inquiry (Barrera, 2018). Some assert that deception is unacceptable, however others believe in deception for two reasons: the belief that the participants could be influenced prior to data collection as well as to shield the informant (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). The benefits to be gained by deception should be balanced against the risks to the participants (Bulmer, 2000). When possible, an experiment or interview should be reformed to decrease the dependence on deception (Barrera, 2018). Therefore, deception should not be used in an attempt to improve response rates (Marzano, 2007).

### **3.13.3 Informed Consent**

The principle of informed consent enables potential participants to decide whether or not they are interested in participating in the study (Ruane, 2005; Webster, Lewis and Brown, 2014). Specifically, informed consent refers to the obligation of the researcher to clearly discuss the subject of inquiry with the informants and anything else that may influence their decision to participate (Ruane, 2005). Competence as an element of informed consent presumes that informed consent should only be given by competent individuals; this implies individuals' capability of deciding for themselves if participation in a study is in their best interest (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). The informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to conducting the interviews, hence the informed consent letter is attached as Appendix B.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee. The ethical approval number is: HSS/2016/018M, and is attached as Appendix A. To ensure that the participants were treated with dignity, the researcher sought informed consent from them, and they were allowed to make their own decisions whether to participate in the study or

not. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms have been used to identify participants. Furthermore, the organizations where participants are employed are not mentioned in the study.

### **3.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the research methodology, and described what techniques were used the research process to conduct the study. The aim and objectives employed for this study justified the type of research design and methods, sampling decisions and data collection methods adopted for this study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter three discussed the methodology employed in this research, and expanded on approaches utilized to collect data. This included research philosophy, research design, research approaches, sampling procedures, how data was analyzed, validity and reliability, and finally, ethical considerations. In this chapter, data collected from in-depth interviews is analyzed. Further, empirical findings are presented and discussed.

This study is mainly qualitative; hence data is analyzed using both thematic and content analysis methods. This chapter is divided into three sections. Section A consists of demographic data which includes age of participants, whether they are employed in the private or public sector, level of management, if they aspire to progress to top management, their marital status, qualifications and if they had children. This section is presented with the use of pie charts. Section B consists of data on the career profiles of participants, and Section C is directly related to the objectives of the study.

### **4.2 RESPONSE RATE**

Based on the minimum required number of participants for a qualitative study, thirty (30) women who occupy management positions in the private and public sectors were contacted. However, twenty-four (24) women were interviewed. The response rate from the interviewed women was 80%. This response rate was due to the period when the data was collected. It was towards the end of the year and most managers were busy with year-end reports and functions, making it difficult for the researcher to reach them.

These twenty-four participants volunteered their time and made themselves available for interviews. The researcher made numerous efforts through telephone calls as well as emails to get women managers to participate. Some participants failed to honor appointments that were

scheduled with the researcher. A limitation is that the researcher interviewed two (2) women who occupy top management positions instead of the four (4) that was envisioned. In this study, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants.

**Table 4. 1: Table of participants**

Participant	Pseudonym	Participant	Pseudonym
1	Karren	13	Shria
2	Pamela	14	Nokwazi
3	Zinhle	15	Precious
4	Nozipho	16	Sindi
5	Thandiwe	17	Eve
6	Carol	18	Bongi
7	Dolly	19	Ayeshware
8	Akhona	20	Thandeka
9	Lizzy	21	Busi
10	Zola	22	Lauryn
11	Zodwa	23	Nondumiso
12	Sariyah	24	Nomfundo

**Table 4.1: Table of participants**

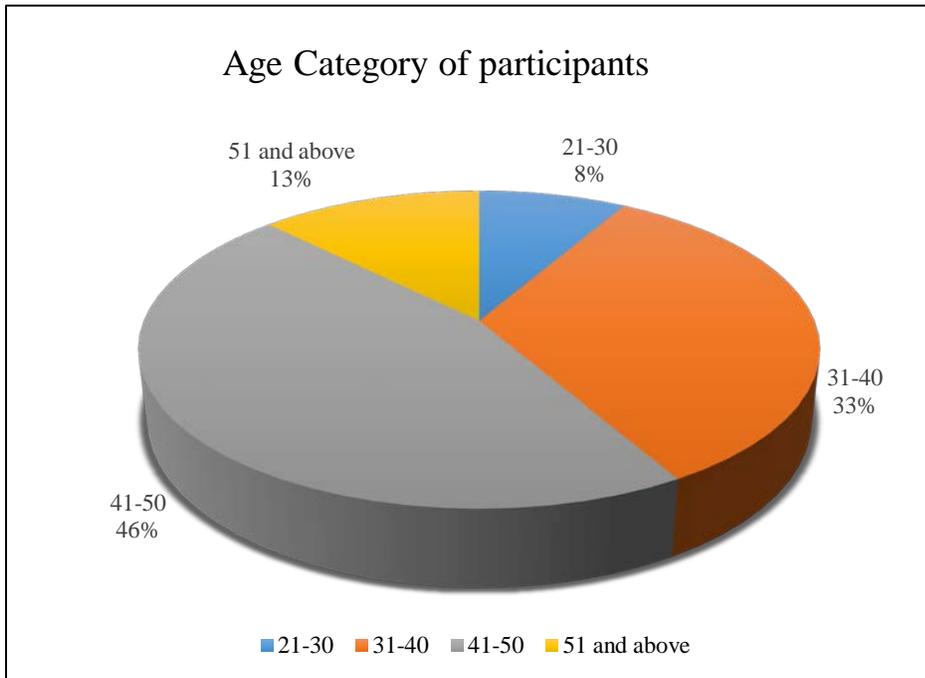
#### **4.3 SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS**

##### **4.3.1 Demographic characteristics of participants**

Twenty-four (24) women who occupy either lower, medium or top management positions in the public and private sector were interviewed in order to gather background information on the following: age of participants; sector in which the participants are employed; if the participants are occupying lower, middle or top management; if the participants aspire to progress to top management level; marital status of the participants; highest educational qualifications of the participants; marital status of the participants; and whether the participant have children. The results and findings were interpreted with the use of pie charts.

### *Age category of participants*

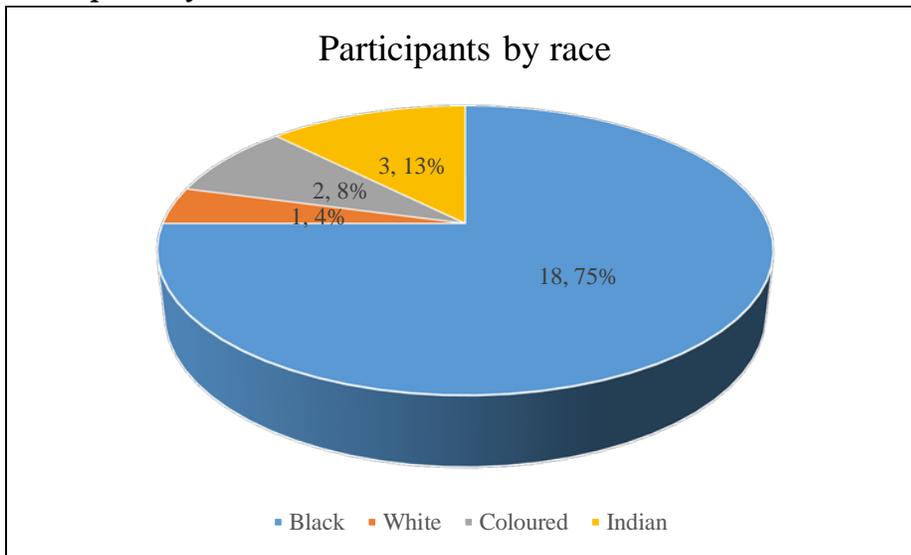
In order to establish personal information regarding the age groups of the women managers interviewed, the research participants were asked to tick the age category in which they fall. Figure 4.1 below shows the age categories within which the participants fall.



**Figure 4. 1: Age category of participants**

The majority (46%) of women who occupy management positions in the private and public sectors fall within the age category of 41-50. This is followed by the 31-40 category, which represents thirty-three (33) percent of women who occupy management positions. The 51 and above category is represented by thirteen (13) percent and the 21-30 category is represented by eight (8) percent.

### *Participants by race*



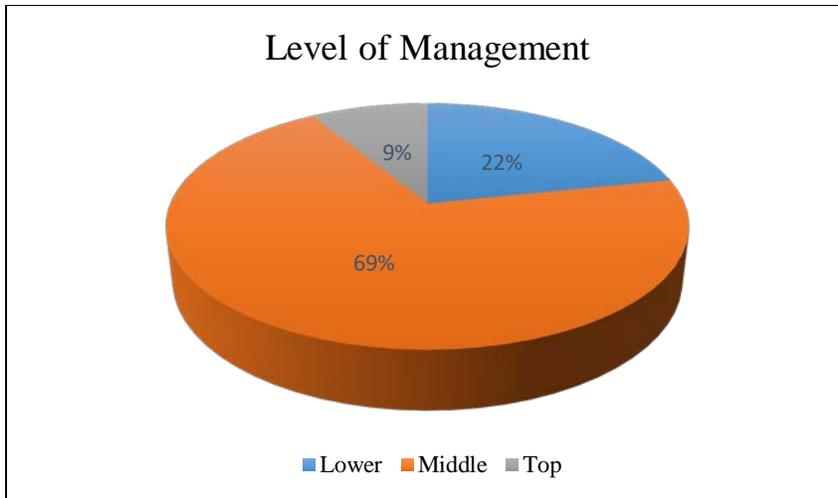
**Figure 4. 2: Participants by race**

The majority (75%) of women occupying management positions who were interviewed were black, followed by thirteen (13) percent of participants who were Indian, two (2) percent who were colored, and lastly, four (4) percent who were white.

### *Level of management*

Top management signifies a comparatively small group of individuals who lead the organization and with whom the final power and accountability rests (Smit et al., 2011). Middle management takes responsibility for certain departments and mainly deals with executing strategies formulated at top management (Smit et al., 2011). Middle managers normally include functional heads, such as the operations manager, financial manager, the purchasing manager and the human resources manager (Smit et al., 2011). Lower/first-line managers are responsible for even smaller segments of the organization, namely the different sections within an organization (Smit et al., 2011). Middle management is responsible for specific departments of the organization and is primarily concerned with implementing the strategic plan formulated by top management (Smit et al., 2011).

In order to establish the level of management of each participant, they were asked to briefly describe whether their position is associated with lower, middle or top management. Figure 4.3 below shows the level of management into which the participants fall.



**Figure 4. 3: Level of management**

Figure 4.3 shows that the majority (69%) of women occupy middle management positions. This is followed by women who occupy lower management positions represented by twenty two (22) percent. Women who occupy top management positions is represented by nine (9) percent. These findings are in agreement with a large body of literature (e.g. Dimovski et al., 2010; Murray and Syed, 2010; Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012; Smith et al., 2012; Shabarwal and Varma, 2017), which indicates that a substantial number of women get to middle management and then find it difficult to progress to top management positions.

Dimovski et al. (2010) and Murray and Syed (2010) state that while the numbers indicate that women in the workforce have improved, including women who occupy lower and middle management positions, the number of women in top positions stays insignificant. Furthermore, a hefty number of women is clustered in middle management. This assertion was illustrated by Karren when she said that:

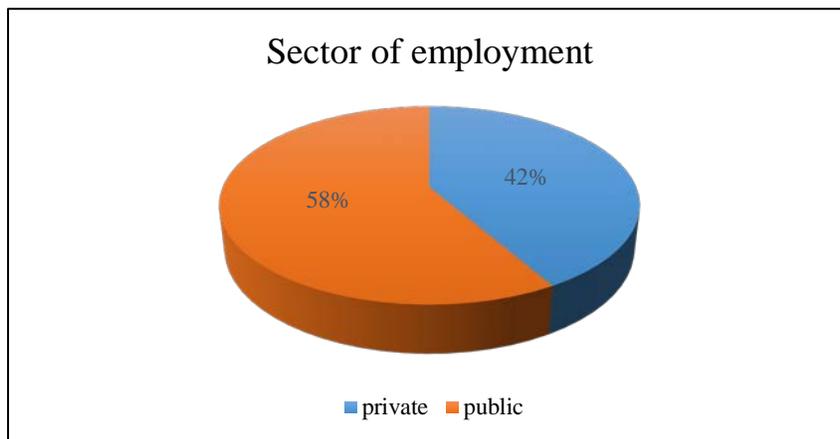
*“Yes, we get promotions fair enough, but it is extremely difficult to progress pass middle management and I think more than problems related to organizations, it is because positions are limited up there. I hardly see any post advertisement to a top management position post.....”*

Supporting this assertion by Karren, Vinicombe and Sturges (1995) said that women are involved in just ten (10) percent of managerial occupations in Europe; however, they stay amassed in low

and middle management positions and a limited number break through the glass ceiling to occupy top management positions.

### *Sector of employment*

Participants were asked to reveal the sector in which they are employed. Because this study is comparative in nature, it is imperative for the researcher to know this kind of information. Figure 4.4 below shows the sector in which the participants are employed.

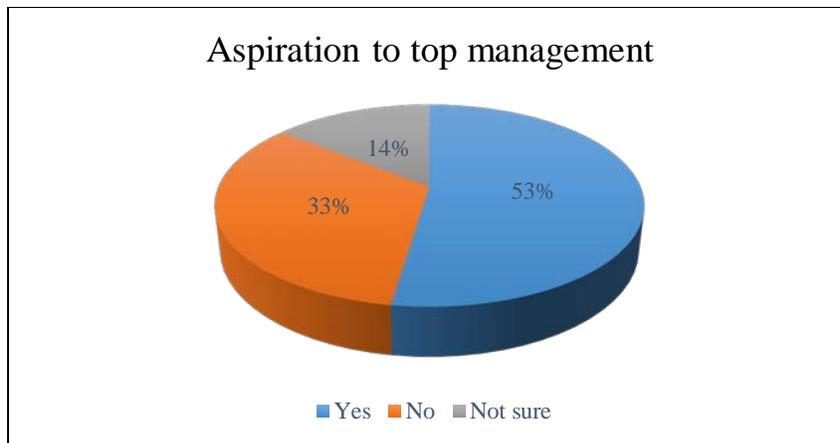


**Figure 4. 4: Sector of employment**

Figure 4.4 above shows that the majority (58%) of participants are employed in the public sector and 42% employed by the private sector. This is because of the promptness of the participants who are employed in the public sector compared to those who are employed in the private sector.

### *Aspiration to top management*

Posholi (2012) indicates that not only in African societies, but also in China, men have the propensity to choose family-oriented over career-oriented wives. As a result, women would rather choose to be family-oriented, as they do not want to be viewed as being more capable than their husbands (Posholi, 2012). As described by Mathur-Helm (2006), some women would rather choose to drop top jobs than sacrifice their families. In this regard, participants were asked if they aspire to progress to top management. Figure 4.4 below shows how participants responded to the question.



**Figure 4. 5: Aspiration to top management**

The majority (53%) of women who occupy lower and middle management positions aspire to progress to top management positions. This is followed by thirty-three (33) percent of women who do not aspire to be promoted to top management positions, and fourteen (14) percent of participants were not sure if they are interested to be at the top. This was clarified by Pamela when she said that:

*“If I want to be in top management, I can present myself and proceed to that level but for now I am ok where I am. I am not ready to be in top management. When I am ready to grow, I will do all the necessities to advance. But I am not even keen to progress to top management. It is too hectic up there; where I am at the moment, it’s a bit relaxed, even though there are difficult times but it’s not as bad as at the top. There is a lot of pressure. Even if they can offer me, I will turn it down, I will rather spend time with my family than being stressed at top management.”*

Another participant, Zinhle asserted that:

*“Yes I am going there soon.”*

Another participant, Karen, said that:

*“Yes, I am ambitious, driven and I like a challenge and would like be part of diversification on top cause really, why do we as women like to settle for mediocrity.”*

Contrary to other participants, Nozipho said that:

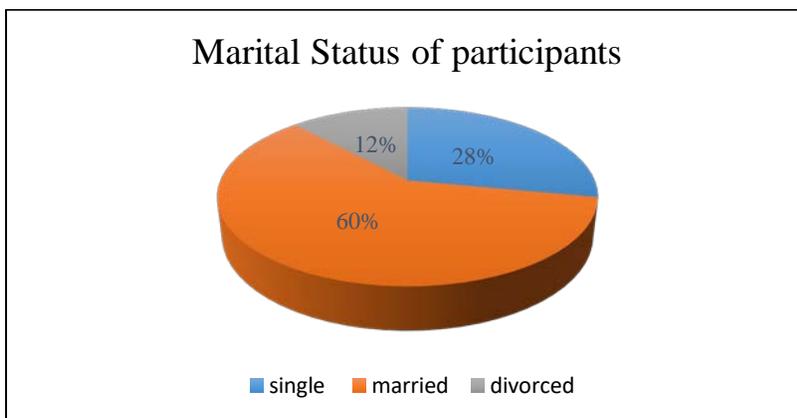
*“Every time there is a position, even though they don’t come out as often as middle and lower management, I do apply, but no luck. I have necessary qualifications and experience*

*required but I don't make it. I am not sure why. I am now doubting if I want to be in top management."*

Even though some obstacles that prevent the upward mobility of women are related to organizations, it is apparent that some are due to women not being willing to sacrifice their families for work and others not having confidence in themselves to pursue top management positions.

### ***Marital status of participants***

With age, women's responsibilities at home increase due to marriage, children and household chores. When this occurs together with their ascending to management levels, it results in a work/life imbalance (Saadina, Ramlia and Harina, 2016). Work-life conflict is experienced when responsibilities from work and family jobs are contradictory, to such an extent that investment in one job makes it hard to take part in the other (Saadina et al., 2016). In addition, Meyerson (2001) explains that the issue of work and family conflict does not only restrict women from getting ahead, but it also creates occupational segregation. The reason for this is that women still hold the belief that they are entirely responsible for taking care of family responsibilities (Posholi, 2012). In this regard, participants were asked about their marital status, and if their marital status had any influence on their roles as managers. Figure 4.6 below show the marital status of participants



**Figure 4. 6: Marital status of participants**

The majority (60%) of the participants are married. This is followed by twenty (28) percent of participants who are single, and twelve (12) percent of the participants who are divorced. Each participant was further asked if their marital status had any impact on their role as a manager. Some

of the responses to this question are quoted below. Pamela who is employed in the public sector said that,

*“Yes it does, hmmm because eh, I have to juggle around family and work, so he needs to understand what my job entails and the program as a whole, sometimes I travel and I work late hours, so he has to know. He was aware when we started dating because it was worse at those times because I was a PA at MECs office. He understands and we are happier than before. But he has to understand my schedule and also that I need growth; that is why I have to work in these demanding positions, because they are demanding, I don’t want to lie. So your partner has to know clearly about your work. Also he is a manager, I think that is why he is understanding.”*

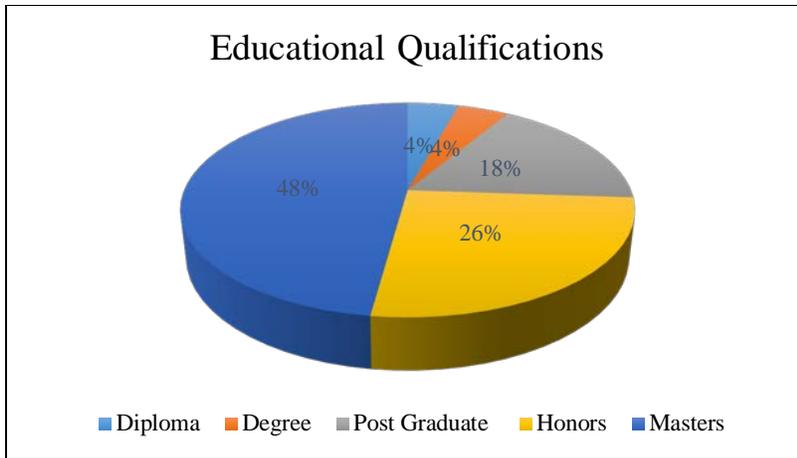
Carol further who is employed in the private sector stipulated that,

*“Not really, I am single, I don’t know any other life besides this, and there is nothing that I do just because I am single, work is work for me.....”*

The above quotes imply that it is easy to balance work and marital duties where there is support from the spouse, while single participants did not see any difference between both scenarios. These findings agree with extant literature (Lingard and Francis, 2008; Ezzeden and Ritchey, 2009).

### ***Educational qualifications***

The need to upgrade individual characteristics, for example, education and management abilities in order to accomplish impartiality and improve career advancement has its premise in liberal feminist insight (April et al 2007). In relation to this, participants were asked about their educational qualifications. Figure 4.7 displays educational qualifications of participants.

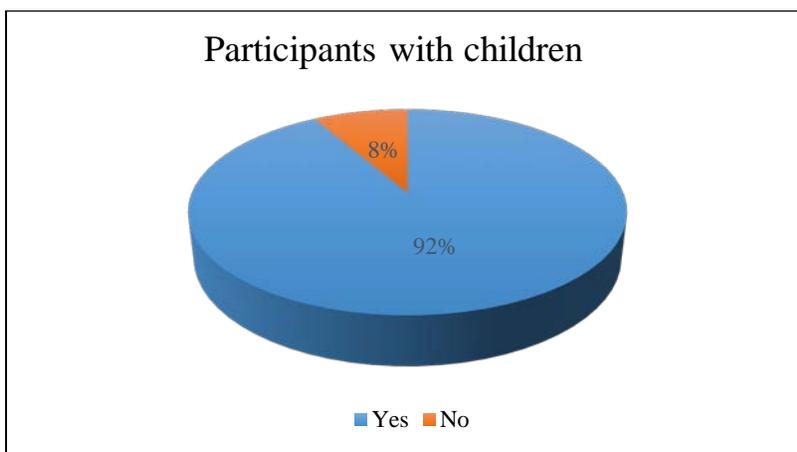


**Figure 4. 7: Educational qualifications**

The majority (48%) of women managers in the private and public sector were in possession of Master’s degrees. Participants with Honors degrees are represented by twenty eight (28) percent; 18% are participants with post graduate diplomas; four (4) percent represents women who have their first degrees; and lastly, the other four (4) percent represents women with diplomas.

***Participants with children***

Literature reveals that women in leadership positions who have children find it difficult to balance work and family life and this causes conflict in their roles as managers (Posholi, 2012). In this regard, participants were asked if they had children. Those participants who have children were further asked if having children influenced their role in management positions. Figure 4.7 displays the percentage of participants who have children and those who do not.



**Figure 4. 8: Participants with children**

Figure 4.8 indicates that the majority (92%) of women occupying management positions have children and eight (8) percent of women do not have children. Participants were further asked whether they are able to maintain balance regarding children and work at the same time. A few responses are quoted below. Dolly said that:

*“I do in a way; I think it’s because my husband is very helpful especially when it comes to the kids, I don’t feel pressure at all.”*

From the above response it can be noted that some participants find it easy to balance work and family due to support from partners and families. Contrary to this statement, Akhona alluded that:

*“It is not easy for a woman to work, have a husband and kids, because no matter what position you hold at work, you are still expected to come back home and perform wifely and motherly duties. My husband is hardly involved in my children’s lives, for example homework and sports. I have to juggle my work life and my kids.”*

While some participants are able to find balance between work and life due to help they get from their spouses, others find it difficult.

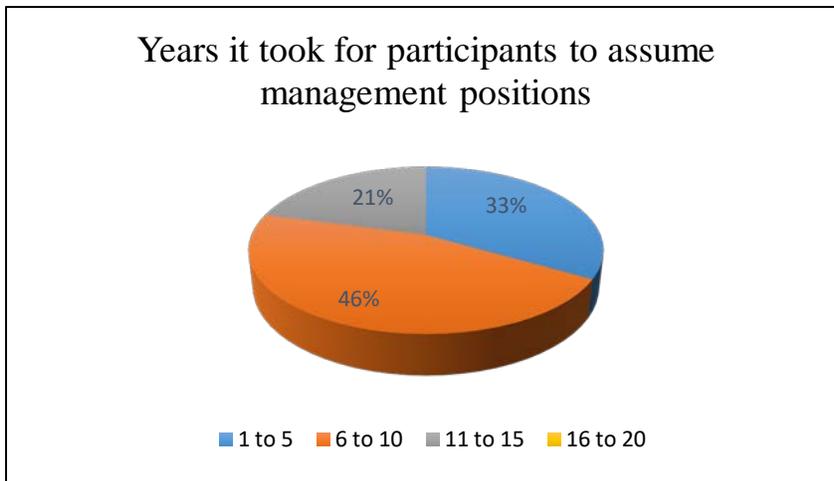
*“Sometimes I have to come back at home around 12 midnight, it is difficult I won’t lie, but my helper is very competent.”*

Women could experience role overload and time management problems while trying to fulfil family and work demands simultaneously (Martin and Barnard, 2013). There might be a spillover of meetings that clash with children’s programs and a continual change of deadlines that compete with family time (Brijbans, 2015).

#### **4.4 Section B: CAREER PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS**

##### **4.4.1 Years it took for participants to be promoted to management positions**

In this section, participants were asked the period it took for them to assume management positions, whether lower, middle or top management. Their responses are illustrated in figure 4.9 below:



**Figure 4. 9: Years it took for participants to assume management positions**

The majority (46%) of women who occupy management positions took six to ten years to be in management, whether low, middle or top management. Ranking second were women who took one to five years to be in management, represented by thirty-three (33) percent. Lastly, twenty-one (21) percent of participants assumed management positions from eleven to fifteen years.

#### **4.5. SECTION C: DATA DIRECTLY RELATED TO RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This section presents, analyses and discusses data related directly to the research objectives. Themes that emerged from the analysis of data are presented and discussed under relevant headings formulated from specific research objectives. Below are the research objectives as indicated in Chapter 1:

- To analyze the factors affecting the advancement of women to top management positions in the private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa;
- To analyze the challenges faced by women in management with reference to the public and private sector in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa;
- To determine the role played by organizational culture in the advancement of women to the top management positions with reference to private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa;
- To determine the possible attributes required for women to advance to top management in private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa; and
- To determine how women are represented in management with reference to private and public sectors in South Africa.

#### 4.5.1. FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN TO TOP MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

The main aim of this objective was to establish factors that affect women’s advancement to top management positions in the private and public sectors. Participants were asked to indicate these factors with an intention to get a deeper understanding. The themes are identified from these questions and quotes are presented from the participants. Further, the content of these quotes are analyzed and linked to the literature. The main theme that emerged from this objective is that historically women are perceived to be the ones who look after the children and do household chores. In addition to this main factor discussed under these themes, other important factors mentioned by participants are briefly highlighted in Table 4.2.

**Table 4. 2: Factors that affect the advancement of women in the public and private sector**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private Sector	Public Sector
Historical	11	13
Men motivate for other men	6	0
Non-implementation of policies	0	7
Lack of interest in women	2	4
Gender inequality	0	1

The analysis of data from in-depth interviews suggests history as the main factor that prevents women from advancing to top management positions. This factor emerged strongly in both the public and private sectors. These themes concur with several authors (e.g. Ismail and Ibrahim, 2008; Clevenger and Singh, 2013; Ansari, 2014). These factors include, among others, historical issues which suggest that women are to stay at home and look after the kids, men motivating for other men, policies not implemented, and lack of interest in women. To further illustrate these factors in women occupying management positions in the public and private sectors, Lizzy, who is employed in the public sector, responded:

*“I think it’s the stereotype nature, I don’t think there is something really tangible. Men specifically are the ones who are in top management and are the ones who are blocking us*

*as women to advance because some of them do not believe that women should be in leadership positions, so they give you hard time; even if they report to you, they still give you hard time just because you are a female, so it's those kind of stereotypes.”*

Nozipho, who is also employed in the public sector, further alluded that:

*“I think it is because of history, that women used to stay at home and look after the children, but the government is really trying.”*

The above quotes indicate factors that are adopted by the society – women are to stay at home, do household chores and look after the children. Some men are not willing to change even in this current society. In addition, it is an alarming factor taking into consideration the unwavering efforts of government about gender equality. A large body of literature exists on gender equality (Ghaill and Haywood, 2007). Gender equality can be defined as a term marked by several dimensions which embrace the participation of men and women in the economic, cultural and social dimensions equally (Stearns, 2015). Most recently, the EU connected gender equality to fighting discrimination and promoting diversity (Mancini-Billson, 2005). The UN (United Nations) has connected it with development and demography (Lobban, 2005). Individual countries have associated it with civil rights or labor market conditions. Globally, governments have likewise presented new policies to integrate women into politics and policymaking, consequently allowing their progression to higher echelons (Squires, 2007). Therefore, according to literature, based on policies adopted by countries, no position should be gendered.

Carol who is employed in the private sector, said that,

*“Some factors are more historical in nature; if you look at the fact that you will find at the executive level, people who are there are in their fifties, so probably fifty years ago not as many women were in the workplace.”*

Sariyah, who is employed in the private sector, agreed with Carol and said that,

*“Private sector, worse mining, it is difficult for the patriarchal culture to dissolve just like that. Before only men worked in the mines, times have changed, its taking a lot of time. But the younger generation, which is more educated is coming in, we are hoping that soon people will not be ‘excited’ to see woman in the male dominated occupations.”*

The above participants who are employed in the private sector agree with the participants who are employed in the public sector and suggest that the reason for the shortage of women in top management is the fact that women were hardly part of the workforce fifty years ago. It is therefore evident that in some societies, men are viewed as superior to women. This suggestion implies that as the younger generation continue to enter the workforce, more women are likely to ascend to top management positions. These findings agree with the larger body of literature on gender dominance by males (Clevenger and Singh, 2013). According to traditional and social norms, women are perceived to have their place in the kitchen, child-minding and carrying out other domestic duties (Benya, 2009). This is supported by development theory which argues that outdated cultures are categorized by segregated gender roles that do not allow women to be employed external to their homes (Inglehart and Norris, 2003).

Another factor that emerged in the private sector is that men in leadership positions motivate for other men when positions are advertised (especially leadership positions). This was alluded by Shria, when she said:

*“Men look out for other men, they organize jobs for each other probably because they don’t want to be surrounded by females.....”*

Nokwazi, who is also employed in the private sector, said:

*“Here, men are chauvinists, they don’t believe that a woman can hold a department and run with it. They’d rather employ other men from externally when we are available internally, qualifying and having enough experience. It’s difficult when we are just general employees, how much more in higher positions.”*

The above quotes imply that some men view women as different to them, and therefore prefer to work with men because they are similar to them. These findings concur with extant literature, for example, Ansari (2014). Barragan et al. (2011) stated that the difference barrier is strengthened by the phenomenon that people are more comfortable hiring people like themselves. This suggests that since hiring positions are held by men, they are most likely to hire men over women.

Another theme that emerged in the public sector is that of policies which are adopted but never implemented. As the literature indicates, the absence of the application and execution of the laws meant to address gender inequality permits discrimination to prevail in organizations and widens

the gap between men, women and minorities (Clevenger and Singh, 2013). The following quote from Pamela highlights the nature of this factor that blocks women, especially in the public sector, from progressing to top management.

*“Policies are there, they just need to be implemented, the bad thing about government is that we create and create and plan but when it comes to implementation, it takes years and years; but if you can do an audit about policies that are solely focused on women, they are a lot of things, programs that are there.”*

Sindy, who holds a top management position in the public sector, agreed with Pamela, and highlighted:

*“..... even though policies are drawn, to implement them is a mission”.*

These quotes imply that policies aimed at women are only on paper and they are as good as not adopted at all. Thus, top management, as the decision makers of organizations, draw up these policies and they are never implemented at the operational level.

Another theme that emerged from one participant who is employed in the public sector was that of gender inequality. Zinhle said that,

*“Gender inequality in South Africa is also another issue. Even though there are policies in place, but sometimes you go to an interview and you qualify and you are competent but already they have someone they want in that position and also when you don’t have the party’s card then you can’t get to top management.”*

The last factor that emerged from the data in both the public and private sector, but mostly in the public sector, is lack of interest in women. In other words, positions are advertised, yet qualifying women shy away from such or they are given an opportunity to assume a leadership position but show no interest. Bongzi, who is employed in the public sector, highlighted that,

*“It’s the fear of the unknown. Sometimes a position will be advertised and you’ll find that women are targeted, they get called for an interview and they pull out of the position, some of them get scared, not that they are not capable, sometimes women feel inferior, sometimes they don’t qualify academically.”*

Ayeshware, who is employed in the private sector, said:

*“Guys are more likely to go for a higher position even if they are not ready for it. They are more risk takers I would say, eh women want to verify ten times before they go for a job.”*

These findings concur with extant literature. In the spring of 2014, two accomplished female columnists, Kay and Shipman (2014), composed an article in the Atlantic Magazine called “*The Confidence Gap*” (O’Neil and Hopkins, 2015). In this article, they recommended that women’s lack of advancement and powerlessness to get through the “glass ceiling” in substantial numbers is because of what they named women’s intense absence of confidence (O’Neil and Hopkins, 2015). They recognized that maternal senses and social and institutional boundaries may likewise be contributing variables, yet expressed that at the most essential dimension, confidence is the key missing fixing to “women’s prosperity” (O’Neil and Hopkins, 2015).

#### **4.5.2. CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN OCCUPYING MANAGEMENT POSITIONS**

The aim of this objective was to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges facing women who occupy management positions in the private and public sectors. It is perceived by the researcher that these challenges are the core obstacles that women face in relation to their desire to advance to top management. Therefore, each participant was asked a series of questions to explore these challenges. The analysis of data from the in-depth interviews indicates these challenges confronting women in management as illustrated in table 4.2 below.

**Table 4. 3: Challenges faced by women in management positions**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private sector	Public sector
Being undermined	11	9
Lack of mentorship programs	11	13
Younger generation's attitude	2	0
Lack of support from women	9	7
Male stereotype	4	3
Gender discrimination	10	5
Queen Bees	5	3
Biased corporate practices	5	2

Underestimation of women and lack of mentorship programs emerged as overarching themes from the data. This underestimation probably stems from male stereotypes. Other challenges include lack of mentorship programs; younger generation's attitude; lack of support from other women; stereotypes; gender discrimination; Queen Bees and biased corporate practices. Challenges that women in management face are directly related to their chances to progress to top management. To further illustrate the influence of these challenges on women in management, Thandeka, who is employed in the public sector responded:

*“As a woman in a management position, you surely get undermined, I get undermined. So we are forever attending meetings and I would suggest something or have an opinion about an issue discussed. People scrutinize and ask a lot of questions. A male colleague says the same thing, boom!!! Everyone agrees and that is really degrading.”*

Busi, who is also employed in the public sector, alluded that:

*“People, especially men, have a mentality that as they are heads of their households; even at work, they don't take orders from a woman, no it doesn't work like that. It's taking them a lot of time to understand that we now can lead them or we can be colleagues, shame I feel for them. I don't know but I think this stereotyping is more obvious here in KZN, because I have worked in other provinces, but here its worse.....”*

Zinhle, who is also employed in the private sector highlighted that:

*“I think every day as a woman you get to be second guessed, I think as a woman it takes time for people to stand up and listen to you. When you are a woman you have to sort of prove yourself that you are actually capable to lead such and such department. You always have to work harder than your counterparts to prove that you know what you are doing. Sometimes people want to test you before they can trust you. I don’t know but this seems like a ‘Zulu’ thing because I have worked in three provinces, but stereotypes are bad here.”*

Nondumiso, who is also employed in the private sector, responded:

*“As a woman you have to go an extra mile, working two times harder because men think they are the only ones who can think smartly. So, in meetings, and in my shift. You know, even middle and senior management people undermine the thinking of women. I am the only woman who sits in these production meetings and you see people’s reactions when you talk that they do not believe.”*

Participants showed deep emotion regarding this challenge, emphasizing on the brutality of meetings. The presence of women in management probably raises fear and insecurity in men, taking into consideration that women enter the workplace more qualified than men. In addition, this may be due to patriarchal attitudes that prevail in society. This concurs with the literature which elucidates that throughout the pre-historic period, the patriarchal system of values was at its peak in terms of social, economic and political control of women by men in most communities of the world (Mudau and Ncube, 2017). Wolfram, Mohr and Schyns (2007) also noted that people with traditional gender role attitudes object to female authorities. These stereotypes are therefore perceived to be the main barriers faced by women in the workplace in attaining senior management positions (Berkery, Morley and Tiernan, 2013). Furthermore, in the South African context, gender stereotypes are more dominant in some provinces than others. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal, the Zulu culture is dominant and gender segregation in favor of men is still highly prevalent.

Nomfundo, who is employed in the public sector, responded by saying that:

*“On my side there is not much, the reason being we as women are now educated, we know and when we are in the boardroom it’s no longer that we are not able share our views. We do not have fear, as opposed to women when they started entering the workforce, because*

*we now know our rights as women, we know how to behave in the boardroom and we know how to engage. The main challenge that I can pick up is the lack of mentorship programs aimed at the development of women.”*

Sindy who is employed in the public sector, said that:

*“I think we lack mentorship programs that are aimed at women. These will prepare us for higher positions, so that when we reach the top, someone has already role modelled before us. Besides, top management involves tough decisions to be made, so it’s important for us to learn how to go about making such decisions.”*

The above quotes stress the importance of mentorship for women. Because of lack of mentoring, women are supposedly not sure of their role in top management when they assume executive level positions. This is due to the fact that mentoring comprises career advancement functions and psycho-social functions (Enrich, 2008). Therefore, when women are mentored while occupying middle management positions, they are developed into what is required in executive management.

Another important theme that emerged from the private sector is the younger generation’s attitude. Participants mentioned the attitude of the younger generation. Carol and Zodwa, who are employed in the private sector, said that:

*“There is this younger male generation, the attitude, yo, yo, yo.....they have these rights and privileges, you know, they really don’t want to work. The sick leaves they take, it’s amazing. I was actually telling someone the other day that the way it is happening right now, I will have a ward.....”*

*“The younger generation’s attitude is really alarming. They do not know how to address people. There is this guy who is ten times junior than me, the way he talks to me. I’ve told him many times that I don’t like his attitude but he doesn’t budge.....maybe it’s a way he was brought up to treat women anyhow....”*

When the participant expressed, “yo, yo, yo...” she showed deep exhaustion and looked emotionally defeated by the challenge discussed. Therefore, it is obvious that the socio-cultural challenges that women face from history and traditions are also unconsciously relayed to the

younger generation. It is frustrating that women have to face older men who are not willing to cooperate as well as the attitude in the younger male generation.

These findings confirm previous studies which posit that many organizations lack practices in training and development, promotion and compensation (Rishani, Mallah, Housani and Ismail, 2015), which adds significantly to the glass ceiling effect. The presence of casual male systems alluded to as “the old boys’ networks” also tend to exclude women from top positions (Dimovski et al., 2010; Smith, Caputi and Crittenden, 2012). Cultural stereotyping refers to those beliefs that are culturally embedded within individual’s minds and tend to work against women’s promotion to senior management positions (Moorsi, 2010; Hurley and Choudhary, 2016). Women have always been associated by culture with uncompensated household chores as well as caring for children (Floro and Komatsu, 2011; Mudau and Ncube, 2017). In addition, "Queen Bees" don't demonstrate support to female subordinates because of the threat of other women’s prosperity challenging their own situation of leadership in corporations (Kanter, 1977). Their conduct might be experienced by other women as female misogyny (Warning and Buchanan, 2009). In the last few decades, mentoring has been upheld as a vital career development tool for women (Mustafa, Ronald, Nihat and Jacob, 2014).

**4.5.2.1. Sacrifices made by women to be in management**

This section explores some sacrifices that women have had to make to be in management. Table 4.4 below illustrates some of the sacrifices made.

**Table 4. 4: Sacrifices made to be in management**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private sector	Public sector
Nothing at all	6	6
I don’t have a social life	1	2
Time spent with my family	4	4

The majority of participants did not sacrifice anything to be in management positions, rather they believe that they are leading simply because they possess all the necessary credentials to be leaders.

This theme emerged in both the private and public sectors. Pinky, who is employed in the public sector, said that:

*“I got into middle management because I was well deserving in terms of experience and qualifications, but I did not make any drastic life changing sacrifices in my life to get where I am today. Yes, to be successful, there are sacrifices that you have to make here and there but nothing hectic on my side.”*

Data suggests that some women are not willing to make sacrifices to reach any position. Rather, they posit that possessing the necessary qualifications together with experience deems them deserving without making any sacrifices. However, contrary to the above statement, some participants have made sacrifices to be in leadership positions. This was illustrated Noxy, who is employed in the private sector, when she said that:

*“I have always been employed in the private sector, so things here are not plain sailing. If you want something, you have to really work hard. So, I once relocated to Johannesburg for better opportunities and development leaving my husband and my children behind. I think that was the biggest sacrifice I have had to make for my career and the good thing is that when I came back to KZN, I got a middle management position, so that sacrifice opened doors for me.”*

Data also suggests that some women have had to make sacrifices for them to successful. This demonstrates the ambition and eagerness for these women have to reach their goals. Thandiwe, who is employed in the private sector, said:

*“When I was appointed in this position, I just got married, but before the end of the first year, already my marriage was falling apart because of the demands of the job, and I didn’t have time to make amends to it or pay attention to things I couldn’t change.....I had to remind myself that I did not get educated to get married, I studied to get a job.....so even now I don’t have a partner because I can’t keep to the demands of the job AND STILL HAVE A PARTNER, NO.....”*

These findings agree with the current literature, where there is now growing recognition that a relatively large proportion of women in management roles choose not to have children, or even no partner in order to progress in their senior or executive management career (Gherardi and Murgia,

2014). One study in the USA has reported that almost half (49 percent) of women classified as high achievers were childless (Gherardi and Murgia).

#### 4.5.2.2. Role of women executives in the development of other women

Participants were asked to discuss the role that women executives should play in developing other women. The themes that emerged are illustrated in Table 4.5 below.

**Table 4. 5: Role of women executives in the development of other women**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private sector	Public sector
Women executives should mentor other women	11	13
Arrange seminars and workshops aimed at women	5	8
Develop women into executive thinking from a young age	4	7

As indicated in the above table, participants suggested that mentorship, seminars and workshops, and grooming of women from a young age could assist in developing women to assume executive positions. Mentorship emerged as the strongest theme from the interviews. All the participants thought that in order to develop women, women executives should mentor other women. This is illustrated by Zola and Precious when they articulated that:

*“I think they are the ones who should play a big role in developing other women because they have faced all the challenges that we are facing in middle management, so they know better. When they have reached the top of the corporate ladder, they should not kick the ladder because we also need the same ladder to climb. I know they are very busy people, but I am sure they can take some time in mentoring other women.”*

*“..... women executives can target women where senior management positions are concerned and they should specifically groom them to assume these positions.....”*

Besides obstacles faced by women when trying to climb the corporate ladder, it is apparent from the above quotes that women who occupy management positions do hope for women executives to develop other women. However, there is a comment from the first response implying that some women executives are not keen to see other women at the same level as themselves. Other women executive (Busi) agreed to this articulation and stated:

*“As women executives, it is imperative that we try by all means to mentor other women. I remember when I started in this position, I had no idea what was going on, and I worked very hard to get recognition from my male counterparts. So, I feel that mentoring can allow women to gain exposure to the executive level before getting there..... but having said that, it gets too busy, meetings, travelling and so on makes it difficult to do such.”*

Pressure associated with the executive level probably makes it difficult for women executives to mentor potential women to assume executive positions. While trying to prove that they are cut out for the boardroom, they are ‘expected’ to mentor other women, which makes their lives even more difficult. This was also alluded to by another woman executive (Dolly) who said:

*“I would like to see as many women as possible reaching the top of the corporate ladder, so I am not jealous of other women reaching here I am. Another thing, when you are in executive level, people have certain expectations of you, and if you can’t meet them then you are an enemy and they start calling you names. It is not plain sailing here, you want to mentor and help people but it gets too much.....”*

Another role that participants thought women executives could play is organizing and conducting workshops and seminars aimed at women. Zanele said:

*“Maybe women executives can assist us by conducting structured workshops and seminars which basically can give us an idea of what is expected.....”*

Another important factor was that of grooming young women to penetrating male dominated occupations. This could assist young women to choose relevant careers. In addition, cultural perceptions embedded in society that make girls feel inferior to boys could fade away. Mentors are said to perform both roles, where functions career in corporate sponsorship, training, security, exposure, visibility and stimulating work assignments (Enrich, 2008). Psycho-social capacities

incorporate support, kinship, guidance and input, and assisting people to build up a sense of competence, confidence and effectiveness (Enrich, 2008).

#### **4.5.2.3. Recommendations by participants to overcome challenges faced by women in management**

The challenges faced by women occupying management positions are perceived by the researcher as the very obstacles that impede their advancement to executive management, and they are mostly structurally and socially related. In order to overcome these challenges, participants were asked to recommend what could be done by organizations. Themes that emerged from the interviews are illustrated in Table 4.6 below.

**Table 4. 6: Recommendations to overcome the challenges faced by women in management**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private sector	Public sector
Change of corporate practices	9	4
Succession planning and mentorship programs	4	13
Involvement of HR	8	3
Women to support each other	2	0

Change of corporate practices emerged as the strongest recommendation in the private sector. Participants thought the challenges that are faced by women stem from corporate practices that favor men more than women and therefore suggest that the change of these practices can bring forth changes. Pamela and Bongsi said that, respectively:

*“Changing corporate practices do take time, but it should be done eventually because right now they are in favor of men yet we are supposed to be equal .....”*

*“It’s a call to change corporate practices, because, these ‘old boy’ networks are there because men are running the show; if this could change, then may be things could get better.....”*

Therefore, change of corporate practices can supposedly abolish casual male systems which exclude less powerful men and all women; and the assumption is that this will result in fair hiring

systems. This is consistent with one of the theories used in this study, the gender-organization-system perspective which suggests that in the broader concept of organizational structure, the under-representation of women in management positions may be due to the social and institutional systems in which organizations function (Fagenson, 1990). Furthermore, when corporate practices change then succession planning will be incorporated in organizations. This theme emerged strongly in the public sector. This was affirmed by Sindi and Nondumiso when they said:

*“Succession planning is where relevant people are targeted for potential positions.”*

*“Succession planning and mentor programs designed for women. There should also be a lot of training and development happening in middle management positions.”*

Data shows that succession planning is one strategy that companies and government departments can utilize to ensure adequate numbers of women in executive levels. Therefore, formal succession plans could be drawn which comprise time frames, and this will assist in reaching specified targets. Succession planning is closely related to the Human Resources function; hence participants suggested the strong involvement of HR in ensuring that women advance to executive levels. This was emphasized by Lizzy and Ayeshware when they suggested that:

*“Because most of the time the HR function is dominated by women, these challenges could cease if they put their foot down when it comes to gender equality, not that women must be appointed even if they don’t have necessary credentials for those positions, but they can make it a point that well deserving women advance to the executive level.”*

*“I think because there are women in the HR department, they should try by all means that women are well looked after and positions are meant solely for women.”*

Participants felt that the presence of women in the HR function could benefit women in terms of bringing about change in the hiring process. Therefore, participants suggested the close involvement of HR.

Participants employed in the private sector also mentioned that women supporting each other can help one another to overcome challenges faced by women in management positions. Carol said:

*“As women we don’t support each other, and you are more likely to get a mentor in a man. I don’t know why this happens. As women professionals, we don’t want to sit together and talk about our challenges. I will make an example, I am involved in a forum that is meant to bring together professionals, you organize something and say let’s have a workshop about a certain issue, people don’t pitch up. People just isolate themselves because they are now executives and don’t see a point in spending an afternoon helping some junior person. I think if we can get together and talk about our challenges, we can overcome such.”*

The above quote signifies the value of women supporting each other. These findings imply that if women band together, gender inequality can be eliminated in the workplace. In addition, the conversations that women can engage in are likely to produce considerable benefits for the individual as well as the organization. These findings are in agreement with literature (Korabik and Abbondanza, 2004; Mavin, 2006; Mavin and Williams, 2013), concluding that solidarity behavior (the behavior which assumes that women view other women as their natural supporters, regardless of hierarchical differences) transpires on an individual and group premise, both inside and outside organizations, which incorporates all types of ties and alliances that women may form in organizational settings, for example, tutoring, changing organizational policies and supporting their rights (Mavin, 2006).

### **4.5.3: THE ROLE PLAYED BY ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

#### **4.5.3.1: Organizational culture adopted where participants are employed**

Hofstede (1998) defined organizational culture as the collective mindset which differentiates the members of one organization from another. In this regard, participants were asked to briefly describe the organizational culture that is adopted in the organizations where they are employed. This is illustrated in table 4.7 below.

**Table 4. 7: Organizational culture adopted where participants are employed**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private sector	Public sector
Equality for everyone	0	11
It is highly male dominated	11	0
Deliver now, complain later	0	2

It can be noted that three themes emerged regarding organizational cultures adopted by the different organizations in which participants are employed. The theme that emerged in the public sector is one that upholds equality for everyone. This was elaborated by Thandeka, when she said:

*“Government is really trying in terms of gender equality, even though top management is still dominated by males, but in terms of the department as a whole, numbers are really good. Especially in management positions, junior and middle, women are there, in numbers.”*

*“There is a lot of women now in management positions compared to before when there were no laws in place concerning gender equality. The culture has changed now, women dominate the government departments, and even in management it’s not bad.”*

Judging from the above quotes, it is evident that the culture in the public sector is transitioning from that of being male dominated to equality for everyone. Contrary to this culture, the private sector is recognized as a culture that is male dominated. This was illustrated by Precious and Nokwazi when they said that:

*“I wish you could stay here until 2pm when there is a shift change over, it looks like its Father’s Day or something, or if you could go to the canteen, you would see, and to think that this company is 78 years old now, it’s sad.”*

*“The culture around here is highly male dominated. It is weird actually because there is an equity committee and only males sit in that committee, how then will the inequality be addressed? All the hierarchies of management are dominated by males. Even in this position I am holding, people did not want me here, they wanted their male ‘friends’, so HR had to fight for me.”*

From the above quotes, it is obvious that the private sector is still highly male dominated. This male dominance is due to cultural beliefs that were adopted by previous generations, yet that remain prevalent in contemporary organizations. Taking into consideration the history where, as women entered the workforce, they were employed in support roles as secretaries and males were in leadership roles and continue in such positions, it is evident that this culture still persists even though a large number of women have entered the workforce. Literature concurs with these findings as organizational culture is defined as beliefs, attitudes, behavior and presumptions adapted by an organization to deal with difficulties from the outside environment and internal pressures (Cronje, Hugo, Nealund and Van Reenen, 1987; Schein, 1992; Dimovski et al., 2010; Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012). Organizational culture is frequently mentioned as either the principal enabler or barrier to work-life policies, because traditional norms often supersede formal policy goals (O’Neil et al., 2010). The South African organizational culture holds onto ideas that are more male orientated and women are very submissive to men (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2010). The culture relies upon men being in charge; they are overwhelmingly represented in the corporate world where they should be decisive and intense.

#### **4.5.3.2: Role played by culture in the advancement of women to top management**

To further probe the research objective of organizational culture, participants were asked the role that the culture in their organizations plays in advancing women to top management. Their responses are highlighted in table 4.8 below.

**Table 4. 8: Role played by organizational culture in the advancement of women**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Frequency of responses</b>	
	<b>Private sector</b>	<b>Public sector</b>
None	11	0
Government is trying	0	13

It is evident that since organizational culture in the private sector is dominated by males, it does not play any role in the advancement of women to top management positions. Therefore, women have to work hard to obtain the necessary qualifications and experience to prepare themselves when there are opportunities. Even then, opportunities might be there, but organizational culture

might be a disadvantage to them. Contrary to the private sector, participants employed in the public sector commended government for its efforts on gender equality. Although there is a lot to be done in terms of advancing women to top management, there is hope due to the high level of diversity that has been achieved in the government departments and municipalities.

#### **4.5.4 POSSIBLE ATTRIBUTES REQUIRED FOR WOMEN TO ADVANCE TO TOP MANAGEMENT**

This objective sought to explore the attributes required for women to advance to executive positions. Participants were asked a series of questions about leadership qualities to get a deeper understanding in this regard.

##### **4.5.4.1 Leadership traits displayed by women**

Many scholars have studied the leadership styles of men versus women (Rosener, 1990; Eagly and Carli, 2007; Nixdorf and Rosen, 2010) and have deduced that men and women exhibit different management styles. Participants were asked to establish attributes that they perceive are required from women to advance to top management. These leadership traits are illustrated in figure 4.9 below.

**Table 4. 9: Leadership traits displayed by women**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private sector	Public sector
I am fair	11	13
I allow employees to work independently	3	4
I have an open-door policy	7	5
I use stewardship	2	3
I communicate a lot	11	13
I respect people	4	6
I take time to know employees	8	6
I am firm yet friendly	2	1
I am nurturing	4	2

From the interviews, participants mentioned fairness, allowing employees to work independently, an open-door policy, using stewardship, communication and interaction with employees, respect, taking time to know employees, being firm yet friendly, nurturing, and toughness as leadership traits that they adopt to get results from employees. Fairness and communication emerged as the strongest themes as they were mentioned by all participants employed in the private and public sectors. This was illustrated by Nondumiso and Nomfundo when they said:

*“.....I am a fair leader, I treat people the way I would like to be treated if I was to be in the same position as them.....”*

*“I am fair, I do not expect ‘miracles’ from my employees, I know that what I give of me as their leader, I will get from them. Those who are willing to learn, I expose them to my experience as a manager....”*

The above quotes indicate that participants treat employees equally with no discrimination. Also, by ‘fair’, participants implied that they are certain that the employees are able to produce the quality of work expect from them. Ranking the same as fairness is communication. Participants thought that being able to communicate with their employees made them good leaders. This was elaborated by Zinhle and Akhona:

*“I communicate a lot with my employees and I go to site, interact with them, I spend time with them. I believe that communication is the main key to a healthy relationship, thus, by communicating, employees know what is expected of them, and in turn I know if they are experiencing any difficulties. They know that I do not accept substandard work, so I expect people to communicate if they experience any hurdles.....”*

*“.....I also communicate with them, I believe that the main key to a healthy working relationship is by communicating. They understand the kind of person that I am, the quality of work that I am expecting and they know how I want it done. I also opened a social media group for the whole team so that it is easy for us to communicate.....”*

The above quotes indicate that women managers believe that by communicating with employees, they are able to build strong teams and produce good results. By ‘interacting’, participants probably implied that the communication is two way, the employees listen and in turn she listens

to them. This is contrary to command where employees are expected to only listen to the command of the superior.

Another leadership trait mentioned by participants was that of taking time to know employees. This was mentioned by Lauryn and Shria:

*“.....I tend to want to know people that I work with, who they are and where they are from, know about their families etc.; from the lady who cleans in my department, I know who she is and where she’s from.....”*

*“I know everyone in my department, I go talk to them, you know. I believe that for my employees to produce results, they are to be well taken care of, they need to know that they belong, it’s a ‘we’ and ‘us’ kind of thing. You know the guy who holds the lowest position in my department, those are the people that I keep close to me.....”*

Participants thought taking time to know people is one of the most important traits that a leader should possess. This provides employees with a sense of belonging, not the feeling that they are merely expected to deliver or produce. In addition, this effort by managers gives employees a sense of ‘ownership’, thus, they (employees) are bound to go an extra mile to produce good results.

These findings concur with extant literature, affirming that women are more people-oriented, altering people’s interests into corporation’s goals (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Northouse, 2015). Toor and Ofori (2011) observed women as transformational leaders who cooperate, mentor and collaborate, and they assert that these qualities are imperative for contemporary organizations. Women are also observed as being able to influence their employees in the pursuit of organizational goals, to be visionaries capable of transforming companies through their natural charisma, and able to motivate and inspire their teams (Evans, 2010). Coleman (2010) further observed that women attempt to build harmony in decision making. They are good listeners and therefore establish connections quickly; and they are generally democratic, which is why they can reason with the team members (Coleman, 2010).

#### **4.5.4.2: Difference between male and female leadership traits**

In order to establish the differences between male and female leadership traits, participants were asked to describe how their management style differed from those of their male counterparts. These differences are illustrated in table 4.10 below.

**Table 4. 10: Difference between male and female leadership traits**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private sector	Public sector
Males do not dig deep into employees' lives	11	9
Males want to be seen as bosses	7	4
Males want results only	6	5
We are all the same	0	2

Most participants, in both the private and public sectors, thought that there were leadership qualities that made them differ from their male counterparts. They thought that males are aggressive, and demand employees to be submissive and subjugated to their leadership. Nozipho and Zinhle, who are employed in the private and public sector, respectively said:

*“Men want to be felt that they are bosses, for example, my boss is a male, he likes to discipline. There is this one time that I was ten minutes late at work and he wanted to discipline me, but he didn’t succeed because I am very outspoken. Even my male counterparts, a lot of them want their employees to feel that they are bosses. Another important thing is that the male boss that was here before me did not allow employees to visit his office for any reason without an appointment.....”*

*“My management style is very different from them. They concentrate on people instead of paying attention to the quality of work that they deliver. For example, we work flexi hours because we are project based, so there is no need to be in the office for 8 hours, but when your boss is male, you are in trouble. They want you at work at 7:30. I am not too sure what their employees do if they have to be in the field at that time. They just want to be seen that they are bosses, that’s all.....”*

The above quotes refer to the patriarchal nature of society. The male character has always been perceived by society to dominate, thus even in the work situation, males push for dominion whether they are an employee or a boss. In support of this statement, Barbara, who is employed in the public sector said:

*“.....you know, men take things which are done to them at home in the form of submission from their wives and children, and think they will also happen at work.....no one is going to kneel here and give someone else food. You know there is an elder male who reports to me and has always referred to me as “ntombazane” [translated in English as “((girl)”]..... I mean, really.....”*

Another difference in leadership qualities that was mentioned was that males do not dig deep into employee’s lives. This was observed by Carol:

*“From what I have observed, I don’t think guys try and dig deep into your family and what not. They are very friendly, I must say, but they are not that kind of people that are going to dig deep into someone else’s life. We women tend like to know so many things about people’s lives. I don’t think guys have the same kind of thing where they want to be motherly. You’ll be lucky to come across that kind of guy.”*

This quote seems to imply that for most men, employees are at work to deliver their tasks and anything that is not work related does not concern them, which is probably their nature. In contrast, women go an extra mile to know more about their employees. This is illustrated by Thandiwe when she said:

*“.....for example, there was one lady who was reporting to me. I could see that her behavior was changing; I sat her down and I raised my concerns, she told me her problems. But while I was busy arranging for her to go to EAP (Employee Assistance Program) she suffered heart failure and she passed on.....”*

Thus, some women possess intuition which assists them regarding the well-being of employees. An employee may be underperforming not due to incapacity but because of personal challenges they might be encountering, which requires a sensitive leader to assist that particular employee.

It can be noted however, that two participants employed in the public sector contradicted what was said by the participants quoted above. Zola said:

*“I think this thing of management style depends on the character of a person; yes there are elements of my leadership style that differ from my male counterparts, well I don’t think*

*it's because they are male. I believe it is because we display different characters as individuals.”*

The above quote implies that management styles should not be associated with gender. It is the character of an individual which determines the leadership style that they adopt. This concurs with the literature, as some studies suggest that there are no differences in leadership attributable to gender (Carless, 1998; Northouse, 2007). This is justified by the definition of leadership in terms of traits provided by Evans (2010): L – listening and learning from others, E – energizing the organization, A – acting for the benefit of everybody, D – development of themselves and others, E – empowerment of others to lead, and R – recognition of achievement. Another area which has generated much research in the search for answers to the scarcity of senior female managers is the arena of work-life conflict/balance (Cross, 2010).

#### **4.5.4.3: Reasons why women should be appointed in senior management positions**

Participants were asked to share reasons why they think women should be appointed to executive leadership. Themes that emerged are illustrated in Table 4.11 below.

**Table 4. 11: Reasons why women should be appointed to senior management positions**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private sector	Public sector
Education	8	9
Dedication	4	4
For diversification purposes	3	1

Participants thought that besides their various leadership styles, there are other reasons why women should be appointed to senior management positions. They mentioned a few reasons such as education, dedication and diversification purposes. Education emerged as the strongest theme that was mentioned by the participants from both private and public sectors. This was illustrated by Lizzy and Shria:

*“We are educated, we are determined, ambitious and we know how to balance work and family, unlike men; they have their wives taking care of things at home, but we do all.”*

*“Women are more educated now and that makes us competent and fit to take on top leadership positions.”*

From the above quotes, it can be noted that education seems to be one of the weapons that women are able to use to play their part in fighting gender inequality. Education probably assists women in enhancing confidence and finding their way around the boardroom. In addition to education, dedication was mentioned as another reason why women should be appointed to senior management positions. This was illustrated by Simile:

*“Women are dedicated beings; when a woman does something, they do it wholeheartedly. And they know how to juggle private life and work-life. You find a woman that she is married, with kids, she will still continue with her studies while performing well at work.”*

By dedication, participants probably meant that women are committed to whatever they are obligated to do. Another theme that emerged, especially in the private sector, is that women should be appointed to top management positions because of diversification purposes. Noxolo said:

*“I think the diversification for me is the reason why one should consider women into top management positions, because I think the way we think is quite different and the angles we look are quite different so I have learnt over the years that it doesn’t help to get the same people with the same thinking doing the same thing, whereas when you have the ‘old boys club’ and the women whatever, someone will come up with a different perspective to tackle an issue.”*

Participants highlighted the importance of a diverse top management in any organization. Perceived results include diverse ideas and diverse problem-solving skills. The underrepresentation of women in senior management roles may be the result of underlying behavioral factors that prevent organizations from achieving their diversity goals (Clevenger and Singh, 2013). Therefore, South Africa turned gender equality into a legal command after the elections in 1994 (Masango and Mfene, 2015). The legislative framework on gender equality made a way for institutions to execute strategies on gender balance (Masango and Mfene, 2015).

#### **4.5.4.4: Pressures on women leaders to behave in a certain manner**

Literature reveals that there is a perception in the society that women are not cut out for leadership positions (Booyesen, 2007), hence the hypotheses by Schein, “think manager, think male” (Booyesen

and Nkomo, 2010). In this regard, participants were asked if they feel any pressure in their role as managers to behave in a certain way. Their responses are highlighted in the table 4.12.

**Table 4. 12: Pressures on women to behave in a certain manner**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private sector	Public Sector
I go out of my way to set an example	2	0
I have to go an extra mile	5	1
I don't feel any pressure	0	9
I feel like I have to behave like men for people to take me seriously	4	3

Participants, particularly those who are employed in the private sector, alluded that they did not feel any pressure to behave in a certain way in their role as managers. In support of this Precious and Ayeshware stated that:

*“I do not feel pressure to behave in a particular way, honestly, probably because things are not the same nowadays. We are educated, more than men even. So, our male counterparts give us respect that is due to us.”*

*“..... times have changed, I think people have changed too, gone are the days where we were expected to be submissive to males at work. We are in the same level now. We are even more educated as women and I think we perform better than men, if someone should feel pressure, it's them, not us.”*

The above quotes point mainly to education, which probably has led to women receiving enough respect to be trusted by male counterparts in the workplace. Another important point highlighted in the above quotes is the change of times. The entrance of women in the workforce, their access to education and training together with their experience has allowed other individuals to give them the recognition.

A theme that emerged in the private sector is that women have to go an extra mile to prove that they are as competent as much as men. Nozipho and Bongzi highlighted that:

*“I think we do get that pressure because you get to the boardroom for the first time, you are always just second guessed or looked down upon, so sometimes you feel like you have to work three times harder than men to prove yourself to make them take you seriously. Everyone second guesses us, women, men superiors, everybody.”*

*“We have to go an extra mile for people to trust us; people go as far as taking over my operation, because they do not think that there is anything productive that I can do. I have to constantly prove that we are in the same level as men. It’s actually sad when this is done by your boss (someone that supposedly is your mentor), it is really discouraging, but I refuse to give them the upper hand.”*

Women managers in the private sector showed deep emotion in response to the question that was asked. Even though this theme emerged in the public sector, it was more prevalent in the private sector. The above quotes imply the underestimation of women managers by male counterparts, women subordinate and superiors. It is probably disheartening for women to work under such pressure, not because of the enormous load of work but having to work to ‘prove’ themselves.

Women managers, especially in the private sector, likewise change their characters to supposedly ‘fit’ in the management position. Zola and Sindi said:

*“When I started in this position, you know I behaved like my normal self, but people were too undermining; I had to change and I got aggressive, a ‘not so friendly’ behavior, so to speak. People are like that, if you are a nice person, they undermine and take advantage of you, so now suddenly you have to really make sure that you stand your ground, in a mean way whereas may be that’s not your nature.”*

*“Changing our behavior as women comes with the demands of the job. As you grow as a manager, you have to learn to be tough, just like men. As women we are emotional beings but the more you get the boardroom experience, the tougher you are. There is no time for tears, you leave that in junior management. So yes, we change just to meet the demands that comes with our jobs.”*

The first quote implies a deep socio-cultural problem that is likewise associated with stereotyping. It indicates that people would rather have a male figure managing them than a female. It is probably

frustrating for these women to change who they are just to meet the socio-cultural demands associated with being a manager.

Another theme that emerged in the private sector is that some women go out of their way to set an example and to prove that women are suitable for management positions. This was alluded by Petunia and Bella when they said:

*“Of course, this thing of leading by example is a challenge; I cannot just behave anyhow, just because I am a manager, I have to set an example for my employees, even if it means my family suffers. For an example, I had an inquiry I had to attend to (bear in mind that I am the only woman who was to sit there) and my daughter was supposed to go for an operation. I had to postpone her operation so that I could be able to attend the inquiry, otherwise they would have pointed fingers at me.”*

*“It’s very difficult to set an example for your subordinates even if circumstances do not allow; sometimes I get sick, but I would come to work just to set an example as a manager. I am the first one to arrive at work in my department that I am leading. Sometimes it’s just not possible, but I push just to set an example.”*

The above quotes indicate the amount of pressure that these women are experiencing regarding their roles as managers. It is obvious that they put pressure on themselves but it is probably exacerbated by the demands that come with the management role, especially as a woman, or they are trying to prove that women are as fit as men are to carry out management duties. The gender-organization-system perspective asserts that the conduct of women in the organization is the result of both their gender and the structure of the corporation (Fagenson, 1990). The viewpoint likewise expands on the idea of corporate structure to incorporate not just power, work circumstances, and the quantity of people that shape and define women’s conduct in associations, but additionally considers authoritative factors, for example, corporate culture, history, belief system, and strategies (Yukongdi and Benson, 2005).

#### **4.5.4.5: Expectations on women to take a soft, feminine, caring almost motherly/maternal role in the workplace**

Literature reveal that women are perceived to take on nurturing roles in the workplace (Ansari, 2014). In order to explore this perception, women were asked to reveal if they are expected to take

soft, feminine, caring almost motherly roles in the workplaces. Their responses are illustrated in Table 4.13 below.

**Table 4. 13: Expectations on women to take soft, feminine, caring almost motherly/maternal roles in the workplace**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private sector	Public sector
It comes naturally	2	3
I have never felt that way	9	10

Participants felt that they have never been expected to exhibit motherly roles in the workplace. However, a few women from both the private and public sector alluded that the motherly role comes naturally because of their nature. According to Zanele who is employed in the public sector:

*“I am not even expected, it comes naturally, I do care about my subordinates, and they are not simple people who report to me. I make sure that I am approachable so that when someone has a personal problem or work related, they are able to tell me.”*

Carol who is employed in the private sector said:

*“You know I feel like, for us as women it’s very easy to be managers because I am a mother, so automatically for me I just look, I take that motherly position from home and I apply it at work. Where I am sensitive at home, I try to be sensitive even at work, but at the same time remembering that we are running a business. Where I need to discipline, I do that, like my child at home, out of love, even here at work, I do that.”*

The above quotes imply that for some women, the nature of being a mother or a female comes with a caring side, thus, it inevitably occurs that this nature emerges even at work. This allows the subordinates to communicate freely with their leader if they are experiencing any challenges. In turn, it assists the women leader to notice whether a subordinate is underperforming due to challenges they might be facing or reasons of incapacity.

#### 4.5.4.6: Value added by the presence of women in senior management positions

Participants were asked if having women in senior management added any value to the organization. This was done for the researcher to investigate the perspective of women vis-à-vis their significance in senior management positions. Their responses are illustrated in table 4.14 below.

**Table 4. 14: Value added by the presence of women in senior management positions**

Themes	Frequency of responses	
	Private	Public
Different way of thinking	3	2
Multi-tasking abilities	9	11
Strong character	0	4
There is nothing special	2	0

Participants highlighted several qualities of women that make them unique in top management, thereby adding value to the organization. These qualities were: different way of thinking; multi-tasking abilities; and strong character. Participants not only described themselves as possessing these qualities, but they perceived that these qualities enable women to survive at the top. According to Nokwazi:

*“Another advantage for having women in leadership positions is that they are able to multi task, so we don’t get overwhelmed by work; a woman does not come up with excuses because we are created to multitask. I’d also like to believe that top management is more demanding than middle management, therefore, this skill works to our advantage.”*

In the midst of these qualities, the ability of women to multi-task was mentioned by most participants from the private and public sectors. It appears that by ‘multitasking’, participants imply that they are able to handle multiple tasks at once. The results include being organized and confident to deliver quality work. Therefore, participants felt that being able to multitask meant they added more value than men in top management. Participants thought that their ability to multitask enabled them to carry out tasks timeously and efficiently. Eve said:

*“When you give a task to a woman they make sure that they deliver. All that I have worked with in all my years cannot multitask, they are very slow in nature. When they are to submit a report, they must be told three days before its due otherwise there will be a problem. My superior knows, I submit my reports on or way before the due date.”*

This quote agrees with Nokwazi and further indicates that women are reliable and give their best in whatever they do. In addition to multitasking abilities, women bring a different way of thinking into the boardroom. Participants believe they bring to the fore a different way of thinking. Carol said:

*“It brings a certain dynamic, women bring a different way of thinking, sometimes rush to discipline at work. I’ve come across this many times. Often, people will underperform just because they are having personal problems, not because they do not have the ability.....”*

This quote implies that women are critical thinkers and do not take hasty decisions. This quality is expedient because life-changing decisions are made in the boardroom, thus it is imperative to make decisions with a sober mind.

Another theme that emerged from participants employed in the public sector was that women have a strong character. This was captured by Pamela:

*“Having women in top positions means a great deal for any organization because a woman is very strong but on the other hand if you put men in an uncomfortable position or they are in a lot of stress, they break, they can’t perform under those conditions.”*

It appears that by ‘strong’, the participant meant women are able to withstand pressure. Therefore, by possessing this quality, no matter what transpires and shakes them, they are still able to perform their tasks to the best of their ability. In contrast, men, as the above participant alluded, when they are put in an uncomfortable position, their ‘ego’ is bruised thereby affecting their performance in leadership roles.

It should be noted however, that a small percentage of participants (2 women) believed that there is nothing special that women possess that adds value to organizations. One believed that where there are women there is ‘drama’ and the other thought that developing a strong character comes with experience, disputing that being strong is a characteristic unique to women. Precious said:

*“.....mmmmmmh, drama, which women bring. I don’t think they have anything special, to be really honest with you, but they need to be given a chance to manage. I think that is why we are 50/50, and get a job when you have skills and competences and meet the job requirements, not because you are male or female, that said does not mean you are really better than the other.”*

According to Carussi (2016), companies with higher gender diversity as compared to industry coverage see a much higher return on equity (10%), a higher operating result (48%) and a stronger stock price growth (70%). Research reveals four qualities that women possess which add value to organizations: (1) Women see and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities by taking initiatives, driving for results and championing for change, thereby outperforming their male counterparts; (2) women build strategic connections that strengthen the organization because of their ability to engage and develop people. In addition, they are likely to build collaborative environments more than their male counterparts; (3) women are holistic problem solvers because they have the ability to cogitate and they gather details somewhat differently than men; and (4) women are relationship and network builders because of their executive social skills which enable them to listen, read complex emotions in faces, and hear slight changes in tone of voice. Therefore, by disregarding the significance and power of aggressively growing gender diversity, organizations are deliberately losing momentous advantages in the market. Equally, organizations that pursue the appointment of women to their top leadership rungs intentionally will be far better positioned to outperform competitors.

#### **4.5.4.7: Possible measures to create more opportunities for women in South Africa**

In order to explore this phenomenon, participants were asked their opinions regarding possible measures that could be taken by South African companies and government departments to create more opportunities for women in South Africa. Responses are illustrated in table 4.15.

**Table 4. 15: Possible measures to create more opportunities for women in South Africa**

Themes	Frequency of themes	
	Private	Public
Deliberate employment of women into senior positions	7	6
Mentorship programs and succession planning	4	6
Change of mindset from women	2	4
Gender equality should be the first priority	4	3
Organizations to set time frames	1	3
Women networking	1	0

Data shows that deliberate employment of women in top management, mentorship programs, and succession planning are the most important factors that are likely to assist in creating more opportunities for women in management in South Africa. Mentorship programs and succession planning were also mentioned as one of the strategies to overcome factors that affect the advancement to top management positions. For instance, according to Nomfundo:

*“I think organizations should have mentorship programs, succession planning and positions aimed at women only.”*

Participants believed that mentorship programs and succession planning aimed solely at women could assist in creating more opportunities for women. The above quote probably implies that women should be given first preference because men have been around in the workplace and especially in leadership positions. In addition, by involving women in mentorship programs, they are guided by individuals who are experienced in the field of management, therefore if this opportunity is created, they are likely to succeed. According to Leck and Orser (2013), mentoring is normally considered as a relationship between an individual who is younger and less experienced (protégé) and an individual who is older and more experienced (mentor). In this relationship, a mentor provides advice, counselling and further improves the quality of their

protégé's career development. In the course of the most recent few decades, mentoring has been upheld as a vital career development tool for women (Mustafa, Ronald, Nihat and Jacob, 2014).

In addition, some studies propose that these hindrances are the repercussion of inadequate quantities of women in the pipeline (Hurn, 2012; Auster and Prasad, 2016). This implies therefore that by involving women in succession planning (the pipeline), there will be adequate women to proceed to upper management rungs when opportunities avail themselves. This is due to findings of some studies that reveal that women fail to comprehend the shift of focus while they are moving from middle management to top positions roles. Women are perceived as unaware of the distinction between the middle management capacities, which are more short-and medium-term objective orientated, contrasted with the senior management position which is long-term orientated (Mathur-Helm, 2006).

Deliberately seeking to employ women at top management is another important factor mentioned by participants, to create opportunities for women in South Africa. This way, opportunities are created for well-deserving women who are qualified and with the necessary experience. This was explained by Shria, when she said:

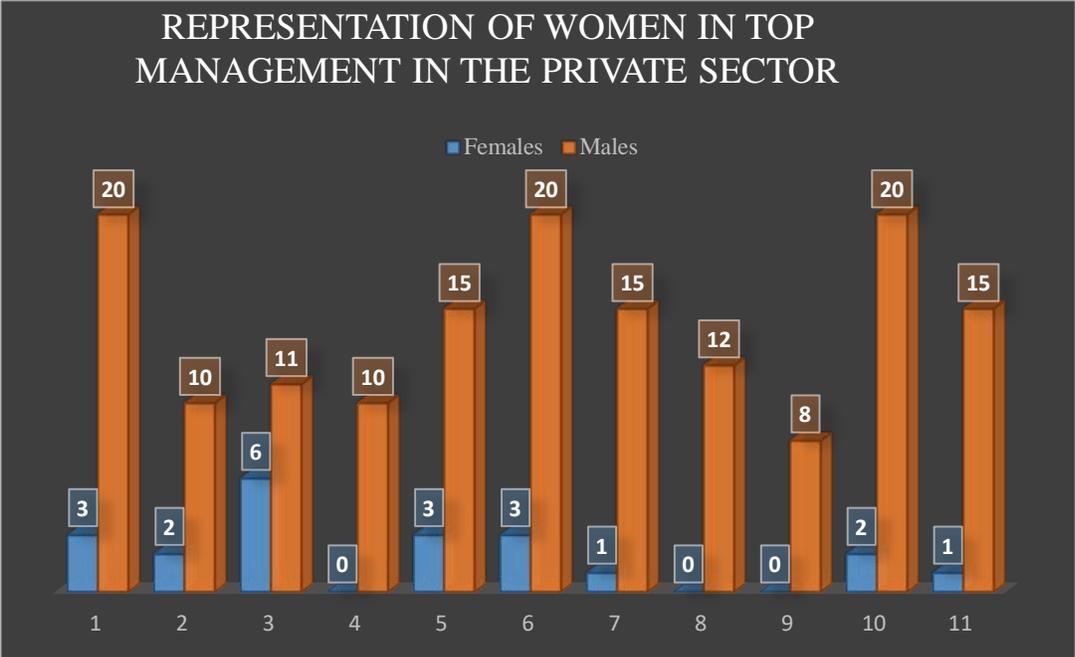
*“I think deliberate seeking to put women into the fore, you see. If a company would deliberately say we want so many women or these opportunities for women. Every time any opportunity presents itself, if a company can physically look for a woman. It has to be deliberate.”*

This shows that participants feel organizations are not aggressive enough to achieve gender diversity in the workplace and suggest that if they were aggressive enough, diversity is possible. The literature indicates that lack of women in leadership positions could compromise the attractiveness of any organization (Strachan et al., 2015).

#### **4.5.5: THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN TOP MANAGEMENT POSITIONS**

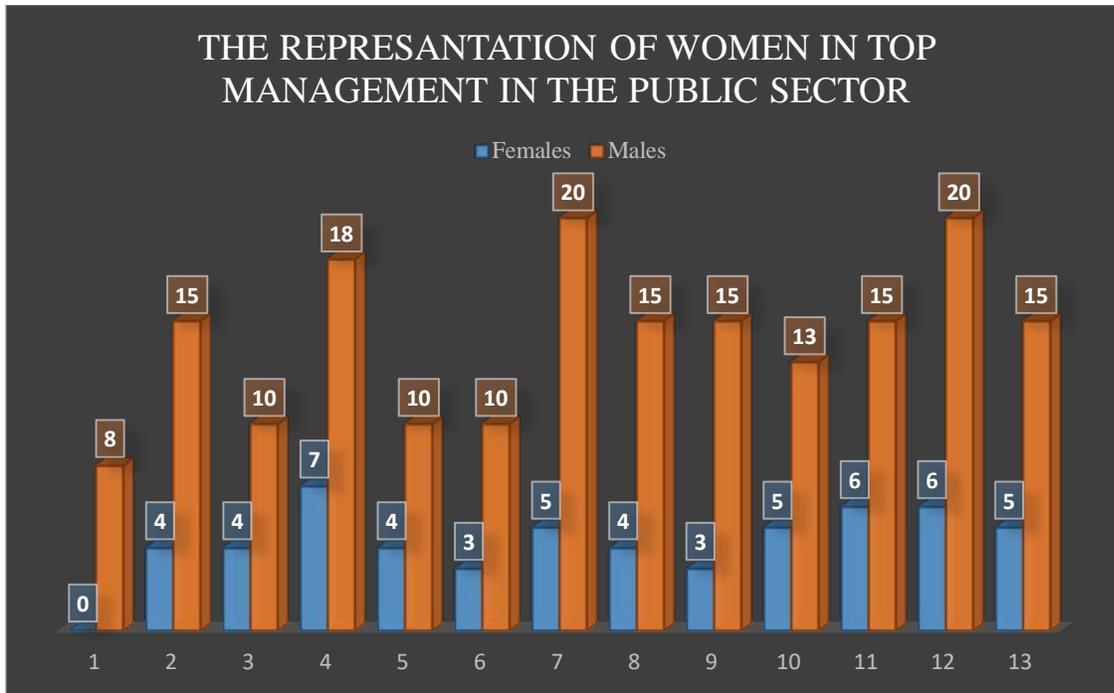
The aim of this research objective is to investigate the existence of glass ceiling in the private and public sector. To realize the aim of this objective, each participant was asked to provide an estimate regarding the representation of women at top management in their respective organizations.

Participants are employed in various different organizations in the private sector. The responses are illustrated by the use of charts in Figure 4.10 and Figure 4.11 below.



**Figure 4. 10: The representation of women in top management in the private sector**

The above Figure 4.10 indicates a colossal gap between men and women in the private sector at top management. This is a startling finding because in some organizations, women are not represented at top management. Participants are employed in different municipalities and government departments in the public sector. Figure 4.9 below illustrates the representation of women at top management in the public sector.



**Figure 4. 11: The representation of women in top management in the public sector**

In Figure 4.11 above, similar to the private sector, data demonstrate the underrepresentation of women at top management in the public sector. During the period of data collection, data indicated that in one government department, there was no representation of women at top management.

These findings indicate that only thirteen (13) percent of women occupy top management positions in the private sector while the public sector is represented by twenty-nine (29) percent of women in top management. This shows an unfathomable underrepresentation of women in top management. Even though the public sector looks better than the private sector, this underrepresentation of women cannot be justified. These figures are alarming, taking into consideration the efforts of government to redress gender inequality. In addition, the findings concur with a large body of literature (for example Booysen and Nkomo, 2010; Grant Thornton, 2013; Johnson and Mathur-Helm, 2011) which indicate that the underrepresentation of women in top management is a global problem. As Grant Thornton (2013) asserts, women have made enormous progress in entering the job market, as they currently account for thirty-five (35) percent of the workforce globally, yet their representation in top level managerial positions in business remains nominal at twenty-four (24) percent. These findings imply that there is still a lot to be

done to overcome this problem and unfortunately it will take years to close this gap between men and women in top management.

## **4.6 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **4.6.1 Research objective one**

#### **The first research objective is to analyze factors affecting the advancement of women to top management positions in the private and public sectors**

The aim of this objective was to establish factors that affect the advancement of women to top management positions in the private and public sectors. The findings reveal societal factors, which include cultural stereotypes, as the main factor that affects the advancement of women to top management positions. Societal factors encompass those beliefs that are embedded in people's minds that tend to work against women's promotion to senior management positions; for example, that good mothers are less determined to prioritize work demands. This factor emerged as overarching in both the private and public sectors.

In addition, the difference factor also emerged, where men motivate for other men to assume executive positions when opportunities are presented; this perpetuates the stereotype associated with executive positions. This is strengthened by the phenomenon that people get comfortable hiring people like themselves and suggests that since hiring positions are held by men, they are therefore likely to hire other men. This factor was prevalent in the private sector.

Non-implementation of policies, which implies governmental factors, likewise prevailed in the public sector. Participants emphasized drawing up and constituting policies aimed at advancing women to executive leadership in the public sector, however, implementing such policies is lagging behind, resulting in the exclusion of women in senior management positions. Some participants demonstrated less interest in assuming executive management due to pressure associated with such positions which may result in work/life conflict.

### **4.6.2 Research objective two**

### **The second research objective is to analyze challenges faced by women in management with reference to private and public sectors**

The aim of this research objective was to establish the challenges faced by women in management with reference to the public and private sectors. Furthermore, this research objective sought opinions from participants on how these challenges can be overcome. Findings reveal the underestimation of women as the main challenge faced by women in both private and public sectors. Likewise, this challenge is more socio-cultural and stems from patriarchal attitudes that prevail among some males, where they refuse to submit to the leadership of a woman or to be employed at the same level as women. These patriarchal attitudes are also apparent in the younger generation of males who show poor attitudes toward female managers. In addition, patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes seem to be more prevalent in some provinces than others – for example, in KwaZulu-Natal where the stereotypical male gender role is prevalent in the Zulu culture.

Lack of mentorship programs aimed at women also prevailed equally in both the private and the public sectors. Such mentorship programs would expose women in middle management to the roles of executives so that when given an opportunity to advance, they are able to meet the expectations of top management levels. Findings also reveal lack of support from other women as another challenge faced by women in management. Some participants highlighted that men are more willing to help and mentor women when compared to other women. Queen Bees and biased corporate practices also prevailed as challenges faced by women occupying management positions.

#### **4.6.3 Research objective three**

### **The third objective is to determine the role played by organizational culture in the advancement of women to the top management positions with reference to private and public sectors**

The aim of this research objective was to explore the role played by organizational culture in the advancement of women to top management positions with reference to private and public sectors. A culture signified by equality to every individual prevailed in the public sector. Efforts by government to achieve gender equality plays a huge role in the public sector where the traditional culture of male dominance is gradually being replaced by that of gender equality. However,

although women occupy lower and middle management positions, the executive level is still dominated by males.

The private sector is identified by its male dominance, and though government is trying to instill laws to redress gender inequality, this sector is still highly male dominated. This results in a culture that does not play any role in the advancement of women; rather, sampled participants called for the change of culture to be in line with the requirements of government.

#### **4.6.4 Research objective four**

##### **The fourth research objective is to determine the attributes required from women to advance to top management positions**

Findings reveal that women in both private and public sectors stand out as transformational leaders. This leadership style is characterized by the ability, through natural charisma, to inspire and guide the workforce through change and transformation. It also emphasizes the achievement of goals by gaining employees' trust and respect. Further, sampled participants believed they were different leaders compared to their male counterparts due to the observation that males tend to be results oriented, and they ignore the 'well-being' of employees. Males also show aggressiveness while overlooking the personal lives of employees.

Sampled participants believe women should advance to top management because they enter the workforce more educated than men; they show more dedication compared to men; and diversification should be an adequate reason for women to occupy top management positions. Women are often put under pressure to behave in a certain way while occupying management positions. Some sampled participants feel pressure to go an extra mile just to prove their competence; some go an extra mile to set an example for employees; and some participants believe they need to change their behavior to exhibit masculine qualities just to show that they are suited to management positions.

Most sampled participants from both private and public sectors behave in a nurturing, more motherly way in the workplace. These participants believe that their role as mothers or females do not have to change in the workplace; while being conscious about running a business, this nature assists in getting the best out of their employees. Participants believe that the presence of women in the boardroom brings different perspectives in thinking. In addition, women possess strong

multi-tasking abilities. The ability to multi-task is believed to be imperative for executive management due to its demanding nature. Lastly, sampled participants believe that women are strong willed, and therefore likely to add value to the executive level.

#### **4.6.5 Research objective five**

##### **The fifth research objective is to determine how women are represented in senior management positions in private and public sectors**

The aim of this research objective was to find out how women are represented in senior management positions in public and private sectors. Findings reveal the underrepresentation of women in both sectors. These findings indicate that only 13% of women occupy top management positions in the private sector while the public sector is represented by 29% of women in top management.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this chapter was to analyze, interpret data and discuss findings. Data was collected by the use of in-depth interviews conducted with twenty-four (24) women who occupy lower, middle and top management positions in private and public sectors in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The results were interpreted by the use of charts, graphs, tables, identification of emerging themes, and analysis of content.

Findings revealed that the 'glass ceiling' does exist in private and public sectors. The reason for the existence of this glass ceiling mainly stems from history which has given birth to gendered stereotypes, thus creating challenges for women in the workplace. In addition, social institutional frameworks create barriers to advancement for women. Lack of mentorship programs and succession planning emerged strongly in the private sector, while empirical data revealed biased corporate practices, which include 'old boy' networks, in the private sector. Besides barriers related to institutions, women lamented the lack of support from other women as another barrier to the advancement of women. In addition, empirical data from the private sector reveals the younger male generation's attitude towards women managers as a challenge showing that patriarchal attitudes are still prevailing even in the modern society.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides the summary of the previous four chapters and provides the conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the study. This dissertation sought to discover whether there is a ‘glass ceiling’ in the private and public sectors which results in women being amassed in middle management. The focus was on the factors that affect the advancement of women to top management positions, challenges that are faced by women in management, attributes that are required for women to advance to top management, and the representation of women in the private and public sectors in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. A non-probability sampling technique, referred to as snowball sampling, was utilized to identify the research participants. In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty-four (24) women who occupy lower, middle and top management positions in the private and public sectors in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

This study was qualitative and an interview guide was generated to collect qualitative data from participants. Data collected from in-depth interviews was analyzed by the use of both thematic and content analysis. This chapter offers a summary of findings of the analysis which is discussed in detail in the previous chapter. It begins with the summary of the findings from the existing literature. This chapter, then, makes conclusions based on the findings of the study and makes some recommendations.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE**

The study examined previous studies on gender relations and women in management. The key terms and variables in this study were used to structure the literature that was reviewed, thereby building a fundamental base for the study and to demonstrate what other studies have achieved, as well as to uncover underexplored areas.

Previous studies underlined some limitations. For example, Dimovski, Skerlavaj and Man (2010) studied women mid-managers in organizations in Singapore in light of the glass ceiling type of

barriers. Findings showed that women lack adequate assistance from organizations in terms of networking, coaching and family-friendly conditions (Dimovski, et al., 2010). The findings show that these factors inhibit the promotion of women mid-managers to senior management positions. Feng and Sakellrice (2015) looked at the metaphor 'glass ceiling' as the pattern of gender wage differentials in Asian and Latin American countries, but did not look at glass ceiling as a barrier to career advancement. Findings revealed that while, as a group, Latin American countries evince the glass ceiling, no unambiguous evidence of glass ceilings were found in the group of Asian countries where sticky floors or mixed patterns is a norm (Feng and Sakellrice, 2015).

In a more recent study, Sabharwal and Varma (2017) studied the glass ceiling among a group of academics in Indian and Asia. Findings revealed a lack of confidence among women. Further, women thought they lacked traits such as assertiveness, extraversion and individualism. Findings also revealed that Asian Indian faculty members have internalized these differences and are therefore opting out of leadership positions.

Focusing on South Africa, Kiaye and Singh (2013), sought to determine whether the glass ceiling exists in organizations in Durban. Findings revealed the existence of some elements of glass ceiling, which included situational factors (Kiaye and Singh, 2013). The clear barriers to the progress of women that emerged included gender discrimination, lack of respect from the male colleagues and insensitive handling of the multiple roles played by women (Kiaye and Singh, 2013). Social roles such as family responsibility and transfers to different geographical locations contributed to the hindrance of growth of women (Kiaye and Singh, 2013). Kiaye and Singh (2013) did not however look at the challenges that women face in management positions. In addition, the sampling frame utilized in the study, which suggested selecting women who fitted the participant profile at random, did not specify how the researcher reached the participants (Kiaye and Singh, 2013). Another question that the study did not address was whether women occupying middle management positions aspire to progress to the senior management positions. Kiaye and Singh (2013) looked at women working only in organizations located in Durban. This study expands the geographical proximity to include women occupying management positions in organizations in Pietermaritzburg, the capital and second-largest city in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The inclusion of Pietermaritzburg in the sample is important because provincial government offices are located in Pietermaritzburg.

### **5.2.1 Key findings from the literature review**

#### **Findings 1: Factors affecting the advancement of women to senior management positions**

The literature reviewed show a number of factors that affect the advancement of women to executive management level. These include: difference factors; governmental factors; family related factors; societal factors; organizational factors and personal psychological glass ceiling for women. According to extant literature, societal factors are the main factors that hinder women from advancing to top management positions

#### **Finding 2: Challenges faced by women in management**

Challenges faced by women who occupy management positions are perceived as the main hindrances for women who wish to advance in their careers. These challenges include: gender discrimination; 'old boys' networks; Queen Bees; cultural stereotypes; work-life balance; lack of mentoring and support from other women; tokenism; and societal perceptions.

#### **Finding 3: The role played by organizational culture in the advancement of women**

Organizational culture comprises beliefs, standards, principles and collective norms of the organization. Literature reveals that globally; organizational cultures are highly dominated by men. In addition, corporate practice that guide organizations are biased in favor of men. Therefore, taking into consideration that the key aspects that guide organizations favor men, it is difficult for women to ascend to top management positions.

#### **Finding 4: Possible attributes that are required for women to advance to top management**

The literature suggests that men and women exhibit different leadership traits, which makes them unique leaders. Women are associated with transformational leadership. They cooperate; mentor; collaborate; are more people oriented; and alter people's interests into the corporation's goals. In contrast, men are associated with transactional leadership. They are competitive; logical thinkers; persuasive; aggressive; fierce; unconventional; fair; confident; bold; and able to reason.

#### **Finding 5: The representation of women in management positions**

The literature suggests there has been progress in women entering the job market, however, there is a global underrepresentation of women at executive levels. According to Grant Thornton,

women account for about a quarter of the workforce, however, their representation in executive management is insignificant.

## **5.3 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **5.3.1 Findings on background information of participants**

The majority of women (46%) occupying management positions were within the age category of 41-50; this means that participants were middle-aged. The majority (69%) of interviewed participants occupy middle management positions, which means that many women are clustered in middle management. The majority (58%) of participants were employed in the public sector, which implies their easy accessibility. The majority (53%) of interviewed participants aspire to progress to top management. The majority (60%) of interviewed participants were married. The majority of women who occupy management positions have Master's degrees; this infers that women who occupy management positions are educated. The majority (92%) of interviewed participants have children. It took six (6) to ten (10) years for the majority (46%) of participants to be promoted to management positions

### **5.3.2 Summary of empirical findings of the study relating to research objectives**

#### **Research objective one: To analyze factors that affect the advancement of women to top management positions**

The aim of this objective was to establish factors that affect the advancement of women to top management positions in the private and public sectors. The findings reveal societal factors which include cultural stereotypes as the main factor that affects the advancement of women to top management positions. Societal factors encompass those beliefs that are embedded in people's minds that tend to work against women's promotion to senior management positions; for example, that good mothers are less determined to prioritize work demands. This factor emerged as overarching in both the private and public sectors.

In addition, the difference factor also emerged, where men motivate for other men to assume executive positions when opportunities are presented. This perpetuates the stereotype that is

associated with executive positions. It is strengthened by the phenomenon that people are comfortable hiring people like themselves and suggests that since hiring positions are held by men, they are therefore likely to hire other men. This factor was prevalent in the private sector.

Non-implementation of policies which imply governmental factors likewise prevailed in the public sector. Participants emphasized the drawing up and constituting policies of aimed at advancing women to executive leadership in the public sector, however, implementing such policies is lagging behind, resulting in the exclusion of women from senior management positions. Some participants demonstrated less interest in assuming executive management positions, due to pressure associated with such positions and the resultant work/life conflict.

**Research objective two: To analyze challenges faced by women in management with reference private and public sectors**

The aim of this research objective was to establish the challenges faced by women in management with reference to the public and private sector. Furthermore, this research objective sought opinions from participants on how these challenges can be overcome. Findings reveal the underestimation of women as the main challenge faced by women in both private and public sectors. Likewise, this challenge is socio-cultural and stems from patriarchal attitudes prevalent among some males, where they refuse to submit to the leadership of a woman or to be employed at the same level as women. These patriarchal attitudes likewise are apparent among the younger generation of males who demonstrated poor attitudes toward female managers.

Lack of mentorship programs aimed at women was also a concern in both the private and the public sectors. Mentorship programs would expose women who are still in middle management to the roles of executives so that when given an opportunity to advance, they are able to meet the expectations of top management positions. Findings also revealed a lack of support from other women as another challenge faced by women in management. Some participants highlighted that men are more willing to help and mentor women when compared to other women. Queen Bees and biased corporate practices also prevailed as challenges faced by women occupying management positions.

**Research objective three: To determine the role played by organizational culture in the advancement of women to top management positions with reference to private and public sectors**

The aim of this research objective was to explore the role played by organizational culture in the advancement of women to top management positions with reference to private and public sectors. A culture of equality to every individual prevailed in the public sector. Efforts by government to achieve gender equality plays a huge role in the public sector where the traditional culture of male dominance is gradually being replaced by that of gender equality. However, although women occupy lower and middle management, the executive level is still dominated by males.

The private sector is identified by its male dominance. Though government is trying to instill laws to redress gender inequality, this sector is still highly male dominated. This results in a culture that does not play any role in the advancement of women; rather, sampled participants called for the change of culture to be in line with the requirements of government.

**Research objective four: To determine the attributes required from women to advance to top management positions**

Findings revealed that women in both private and public sectors stand out as transformational leaders. Transformational leaders possess an aptitude to lead through natural personality, guiding and inspiring their subordinates. In addition, subordinate's trust and respect is gained through transformational leadership which leads to the attainment of goals. Further, sampled participants believed they were different leaders compared to their male counterparts due to the perception that males tend to be results oriented, and ignore the 'well-being' of employees. Males also show aggressiveness while simultaneously overlooking the personal lives of employees.

Sampled participants believe women should advance to top management because they enter the workforce more educated than men; they show more dedication compared to men; and diversification should be adequate reason for women to occupy top management positions. Women are often put under pressure to behave in a certain way while occupying management positions. Some sampled participants feel pressure to go an extra mile just to prove their competence; some go an extra mile to set an example for employees; and some participants believe they need to

change their behavior to exhibit masculine qualities just to show that they are suitable for management positions.

Most sampled participants from both private and public sectors behave in a nurturing, motherly way in the workplace. These participants believe that their role as mothers or females does not have to change in the workplace. While being conscious about running a business, this nature assists in getting the best out of their employees. Participants believe that the presence of women in the boardroom brings about different perspectives. In addition, women possess strong multi-tasking abilities. These are believed to be imperative for executive management due to its demanding nature. Lastly, sampled participants believe that women are strong-willed, and therefore likely to add value to the executive level.

**Research objective five: To determine how women are represented in senior management in private and public sectors**

The aim of this research objective was to find out how women are represented in senior management positions in public and private sectors. Findings reveal the underrepresentation of women in both sectors. These findings indicate that only 13% of women occupy top management positions in the private sector while the public sector is represented by 29% of women in top management.

## **5.4 CONCLUSIONS**

Managers play a major role in the efficient operation of organizations. This role was historically played by men since there were few women in the workplace. As women continue to enter the workforce, they gain access to education, training and development. In this regard, it proves that they are not just entering the workforce but they show their capability to take on roles that were previously associated with men, and this includes the managerial positions. As women enter the managerial hierarchy, they are amassed in middle management. Even so, women struggle for recognition and to be regarded as equal to their male counterparts.

They have to continuously prove that they are competent to be managers. They still face stereotyped attitudes from their male counterparts and subordinates, and these are relayed down to the younger generation. Lack of mentorship programs, training and development, succession planning and role models are additional barriers to women's advancement to executive levels. In

addition, organizational cultures and corporate practices are still biased, making it difficult for women to advance. Some women do not aspire to advance to executive level, others desire to but lack the confidence required to assume these positions. In order for women to be fully accepted at the executive level, organizational cultures and corporate practices need to change also, organizations, government departments and municipalities need to implement practical policies that will enable proper succession of women to executive levels.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In line with the findings and responses from interviewed women, the following recommendations are suggested.

### **5.5.1 Mentorship programs aimed at advancing women**

Organizations as well as government departments and municipalities should develop mentorship programs solely aimed at advancing women to top management. Unless proper mentorship programs are developed, women will not be aware of what is expected of them in order to ascend to top management, as well as the behavior expected when they ascend to these positions. Developing a formal mentor and mentee programs, where an executive woman is be paired with women either in lower or middle management so a closer relationship and development can be experienced, is important. This exposes women who aspire to top management to all the activities performed at top management. Mentorship programs will yield benefits of support and guidance to women aspiring to advance to top management. This approach benefits organizations in two ways: (1) Career growth and development of women; (2) Employee retention due to support shown by employers.

### **5.5.2 Succession Planning**

By engaging in succession planning, there is stability in organizations. Further, this stability occurs by recognizing talented women in the organization as well as women aspiring to advance to executive levels. Employers can overcome the 'glass ceiling' in organizations by identifying women who aspire to advance to executive management rungs as well as those who have the ability by means of qualifications and experience. It is imperative for management to provide equal opportunities for women by identifying talent.

### **5.5.3 Training and development**

Training and development programs aimed at women and sponsored by the employer are imperative for women who are identified for succession planning. In addition, women who are identified for succession planning are to attend professional conferences and networking events aimed at top management advancement. Further, this should be taken as employee investment by employers as opposed to unnecessary spending.

### **5.5.4 Gender bias and stereotype awareness**

When it comes to the skills needed to be in senior management, such as being assertive, women are judged more harshly than men. Therefore, women who are not assertive are likely to be passed over because they do not possess “leadership traits”, while those who are assertive are seen as not likeable by their female counterparts. Thus, it is recommended that all individuals in organizations, especially those who are decision makers, are made self-aware of their unconscious biases and how these affect their decision making. This can be done by training employees to increase awareness of bias and stereotypes as well as ways to overcome them.

### **5.5.5 Deliberate hiring of women into top management positions**

After training and development, succession planning and mentorship programs, well-deserving women should be hired into top management positions when opportunities are presented. Further, employers should have a time frame regarding gender diversity in top management.

### **5.5.6 Aspiring women should take initiatives**

It is also imperative for women who aspire to advance to executive management to take necessary initiatives to show that they are eager to break the glass ceiling. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- They build networks with other women – it is recommended that women try to find a way to network with other women to develop relationships.
- Women should build their confidence – it is imperative that women who aspire to progress to top management build their confidence because employers tend to promote workers who are confident and who have a positive attitude.
- Women should support each other – it is important for women to support each other because when they support each other, it could be easier to overcome the challenges they face at work.

## **5.6 IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY**

The management career is hierarchical; therefore, the upward mobility of women implies the contribution of women in the economic growth of South Africa and around the world. The worldwide underrepresentation of women in executive positions is still a debatable issue among researchers. When women are allowed a chance to progress to higher business echelons, they add to the economy and it reaches out to the more extensive process of social change.

Women's activity in different spheres of business empowers them to grow and excel in their fields, thereby contributing to the country's development. Whether in lower, middle or top management, the presence of women in these position gives companies competitive advantage and provides a chance to redress patriarchy. Government should enforce diversification policies, especially at executive levels. Government can form relevant parastatals that could look into the issues of women, especially to monitor their progress to executive levels. This is because women enter the workforce and are amassed in lower and middle management, while there is a shortage of women at executive levels.

As women continue to enter the managerial hierarchy, gender awareness needs to be enhanced. Male counterparts as well as male subordinates should be made aware of any conscious and unconscious gender prejudices. Thus, government and organizations should insist on redressing gender imbalances in all aspects of the organization. Also, gender discrimination should be addressed in organizations in the form of workshops to create awareness of new leadership perspectives that women bring to the workplace, particularly aiming these at men who are not receptive to women's leadership. Further, there should be committees that sit yearly to review the progress of women in the managerial hierarchy, especially at the top. These committees could also identify barriers to the advancement of women and address these accordingly. Therefore, this study could assist policy makers in understanding the challenges that women are facing and barriers that hinder their progress to executive levels.

## **5.7 STUDY LIMITATIONS**

Although this study has provided a picture of the glass ceiling in the private and public sectors in South Africa, some limitations are identified which lead to the recommendations for future research.

### **5.6.1 Sampling procedure**

The sampling procedure used to identify participants was the snowball sampling procedure. In this procedure, the researcher approaches a few individuals from the population and these individuals refer the researcher to their consociates, colleagues or friends who fit into the target population. Therefore, this sampling procedure is regarded as weak because of the system of referrals. Thus, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population. However, the study revives the debate for gender discourse on women occupying managerial positions in private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Further, this sampling method provided a lead in the studied phenomenon. It is, however, suggested that another sampling method be tried. This could pose some challenges because it is difficult to find a database for women who occupy management positions. Though the researcher included women who are already in the executive level, only two (2) were interviewed, partly due to the sampling method used in this study.

## **5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The main focus of this study was to investigate the existence of a glass ceiling in the private and public sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The disparities between single, married and divorced women who hold management positions can be further investigated. Further studies should be carried out which include male counterparts and subordinates so that the phenomenon of glass ceiling can be interrogated from all possible angles. Although studies have revealed that the glass ceiling is a global challenge, South Africa is lacking such studies. Therefore, similar research could be conducted in other provinces to explore if the challenges pertaining to glass ceiling are province-based. The glass ceiling can also be studied in the perspective of different cultures. Future studies could use probability sampling techniques to generalize the results as well as mixed methods to produce more valid results. Further, the glass ceiling could be studied in academia, civil society and non-profit organizations since studies pertaining to the glass ceiling are limited in South Africa.

## **5.8 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

This study contributes to the debate on the glass ceiling in South Africa, in the context of KwaZulu-Natal, in particular the Zulu culture, where some parts of the province are deeply rooted in gender segregation. In addition, this study has taken a different approach to 'glass ceiling' by comparing two different sectors, namely, private and public sector.

## APPENDICES

### 6. REFERENCE LIST

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## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



08 November 2018

Mrs Buhle Charlotte Khwela (217076468)  
School of Management, IT & Governance  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Khwela,

Protocol reference number: HSS/2016/018M

Project title: The Invisible Glass Ceiling: A comparative study of women in Management positions in Private and Public Sector in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

### Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 05 November 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Evelyn Derera and Ms Zamanguni Kubheka  
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Isabel Martins  
cc School Administrator: Ms Debbie Cunynghame

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**  
**School of Management, IT and Governance**

Dear Participant,

**M COM Research Project**

**Researcher:** Buhle Charlotte Khwela (0732477698)

**Supervisor:** Dr Evelyn Derera (033-260 5781)

**Co-Supervisor:** Ms Zamanguni Kubheka (031 260 2646)

**Research Office:** Tel: (031- 260 8350)

I, Buhle Charlotte Khwela am an MCOM student in the school of Management, IT and Governance, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled (*The Invisible Glass Ceiling: A Comparative Study of Women in Management Positions in Private and Public Sector in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*).

The aim of this study is to: (Investigate the existence of glass ceiling in private and public sector in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa).

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this research project. Confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained by the researcher and the school of Management, IT and Governance, UKZN. All collected data will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed after 5 years.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSS/2016/018M).

The interview should take about 45 minutes to complete. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely

Researcher's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Buhle Charlotte Khwela

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
School of Management, IT and Governance**

**M COM Research Project**

**Researcher:** Buhle Charlotte Khwela (0732477698)

**Supervisor:** Dr Evelyn Derera (033-260 5781)

**Co-Supervisor:** Ms Zamanguni Kubheka (031 260 2646)

**Research Office:** Tel: (031- 260 8350)

**CONSENT**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview                      YES / NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

### Section A: Demographic Information

1. Please select your age category

20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60

2. Are you employed in the government or private sector?
3. What position do you occupy in the organization?
4. Is it lower, middle or top management?
5. If not in top management, do you aspire to advance to top management?
6. What is your marital status?
7. Does your marital status influence you working as a manager?
8. What is your highest educational level?
9. Do you have any kids?
10. If yes, is it easy to find your balance?

### Section B: Career profile

11. Please tell me about your career profile

### Section C: Factors affecting the advancement of women to top management positions

12. What do you think are factors that affect women from advancing to top management positions?
13. How can these be overcome?

### Section D: Challenges faced by women occupying the management positions

14. Please tell me about the challenges that you face every day as a woman occupying a management position in your organisation

15. What sacrifices have you had to make to reach your position?
16. Do you sometimes feel discriminated because of your gender?
17. How relevant is the “queen bee syndrome” in your organisation?
18. Have you experienced it previously?
19. What role do you think women executives should play in the development of other women?
20. Do you think glass ceiling exist in your organisation?
21. Do you think that corporate practices in your organisation favour men more than women?
22. What then could be done to overcome the challenges that women managers face at work?

### **Section E: Role that the organizational culture play in the advancement of women**

23. Please tell me about the culture that your organisations is adopting
24. What role does this culture play in the advancement of women to top management positions?
25. Are there any structures in place in your organisation that are aimed at the advancement of women?
26. Are there any mentorship programs that are aimed at advancing women?
27. What can be done to ensure that all employees benefit from the culture that is adopted by your organisation?

### **Section F: Attributes are required from women to advance to top management positions**

28. How would you define your management style?
29. How does it differ, if at all from your male counterparts?
30. Besides leadership style, are there other reasons that women should be appointed to senior management positions?
31. As a woman leader, do you feel pressure to behave in a certain way?
32. Do you feel that as a woman you are expected to take a soft feminine, caring almost motherly/maternal roles in the workplace?
33. Are you judged when you exhibit leadership qualities that are considered to be typically masculine?

34. Do you think that having women in a company's senior management adds any value to an organisation?

35. What opportunities do you think are open to you as a South African female manager?

36. What do you feel can be done to create more opportunities for women in South Africa?

**Section G: The representation of women in top management positions**

37. Are there women in top management positions in your organization?