UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

EXPLORATION INTO LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES FACING FEMALE EMPLOYEES AT TELKOM HEAD OFFICE IN PRETORIA

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Commerce in Leadership

Graduate School of Business and Leadership

College of Law and Management Studies

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2011

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As a person who is supervising this candidate, I have no objections to this dissertation submitted for examination.

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DECLARATION

I, Nonhlanhla Primrose Shangase, declare that:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA) deals with the achievement of equity in the workplace. This involves the promotion of equal opportunities and fair treatment as well as the implementation of affirmative action measures. Telkom, like many other organizations in South Africa was, and is expected to comply with the Act. Compliance includes the development and promotion of female employees into leadership positions. Very few Telkom female employees are in top leadership positions. Even those that are in top positions have been recruited externally. South African history may play a role in the problem by regarding males as leaders at work and at home. The intention of the study was to explore leadership challenges facing female employees within Telkom and to be able to understand the perceptions and realities accompanying these challenges. Theories based on gender, traits, leadership, the hierarchy of needs and development were used as the theoretical framework in this study. The systems thinking approach was used to assist in looking towards a broader perspective. The population of the study was female employees at Telkom Head Office in Pretoria. From these, twelve served as a sample for the study. In gathering data, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Qualitative analysis was used to analyse data. Analysis and interpretation involved identifying themes, coding and interpretation. The findings in the study are: the strong belief that leadership is solely for males or females is incorrect; there are leadership challenges facing Telkom female employees. The study focused on leadership challenges facing Telkom female employees at middle management, junior management and operational level. These are OP to M4. It is for this reason that the researcher thinks that a future study that will focus on leadership challenges facing top and senior female leaders can be conducted for comparison, as well as another study to ascertain the influence of the working environment on these leaders.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Based on the history of South Africa, males are often expected to hold management and leadership positions in the work environment. In 1994, the Department of Labour saw a need for the protection and treatment of all employees in the same way. The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA) was subsequently introduced, based on that. Its implementation applies to all organizations with a workforce. In terms of the Act these organizations are expected to implement affirmative action and to prevent any form of unfair discrimination within the work environment (Feldner cited by Meyer and Boninelli, 2004: 133).

Opportunities for suitably qualified individuals who were previously disadvantaged have to be increased. These do not only refer to recruitment but extend to promotion, utilization, training, development and retention of these groups. As much as the EEA is in action, females still experience frustration and stress when it comes to reaching top leadership positions, and also in ensuring that they retain their positions. Sweetman (2000: 2) views the recurring shortage of women in senior positions as a shame. Besides the EEA, Section 9 (2) of the South African Constitution stresses the democratic value of equality. This means that males and females have equal rights and should be given equal opportunities when it comes to work and leadership. The study also took into consideration the fact that both the EEA and the constitution are still new to almost all the organizations in the country. Based on this, the study had to look into the challenges in order for the initiators such as the Department of Labour and other governmental departments to realize that although the Act and the Constitution were introduced in good faith, there are a few gaps that require attention. Failure to close the gaps will result in a decrease in workers' motivation levels. This will then negatively impact productivity and profitability. The results of the study may also be of help to organizations that have an interest in this area.

In its attempts to address the topic, the study looked at the research and theories based on gender, traits, leadership, the hierarchy of needs and development. The study also had a few limitations, which are later outlined in this chapter.

1.2 Need for research

Since research informs practice, the information gained from the study will be useful to Telkom Research Division and to Telkom Human Resources – a division that is responsible for developing employees and achieving Employment Equity targets. It will also be useful to organizations that are interested in female leadership and leadership in general such as the Business Women Association, Progressive Women's Movement and academic institutions.

The researcher believes that the study can help raise awareness to the Department of Labour for the need to enhance the EEA and also assist organizations in their endeavours to comply.

1.3 Focus

The study looked at a number of research publications and leadership theories to identify differences in male and female traits and their impact on leadership. These include the social constructionist, transformational, transactional, interactive and situational leadership perspectives.

According to the social constructionist perspective, males are not only superior to females but are also different (Bem, 1995: 329 – 330; Appelbaum et al, 2003: 44 – 45). Hare et al (cited by Appelbaum et al, 2003: 48) state that females have qualities characterised by transformational leadership. This type of leadership is necessary in today's organizations that are following flat and less hierarchical structures, where team work and synergy are required.

Transactional leadership seems to be distinguished by male characteristics such as competitiveness, hierarchical authority and problem-solving abilities (Appelbaum et al, 2003: 48). According to Rosener (cited by Kazemek, 1991: 1) female leadership is interactive because female leaders encourage employees to participate and make them feel that they are part of the organization in a number of ways.

Situational leadership does not differentiate between male and female leaders. It looks at the current situation facing a leader within an organization. According to Hersey and Blanchard (1982: 150) situational leadership is based on guidance and socio-emotional support of the leader as well as the maturity level exhibited by employees in performing a task or meeting an objective. There is no single or best way to lead people. This depends on the maturity

level of the followers.

In addition, the study looked at some developmental stages and their relationship to leadership, as well as Maslow's Theory. It looks at the needs that motivate human beings (Daft, 1995: 403). The satisfaction of needs has an impact on the motivation levels of human beings.

Lastly, literature on systems thinking was included. It was based on the fact that leaders and followers (employees) operate within an organization which due to competition, advances in technology and democracy in South Africa, is becoming more complex. These circumstances lead to a need to improve performance and many other things, and automatically the process demands change in the way things have been done as well as how they are viewed by everyone at work. As a result of interdependence between divisions, units and employees, change in one area of the organization affects or influences change in other areas (Cooper, 1998: 1).

1.4 Problem Definition

A basic premise of affirmative action is that it will rectify the social injustices imposed on designated groups. Women are classified as part of the designated groups. The majority of early theories did not consider women as potential leaders; the focus of these theories was on masculine traits possessed by good leaders. Organizations are therefore expected to implement the EEA and to deal with the paradigm shift regarding women leaders. Telkom like many organizations in South Africa was and is expected to comply with the Act. Compliance includes the development and promotion of female employees into leadership positions. At present, very few Telkom female employees are in top management positions. Some of those that are in top positions have been recruited externally. The history and culture of South Africa may also play a role in the problem by regarding males as leaders at work and at home.

A question that can be posed is whether female employees are not experienced or qualified enough for top positions, or are gender differences as stated by some leadership theories and research studies contributing to the problem. This study proposed to determine leadership challenges that prevent Telkom female employees from acquiring top positions internally.

1.5 Aim of the research

These are:

- To explore the feelings of the female employees and get to know their needs, as well as their views on leadership challenges.

- To obtain suggestions from female employees that may become solutions to identified leadership challenges within Telkom or in other organizations in South Africa.

1.6 Site Specific Questions

These were specifically focused on the leadership challenges facing Telkom female employees, if any; what the proposed solutions to challenges were; and whether the leadership challenges were linked to leadership theories as described in the study.

1.7 Study Boundaries

This study had a few limitations, as follows:

- The total sample planned was sixteen but instead twelve respondents were available for interviews.

- Although the study's focus was on females of all race groups, the majority of responses were from Africans.

- The study only focused on female employees in middle and junior management levels as well as the operational level. These levels are not part of decision makers. The support level which consists mostly of employees whose educational level is below matric was also not included in the study. It would have been good if the study also explored leadership challenges facing top and senior female leaders for comparison purposes. Table 1 in Chapter 2 shows the breakdown of employee levels in Telkom.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

While this research looks at gender differences in leadership, it also takes into consideration that both males and females are human beings. Based on this they have a lot in common, such as their development, needs and behaviours, all of which influence their levels of motivation. Both leaders and followers (employees) are parts that form an organization. When one part is directly or indirectly affected, other parts are also influenced. Based on this, an approach that promotes division will not yield expected results. The next chapter gives a brief overview of Telkom; the organization where the study is being conducted.

1.9 Outline of chapters

Chapter 2: Overview of Telkom

The chapter gives a brief overview of Telkom.

Chapter 3: Reviewing of Literature

This chapter outlines reviewed literature, research findings, leadership theories and other theories to identify differences in male and female traits, their needs and their impact on leadership.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

The focus is on design, research method, sampling, gathering of information, processing and analysis.

Chapter 5: Results and discussion

The chapter concentrates on the discussion of the analysed data. In addition, conclusions and insights obtained during the data analyses that are not part of the research questions are also included.

Chapter 6: Recommendations and conclusion

In this section recommendations and conclusion are made regarding further research as well as for the organization under investigation.

CHAPTER 2: BRIEF OVERVIEW OF TELKOM

Approximately nineteen years ago, Telkom was the only South African telephone company. Due to its expansion, it now has offices in all nine provinces and its Head Office is in Pretoria, Gauteng. In line with transformation in SA, its services have expanded. These services now include digital technology, modern and current network, internet, managing data networking as well as hosting, Information Technology security and services.

In 2003, Telkom became part of the companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange Limited. In 1996, an Act related to electronic communication was introduced. This move opened doors for competition on telephone services, converged services, service-based competition and a new way of governing licences. In 2007, the company extended its services outside South Africa.

The structure includes a board of directors, committees that are responsible for a number of company initiatives and different levels of management. Telkom strives to be a leading customer and employee centred Information, Communication and Technology solutions service provider. Its core strategy is to defend and grow revenues and its employees are the main enabler of the strategy.

According to the Telkom Human Resource website, the company views the Employment Equity Act, especially issues around employment equity, transformation and diversity in general, as major business requirements that have to be dealt with by all units and levels of the organization. Senior management including Executives have to ensure that the Employment Equity Programme including its sub-programmes is properly implemented and is successful. Meyer (cited by Meyer and Boninelli, 2004: 13) regards diversity as South Africa's "greatest asset".

Within Telkom is a unit known as the Centre for Learning whose main role is to ensure that employees have the necessary skills to enable delivery against the company strategy. Its interventions have to be designed in line with the company's Strategic Human Capital Plan. Development options include compilation of an employee's development plan; development programmes at the Centre for Learning or externally, as well as management and leadership courses or workshops and bursaries for part time and full time studies.

According to the Telkom Human Resource website, Telkom is expected to engage employees in company initiatives. Any vacancy that becomes available has to be first advertised internally to allow employees the opportunity for career development. Only in situations where the right candidate cannot be found internally or there is a specific sourcing strategy to be pursued, can Telkom consider external recruitment.

Job levels within the company range from M level to OP level. M stands for management and ranges from one to six; one being the top level. OP levels include some of the technical, administrative and support staff. As of March 2010 there were 23,247 full time employees. Of these 6,670 were females and 16,577 were males. The table below shows the breakdown of female and male employees according to different management, operational and support levels.

Table 1: Telkom full time employees as at March 2010

Level	Females	Males
Top Management	2	7
Senior Management	35	86
Middle Management	539	1876
Junior Management	5303	14111
Operational	769	471
Support	22	26
Total	**6670**	**16577**

(Czanik, M: Telkom Human Resource Information Specialist)

Top and senior management levels are involved in decision making. Middle and junior levels consist of leaders, but who are not involved in decision making. The operational level takes care of organizational operations while the support level provides support to all levels within the organization.

The table shows that in Telkom, males are not only in the majority but they also dominate all ranks, especially the senior levels. These results show a lack of equality especially at decision making levels.

The next chapter focuses on the literature review.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

As a result of democracy, there have been many changes in South Africa. Some of these involve the transformation of gender relations. It was for this reason that the Employment Equity Act was introduced. It was intended to promote the involvement of designated groups at all levels of the corporate environment. Designated groups are race groups that are classified as black in SA, females and persons with disabilities (Employment Equity Act 55of 1998:30). While in other countries such as America, women have made a strong impact in the work environment, South Africa is different. Its work environment is dominated by a strong, traditional male culture. However, women are determined not only to enter the business environment but also to join its leadership. Although research has shown a number of advantages and contributions made by female leaders, there is still a shortage of females at top levels of the organizations. These include both at senior leadership and at board level. This may be due to early theories such as the social constructionist that associate good leadership qualities with masculine traits.

According to Maphisa (cited by City Press, 11 April 2010: 2) the barrier that prevents companies from implementing transformation is psychological. There are policies in place but company executives do not have confidence in female leaders. Organizations are therefore expected to implement the EEA and address issues related to paradigm shift regarding women leaders. In addition to the EEA, research studies show that the inclusion of females at the top level yields good results. A study on companies locally and abroad shows that those with more than three top female managers get higher points in their nine key organizational dimensions, and chances are high for these companies to also get higher operating margins if they are compared with companies that scored low (Hojgaard, 2000: 17).

Employment equity in many organizations is still a challenge for designated groups, especially around the under-representation of females in management and leadership positions. South Africa is an emerging and developing country, which has low numbers of females in management and leadership positions although fifty - two percent of its adult population are women. The number is even lower when it comes to its working population. It is only forty - one percent (Postma cited by Terry et al, 2004: 147).

Some statistics show very little improvement, as illustrated by Hojgaard's work. The percentage of women who are top leaders in the private sector is only five percent, while in the state sector it is about fifteen percent (Hojgaard, 2002:17). As of 1998, Denmark showed better figures of female employment. It had seventy - three percent women's labour force participation; although in the case of full time jobs, males work longer hours (Hojgaard, 2002:17). In Europe the percentage of women occupying governing board positions is very low. The same applies to United States companies regarding females at the top executive level (Henderson, 2009: 32).

In 2009, the Business Women Association (BWA) initiated a census in SA with the purpose of looking at the involvement of females in leadership at corporate level. The results showed that the number of females at director level had increased compared to five years back. The same applies to the number of females at executive level. At least five companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange have twenty-five percent female representation at their board level. The number of female executives and chairwomen has also increased. The number of females who are chief executives or managing directors has, however, not changed. The public sector seems to be behind. There are only 0, 55 percent females in high paying positions. Based on the figures showing females who are available for senior positions, the BWA concludes that there are very few females currently in top positions (Henderson, 2009: 32).

As of 1998, Denmark had thirty - seven percent seats for women in Parliament and forty - three percent female ministers (Hojgaard, 2002:17). As of 2010, South African Parliament consisted of thirty females and forty-three males including the president and his deputy. Of these fourteen are females and twenty are male ministers; eleven females and seventeen male deputy ministers as well as five female and four male premiers.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) associates the gap between males and females as stemming from access to higher education. In many countries females still have problems in having access to higher education. It is better in more developed countries. Here the percentage is fifty - two while in less developed countries it is between thirty - three and forty - nine percent (UNESCO, 2002: 16). De la Rey (cited by UNESCO, 2002: 22) states that in 1997, nine South African universities had high numbers of female students in the faculties of education, arts and social science as well as medicine while the majority of male students were in architecture and environmental design, engineering as well as law. There was no mention of other faculties. Ramphele and Brito (cited by Institutional Cultures and Higher Education Leadership Conference, 2008: 1) state

that "leaders of the future are educated in the universities of today." Also in higher education the number of females in lecturing and management cannot be compared with that of males. Females still have a long way to go. While there is progress in lecturing, in management the gap is huge (UNESCO, 2002: 16 – 17). According to Lund (cited by UNESCO, 2002: 33 - 37) in 1998, South African university academic staff comprised of 1227 females and 3468 males; 73 female and 844 male professors; 697 female and 923 male lecturers. The fact that recruitment and retention of diverse employees at academic institutions is not a major performance indicator may be one of the reasons for this difference in numbers (Driver and Ralebipi – Simela cited by Institutional Cultures and Higher Education Leadership Conference, 2008: 2).

The above figures show that more efforts are expected from the academic sector, business organizations and the Department of Labour regarding the increase of the number of females as students and also as leaders.

3.2 Defining concepts

In this study the concepts designated groups, female, woman, challenge and leadership are defined as follows:

Designated groups: These are race groups that are classified as black in SA, females and persons with disabilities (Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998: 3).

Female: Female is the adjective of the sex that can bear offspring or produce eggs or fruit (Oxford Mini School Dictionary, 1998: 236).

Woman: Woman refers to a grown up female human being (Oxford Mini School Dictionary, 1998:733). In this study the word woman is a synonym of female.

Challenge: It is a task or activity that is new and exciting but also difficult (Oxford Mini School Dictionary, 1998: 104).

Leadership: According to Lussier and Achua (2001: 6) leadership means influencing one another in an organizational environment to achieve objectives or goals through change. Kets de Vries (2001: 215) refers to this type of leadership as a process – meaning that it is a leader's efforts to influence members to work towards achieving a set of goals. It involves empowerment and growth of subordinates. As a result of these two (empowerment and

growth), the interests of shareholders will flourish accordingly (Shuitema, 1998: cover page). According to Rue and Byars (1995: 375) leadership is when a leader is able to influence people to willingly abide by his expectations and decisions.

3.3 Gender stereotypes, other researchers' findings and theories

In an effort to get responses to the research questions, the study looked at the gender stereotypes, and other researchers' findings and theories.

3.3.1 Gender stereotypes and other researchers' findings

Heilman (1997: 879) describes stereotypes as a set of attributes associated to a group and believed to characterize its individual members because they belong to the group. In most cases stereotypes are inaccurate if not over generalized. According to Gedney (1999: iv) there is no valid reason for females to be under-represented at senior levels except for the old and well known stereotype that females need to be behind males. A study conducted by Eagly et al (Gedney, 1999: 16) showed that the evaluation of female leaders is slightly more negative than male leaders. In addition, male respondents were stronger in devaluing female leadership roles compared to female respondents.

Samuels (cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 36) states that myths and stereotypes serve to keep females in their place, justify their lack of progress and place blame on females instead of sex discrimination. Females holding management positions are human beings who did not choose their sex, race or colour; it was God-given and has to be celebrated (Zondi cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 65).

There is a strong belief that management and leadership are solely for males. They also have certain traits that enable them to manage effectively. However, Billing and Alvesson (2000: 145 – 147) found that both males and females have leadership qualities. The difference is that their qualities apply in different situations. Males apply a tough minded approach to problems, and have analytical abilities to handle abstract issues and for planning. They make it a point that their personal and emotional issues do not prevent them from completing their tasks as scheduled; they solve problems and take necessary decisions. Female leadership is characterized by interdependence, co-operation, receptivity, merging, acceptance, awareness, compassion, sensitivity and empathy. Female leaders also do well on issues that require imagination and creativity.

Helgesen (2010: 1) found that while a woman's attention focuses on a number of things at the same time, which is good for context and unexpected connections, a male focuses on one thing at a time and this is good for clarity and analysis. Goman (2010: 11) argues that responses for a female and male leader are not the same in a mixed sex group. Responses to a male leader are real and honest, while for a female leader they include eye contact, mimicking, frowns and head shakes.

Morgan (cited by Winter et al, 2001: 46) found that in group situations where a female is a leader and is playing a major role, she does not get recognition at the end. Instead of her, it will be any male who participated in the group. Gedney (1999: 5) confirms that some studies show that the composition of a group has an influence on the emergence of a leader. Bunyi and Andrews (cited by Gedney, 1999: 5) found that if males are dominating in numbers, they in many cases appear as leaders. Schneier and Bartol (cited by Gedney, 1999: 5) observed that the increase of females in a group setting leads to an emergence of a female leader.

According to Moss and Kent (cited by Winter et al, 2001: 47) if a female adopts a man's style or behaviour, chances are that she may not be accepted as a leader. This is in contradiction to Appelbaum et al's viewpoint (2003: 45). They argue that female leaders should adopt male leadership characteristics and feminine characteristics to enable them to have better opportunities of rising to a leadership position. Oakley (cited by Appelbaum et al, 2003: 43) states that there is a perception that acting in a feminine manner, is associated with incompetence. The best approach is that females should just act normal, lead as females and value the unique contributions that they bring to a situation (Thomson and Graham, 2005: 113).

Zondi (cited by Cameron et al 2003: 64) finds females to be playing a major role in customer oriented environments because by their very nature they are people orientated. Males have a hard-nosed approach that focuses on profits only.

Duncan and Loretto (2004: 96 – 99) do not see a difference in males and females but do point out differences with regards to age. Females are either too young to take leadership roles because they have to start families first or as a result of lacking experience.

3.3.2 Gender and theories

An overview of some of the theories and their relationship with gender as well as leadership are briefly discussed. The intention is to show the theoretical foundations.

3.3.2.1 A social constructionist perspective

According to the social constructionist perspective there are biological differences between the sexes (Bem, 1995: 329 – 330; Appelbaum et al, 2003: 44 – 45). Gender acquisition is viewed as something that is a self-fulfilling prophecy or cultural discourse (Hojgaard, 2002: 18). From an early age, boys and girls are not treated in the same way. Their learning environments are also different, as well as their development needs. They accept themselves as males and females and do not question the differences. As they grow, the way in which they are treated starts to differ. This promotes certain behaviours and self- images that create cultural stereotypes about gender. It is a recurring process that moves throughout all generations. It is a form of socialization that is so strong and turns children into "cultural slaves" who think and believe that there is no other culture other than theirs. Other cultures do not exist or are not real. It is for these reasons that Hojgaard (2002: 18) states that our thinking and actions are based on gender. A person cannot be anything else other than female or male. The core of this cultural discourse is to show differences between the two sexes, which controls the social life. Due to this control, human beings therefore see males and females as different in a number of ways. Research has confirmed that society's gender role distinctions affect individual leadership attitudes and beliefs.

There are specific attributes that have been designated as feminine or masculine. Attributes such as cooperative, interpersonal, participatory and relationship oriented are associated with female leadership. Male leadership is however associated with task-orientedness, competitiveness, domination and self-confidence. Appelbaum et al (2003: 46) highlights that due to the social constructionist perspective, females end up being trapped in the sex roles that they learn during the early stages of their lives. These sex roles cause attitude difficulties in their working lives. It is through such theories that one hears of traditional male or female careers and the issue of a male being a leader from an early age and automatically qualifying to be a leader at work.

3.3.2.2 Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership which is also known as authoritative leadership comes from the exchange role that is played by the leader (Ivangevich and Matteson, 1996: 462). Avery (2004: 24) describes this as a transaction that involves a leader and the followers. The leader believes that if an employee produces quality work, he has to be rewarded (Aldoory and Toth, 2004: 159). The leader's aim is to maintain stability, and provide employees with rewards for quality work produced or goals achieved (Lussier and Achua, 2001: 383). The

rewarding of employees only takes place if their performance merits it. Employees' efforts are essentially exchanged for rewards. The leader responds to employees' immediate needs if they will retard progress or expected results. This approach to employees is more of an exchange service or delivery for a reward. Stability is promoted and people are motivated by indicating how their contribution fits into the vision of the organization. This type of leadership increases commitment to the organization's strategy and goals. It also enables employees to be innovative, experiment and take calculated risks. A transitory relationship exists between the leader and the employees in the sense that as soon as all transactions or contracts have been concluded, the relationship ends or has to be redefined (Lussier and Achua, 2001: 384).

As stated in Table 2, transactional leadership seems to be distinguished by male characteristics such as competitiveness, hierarchical authority and analytical problem-solving abilities.

3.3.2.3 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership which is also known as charismatic leadership comes from specific qualities of a leader. These are charisma and the ability to captivate as well as energize employees or followers (Aldoory and Toth, 2004: 159). The leader is visionary and the intention is to move the employees up the ladder. The leader is more of a change agent, and educates employees on the significance and value of designated outcomes and means of achieving the outcomes. The leader takes into account the employees' needs and expands their range of wants and needs (Wright, 1996: 213). The leader is able to bring some value, respect, pride and vision to the employees (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1996: 465).

In a turbulent, risky and challenging world with rapid change, leaders are expected to react to the changes while facilitating changes to employees as well as the organization (Daft, 2005: 24 – 25).

Transformational leadership is necessary in today's organizations that are following flat and less hierarchical structures, where teamwork and synergy are required. Hare et al (cited by Appelbaum, et al, 2003: 48) state that females have qualities of a transformational leader. The qualities involve the process of envisioning, planning, teamwork, motivation and evaluation (Anderson, 1992: 66 – 68). Kets de Vries (2001: 309) also found women to be out performing males in interpersonal and cross-cultural skills.

Appelbaum et al (2003: 48) state that research from a number of sources confirms that males and females approach leadership in different ways. The table below shows the difference:

Table 2: Differences between female and male approach to leadership

Female	Male
Considers employees and their viewpoints	Structured
Transformational	Transactional
Participative	Autocratic
Empowering	Gives instructions
People-centred	Work-oriented

(Appelbaum et al, 2003: 48)

3.3.2.4 Interactive Leadership

Interactive leadership is based on the fact that both the leader and the employees need one another. There is a need to influence one another; the direction, whether right or wrong has to be decided by the team or group, and not just the leader. The leader has to share knowledge and work information with the group. According to Rosener (cited by Kazemek, 1991: 1) interactive leaders promote participation and sharing of information by employees. They make employees feel that they are part of the organization. Instead of holding onto the power, they share it with the employees. They promote the self-worth of their employees; give them credit where it is due as well as recognition. Daft (2005: 438) and Appelbaum et al (2003: 45) associate this style of leadership with females. As a result of interactive leadership, leaders are able to develop relations with their employees, delegate power, share information, promote self-worth, empower as well as energize everyone. Rosener (cited by Kazemek, 1991: 1) further states that this leadership comes naturally to females, and associates this with their socialization.

3.3.2.5 Situational Leadership

Situational leadership holds that leaders have to use different styles of leadership based on the environment or circumstances facing the leader, maturity levels of employees in performing a specific task and the amount of socio-emotional support (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982: 150). Based on these three factors, the leadership style varies from one person to another. The table below shows the three levels of situational leadership:
- Four levels (from S1 to S4) describe the leader's behaviour.

- The development levels of the employees are categorized from D1 to D4.
- The maturity levels of the employees are categorized from M1 to M4.

Table 3: Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Theory

Leadership Style	Development Level	Maturity Level
S1: It is a one way communication where the leader is telling the employee what, how, why, when and where to perform the task.	D1: The employee has low competence and high commitment.	M1: Due to a lack of specific skills, the employee is unable to take responsibility for the task.
S2: Although the leader is still providing guidance, he is now using two-way communication for the employee to buy into the process and the leader also provides socio-emotional support.	D2: The employee has some competence and low commitment.	M2: The employee may have some skills but is unable to do the task without assistance.
S3: The decision making regarding the task is now shared between the leader and the employee.	D3: The employee shows high competence and variable commitment.	M3: The employee is experienced and capable of doing the job but lacks confidence.
S4: The leader is still part of decision making and the employee is responsible for the task and process.	D4: The employee shows high competence and commitment.	M4: The employee is experienced, comfortable and willing not only to do the assignment but even to take responsibility.

(Hersey and Blanchard, 1982: 150 - 157)

The maturity level consists of:

- Achievement-motivated people – these people have common characteristics to set and achieve high goals, personal achievement and feedback on how the person is doing.

- Education or experience plays a vital role within an organization. It enables a person to gain task-relevant maturity. It has an influence on ability and achievement (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982: 157).

The emphasis of situational leadership is on leadership behaviour, maturity and employees' development. Situational leadership fits well in organizations with units and divisions performing different tasks and with each division having its own supervisor.

3.3.2.6 Maslow's Theory

This theory is one of the content theories and was developed by Abraham Maslow. Content theories place emphasis on what motivates human beings (Mullins, 1996: 488).

In a work environment, employees need to be treated with respect and dignity because they are the primary source of quality and productivity gains (Burnes, 1992: 61). At the same time they have needs. Maslow's theory (Daft, 1995: 403) proposes that human beings are influenced by a number of needs which are in a form of hierarchy, as explained below:

- Self-actualization needs – In a work environment, the employee wants higher levels of development and desires to be engaged in more difficult assignments.

- Esteem needs – Within a work environment, the employee wants more responsibilities and financial recognition for the higher responsibilities.

- Need to belong – The employee accepts his colleagues and the same applies to him. As a result, relations with colleagues and supervisors are enhanced.

- Safety needs – The employee expects a job that is safe and has good benefits.

- Physiological needs – The environment has to be conducive to the physiological needs of the employee, such as a comfortable office, desk and chair.

The table below describes the needs from the highest to the lowest in relation to work motivation:

Table 4: Maslow's Theory in relation to work

Need hierarchy	Description	Work environment
Self-actualization needs	These are the needs for self-fulfilment. It involves development of a person's potential.	An employee expects opportunities for development, growth and progress.
Esteem needs	Such needs have to do with recognition and appreciation from others as well as a positive self-image.	An employee expects recognition, high status and more responsibilities.
Belongingness needs	These are needs for love and to be accepted by peers, friends and groups.	This involves being part of the group and team, colleagues and supervisor.
Safety needs	It involves safe and secure physical and emotional environments where there is no fear of anything.	The employee expects safety at work, fringe benefits and job security.
Physiological needs	These are basic human needs such as food and water.	A work place that promotes the employees' health.

(Daft, 1995: 403)

The study has shown that there are leadership theories that show males as having good leadership qualities and those that show females as having good leadership qualities. What these theories did not take into consideration is the fact that both employees and leaders have needs. Without these needs being addressed as in Maslow's theory, it will not be possible to get the expected results or to perform the assigned tasks. The situational leadership theory takes into consideration the leader's needs, the follower's needs and the organizational goals. Any leadership style that fits the situation at the time can be applied.

3.4 Personality development and employees

Although some of the leadership theories have shown a difference in male and female leadership qualities, the study brought in other theories that see leaders as human beings who have a lot in common. Situational leadership and Maslow's Theory discussed in the above sections are two examples. In addition, human beings whether male or female have the same personality developments. These have an influence on their behaviours. Since the study is based on employees, the discussion of developmental stages starts from young adulthood to old age.

- **Young adulthood** is mostly a happy period for most people. This is the time to create ambitions and have set goals to be achieved. The positive side involves independence, additional responsibility and status, and the negative side involves making serious mistakes such as choosing a wrong mate and going for a wrong career (Mussen et al, 1979: 367 – 368). This is the period that Duncan and Loretto (2004: 96 – 99) feel where females are discriminated. They are either too young to take leadership roles because they have to start families first or they have no experience. In terms of a lack of experience, males are not included, although based on the developmental stage they are in the same category.

- **Later stage in young adulthood** is characterized by the outgrowth of career and other personal choices made during the twenties. They may have been fine at the time but now things have changed. There are some inner aspects that were left out but now have to be considered. At this stage, new choices are made and commitments are altered. This may even include outbursts (Mussen et al, 1979: 372). Situational leadership is more relevant at this stage as it looks at the situation, maturity and developmental level of employees.

- **The marriage stage** is characterized by choosing a mate, intimacy and isolation. Intimacy involves deep friendships and sexual relationships. At the same time, intimacy has risks such as rejection and loss. This leads to facing the rest of life alone – isolated (Mussen et al, 1979: 373). Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the safety need is not met. In the work environment it may not be possible to satisfy other people's safety needs or the unmet needs may motivate the employee to behave negatively and be unacceptable to other employees. The phase includes plans for having children for some couples, but changes on this aspect are far common than years back. Some couples choose not to have children while others may decide

on one child only. As an employed parent this is the time for flexible hours at work. This b ecomes a challenge as some H uman R esource D ivisions fail to make al l employees aware of flexible working conditions (Atkinson and Hall, 2009: 652).

Another cha llenge is that som e organizations believe that w orking l ong hour s mean being ambitious and com mitted (Liff and W ard, 2001: 23). This means that employees who do not work long hours are not committed and ambitious, and therefore may not be the right candidate for top leadership positions.

- **Career choice** is an expression of a person's personality. Social factors also play a role in career choice. While the company is trying to determine the right person, the employee on the other side is trying to choose the right job. Mussen et al (1979: 391) state that personality factors are essential determinants of a career. Researchers have found t hat t here is a relationship be tween ac hievement m otivation and scientific careers, affiliation n eeds and sales c areers, a nd pow er m otivation a nd executive/supervisor positions.

- **Middle years** are characterized by generativity and stagnation. Generativity refers to parenthood, pr oductivity a nd com petence. In shor t it i s self-actualization. W ithin a work env ironment i t r efers to s triving t o do the best and improving unt il t he employee reaches the highest level of competence. If there is no personal growth and development, t he employee f eels st agnated (Mussen et a l, 1 979: 410). A t m iddle years, the person evaluates the difference between dreams, goals and reality. This is also the t ime w hen a pe rson realizes that it is too late t o make ca reer changes. However, some goals may be reformulated using r ealistic vision a nd ac ceptance of limited time.

The above stages o f per sonality dev elopment cl early show that m ale or f emale t raits and leadership t heories are not t he only det erminants of leadership qual ities. The development also has a major influence on all human beings whether they are males, females, leaders and followers.

3.5 Work environment and female employees

Female em ployees find the work env ironment unw elcoming and very t hreatening due to cultures that ar e dominating (Appelbaum et al , 2003: 47). I t di rectly or i ndirectly discriminates against females. The first d iscrimination i s a failure by t he Human R esource

Division to make all employees aware of flexible working conditions (Atkinson and Hall, 2009: 652). The second discrimination is that in some organizations, working long hours is an indication of being ambitious and committed (Liff and Ward, 2001: 23). It is in such circumstances where some female employees, especially the young ones are discriminated against. They cannot be at work after hours because they have to balance work and family.

As a result of working together in the same organization for many years, males benefit from good networks and strong relations among themselves. These closed circles are forces that have an influence in the organization and it is not easy to break them overnight. When deciding on the person to be promoted into management, it is easy to look for a person like yourself, look for a former colleague and those who are old school ties (Samuel cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 32). From the females side, females may be few or new, if not both, and do not know one another. They are therefore struggling to adjust. Research suggests that there are more female entrepreneurs compared to males. The reason for this is that female employees find the work environment to be a barrier to their advancement. They then move out and start their businesses (Appelbaum et al, 2003: 47).

While the overall market is sharply segregated by sex, females occupying top positions are concentrated into certain types of jobs such as support, personnel and public relations. (Samuels cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 32). It is for this reason that they find themselves employed in work areas where there are no promotion opportunities. As a result, they give up any possibilities of being promoted. This is also a risk for the organization since these female employees may be high achievers who may resign and go to other organizations.

The media also indirectly contributes to issues facing females within the work environment. It may choose to tell a different story making readers believe that there are many females who occupy senior positions, while this is not the case. Females find themselves reaching a glass ceiling quickly. Although there are high level positions, females are prevented from reaching such levels, and not because they do not qualify, but for being females.

In a research study where female executives were asked about what they consider as the most serious obstacle in their careers, 6.1 percent reported having been mistaken for a secretary at a business meeting; 25 percent stated that they have been blocked from moving up the ladder and 50 percent cited reasons that had to do with their gender (Samuels cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 33).

Fifty percent of female executives from United States companies are thinking of resigning. Their input is not valued, they are not invited to informal networks, they are isolated, and are deprived of training opportunities and the organizational culture is inhospitable (HR Focus, 2010: 15).

According to a study on leadership in the management institutes conducted by Dhar (2008: 8), the majority of female respondents agreed that they quite often had to face male egoists, prove their ability and maintain a balance between work and family life. According to Gedney's study of leadership effectiveness and gender in the military force (1999: 25 – 34) there are many leadership challenges facing females in organizations that are dominated by males. The first leadership challenge is attitude. This challenge is not only demonstrated by male military staff against female leaders, but also by a number of male authors such as Brian Mitchell in his book, "Women in the Military, Flirting with Disaster". Throughout Mitchell's book, he makes negative statements about the presence of females in the military (Gedney, 1999: 25). The second leadership challenge is the masculine culture. All the good things are associated with males and are collective, whereas the bad things are associated with females and are individualistic. In fact, female characteristics are associated with failure in the military (Gedney, 1990: 28). The third leadership challenge is that of stereotypes which are linked with females. This is based on the mindset that there are activities that are better suited for males than females. If a female manages to accomplish a difficult and dangerous task, the significance of males who are doing the same task is undermined (Gedney, 1999: 30).

Gardiner and Tiggemann's study (1999: 301) on the differences of male and female leaders show that in organizations with many males, female leaders are under pressure to change their leadership style. This change affects their mental health. It is in such situations where Senge et al (1994: 193) state that an organization needs to grow and develop together with its employees. Personal mastery is very important. It enables each employee to understand all the forces surrounding him or her and be prepared to work with them. In such situations the significance of males who are doing the same tasks accomplished by females will not be undermined. Personal mastery helps a person not to withdraw even if there are challenges which results in the person being uncomfortable.

3.6 Leadership and Systems Thinking

Based on transactional, situational, interactive and transformational leadership theories, both males and females can be leaders. As leaders they are not confined to a certain type of

leadership theory. They can use one leadership theory or a number of them at the same time depending on the situation they are involved in. Developmental stages also bring about different behaviours and expectations as the human being grows. The hierarchy of needs showed that some of the employees' needs have to be met within an organization. The same organization has its driving forces. In addition, the implementation of the Employment Equity Act also brings in more driving forces and expectations for both the employees and the organization. According to Sekaran and Leong (1992: 34 - 35), one of the forces is to prepare management for a shift in power base. Secondly, women in management are expected to support new changes. Thirdly, women in management have to represent all women and their diversity.

According to Reed (2006: 10) if leaders want to be successful in organizations, they need to understand that organizations are becoming more complex day by day; they go through turbulences and uncertainty; organizational problems are no longer that simple. As a result these problems can no longer be resolved by one person. Schoderbek et al (cited by Jackson, 1991: 95) state that "the complexity of a system is the combined outcome of the interaction of four main determinants:

- The number of elements comprising the system
- The interaction among these elements
- The attributes of the specified elements of the system
- The degree of organization in the system"

In this study, the researcher did not do a deep analysis of the Viable Systems Model. However, from her observation the organization under study (Telkom) is not only complex but also open (Jackson, 2003: 32). It has a number of systems but these do not have powers to make decisions in their specific domains. It is for this reason that the VSM is briefly included in this section as well as in Chapter 6.

The Viable Systems Model assists organizations to break down complexity, manage it, sort out services and identify inconsistency (Beer, 1994: 349). Telkom interacts with the environment. It is through this interaction that it receives input from the environment which is transformed and taken back to the environment as output. Brititci et al (1997: 4 – 5) state that organizations as systems need to have subsystems that interact and these subsystems form systems on their own. That is where Beer's Viable System Model (VSM) fits in. It works well in complex organizations as it breaks the complexity into five manageable systems. It looks at a project or organization and its environment while at the same time is not authoritative. The project or organization that is diagnosed using VSM has to have

identity, a time frame for its survival and a purpose (Beer, 1994: 347). It provides a more holistic way to observe collective behaviours within an organization. It is good in channelling interactions to the direction that will produce effective organizational structures and their mechanisms. It helps in showing the type of interaction and where communication is hindered. It structures the organization or system in such a way that it is able to promote growth of healthy and effective relations (Espejo, 2003: 3 – 4). Beer (1994: 349 – 356) states that VSM has five levels ranging from one to five as follows:

- System one manages the actual operations of the organization. These are the core activities that are supported by all functions in an organization. Even the existence of the organization is a result of these activities. Here the focus is on the flow of goods, services, resources and information among operations and their interaction with the environment.

- System two is responsible for managing all practices that are regarded as important for smooth day to day operations.

- System three promotes communication, disseminates information related to legal issues as well as compliance. It is also responsible for audits and financial reports.

- System four looks at environmental demands. These are changes, uncertainties, and any other issues that impact on the organization or relations that affect the environment at present or in the near future. Based on this, system four will then plan for the future.

- System five is responsible for policy decisions that will balance demands from subsystems and drive the organization as a whole. It also balances the current and future initiatives of the organization.

Organizations as systems are made, run and managed by human beings. These include all levels of employees from leadership to operational and are regarded by Reed (2006: 11) as a human system which is not only difficult but also dynamic. Jackson (2003: 44 – 45) adds that relations of human systems within a complex and open system may be unitary, pluralistic and coercive. Leaders have to observe and be aware of all relations. Unitary relations mean that participants have the same or similar values, beliefs, interests and purpose. Pluralist relations mean that participants have different values, beliefs, interests and purpose. Leaders have to make room for debates, disagreements, conflict and compromise. Coercive relations involve participants who have few interests in common. If they are allowed to express these, the end result will be conflicting values and beliefs. Here compromise is impossible (Jackson, 2003: 44 – 45).

Organizations cannot rely on a specific type of leadership nor do they need solutions "that are simple, neat and wrong" (Zemke cited by Reeds, 2006: 10). Simple solutions hardly work in organizations that are not only complex but are also expected to deal with a number of changes and diversity (Jackson, 2003: xiv). They look at the parts of the organization and not the whole. They therefore miss the interaction of the parts and the influence of one part on the other or on the whole (Jackson, 2003: xiv). Leaders have to look at solutions that are based on the whole organization including its divisions and its interactions and have to be creative because challenges emanating from these are not simple or straight forward but are interconnected. Looking at things in a straight line no longer helps.

Complexity is increasing in business organizations. It is not possible to manage complexity due to some interaction of properties in it. An innovative and responsive leader may attempt to deal with complexity. Such a leader deals with relations amongst subsystems, relations between subsystems and the organization, relations between the organization and environment, as well as the environment and the global community (Taylor cited by Meyer and Boninelli, 2004: 166 - 167). Bratianu and Vasilache (2009: 3) recommend non-linear instead of linear thinking. In non linear thinking, leaders work with employees to come up with new and big ideas. Linear thinking is no longer relevant especially in business or complex organizations because it brings up solutions or ideas that are based on plans, schedules and deadlines. Thoughts are structured and solutions are based on evidence. Linear thinking decisions create or contribute to the organization's long term challenges. Non-linear thinking promotes innovative ideas, behaviours and insights drawn from a number of disciplines and strengths (Jackson, 2003: 39 – 40). Linear thinking is equivalent to industrial management while non-linear thinking is equivalent to knowledge management (Bratianu and Vasilache, 2009: 4). According to linear thinking the effects are proportional with their causes. According to the Pareto principle such information is not accurate. It is only about eighty percent of the effects that come from the twenty percent of the initial causes (Bratianu and Vasilache, 2009: 6).

Leaders who use non-linear thinking have to be systems thinkers. Leaders who have no knowledge of systems thinking can make business problems worse because they expect simple solutions although they are operating in a complex organization faced with turbulences and uncertainties from the environment. They see straight lines instead of circles (Senge cited by Bratianu and Vasilache, 2009: 4). However we cannot criticise or blame them. Senge (cited by Bratianu and Vasilache, 2009: 5) states that most of the people or organizations worldwide use linear thinking as a measure of success. Institutions of higher learning use the number of papers published to judge performance instead of judging the

content. Simplicity goes hand in hand with assumptions. It lacks reflection (Reed, 2006: 12). Robbins (cited by Reed, 2006: 12) discourages some leaders' beliefs that quick solutions and responses are better than those that take longer.

Leaders as systems thinkers focus on interrelationships of the subsystems and changes in behaviour patterns and their impact on the organization as a whole. This paradigm shift enables leaders to handle complex and dynamic systems (Senge cited by Reed, 2006: 12). Systems thinking leaders are able to analyse and synthesize both the human and social systems. Analysis refers to understanding the behaviour patterns of the parts (subsystems) within the organization (system) and how these parts impact on the whole and its overall objectives (Reed, 2006: 11). At the same time Reed (2006: 13) stresses that leaders have to focus more on synthesis than analysis and be honest in dealing with what is really the issue instead of what they think or want as these may suggest new approaches. Senge (cited by Reed, 2006: 12) stresses that leaders have to look at how parts within an organization relate and the influence of such relations as well as behaviour patterns of the parts to one another and to the organization. Synthesis involves understanding the organization as to what type of a system it is. It can be simple and predictable or dynamic and complex (Reed, 2006: 11).

Leaders have to take time as they have to avoid the situation where the focus is on rushing to make decisions in order to meet organizational goals and objectives as this may lead to new challenges (Reed, 2006: 12). From time to time, systems thinking leaders work on feedback and reinforcing loops. Continuous assessment in a turbulent and fast changing environment is essential. This enables leaders to identify new problems on time and to check why the resolved problems have emerged again. Rich pictures can be used as these help in visualizing the systems to be analysed and they also provide broader pictures of the organizations (Checkland, 1999: 317). They enable the analysts to understand the problem situation, structure and processes. According to Senge et al (1994: 189) it is at this point when employees and leaders start asking for a purpose for what they intend doing. They begin to have a shared vision and values for the future. The sharing of values by employees enhances morale and performance (Martins and Martins, 2002: 58).

In Telkom, non-linear thinking will enable the leadership, female employees and the rest of staff to re-examine their expectations and decisions made regarding the promotion of internal or external female employees. Working together as a team and looking at issues objectively can make each employee feel important and creative. This involves sharing input on company policies and procedures that have to do with the development, recruitment, selection and placement of employees. At the same time, the leadership will be in a position

to take cognisance of the different types of relationships that take place in a complex and open system such as unitary, pluralistic and coercive, as stated by Jackson (2003: 44 – 45). It will therefore be able to expect and deal with disagreements, debates, conflicts, accommodation and compromise made by employees, units or divisions within the organization.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

The systems thinking approach promotes continuous assessment of turbulent and fast changing environments. Leaders are able to work with their employees to identify new problems on time and be able to know why resolved problems have emerged again. Since the organization works as a team, it is possible to share organizational values and this enhances morale and performance. The systems thinking approach is not gender based. It can be used by any leader whether male or female.

While some of the stereotypes and research findings confirm the qualities of either male or female leaders, the theories did not clearly confirm or dispute this.

No matter what the theories, stereotypes and myths say about females, Hemming (cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 84) stresses that females "need to learn to push their boundaries of self-belief, take risks, command and demand respect". They have to draw the line without losing their female status and dignity in the process.

According to McGrath (no date) "women learn leadership in many ways, through books, classes and by watching others but they learn the most through challenging, interesting and sometimes difficult experiences of life."

The next chapter focuses on the research design and methodology, sampling and sampling method, method of data collection, data processing and analysis.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The s tudy l ooked at research de sign, m ethod, sa mpling, a nd g athering of i nformation, processing and analysis.

4.2 Intention and objectives for research

The study w as i ntended to expl ore leadership cha llenges f acing f emale employees within Telkom and to be able to under stand t he perceptions and realities a ccompanying t hese challenges. The objectives were:

- To explore the feelings of female employees and get to know their needs as well as their views on leadership challenges; and
- To obtain sug gestions from f emale employees that m ay bec ome solutions t o identified leadership challenges.

4.3 Type of Study

In t his study, qual itative research was us ed. It ena bles the researcher to un derstand or uncover more information on soc ial or human problems (Leedy, 1997: 105). A ccording to Strauss and Corbin (cited by Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002: 85) qualitative research fits in well in s tudies t hat hav e to do w ith hum an beings as i ndividuals, groups or o rganizations. It moves from reasoning from particular facts to general truth (Neale and Liebert, 1980: 242). Qualitative research was used to gain insight into leadership and the significance attached by subjects to t heir w orkplace. Royse (1991: 2 17) s tates t hat q ualitative research enables researchers to understand styles and social phenomena.

4.4 Research Design

This is a framework for conducting research. It is also a strategy for answering questions or to t est a hypothesis (Reid and Smith, 1981: 64). I t works as a guideline that enables t he researcher t o take rational dec isions regarding t he research process (Wright, 1976: 2 4). Included in the design are descriptive and exploratory studies. In an effort to understand the phenomena of female employees and leadership, the researcher looked into leadership styles,

employee needs and development. In the qualitative description the researcher used some of the procedures such as literature study and interview schedule as they are stipulated for descriptive and exploratory studies. Secondary data was also studied.

4.4.1 Literature Studies

Ideally in qualitative research, data collection follows the literature review (Royse, 1991: 221). In this study, the literature review assisted the researcher in obtaining answers for questions posed by the study and also to compare findings. It enabled the researcher to review theories that were relevant to the phenomena under investigation and to become familiar with findings from other studies.

4.5 Collecting Data

4.5.1 Pilot Study

It refers to the testing of a research design for a prospective survey (Strydom cited by de Vos, 1998: 179). It is the explanatory testing of the instrument using subjects similar to the group to be studied. The intention is to investigate the feasibility of the planned study. While it serves as a testing ground, it also helps the interviewer to improve the questions or the way in which questions are posed.

Before the main data collection, a pilot study was done at Telkom four weeks before the main measuring instrument was finalized. It was intended to give feedback with regards to:

- Clarity of questions.

- Understanding of questions.

- Any ambiguities or confusing aspects in the questions.

Three female employees were interviewed, whom the researcher knows on a personal basis and who are also doing research studies on similar topics. Their participation was voluntary and they were requested to give genuine responses and criticisms in order to make the necessary changes. They pointed out that subjects may not be keen to tell the truth for fear of victimization, and also did not like the way some questions were formulated. A few suggestions were made, and changes were made based on the information received.

4.5.2 Measuring Instrument

Since the study is based on qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were used to collect primary data. In this type of interview, respondents talk about something which involves them. The interviewer obtains more information by allowing focus on specific items (Grinnel, 1985: 313). As with structured interviews, semi-structured interviews use closed type of questions, but move a step further to include probing to get more information and clarity. The topic, issues to be covered, sample and questions for interviews are decided upon in advance.

Ethical clearance (Appendix C) was obtained. The interviews were administered in September 2010. The interview guide (Appendix A) had thirteen questions, but the first one which was to obtain the names of the respondents, was optional. The first part consisted of respondents' demographics which were job level, age, marital status, race, level of education and length of service. The second part included respondents' opinions on leadership in general and in Telkom. Questions involved leadership characteristics, gender, work environments that need female or male leaders, grooming of female leaders and roles played by female and male leaders. Interviews were arranged in advance to give respondents an opportunity to decide on a venue that they were comfortable with. Before commencing the interview, a covering letter (Appendix B) with details of the researcher, academic institution and purpose of study were provided and signed by all parties where necessary. Interview responses were recorded manually because most of the venues used (restaurants) were not conducive to the use of a tape recorder.

4.5.3 Sampling

The female employees in Telkom were the population in this study (Babbie, 2001: 110 – 111). It was, however, not possible to interview all these female employees. It was for this reason that a sample was used. A sample means that a subset or a certain portion of female employees were selected for the research.

There is no specific number for a sample; it can be any number and is selected in different ways. A random sample was used. This means that any female employee at Telkom Head Office had a probability of being included in the sample (Neale and Liebert, 1980: 63 – 64).

All female employees from management level M3 and upwards were excluded from the study since they are regarded as top leadership and decision makers. Female employees from M4 downwards are the ones who were regarded as the population in this study. They are not involved in decision making since they are not part of top or senior management of the organization. They are, however, still classified as managers. Due to the demographics of Telkom offices, demand for services and location of customers, it was not possible to find all employees in their offices. Based on this, a convenience sample was used. To avoid its criticism of producing poor results by using the most accessible subjects in the study (Marshall, 1996: 523), it was combined with stratified random sampling which involves dividing the population into many strata (Neale and Liebert, 1980: 68).

The intended sample size was sixteen; however, only twelve were available for the interviews out of a population size of 2,213. This number (population) excludes twenty-two female employees who are classified as occupying the support level in Table 1. Most of them are below matric level and cannot be promoted or developed.

Literature reviews, organizational records, newspapers and published texts were also used to obtain secondary data.

4.5.4 Reliability

A measure becomes reliable if the measurement remains the same no matter how many times it has been measured. In this study, reliability was measured by interviewing the respondents and then sending their responses to them by hand or email, requesting them to check the responses and make changes or additions if they saw a need. All additions or changes made will be part of data analysis and interpretation.

4.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis means placing all the collected data together in an organized and orderly manner that will give meaning (Marshall and Rossman, 1995: 111). It is a dynamic and on-going process. It takes place throughout interviewing until interpretation. It gives the researcher an opportunity to have a bigger picture of people who are studied, as well as the environment around them.

The researcher had to make sense of all the data gathered from the primary and secondary data, obtained from documents, and field notes from the interviews. Since the study was based on qualitative research, qualitative analysis was used to analyse data. This involved

coding data into categories, shortening long statements, getting themes and interrogating meaning (Kvale, 1996: 192 – 204). Chapter 5 of this study provides more information on data analysis.

4.7 Concluding Remarks

Although the sample is a subset of a population, data collected together with secondary data, played a major role in research. Conclusions made are based on both data and apply to all female employees. This is done by analysing data which forms part of the next chapter. The analysis is used to answer the research questions as stated in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Information gathered was analysed and interpreted. A survey was conducted. Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit Telkom female employees' views regarding leadership challenges they were faced with. The researcher's intention was to interview sixteen female employees. Out of this number, twelve female employees were interviewed. The reasons for not meeting the set number were fear by some female employees that they may be victimized by Telkom when they express their views in this study, limited time for some employees especially those who have commitments after hours and weekends , as well as those who were not willing to participate. The response rate was seventy - five percent. The discussion and interpretation of the collected data was in accordance with the responses received through the semi-structured interviews that the respondents completed, company procedures and records, as well as literature. This enabled the researcher to determine if the aim of the study was achieved and compare interpreted results with other studies.

The aim of the study was to explore leadership challenges facing female employees within Telkom and be able to understand the perceptions and realities accompanying these challenges. The intentions were: to explore the feelings of female employees; get to know their needs and their views on leadership challenges, as well as obtain suggestions from female employees that may become solutions to identified leadership challenges within Telkom or in other organizations in South Africa. The research questions were specifically focused on the leadership challenges facing Telkom female employees; the specific challenges, if any; what the proposed solutions to challenges are; and whether the leadership challenges are linked to leadership theories. The study found that the belief that leadership is solely for males or females is incorrect and there are leadership challenges facing Telkom female employees. According to the researcher's view, solutions to challenges cannot only be the responsibility of Telkom, but also of the South African government's EEA which ignored some of the important issues that have impact on female employees in general as stated on pages 51 - 52 of this study.

5.2 Interpreting Responses and Results

5.2.1 Job Levels

The job levels of the female employees who participated in this study range from OP1 to M4. There were three respondents from OP1, four from M/S6, four from M/S5 and one from M/S4 and this is illustrated by a graph below.

Figure 1: Job levels of respondents
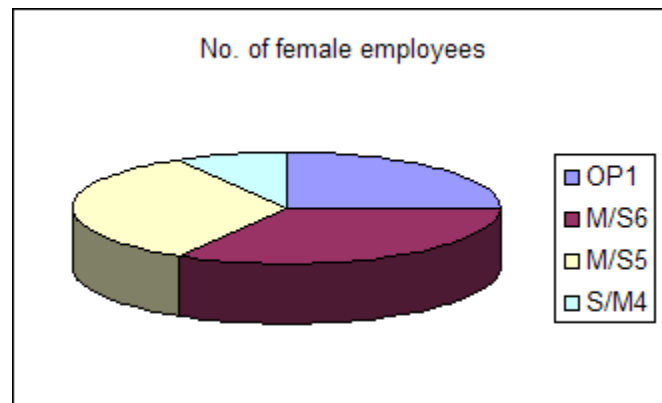
OP1 is the level that deals with administration or secretarial work. Two of the respondents are at this level while nine are at different levels of junior and middle level management. This high number (9) shows that once females reach junior and middle management levels, chances of moving up the ladder are very small. According to Mussen et al (1979: 410) if there is no personal growth and development at work, employees feel that they are stagnating especially at middle years. Maslow (cited by Daft, 1995: 403) states that one of the human beings needs is self-actualization. In a work environment it involves a need to move to a higher level of development and be engaged in more difficult assignments.

5.2.2 Respondents' age

The respondents' age ranged from twenty six to fifty six years; two respondents are between twenty six and thirty five years; six between thirty six and forty five years; three between forty six and fifty five years; and one is fifty six years old. From the sample two respondents are still within the child rearing age which is defined by Mussen et al (1979: 398) as from twenty five to thirty four years. This is the age group which, according to Duncan and Loretto (2004: 96 – 99), is discriminated by age. They are regarded as too young to take

leadership roles because they have to start families first or they have no experience. The rest of respondents (ten) are above thirty four years and Mussen et al (1979: 411) regard this age group as people who are matured and are able to evaluate the difference between fantasy and reality. Hersey and Blanchard (1982: 150) regard this level of employees as experienced, comfortable and willing not only to do assignments but even to take responsibility. According to Liff and Ward (2001: 25) leaders have to focus on the inspiration and motivation of employees. These statements by Hersey and Blanchard as well as Liff and Ward are in line with the EEA which encourages the promotion, utilization, development and retention of designated groups.

The graph below illustrates the age breakdown of respondents.

Figure 2: Age of respondents

No. of fermale employees
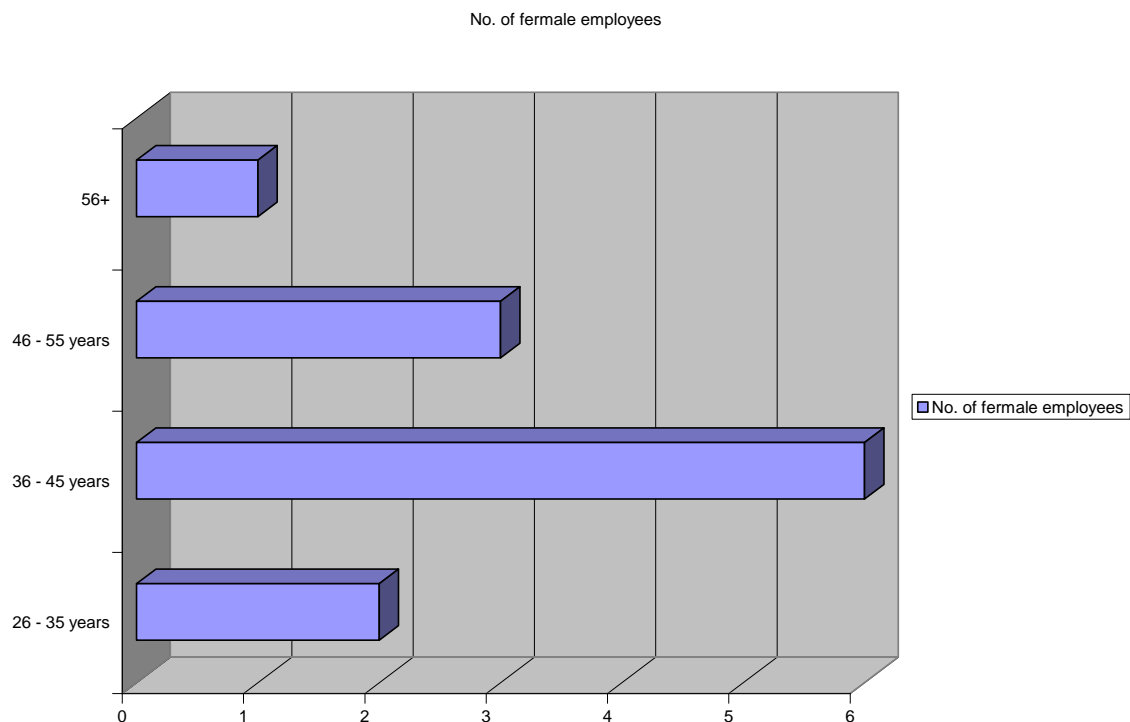
5.2.3 Marital Status

From the twelve respondents, eight were single, three were married and one was divorced. According to the respondents their marital status does not prevent them from doing any assignments that are work related. Some even expressed their availability in case there were opportunities in other provinces. One respondent mentioned that things have changed. Most working females have helpers at home. This gives them enough time to do justice to their

work. This, to some employees, confirms the belief that in some organizations working long hours is an indication of being ambitious and committed (Liff and Ward, 2001: 23), and is acceptable to some females while it is regarded as discrimination to others.

Below is a graph showing the marital status of respondents.

Figure 3: Marital status of respondents
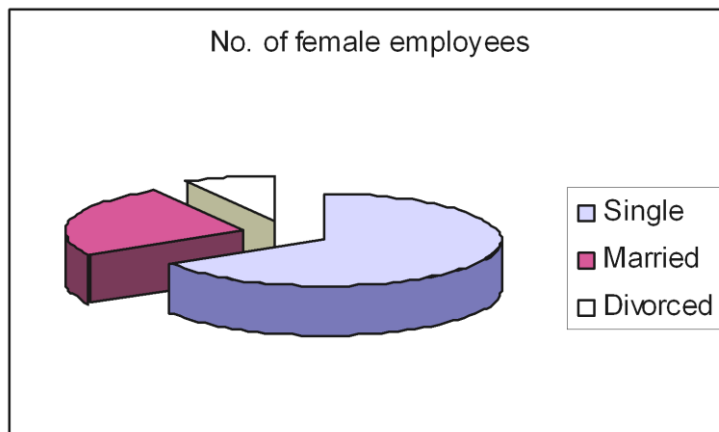
5.2.4 Race Group

Eleven respondents were black and one was white. Black refers to Africans only. This is a result o f t heir av ailability, w illingness to sha re their v iews and feelings as w ell a s their flexibility t o m eet w ith the researcher a fter hour s and on w eek-ends. T he figures ar e illustrated by means of a graph on the next page.

Figure 4: Classification of respondents according to race group
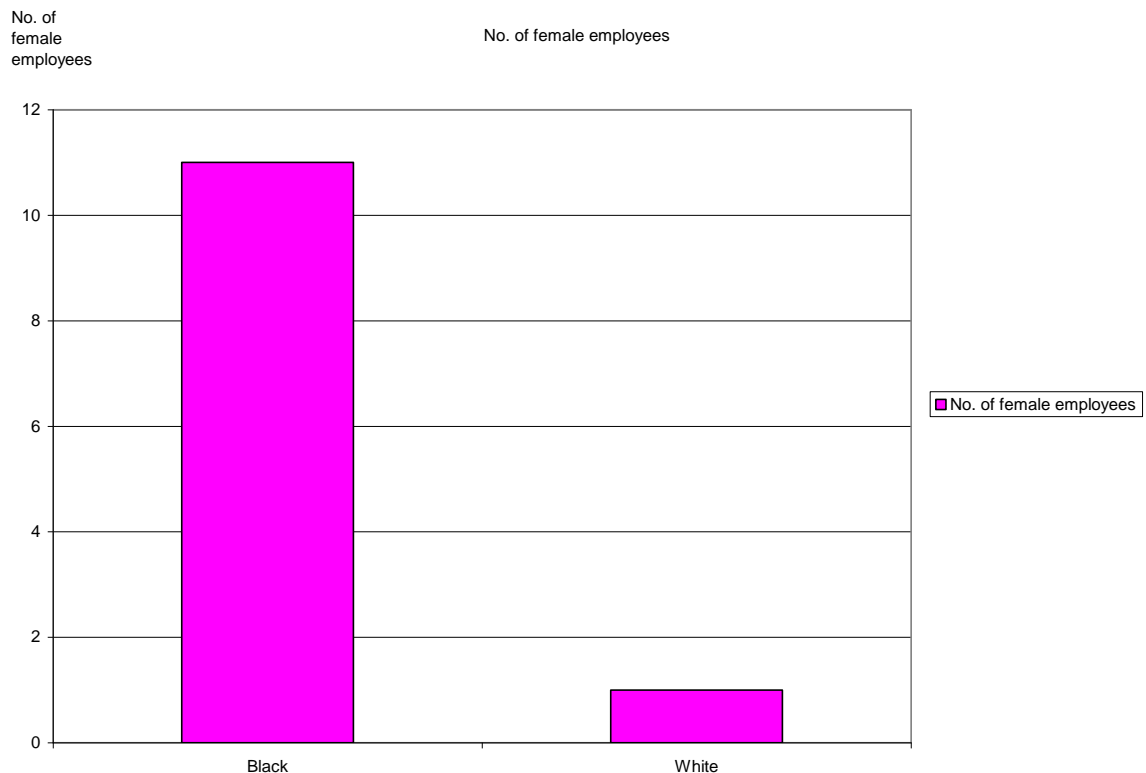
5.2.5 Level of Education

The respondents' level of education is illustrated by means of a graph below. From the twelve respondents, five have certificates for short courses done after completing matric; three have diplomas and four have degrees. According to some of the respondents, after they had achieved higher qualifications they had high hopes that they might be promoted. However, nothing happened. This disputes Henderson's statement that although females' performance can be equal if not more than males, they are reluctant to apply for promotions (Henderson, 2009: 32). One may conclude that transformational leaders are needed in the organization especially in the Human Resources, a division that is responsible for recruitment, development and promotion of employees.

According to Wright (1996: 213) transformational leaders have vision and their intentions are to move the employees up the ladder. They can be considered as change agents. According to Sekaran and Leong (1992: 34 - 35), one of the forces is to prepare management for a shift in power base. Secondly, women in management are expected to support new changes. Thirdly, women in management have to represent all women and their diversity. The graph showing the respondents' level of education is on the next page:

Figure 5: Respondents' level of education

No. of female employees

Legend:
- Certificate
- Diploma
- Degree
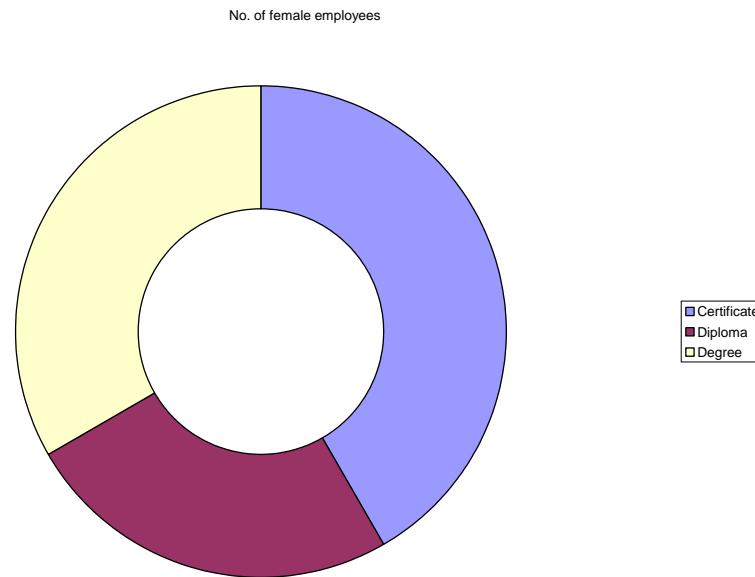
5.2.6 Length of Service

Out of the twelve respondents, ten have worked for Telkom for more than five years. This shows a high number of female employees who are not only loyal to the organization but also have vast experience. Some complained that as much as they have long service with Telkom, they have been in one job level for years.

They also stated that opportunities to move to higher positions are very few. Available positions are filled by external candidates. A problem of nepotism was also highlighted. This means that the organization at times employs external employees who are related or known by some of the leadership. Qualifying internal employees are ignored. This has a negative impact on employees' esteem and self-actualization needs. According to Maslow (Daft, 1995: 403) within an organization, esteem needs include more responsibilities and financial recognition for the higher responsibilities. Self-actualization needs can be met in the organization by engaging employees in higher levels of development and give them difficult assignments (Daft, 1995: 403).

The graph on the next page shows the breakdown:

Figure 6: Respondents' length of service
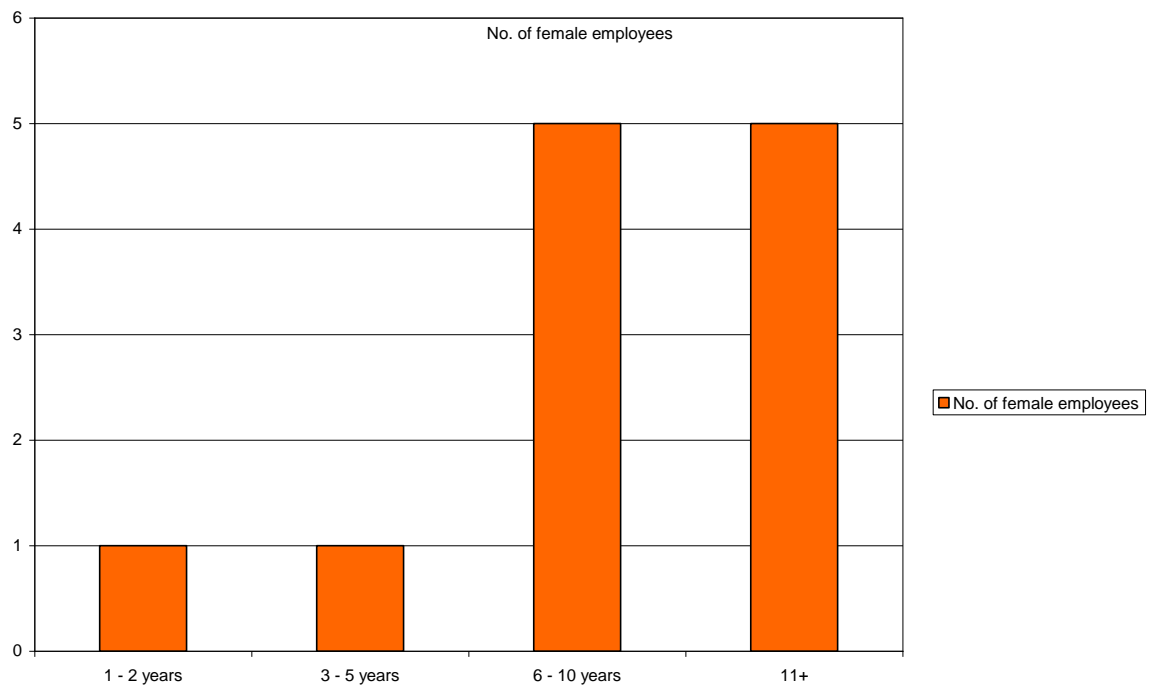
5.2.7 Content analysis of the views of female employees regarding characteristics attributed to good leadership qualities

Seven major categories of responses were identified as follows:

(1) Encourages team work

(2) Transparency

(3) Open door policy

(4) Good communication skills

(5) Good listener

(6) Shows positive attitude to all employees

(7) Avoids nepotism

1.   **Encourages teamwork**

Respondents want a leader who promotes good relations by encouraging employees to work as a team and not alone as individuals. By so doing employees will value, appreciate and learn from one another. Gedner (1999: 15) encourages a leadership style that avoids a top down approach; a leader has to share ideas with people around him. Rosenek (cited by Kazemek, 1991: 1) promotes interactive leadership style as this style develops relations between leaders and employees.

2.   **Transparency**

Here the emphasis was on the employment and promotion of staff. According to the respondents the process is not transparent. There are employees whose positions are upgraded without following the correct channels. There are also situations where new positions are filled in by external people without giving internal employees the opportunity to apply for the vacant positions or explaining the reasons for ignoring the internal candidates. The process even ignores contract employees who have served the company for a long time. Applying an interactive leadership style may be a solution. It will enhance participation and sharing of information. Instead of keeping power, leaders share it with employees – making employees feel that they are part of the organization (Rosenek cited by Kazemek, 1991: 1). Senge et al (1994: 189) promote the use of systems thinking as this approach encourages a shared vision within an organization.

3.   **Open door policy**

The respondents interpreted the open door policy in different ways. Some believe that it encourages gossip while to some it means that the top leader is always available to assist the employee on any challenges that he comes across. This is the situation where Cozens (cited by Groenewald, 2003: 52) expects a leader to be profitable, a leader that is able to stand above negative energies and also be able to do so with others. For an organization to achieve its goals it needs both leaders and followers (employees). Leaders need to be people with intellect and integrity, people who can make a paradigm shift from power based management to visionary related leadership that will result in a win-win situation (Telkom Competence Model for Supervisors and Managers, 2006: 6 – 7). A win-win situation cannot take place if

there is no trust. According to Martins and Martins (2002: 62) what enhances trust within an organization is open interaction between management and employees. Employees feel emotionally safe.

4.   Good communication skills

According to the respondents the process has to be two-way, meaning that messages should not only be sent to employees but also be received from them. One may argue that communication is a challenge in Telkom and that interactive leadership is not in use. According to Rosener (cited by Kazemek, 1991: 1) interactive leaders promote participation and sharing of information by employees. Interactive leadership is based on the fact that both the leader and the employees need one another, have to influence each another, whether right or wrong, and that decisions have to be made by the team or group, and not just the leader. Interaction of employees with the intention of responding to a common situation leads to shared agreement which promotes organizational climate (Moran and Volkwein, 1992: 29). Poor communication within an organization may promote what Moran and Volkwein (1992: 26 – 27) regard as the perceptual approach. Each employee has his perception of the work place. He interprets and responds to situations in a manner that is psychologically important to him but not important to the organization. This means that the structural and process characteristics of an organization are ignored. As the perceptual approach gets stronger it ends up owned by a group of people or employees who agree with regards to the organizational climate. This leads to disintegration instead of unity.

Senge (cited by McNamara, 1999: 1) states that goal achievement within an organization goes hand in hand with continuous communication amongst the parts that make the organization. It enables everyone to understand all the parts and how they are related to one another.

5.   Good listener, positive attitude to employees and nepotism

The respondents think that a leader has to be a good listener – someone who listens to all messages good and bad. This includes listening to all employees in the same way and giving feedback to issues that were discussed. Responses also indicate that a leader has to treat all employees in the same way. One respondent said that "while there are top leaders and junior staff, the reality is that we are all employees of one organization."

Nepotism was also raised and is linked to transparency with regards to the company's recruitment process and employment of external people while some employees within the organization are retrenched, demotivated and ill-treated. Zondi (cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 64) encourages people to take positions because they are fit and qualified for them and to be seen to be so.

Leaders have a role in an organization which is to ensure that the organization achieves its goals. The process may enhance relationships between leaders and employees or lessen relationships (Senge et al, 1994: 113 – 116). Either way is not a solution because not all employees end up satisfied. It is for this reason that Senge et al (1994: 118 – 120) recommends that leaders have to balance the situation so that both leaders and employees agree on the direction that needs to be followed and yield expected results.

5.2.8 Content analysis of the characteristics of female leaders

Most of the respondents mentioned characteristics that they believe female leaders should have, such as goal directed, decision makers, able to coach and mentor. Although most of the characteristics were more towards transformational leadership, there were a few different characteristics such as being subjective, unable to think out of the box and short relations (relations that end as soon as the task is completed) with employees. These responses show that leadership styles can be combined. Here it is a combination of transformational and transactional leadership styles as discussed by Ivangevich and Matteson (1996: 462 – 465).

5.2.9 Content analysis of the preferences of male and female leader

Eight respondents prefer male leaders because they believe that men do not keep grudges, do not talk about things that do not make sense, do not have an inferiority complex, or engage in nepotism. Two respondents prefer female leaders because it is good to balance the number of female and male leaders, and female leaders understand other females better than males. Another two respondents do not mind either a male or female leader as long as the leader is objective. The latter confirms Billing and Alvesson's findings that both males and females have leadership qualities (Billing and Alvesson, 2000: 145 – 147).

5.2.10 Content analysis of the choice of male or female leader

Eight respondents chose female leaders on condition that they treat all employees in the same way and they empower other female employees instead of looking down upon them.

Amongst these, one stressed that top female leaders have to pull other females up instead of pushing them away from the organization, if not down the ladder. Three chose male leaders due to the belief that occupying top positions does not change them in terms of their behaviour. One respondent believes in equal rights for everyone. The choice made by the majority of the respondents is supported by Sekaran and Leong (1992: 34 – 35) when they state that women in management are expected to support new changes (implementation of EEA) and they have to represent all women and their diversity. If the issue of representation is not addressed, it will not be possible for women to deal with common problems that affect them as women of all races. According to Ngcobo (cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 28) it is the responsibility of females in top positions to ensure that there are changes in their departments. They have to play an active role in capacity building. They are not expected to pull other females down – which is commonly known as "PHD syndrome" meaning pull her down. Samuel (cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 35) expects females in top positions to enhance the process of having more females in top ranks of corporate management and also make equality for females a major issue at both private and public sector. She encourages the implementation of direct action strategies to deal with any myths about females in business and female workshops that will help females to take legal action on any issues related to sex discrimination.

Zondi (cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 64 – 65) stresses that males and females in a work environment need each other, however females need to be determined to take their rightful positions and prove their capabilities of service excellence. They have to network with males and females who are positive minded and be proud of being females.

5.2.11 Content analysis on sections in Telkom that need female or male leaders

Seven respondents believe that all sections need capable leaders. Gender is not important – what counts is capability, performing well in the job interview and having the right supervisor to develop staff. Four respondents would love to see women leaders since some have qualifications for male dominated careers such as Engineering. This disputes the strong belief that management and leadership are solely for males (Billing and Alvesson, 2000: 145 – 147). Zondi (cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 64) stresses that males and females at management should not alienate each other because they both have a role to play. One respondent would like to see female leaders in non-technical sections because these sections are easy to understand.

5.2.12 Content analysis of the grooming of female employees for leadership positions

From the twelve respondents, ten strongly believe that females are not groomed for leadership positions. However, they are confident that the females' experience and qualifications can enable them to do well in their positions. One respondent appears to see growth in female executives and therefore concludes that females are groomed. Another respondent believes that if there is grooming of females for leadership positions, most employees are not aware of it. One may therefore conclude that transparency and communication are some of the leadership challenges facing female employees.

5.2.13 Content analysis of the leadership roles performed by the groomed female employees

Seven respondents believe that the trained females are still in their old positions or they are performing leadership roles, but are not rewarded for a job well done. Three respondents argue that trained females may have resigned due to experiencing frustrations at doing nothing. One respondent believes that the trained females are sharing their experiences with others. The last respondent was not aware of anything that has to do with training. The findings indicate that there may or may not be any grooming of females for leadership positions. Secondly, in case there are any females that were groomed, they may still be in their old positions or not yet recognized in terms of rewards or promotion. The respondents' length of service also showed that they have vast experience. The researcher therefore concludes that stagnation is another leadership challenge facing female employees and agrees with Maphisa (cited by City Press, 11 April 2010: 2) that one of the barriers that prevents companies from implementing transformation is psychological.

5.2.14 Content analysis of the leadership roles to be executed by groomed female employees

The responses were:

- Groomed female employees should be given opportunities to lead as part of their development so that they can be promoted internally or externally.

- They have to be exposed to dealing with aspects around vision, planning and decision making.

- Human Resource Division should keep records of the groomed female employees that will in the near future allow them to be considered for top positions.

- Groomed female employees are expected to communicate their experiences with other female employees.

5.2.15 Content analysis of the comparison between female employees groomed for leadership positions and male leaders

Most of the respondents believe that male leaders have worked for Telkom for many years. As a result they have vast experience both at operational and at all levels of leadership. The majority of female leaders have less experience compared to their male colleagues. They are at middle or lower levels of leadership. These levels of leadership prevent them from participating at strategic level. According to the respondents, females are good researchers. It is likely that they can do well in areas that need new ideas and concepts.

5.2.16 Content analysis of the similarities between groomed females and male leaders

Respondents mentioned that male and female leaders have different views, qualifications and experiences. The advantage of these differences is that it enables both parties to complement each other. Some respondents highlighted that both genders are not helping the junior staff to get better salaries. Respondents emphasized that the few females who have been lucky to be promoted to top positions behave in the same manner as some males, perpetuating oppression of females, especially those who are black. This confirms Appelbaum et al's (2003: 45) view when they state that female leaders should adopt male and female leadership characteristics to be able to have better opportunities of rising to leadership status.

5.3 Interpreting Secondary Data

According to research findings chances are high that there is no relationship between a company's documented information and its implementation, or there is a situation where management ignores company procedures and processes. Chapter 2 stated that internal employees are developed and in the case of vacant positions, they are given first preference for career development. Responses in section 5.2.7 (2) indicate that the employment process is not transparent. There are employees whose positions are upgraded without following correct channels. There are also situations where new positions are filled in by external people without giving internal employees the opportunity to apply for the vacant positions or

explaining the reasons for ignoring the internal candidates. The process even ignores contract employees who have served the company for a long time.

It is not clear as to why the company is developing employees in line with its strategy but ends up recruiting externally. This leads to a waste of company resources and internal designated groups are ignored. It is for this reason that the majority of the respondents state that trained females are still in their old positions or they are performing leadership roles but are not rewarded for the job well done. The company needs to re-look at the different development programmes. Some of them may not be relevant to company needs and strategy resulting in qualified employees not being suitable for some vacant positions.

It is true that in a competitive labour environment any organization ensures that while retaining its skilled employees, it also attracts potential employees who have skills required by the organization. This has to be part of the company strategy and plans while at the same time being communicated with employees and union structures.

Chapter 2 showed a very high number of Telkom male employees compared to female employees. Seventy percent of respondents expressed concerns about female leaders who look down upon female employees. The work environment may also contribute to the female leaders' behaviour. When Gardiner and Tiggemann (1999: 301) were conducting a study to find out the impact of working in a male or female dominated workplace, findings showed that females in male dominated workplaces experienced pressure in their jobs, and pressure to alter their leadership styles as well as pressure from discrimination. It may happen that Telkom female leaders are experiencing the same. However, the future of Telkom lies in the hands of its leaders. They are the change agents. As effective leaders they have to deal with individuals, groups and organizational goals (Afolabi et al, 2008: 2). Meyer (cited by Meyer and Boninelli, 2004: 12) supports Afolabi et al (2008:2) when he states that effective leaders look at leadership in a holistic manner which involves them as employees and leaders, what is happening within the organization, the complexity of the organization and the environmental changes surrounding the organization. From time to time they check if the type of leadership they are implementing corresponds with the changes taking place at the time and how these influence or affect the employees and the organization.

The introduction and implementation of the EEA implies drastic changes within organizations. Any new change only succeeds if it is accepted by top management (Hall, 1999: 16). Without this high level acceptance, change may fail. This may be a possibility in Telkom. Although there are good intentions on paper regarding the EEA, the leadership may

not have been prepared for the changes. For the change to be accepted, Hall (1999: 16) recommends that a convincing argument has to take place in the form of a presentation. It has to include issues such as the need, reasons why change is necessary, who is responsible for change and an account to top management of what the advantages and disadvantages of change will be, its impact on the organization, risks related to change, time frame for the implementation and the costs involved. It is at this level where non- linear thinking comes in. Bratinau and Vasilache (2009: 3) recommend non-linear thinking where leaders work with employees to come up with new and big ideas.

Section 5.2.7 (4) shows lack of communication between leadership and employees. As a result most of the initiatives of senior executives regarding the recruitment and selection of female employees for top positions are not clear. This is caused by the fact that whatever agreements or changes made by senior executives regarding the EEA are not clear to employees. Once senior executives have agreed on the implementation of the EEA, it has to be communicated to all employees. This has to be an on-going process. Hall (1999: 17 – 18) states that employees need to be informed about change. This has to take place at initial stages, get commitment by explaining the need for change, and provide updates on progress as well as open door for feedback. The transition from the past to the introduction and implementation of EEA may have challenges. Leadership has to work hand in hand with Human Resources to ensure smooth transition from discussions on EEA to its implementation and results. The role of leadership is very important. To Bennis and House (cited by George et al, 1999: 545) a leader has to set objectives and also remove any obstacles that may prevent employees from achieving the set objectives.

5.4 Key findings

The key findings were:

- The strong belief that leadership is solely for males or females is incorrect.
- The study confirmed that there are leadership challenges facing Telkom female employees.

The section addressing preferences of respondents regarding male or female leaders shows that both males and females have leadership qualities. In section 5.2.11 which looks at sections in Telkom that need male or female leaders, most respondents state that all sections in an organization need capable leaders irrespective of gender. Sections 5.2.7

(4) which deals with good communication skills, 5.2.12 which deals with the grooming of female employees for leadership positions and 5.2.13 which addresses leadership roles performed by the groomed female employees, confirm that there are leadership challenges facing Telkom female employees.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

From the study it is clear that neither female nor male leaders can operate in isolation. For the future and economy of South Africa, both female and male leaders have to play a role. This means that Telkom has to balance their numbers in terms of female and male leadership ratios. This involves the inclusion of the Human Resources division to guide and correct the leadership in its endeavour to comply with the Employment Equity Act, achieve targets and have motivated employees.

CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Implications of research and suggestions for future studies are presented, along with a concluding summary.

Although the study focused on Telkom, research shows that gender and leadership, as well as leadership challenges are issues facing many organizations locally and internationally. The literature looked at male and female characteristics, qualities, leadership theories and stereotypes. Included also was the influence of the environment and dynamics resulting from complexity of organizations. The literature also highlighted the importance of the systems thinking approach to organizations especially those that are complex and open. The approach helps leaders to grow and develop along with the employees while at the same time sharing the company vision for the future.

Other studies such as Gedney's show that it is not only in Telkom where females are faced with leadership challenges; there are other organizations with same experiences. Challenges facing organizations may be similar or different depending on a number of factors.

Some of the respondents indicated that some female leaders are the ones who look down upon other females, instead of being supportive. It is not possible for males to empathise and sympathise with females, if females themselves fail to empathise and sympathise with one another. It is for this reason that Sekaran and Leong (1992: 34 - 35) state that women in management are expected to support new changes and they have to represent all women and their diversity. It is therefore still very early for studies of this nature to be focusing on male and female leadership instead of female leaders and female employees. The challenge is that some female leaders are so used to gender bias that they hardly notice any problems related to gender equity. Findings from Polnick et al's study (2009: 4) on female principals and gender equity indicate that when some of the female principals were asked about the strategies they were using to enhance gender equity at their academic institutions their response was "not applicable/no need."

The issue of leadership and gender seems to be broad and vary from one organization to the next. Additional lessons also learnt in the study are outlined below. Recommendations and suggestions to Telkom and future researchers are made.

6.2 What are the implications?

Since the study was based on female leadership, literature related to gender, personality development and human needs was studied. The measuring instrument was the semi-structured interview. A sample was used to represent the population of female employees. Primary and secondary data were presented. The key findings were:

- The strong belief that leadership is solely for males or females is incorrect. Section 5.2.9 which addresses preferences of respondents on female and male leaders, shows that both males and females have leadership qualities. The leadership style that a leader decides to adopt is not dictated by theories. It is based on a number of factors such as behaviour patterns, relations and the nature of business. There might be other factors. However these three lead to the attainment of organizational goals.

- Section 5.2.7 which addresses the views of respondents regarding characteristics attributed to good leadership qualities, confirmed that there are leadership challenges facing Telkom female employees. Some of these are communication, transparency and stagnation. A holistic approach that will look at Telkom as an open and complex system with interrelated parts that affect each other is essential. A Viable Systems Model can also assist in bringing in structures that will ensure the smooth running of the organization and prevent duplications. The VSM works well in complex organizations like Telkom as it breaks the complexity into manageable systems as outlined in section 3.5. It also fits well in organizations with identity and purpose (Beer, 1994: 347).

According to Telkom Human Resource website, the company views the EEA, especially employment equity, transformation and diversity as major business requirements that have to be dealt with by all units and levels within the organization. However, section 5.2.7 which addresses the views of respondents regarding characteristics attributed to good leadership qualities, indicate that the company does not always view the EEA as a major business requirement. According to respondents the process of employing and promoting employees is not transparent. The researcher thinks that the EEA also contributes to the process that is not transparent. Although the South African government introduced the EEA with good intentions, there are issues that, according to the researcher are not clear or they were ignored. The EEA should have included processes that:

- Give a breakdown of female targets according to race
- Make development programmes for females compulsory
- Introduce a standard measurement to measure programme effectiveness
- Detail selection criteria for females who have to be developed
- Explain what needs to happen on completion of development programme
- Specify annual penalty measures for organizational leaders who fail to meet required targets. According to VSM (Beer, 1994: 347) such leaders are part of system five, which is responsible for policy decisions that balance demands from subsystems and drive the organization as a whole.

6.3 Suggestions and recommendations

- **Human Resources**

Section 5.2.16 which addresses similarities between groomed females and male leaders showed that respondents regard male and female leaders as having views, qualifications and experiences that complement each other. If organizations treat their employees with respect and dignity because they are the primary source of quality and productivity gains (Burnes, 1992: 61), leaders and employees can complement one another. At the same time their needs can be satisfied; if these are not met, there may be negative consequences in their performance and life in general. Organizational targets are achieved as a result of the employees' performance. It is therefore essential that such resources be treated with dignity and respect to enable the organization to yield expected, if not more than expected results. According to Mthembu (cited by Harris, 2010: 1) current leaders need to be aware that influence and relationship are important.

Section 5.2.15 which addresses comparison between groomed females and male leaders revealed that Telkom male leaders have vast experience both at operational and all other levels of leadership; while most female leaders have less experience but females are good in research. Based on this, respondents concluded that females can do well in areas that need new ideas and concepts. While Telkom Human Resource Division has a major role in building relations, developing employees and meeting equity targets, it has to utilise the male and female differences to the benefit of the organization. In this environment (HR), Zondi (cited by Cameron et al, 2003: 63) recommends innovative and creative initiatives and that the person leading these initiatives be neutral, transparent, and able to investigate and do research, have clear and known principles, create an enabling environment to develop skills

and expertise, involve teams instead of dictatorship and ensure that the relevant sections of the Bill of Rights, South African Constitution and Labour Relations Act are known, respected and implemented and avoid tokenism. Based on the VSM mentioned in 3.6 above, Telkom Human Resource Division has to be part of system three while working closely with all systems especially systems three to five because they play a major role at this stage. System three promotes communication, disseminates information as well as legal and compliance issues. System four looks at environmental demands, changes and uncertainties that impact on the organization. System five is responsible for policy decisions that balance demands from subsystems and drive the organization as a whole (Beer, 1994: 347).

- **Employee involvement**

Section 5.2.12 which addresses grooming of female employees for leadership positions shows that the majority of respondents have no knowledge of this exercise. Their responses to this question were more based on assumptions. The researcher therefore concludes that employees in Telkom seem to have very limited participation in organizational processes and developments. Some respondents even mentioned that in case there was something of this nature, it was done in private. This confirms lack of employee involvement. Employees need to be involved as this will enable them to be knowledgeable of the developments and motivate them to contribute positively and work harder to uplift the image of the organization. Martins and Martins (2002: 58) argue that employees need to be involved in dealing with issues leading to company goals and objectives as this enhances their creativity and innovation. System three as explained by Beer (1994: 347) has to communicate with all subsystems within the organization information on development of female employees from selection of candidates until completion and roles played by these candidates once they have completed the development programme.

- **Development and promotion of employees**

According to Daft (1995: 403) employees expect opportunities for growth, development and progress in a work environment. It is for this reason that a number of organizations have developmental plans in place for all their employees. The plans look at the strategy of the organization, the future developmental path or career of the employees as well as environmental demands. They look at issues such as equality, economic justice, affirmative action, employee benefits, work environment and corporate responsibility. This helps the organization and the employees to know and deal with all barriers that prevent them from growing or moving up the ladder. This transparency leaves all parties (leaders, labour

unions, employees and Human Resource Division) happy and may also help the organization in meeting its EEA targets. It also lessens the rate of stagnation as employees will be moving up the ladder.

It i s recommended t hat t he company has t o re-look at t he different development programmes. Some of them may not be relevant to company needs and strategy resulting in qualified employees not being suitable for some vacant positions. Meyer's research into organizations that are effective in attracting and retaining talent showed that this was due to their i dea o f c reating oppo rtunities for em ployees to succeed (Meyer c ited by T erry et a l, 2004: 15). In such organizations the intention is to see employees progressing as opposed to those organizations who believe that employees are on their own (Meyer cited by Terry et al, 2004: 15).

- **Organizations as total systems**

According t o D aft (1995: 54) or ganizations are open systems characterized by ent ropy, synergy and a number of subsystems that ar e dependent on one another. A s a r esult e ach employee has t o be involved in al l or ganizational pr ocesses and developments. Non-involvement of one part affects the whole organization. In short, changes in one unit of the organization af fect ot her u nits. This is therefore very i mportant w hen leaders implement change in o rganizations. Section 5.2 .7 (1) w hich addresses views of female em ployees regarding characteristics attributed to good leadership qualities, states that respondents want a leader w ho encourages employees to work as a team and not al one as individuals. In so doing employees value, appreciate and learn from one another.

With c ompetition, adv ances in technology and democracy i n S outh A frica, Telkom l ike many other organizations is be coming more com plex. T he cha llenges the or ganization is faced w ith do no t e xist in i solation but are related t o one ano ther. I t w ill not he lp the organization to look at female leaders only or female employees' needs only but their interrelationship to ea ch other and to al l or ganizational uni ts. Senge et a l (1994: 18 9) promotes the use of systems thinking as this approach encourages the individual's personal growth and development as discussed abov e, a shared v ision – which i nvolves bringing in representatives of all organizational units to be involved in a group within an organization.

Once a group has a shared v ision, ea ch person is now abl e to se e other col leagues/units viewpoints and vision. A s hared vision leads to a buy-in by al l employees involved in the groups. It is o nly at t his level w here t he organization ca n obtain objective views from t he

employees. If people know that what they are doing is valued, their sense of belonging increases, they may then work with enthusiasm and dedication to achieve organizational goals. The application of systems thinking in Telkom can help the organization to deal with what the real problem is and not the effects of the problem.

Any new and exciting initiative has positive and negative impacts. While the sharing of a vision may bring employees closer, it also brings new challenges to the leaders. It is at this point when employees gain confidence and want to give input to the organization's policies, procedures and practices. The leader needs to be aware of changes from controlling and evaluating employees to sharing ideas, listening and mentoring employees (Senge et al, 1994: 304 – 305). The leader has to involve employees in efforts aimed towards the vision because this becomes a learning process for everyone. All employees and their functions have to be aligned to the vision. This enables everyone to move in the same direction. It makes employees work towards a common goal instead of pulling away and working against each other (Senge et al, 1994: 305 – 306).

Employees in Telkom like in any other workplace spend most of their time at work sharing ideas and exchanging resources to meet and achieve organizational objectives and goals. According to Senge et al (1994: 509) the place of employment ends up being more of a community to employees. In this case the employer or leader has to promote the community spirit within an organization. This involves processes that will enhance employees' capability, commitment, contribution, continuity, collaboration and conscience (Senge et al, 1994: 512 - 517).

- **Capability**

According to Telkom Human Resource documents employees are developed and trained in a number of ways. From the twelve respondents that were interviewed in this study, five have certificates for short courses after completing matric, three have diplomas and four have degrees. However, Telkom still recruits externally. It is the leadership's responsibility to develop the capabilities of employees and to enable them to face future challenges and deliver even during crises. The organization is expected to promote dialogue not only within the teams but in the whole organization (Senge et al, 1994: 512). However, this is not possible if the leadership does not have faith in the capabilities of its employees. Senge et al (1994: 512) state that leadership should ask itself questions such as: Are we able to inspire our employees? Do employees want to be part of us? Is the organization the right one where employees can learn, grow, increase capacity when things are normal or changing and even

during crisis periods? Do employees get the opportunity to reflect freely on how the parts of the organization or the organization itself can be improved? It is important for the organization to have dialogue within sub systems and throughout the organization. This enhances innovation.

- **Commitment**

It is essential for the leaders and employees to commit to all organizational initiatives. In most cases, employees are willing to commit to initiatives even if they are not of self-interest but will benefit the organization. According to section 5.2.6 which addresses respondents' length of service in Telkom, out of a total of twelve, ten has worked for Telkom for more than ten years. This shows commitment on the part of employees. However, they expect the commitment to be a two- way process. This means that employees need very strong evidence that Telkom is also committed to them (Senge et al, 1994: 512 – 513). Whatever employees bring in is regarded as an investment. At the end, they expect to see results for their investment. As an organization Telkom has to be transparent, fair and honest to employees. In such circumstances employees will be part and parcel of Telkom in good and bad times. Fairness enables employees to be always willing to join forces and resolve common problems in a fair manner (Senge et al, 1994: 513).

- **Contribution**

According to responses to section 5.2.13 which addresses the leadership roles performed by groomed female employees, twenty percent argued that trained female employees may have resigned due to experiencing frustrations at doing nothing. Seventy five percent believe that the trained female employees are still in their old positions or they are performing leadership roles, but are not rewarded for a job well done. Employees' development should enable them to link their daily activities or roles with the success of the organization. This makes them to be so dedicated that they will go out of their way when it comes to contributing to the organization. Where there is a shortage of resources, employees will devise means to get relevant resources or share those that are available. What drives them is the need to contribute to the future of their organization (Senge et al, 1994: 513 – 514). The organization identifies the multiple talents of employees that they display through volunteerism and outside work and use these accordingly while at the same time enhancing them by means of rewards.

- **Continuity**

Some of the responses in the study showed stagnation as a challenge in Telkom. What causes this is that employees remain in the same positions and do not move up the ladder. Senge et al (1994: 514) states that employees within an organization expect to see continuity. The leadership has to be creative and develop continuity that will always keep employees active and motivated. This may involve rotating employees to get exposure and new skills in other areas of the organization or give more tasks and rewards for extra tasks.

- **Collaboration**

The application of systems thinking in Telkom will help the organization to deal with what the real problem is and not the effects of the problem. Employees and divisions within Telkom are dependent on one another and therefore they have something in common that binds them together which Senge et al (1994: 515) refers to as community development and collaboration. This means that everyone and every division in Telkom is engaged and involved in company matters. As much as the divisions are involved in different initiatives the company vision and strategy are still common to everyone. In addition to engaging employees and divisions, communication of information needs to be an on-going process coupled with good relationships and trust (Senge et al, 1994: 516). In building employees to become a community, the leader has to look at things that may be small but real and affect employees in their day to day operations or in life. Solutions may not be high-level requiring approval from top levels of the organization. It can be a simple thing that may have positive results to both the organization and employees. These may include rotating female employees who have been developed for leadership positions. As they gain experience, the organization also gains in productivity and the message comes across to all employees about the development of female employees. This is also an opportunity for the organization to evaluate its strategy regarding development of employees and equity targets. Senge et al (1994: 526) recommends action learning in an organization that has reached a level of being a community.

Employees have strengths and weaknesses; instead of criticizing the employees for their downfall, the focus has to be on the positives that they bring in. Small as they may be, if recognised and acknowledged, they grow. The focus of leadership has to start from the initiatives that are regarded by employees as good. They may be small but as long as they bring employees together, they have to be reinforced and celebrated (Senge et al, 1994: 527 – 529).

- **Positive Conscience**

The word "conscience" is always associated with guilt. However, Senge et al (1994: 517) expect employees and their organizations to have what they term "positive conscience". This means that employees have on their own made a choice to be responsible as individual employees and also to be responsible as members of an organization. This becomes organizational conscience. Senge et al (1994: 517) state that organizational conscience lead to respect for organizational constitutions, policies, ethics and responsibilities. Under such circumstances it becomes easy for the organization to position itself for competition or to bigger initiatives because both employees and the organization are bound by the same conscience. According to Senge et al's (1994: 517) research study has shown that organizations with positive conscience get high net profits compared to those who follow traditional leadership practices.

According to Senge (cited by Bratianu and Vasilache, 2009: 4) "organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization. Learning organizations are possible because, deep down, we are all learners."

6.4 Recommendations for future research

The study's attention was only on female employees from OP to M4 level. A study that will focus on leadership challenges facing M3 to M1 female leaders can be conducted for comparison purposes, as well as one that will ascertain the impact of work environment on female leaders. Gedney's study on leadership effectiveness and gender (1999: 25) confirms that there are continuous and very strong leadership challenges facing females, especially those in top positions in work environments that were previously for males only.

6.5 Concluding remarks

Employees are the key to open doors to a bright future of an organization. It is essential that employees working conditions and surroundings be conducive to the attainment of individual as well as organizational goals. Leadership is expected to create such an environment.

The South African Constitution and the Employment Equity Act promote rights of South Africans. It is the responsibility of the employers to promote equality at work by implementing the relevant policies and procedures. These will positively address gender

discrimination and stagnation. The responses in this study indicate that female employees have no intention to dominate or get rid of male leaders, but rather want to do justice to both genders. This confirms Helgesen's findings regarding males and females which show that they have characteristics that complement each other (Helgesen, 2010: 1).

As much as the study was based on female employees within Telkom, the researcher would like to highlight that according to Meyer (cited by Meyer and Boninelli, 2004: 269) it is argued that leadership in South Africa is in a crisis. There are very few leaders who can lead within the current complexities in the country. As much as the business schools have introduced world class degrees and programmes, the question is will these produce leaders with the right skills for future challenges? A study on Developing Business Leaders for 2010, which was done by Development Dimensions International in 2002, showed that there are barriers which may be a challenge to a leader's future performance. Some of these are arrogant and insensitive; exhibits excessive control in his/her leadership style and are not prepared to attend to issues related to difficult people (Meyer cited by Meyer and Boninelli, 2004: 269 – 274).

Johnson's viewpoint is that organizations have to expose employees to leadership positions because "leaders are like teabags – you can't be sure exactly how good they are until they get into hot water (Johnson cited by Meyer and Boninelli, 2004: 350)."

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographics

- Name and Surname (Optional)

- Job Level

  - M4/S4: Senior Manager/Senior Specialist
  - M5/S5: Manager/Specialist
  - MS/S6: Operational Manager/Operational Specialist
  - OP1: Administrator/Secretary

- Age

  - From 18 to 25 years
  - From 26 to 35 years
  - From 36 to 45 years
  - From 46 to 55 years
  - From 56 years upwards

- Marital Status

  - Married
  - Single
  - Divorced
  - Widowed

- Race Group

  - Asian
  - Black
  - Coloured
  - White

- Level of Education

- Grade 1 to 8
- Grade 9 to 12
- Certificate
- Diploma
- Degree

- Length of Service

- < a year
- From 1 to 2 years
- From 3 to 5 years
- From 6 to 10 years
- > 10 years

Questions

- In your opinion what characteristics would you attribute to good leadership qualities?

- In your opinion which of the leadership characteristics you have just mentioned would you say female leaders have? Motivate your response.

- If you were to choose between a male or female leader, which leader would you prefer? Motivate your response.

- In your view who should be given preference between males and females when it comes to leadership opportunities? Motivate your response.

- Are there any sections within Telkom that you think specifically need either male or female leaders? Motivate your response.

- In your opinion are female employees in Telkom groomed for leadership positions? Motivate your response.

- What leadership roles do these female employees play in their respective functional areas?

- In your opinion what leadership roles should these female employees be executing? Motivate your response.

- If you were to compare these female employees with male leaders in Telkom, what in your opinion would be the differences? Motivate your response.

- If you were to compare these female employees with male leaders in Telkom, what in your opinion would be the similarities? Motivate your response.

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT LETTERS

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
LEADERSHIP CENTRE

MCom (Leadership Studies)
Researcher: Ms N Shangase (084-7947440)
Supervisors: Prof. K Pillay & Ms. C Gerwel (031-2608300 / 031-2608318)
Research Office: Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

Dear Respondent,

I, Nonhlanhla Shangase, am a Master of Commerce student, at the Centre for Leadership of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled Exploration into leadership challenges facing female employees at Telkom Head Office in Pretoria. The aim of this study is to: Explore and gain insight on leadership challenges facing Telkom female employees.

Through your participation I hope to understand the needs as well as views of Telkom female employees on leadership challenges; gain suggestions that may be solutions to identified leadership challenges. The results of the survey are intended to be shared with Telkom Human Resources and other organizations that are interested in female leadership such as Business Women Association, Progressive Women's Movement and Academic Institutions.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequences. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this survey. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Leadership Centre, UKZN. If you have any questions or concerns about completing the interview or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above. The survey should take about an hour. I hope you will take the time to participate.

Sincerely, Nonhlanhla Shangase (Ms)

Investigator's signature_____ Date_____

MCom (Leadership Studies)

Researcher: Ms N Shangase (084-7947440)

Supervisors: Prof. K Pillay & Ms. C Gerwel (031-2608300 / 031-2608318)

Research Office: Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

<u>CONSENT</u>

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.

Participant's signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

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14 September 2010

Ms N Shangase
P O Box 3392
SUNNINGDALE CLUSTER 1
4019

Dear Ms Shangase

PROTOCOL: Exploration into leadership challenges facing female employees at Telkom **Head Office in Pretoria**
ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0993/2010 M: Faculty of Management Studies

In response to your application dated 03 September 2010, Student Number: **991053383** the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given **FULL APPROVAL.**

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

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

Yours faithfully

Professor Steve Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS COMMITTEE

SC/sn

cc: Prof. K Pillay (Supervisor)
cc: Mrs. C Haddon

Postal Address:

Telephone: Facsimile: Email: Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood   ■ Howard College   ■ Medical School   ■ Pietermaritzburg   ■ Westville