



**The potential impact of female leadership on the petroleum industry in
Durban**

**Nonsikelelo Thembelihle Munyaka
217075086**

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Supervisor: Prof. Ana Martins

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DECLARATION

I, **Nonsikelelo Thembelihle Munyaka**, declare that:

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Lord Jesus Christ, I am nothing without You. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for guiding me and comforting me when days seemed bleak. Father God, thank you for Your unmerited favour. My dear husband, Jean-Jacques Bahati Munyaka, I thank God for you every day. We did it! Thank you for all your support. It's been a difficult journey, but we held on.

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- My interview participants, for providing this study with invaluable insights.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research study to:

- My son, Kwame Mayenzeke Uhuru Munyaka. Words cannot express how much I love you and how incredibly grateful I'll forever be that God chose me for you. The joy you bring into our lives is immeasurable; you are love personified. You inspire me to be me.

ABSTRACT

The term "glass ceiling" was coined in the 1980s to describe the restrictions that women experience in many occupations. The term alludes to the frequently unseen and universal impediments that prohibit women from progressing up the corporate ladder or earning equal pay. Despite the tremendous influx of women into the workforce and the growing number of women in mid-level management positions, top-level positions remain out of reach for women today, just as they were more than two decades ago. Operating in a world influenced by male decision-makers and their entrenched practices, women face a slew of barriers on their way to the top of their professions. The continuation of negative preconceptions, discrimination, and the glass ceiling against women as leaders is one widely recognized explanation for the modest number of female executives.

The main aim of this study was to explore the impact of female leadership in the petroleum industry, with the following research objectives:

1. To ascertain if women and men lead differently within the petroleum industry;
2. To establish if gender influences an individual's leadership effectiveness within the petroleum industry;
3. To determine the factors that affect women leadership within the petroleum industry; and
4. To make recommendations to petroleum industry's senior management towards enhancing women leadership.

A qualitative approach and a thematic interpretative analysis to analyse and interpret data collected was used for this study. Snowball and purposive sampling were employed as sampling techniques, with six female executives selected from diverse socio-economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds. Semi-structured, online interviews were the chosen instrument to gather data for this research study and were thematically analysed. The study's findings were crucial in determining the contribution that female leaders make in the petroleum industry as well responsibilities of stakeholders in the petroleum industry to ensure female leaders are afforded equal opportunities as their male counterparts. This research study deduced that females were still under-represented in the petroleum industry and made recommendations to the petroleum industry's senior management towards enhancing women leadership.

Keywords: Gender Bias; Glass Ceiling; Females; Leadership; Petroleum Industry

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TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms

BWA - Businesswomen's Association of South Africa

CEO - Chief Executive Officer

COO - Chief Operating Officer

MD - Managing Director

SLT - Situation Leadership Theory

UKZN - University of KwaZulu Natal

GSB&L - Graduate School of Business & Leadership

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Considered as one of the biggest protest marches at the time, women in excess of twenty thousand marched to the South African Union Buildings on the 9th of August 1956 to demonstrate against the apartheid government's pass laws. Their message was clear: they had had enough!

This compelling declaration of dissent brought to the fore the struggle for women's rights and signalled a decisive moment in the fight for a non-sexist and non-racial South Africa. But how far have we come as a nation in the last 64 years in bridging the gap between gender inequalities? Twenty-six years ago, for the first time in the history of the country, all South Africans had the opportunity to participate in historic free and fair elections, encouraging optimism of fair treatment for every South African, even the formerly marginalised persons and people groups (Ndlovu, 2017). These people groups comprised women who had ascended to leadership positions. In order to guarantee that females in general are treated with dignity and females in the workplace are afforded the same opportunities as their male counterparts, government has since instituted several programmes and policies to achieve the primary principles in the Bill of Rights (Ndlovu, 2017).

This study set out to explore the obstacles faced by executive leaders within one of the biggest Oil and Energy organisations, Engen Petroleum, including challenges they encounter in their pursuit to climb the proverbial corporate ladder with the objective of making a meaningful and tangible contribution to the organisation's success.

The research study endeavoured to point out ambiguities, difficulties, challenges, and vexations that were unique to them as female high-ranking (c-suite/c-level) leaders, as well as examine how they came to terms with these. The research further established whether the corporate world in general was heading in the direction of bridging the divide of gender equality, thereby affording women access to the same opportunities as it does their male counterparts.

Findings from previous studies were also examined by this body of work, together with insights on whether there have been any significant, or any at all, improvements in the challenges

executive female leaders face on a national scale as well as globally, and their viewpoints on these challenges.

1.2 Motivation for the study

Multi-national oil company BP's appointment of Priscillah Mabelane as the chief executive of its Southern Africa operation, may have been one small step for a woman, but it was one giant leap for womankind, albeit great strides still need to be made.

In South Africa, there are seven predominant petroleum companies, Engen Petroleum, PETROSA, Chevron South Africa, Shell South Africa, Total South Africa, Sasol Oil and BP Southern Africa. Out of these, Engen Petroleum, BP Southern Africa, and Shell South Africa have their refineries in Durban. And in these organisations, there are comparatively few women in decision making positions, let alone c-suite executive positions. The petroleum industry could have written the book on this subject as it could be a great example of how women have been marginalised. The industry has long been a "boys club" and therefore taken for granted that it be led in terms of masculine "frontier" and "cowboy" mythology (Miller, 2004).

As of September 2020, the South African population is estimated to be over 59 million and made up of more women (approximately 51%) than men (STATSSA, 2020). Regardless of the fact that women make up just over half of the population, they continue to be somewhat overlooked in positions of power and authority. This is in spite of the fact that "the South African National Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality (The Office of the Status of Women) envisioned the realisation of the rudimentary principles of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) when it delineated its vision for gender equality within all organisations and industries, calling for 50% representation in decision-making positions" (Ndlovu, 2017, p. 3) thus positioning the country amongst progressive and liberal states globally (Lumby, 2014). Yet, 26 years into the country's democracy, South African women are still having to contend with exceptional difficulties and challenges in their pursuit for senior leadership roles, especially in so-called male dominated industries like the oil and energy sector. It is hoped that this study will bring awareness to decision makers in the corporate sphere, as well as to custodians of policy in the country to ascertain whether the policies and systems in place to achieve gender equality are adequate to cater for and support female leaders, if not, where the bottlenecks are and how they can be overcome.

This study aimed to explore the impact of the leadership of women in the petroleum industry in Durban, a city on the east coast of South Africa and further investigated the gender differences in leadership styles and effectiveness as well as explored challenges and experiences women face in aspiring to occupy positions that will allow them to make a tangible contribution to the success of the petroleum industry in general. The main objective of this study was to determine what action needed to be taken to tap into the reserves and promote gender balance in leadership positions in the petroleum industry to “fuel” the future for the next generation of women aspiring to contribute to the success of their organisations.

1.3 Focus of the study

The study focused on the factors that affected women leadership at Engen Petroleum, an organisation within the petroleum industry in the east coast city of Durban and also delved into the gender differences in leadership styles and effectiveness, the labyrinth morphed glass ceiling and the leadership labyrinth evidence (Northouse, 2016). This study also endeavoured to examine the strides, if any, the country has made in levelling the playing field across all sectors to ensure the country are not just complying with legislature, but also to do that which is right and acceptable in civil society.

1.4 Problem statement

A recent survey by Ernst and Young (2016) highlighted the necessity for diversity to aid and navigate the petroleum industry disruption and the value multiplicity brings to the bottom line. The survey further found that organisations who ply their trade in the petroleum industry and chose to put gender parity on their agendas had a more engaged workforce, performed better and maintained higher retention rates.

Zeroing in on the home turf, Grant Thornton’s 2017 report on women in business revealed that in South Africa, only 28% of senior management positions were occupied by females.

Margaret Atwood said: “We still think of a powerful man as a born leader and a powerful woman as an anomaly” (Hengen & Thomson, 2007, p.336). And therein lies the problem.

1.6 Aim of the study

The research study's main aim was to explore the impact of the leadership of women in the petroleum industry in Durban, a city on the east coast of South Africa. Durban is the base for two of the country's biggest refineries, Enref, which is Engen Petroleum Ltd. and the Shell SA Refining and BP Southern Africa joint venture - SAPREF.

1.7 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were:

1. To ascertain if women and men lead differently within the petroleum industry;
2. To establish if gender influences an individual's leadership capabilities within the petroleum industry;
3. To determine the factors that affect women leadership within the petroleum industry;
and
4. To make recommendations to petroleum industry's senior management towards enhancing women leadership.

1.8 Research question

Do South African women have the capacity to take the petroleum industry to new heights?

1.8.1 Research sub-questions

1. Do women or men lead differently within the petroleum industry?
2. Does gender influence an individual's leadership effectiveness within the petroleum industry?
3. What are the factors that affect women leadership within the petroleum industry?
4. What recommendations can be made to the senior management towards enhancing women leadership within the petroleum industry?

1.9 Significance of the study

This study was important to the researcher as a woman seeking to shatter the “glass ceiling” i.e., the unseen, yet unbreachable barriers that keep women like herself from climbing the proverbial corporate ladder, regardless of their aspirations, qualifications, or achievements in the petroleum industry.

1.10 Delimitations of the study

Delimitations are those features that outline the boundaries and limit the scope of your study (Simon, 2011). In this study, the major delimitations were the population and study setting selected as the study will be restricted to six participants in the Durban area.

1.11 Limitations of the study

By nature, qualitative studies have many shortcomings. This research study embarked on exploring obstacles facing senior leaders, who are female and are within the petroleum industry. The study was restricted to female senior leaders at Engen Petroleum who were still in the organisation, omitting the female senior leaders who had left the business. One of the female senior leaders who was identified as a participant had left the organisation before the interviews were conducted.

1.12 Assumptions

Leedy & Ormrod (2010) suggested that assumptions are so rudimentary that, the research problem itself could not exist without them. The underlying assumptions of this study are that the interview questions will be answered honestly and candidly by the participants and the selection of the participants is appropriate to ensure that the participants have all experienced the same or similar phenomenon of gender bias (Wargo, 2015).

1.13 Research Methodology

A significant portion of this study extensively examined the literature review to gain an improved appreciation of the research approach as well as the problem statement. The instrument used to collect data for this qualitative study was semi-structured, online (Skype/Zoom) interviews from an engagement with six female executives from one of the Petroleum companies in Durban. Furthermore, purposive sampling was employed and qualitative thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the data.

1.14 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provided an overview of the research study, including the motivation for the study, the study's focus, the problem statement, the study's significance, the study's goal and objectives, the research questions to be investigated, the study's delimitations, limitations, and assumptions, and the research methodology used in the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter included a literature review and a presentation of prior researchers' work on the research issue. Theories of leadership, leadership styles, female leadership, and issues faced by female leaders were examined, with local and international literature consulted to support the research study.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter looked at the participants, research design and methods, data collection, the location of the study, validity and reliability, ethical issues as well as the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter 4: Presentation of results and analysis

The findings of the data collection were presented in this section, backed up by appropriate raw data extracts and includes a discussion of the analysed data in light of the study's objectives, current literature, and this study's paradigm to arrive at the findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations.

This chapter highlighted the important findings based on the research study's objectives, as well as recommendations for senior management and for future research.

1.15 Summary

The research study was introduced in this chapter, which also discussed efforts by the government and private institutions to address gender issues and promote equitable treatment for men and women. The chapter went on to discuss the motivation for the study by examining, inter alia, the obstacles and challenges faced by female leaders. Discussed in this introductory chapter were the study focus, the problem statement, as were the aim, objectives, methods employed to perform the study, and the questions that the study aimed to answer. The literature review will be presented in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, some of the crucial issues facing women leaders in the workplace were explored. This is achieved through a review of the literature, focusing on leadership and leaders, leadership theories, overall business leadership, obstacles faced by women aspiring to become leaders in the Petroleum industry and how they deal with these challenges, as well as other facets related to leadership. Leadership theory will be drawn upon since the focal point of this study is female leadership.

The notion that women are effectual leaders has progressed from the authors of feminist business books on management to mainstream media and is progressively making its way to popular culture (Eagly & Carli, 2003). But does gender have any relation to leadership style and efficacy?

Northouse (2013) defined leadership as "... a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal".

"I learned that leadership is about falling in love with the people and the people falling in love with you. It is about serving the people with selflessness, with sacrifice, and with the need to put the common good ahead of personal interests." Joyce Banda, former President of Malawi proffered.

Pick any definition of leadership and you would be hard pressed to find any that incorporates gender as part of its characterisation.

2.2 Women in Leadership

A 2016 study released by Ernst and Young (EY) and the Peterson Institute for International Economics revealed there was a substantial correlation between women in leadership and organisation profitability. The firms analysed results from 21,980 global, publicly listed companies, in 91 countries (South Africa included) from various sectors and industries and indicated that having at least thirty percent of women in leadership positions, resulted in an increase in net profit margin of around six percent (Anderson, 2016).

Yet, women must still circumnavigate a multifaceted and often spasmodic path to the top that bit by bit eats away at the number of women prepared to make the sacrifices to keep pushing (Paton, 2007).

Over the past couple of decades, women all over the world have relished their inclusion in unparalleled proportions in the labour market. Worldwide, women are now occupying leadership positions that were formerly earmarked for their male counterparts only. As encouraging as that may be, the reality is that this inclusion is still uneven and differs from one country to another. In South Africa for instance, this advancement has not always been systematic and every so often women find themselves encountering unanticipated challenges when advancing through the different echelons within organisations. In a 2013 article that appeared in the Harvard Business Review, it was revealed that only four percent of CEO positions in Fortune's top 1000 companies were occupied by women (Flynn, Heath, & Holt, 2013). As you shift from first world countries to the developing world, the difference is glaring. Zoning in on the home turf, the numbers tell a sombre story.

In as much as the focus of this study is to examine what impact women executives have on the petroleum industry, an exploration into challenges women face in general in the concrete jungle that is the corporate world will also be undertaken by examining literature.

This body of work is significant for a myriad of reasons. One of those reasons, and perhaps the most crucial has to do with diversity in the workplace. By way of example, globally, diversity has been credited for the success of organisations. The so-called "value-in-diversity" theory, which states that the assimilation of women and other marginalised groups does in fact improve organisational performance, has been contended to be a vital element of the rapidly evolving international corporate landscape (Cox, Lobel, Macleod, 1991).

Cobble (2005) claimed that not considering women for positions in senior levels of management gives rise to a problem of unjust discrimination.

According to a survey conducted by Grant Thornton - a consulting firm- in March 2004, globally (Nefdt, 2017), South Africa had been regarded as one of the more progressive countries as far as appointing women into senior level positions is concerned. More recently, a report from the annual Business Owners Survey revealed that in South Africa, seventy-five percent of organisations have women in senior management roles compared to the fifty-nine percent global average. Yet, the same cannot be said in the Petroleum industry.

The petroleum industry is multifaceted. It exerts influence on a number of topics ranging from poverty and politics to health and the environment. The chief interrogation of "Debating Oil in Africa" (2002) was "can oil revenues be made to work for Africans or will they profit only a

corrupt few?” (Nefdt, 2017, p.16). While the petroleum industry can be used to boost the economies of numerous countries, it is unfortunately also manipulated by dishonest government officials to advance their militaristic agendas as well as by superpowers to take advantage of developing countries, including those in Africa. This truth renders the petroleum industry a melting pot of gender, social and developmental issues worldwide and specifically in the continent of Africa.

2.3 Women in the South African Petroleum Industry

Women representation in middle and senior management positions in the petroleum industry is negligible, this despite the industry being the first to officially agree to a Charter. The Charter on Liquid Fuels and Petroleum was a pioneer in all economic charters to promote historically disadvantaged South Africans to participate in the sector, yet transformation remains dismally slow (Sephoti, 2010). WOESA (2005) attributes this chiefly to the fact that women are not encouraged to take up careers in the industry, in addition to a patriarchal organizational culture and the lack of advancement of women. To address the issue, SAPIA created the Leadership in Oil and Energy Certificate Programme NQF Level 7 as a flagship industry-specific curriculum (LOE Programme). This program was created particularly to assist women in achieving their full potential and to promote leadership diversity and capacity building (Banda-Hansmann, 2009).

Banda-Hansmann (2009), stated that the petroleum industry has a key strategic position in South Africa. As a result, it is critical to offer fundamental management and leadership coaching to prospective and present leaders who are also familiar with the industry's intricacies and issues. Although this initiative garnered widespread praise from industry captains, the progress made thus far suggests it has not been as effective to date.

2.4 Leadership: Does gender matter?

Leaders exert influence to motivate their followers. Although an individual who does not have followers can exhibit leadership, most interactions occur in a group setting. Achievement of goals is what a leader strives for. *“The process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish the shared objectives”* is what Yukl (2002 p.7) offered as a definition for leadership. His definition of leadership referenced ‘influence’. He

further agrees that the achievement of goals remains the overall objective. Even though the connection between leadership and gender has demanded scrutiny, tellingly, neither one of them mentioned gender in their definitions.

Women entering the labour force have been increasing steadily in recent years, however, a comparative increase in females being promoted to decision-making levels in organisations still proves elusive.

Dean, Mills, Roberts, Carraher, & Cash (2009) observed that gender segregation unabashedly continues to characterise many organisational structures. Women are still in oversupply in jobs conventionally regarded as suitable for females, and they remain underrepresented in positions that are regarded as “macho,” let alone in advanced leadership roles. Furthermore, there is an expectation on women managers that function in environments dominated by males to apply styles of leadership leaning towards virile cultures for self-preservation and recognition. Stereotypical agentic characteristics such as hierarchical authority, emphasis on control and effectiveness characterise “masculine approaches to management”, asserts Loden (1985). These approaches also include rationality, decisiveness, independence, dominance, ambition, self-assurance, and aggressiveness. By contrast, the “feminine approaches to management” or the communal characteristics associated with women, are linked with a concern for the treating of others with compassion. They are said to include being loving, accommodating, being approachable, compassionate, and considerate, as well as being interpersonally sensitive, tender, and gentle (Loden, 1985; Peters, 1990). Research has confirmed that society associates females and males with dissimilar traits, in addition, society correlates males with more of the traits that symbolise effective leadership (Ely & Rhode, 2010). Females who occupy leadership roles, as a result, time and again find themselves in a catch-22 situation. On the one hand, if they display so-called highly “ladylike” approaches of management, they are usually criticised for lacking manly qualities. On the other hand, if they exhibit so-called decidedly masculine traits, then they are censured for lacking a more feminine-participative approach. One way or another, they are always perceived as not having what it takes to crack it at the top.

2.5 The Glass Ceiling Turned Labyrinth

Sages started the conversation raising the question “can women lead?” Highly effective female leaders in corporate & political spheres have emerged and answered that question once and for all. The likes of PepsiCo’s CEO Indra Nooyi, ABSA Group CEO Maria Ramos, cutting a

lonely figure as the only female CEO on Top 40 JSE listed companies (Faku, 2017), former president of Malawi Joyce Banda, contemporary Christian leader Joyce Meyer, top the list of successful women who have defied the odds and prove the old African saying “If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation” as being true. Although seeing these women where they are and doing what they are doing is encouraging, there still is a long way to go.

That there is an issue is not in question. But if one misdiagnoses a problem, it is unlikely that one will prescribe a cure that is effective. In spite of years of progress made by women in the labour force, they continue to be as rare as hen’s teeth within the c-suite level.

During quarter one of 2021, 41 women led Fortune 500 firms. That is precisely 8.2 percent, but a boost from the 33 firms in 2019 and 24 in 2018. According to Fortune, there were only two firms on the list that were led by women 20 years ago (Newcomb, 2020). What is to be held accountable for the conspicuous deficiency of women in positions of authority and power? According to Eagly & Carli (2007) the world got an answer to this question three decades ago from then Wall Street Journal’s Timothy Schellhardt and Carol Hymowitz: “As it happens, the negligible number of women who steadily rose through the ranks ultimately smashed into an indiscernible barrier. The executive suite appeared to be within their reach, yet they just couldn’t push through the glass ceiling.” The metaphor struck a chord; it encapsulated the vexation of a within sight but somehow unachievable goal. Most certainly, there was an era when the impediments were definite. Even for executives whose career spans were of 1980s-era, access to the topmost positions had been overtly vetoed. Former USA President, Richard Nixon, in justifying why he would not designate a woman to the U.S. Supreme Court, is reported to have said that he did not think a woman should be appointed in any government job whatsoever because he believed women were emotional and erratic. He thought men were emotional and erratic as well, but a woman is more probable to be so. In a culture where such sentiments were prevalent, women effectively had no prospect of securing prominent leadership positions.

However, Eagly & Carli (2007) continued, times have changed, and the metaphor of a glass ceiling is now more untrue than true. For a start, it narrates a definite barrier at a particular high level in organizations. Given that there have been female presidents of nations, university presidents, and chief executives discredits that claim. Simultaneously, the metaphor suggests that men and women have coequal opportunities to junior and intermediate positions. They don’t. The depiction of a transparent barrier also implies that women are being deceived about their prospects, because the obstruction is difficult for them to notice from far. However, some

barriers are not elusive. By portraying a solitary, constant hindrance, the glass ceiling neglects to incorporate the variety and complexity of challenges that women can encounter in their journeys to leadership. The truth is, women are not ruled out only as they arrive at the penultimate juncture of an illustrious career, they vanish in copious numbers at various stages getting to that point. Metaphors are significant because they form part of the narrative that can necessitate transformation. Convinced of the realness of a glass ceiling, people underscore some types of interventions: lawsuits designed to punish bias in the c-suite, mentoring to expand report memberships, top-to-top networking, stipulations for diverse candidates in high-profile succession horse races. In no way are any of these ineffectual; all play a part.

The danger occurs when they divert resources and attention away from other types of approaches that may be more effective in combating the issue. It's time to rename the challenge if we want to make further progress.

The labyrinth is a better metaphor for what women face in their professional lives, continued to argue Eagly & Carli. It's a symbol with a long and varied history in ancient Greece, India, Nepal, and the United States, to name a few. As a present-day image, it conveys the concept of a difficult path toward a worthwhile objective. Passing through a labyrinth is not easy or straightforward; it necessitates perseverance, knowledge of one's success, and careful study of the puzzles ahead. There are paths for women who want to be top leaders, but they are full of twists and turns, both anticipated and unforeseen. It is assumed that goals are attainable since all labyrinths have a feasible path to the centre. The metaphor acknowledges difficulties but is not ultimately depressing. We can work more effectively to improve the situation if we understand the various barriers that make up this labyrinth and how some women get around them. Below, is a representation of the labyrinth that explains female under-representation in high-level leadership positions.

2.5.1 The leadership labyrinth

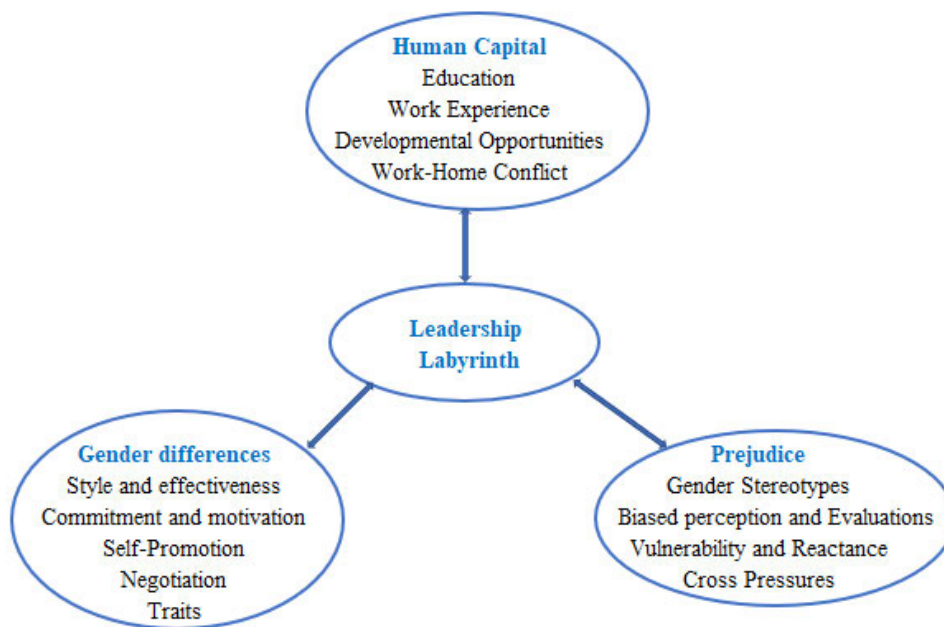


Figure 1: Leadership: Theory and Practice, 7th Edition
Source: Northouse (2016, p.400)

2.5.1.1 Human capital differences

- Pipeline Theory – the notion that women have not been in managerial positions long enough for natural career progression to occur Heilman (1997) which is not supported by research.
- Division of labour – this is said to lead women to self-select out of leadership tracks by choosing “mommy track” positions that do not funnel into leadership positions. Research does not support this argument (Eagly & Carli, 2004).
- Are less likely to receive encouragement, be included in key networks, and receive formal job training than their male counterparts.
- Confront greater barriers to establishing informal mentor relationships.

2.5.1.2 Gender difference

- Women show the same level of identification with & commitment to paid employment roles as men.
- Are less likely to promote themselves for leadership positions than men.
- Were less likely than men to emerge as group leaders, more likely to serve as social facilitators.

- Face significant gender biases and social disincentives when they self-promote.
- Are less likely than men to ask for what they want.
- Are less likely to negotiate than men.
- Psychological differences on traits often seen as related to effective leadership:
 - men show slightly more assertiveness than women.
 - women exhibit somewhat higher levels of integrity than men.
 - But effective leadership marked by androgynous mixture of traits as asserted by (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

2.5.1.3 Prejudice

- Stereotypes are easily activated and can lead to biased judgments.
- Gender bias stemming from stereotyped expectations – “*women take care and men take charge*”.
- Preconceptions of women’s roles & abilities as a major contributor.
- Women facing cross pressures to be tough but not too “manly”.
- Gender stereotypes:
 - Stereotypical attributes of women include communal characteristics such as concern for others, sensitivity, warmth, helpfulness, & nurturance while men are stereotyped with agentic characteristics such as confidence, assertiveness, independence, rationality, and decisiveness.

2.5.2 Vestiges of prejudice

It is a well-known fact that men continue to profit from quicker promotions and higher salaries as a group. Is this due to sexism or simply because men have less family obligations and, on average, longer careers, allowing them to obtain superior qualifications? Hundreds of correlational studies conducted by sociologists and economists have attempted to address this question. The US Government Accountability Office performed one of the most detailed of these reports. The research was focused on survey data from a representative sample of Americans collected between 1983 and 2000. The study offered reliable estimates of past job experience, which is useful for explaining later incomes, since the same people reacted to the survey repeatedly over the years.

Sex and other characteristics were used by the GAO researchers to see whether they could estimate overall salaries. They surveyed both part-time and full-time workers, as well as any other variables that they could predict, such as job experience and, that could impact earnings. Without accounting for these factors, the data revealed that women, averaged over the entire period from 1983-2000, received around 44% less than their male counterparts.

With these factors accounted for, the chasm was only about half as wide, nevertheless still considerable. Different working habits of men and women were the control variables that reduced the wage disparity the most: men worked more hours a year and had more years of experience than women. There were exceptions to the rule that most factors influenced men and women's earnings in the same way. For example, marriage and parenthood were linked to higher wages for men but this was not the case for women.

On the other hand, certain characteristics, especially years of schooling, had a greater positive impact on women's wages than men's. Even after accounting for all of the differences between men and women, the GAO report, as with similar reports, found that women's incomes remained lower than men's. The existence of wage inequality is consistent with the unexplained gender gap. The topic of whether prejudice affects promotions has been studied using similar approaches. Clearly, it does. Promotions take longer for women with comparable credentials than for men. From 1980 to 1982, one demonstrative countrywide study tracked staff and discovered that white men were more likely than black men, white women, and black women to advance to managerial positions. When other factors like education and hours worked per year were considered, the study found that white men were leading the other classes when it came to entering the labour market, and that their advantage in obtaining managerial positions increased all through their careers. These results were echoed by other researchers. Even in traditionally feminine fields like nursing, librarianship, elementary education, and social work men soar to administrative and supervisory roles faster than women.

2.6 Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks that will be used in this study will be the Trait-Leadership Model developed by Zaccaro and colleagues (2001) to understand leader traits and their influence on leader effectiveness/performance, the Contingency Theory of Leadership proposed by Fred Edward Fiedler and finally, Bass's Transformational Leadership Theory (Eagly et al., 2003;

Ely & Rhode, 2010). Path Goal, Great Man, Situational, Behavioural theories were also discussed in this study to have a balanced view of the leadership continuum.

2.6.1 Leadership styles and theories of transformation

Some theories and styles developed via leadership studies have over time withstood variations in leadership methods and conceptions, allowing us to better comprehend how to view and practice leadership. This research will examine these leadership philosophies and techniques as they relate to various leadership styles as explained by Ndlovu (2017).

Daft (2011) explained that in as much as several of these concepts and methods were studied years ago, they remain relevant to current leadership research. As described in Ndlovu (2017), in an effort to distinguish the most basic behavioural traits exhibited by effective leaders, these theories have been investigated, re-developed, and verified:

- Trait Theories: “What personal characteristics make a good leader?”
- Contingency Theories: “How do circumstances influence leadership style?”
- Transformational Leadership Theory: “By articulating a vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals, and providing individualized support, effective leaders change the basic values, beliefs, and attitudes of followers so that they are willing to perform beyond the minimum levels specified by the organization”.
- Path-Goal Theories: “How do you motivate your subordinates to reach intended goals?”
- Great Man Theories: “What distinguishes leaders from non-leaders?”
- Situational Theories: “What behaviour should a leader adopt given the situation?”
- Behavioural Theories: “What behaviours reflect in a good leader?”

2.6.2 Trait theories

Traits and skills of successful leaders have been written about quite considerably. Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, and Steve Jobs are all names that have become synonymous with great leadership. But what are Maria Ramos, Priscillah Mabelane, Sheryl Sandberg and Mary Barra greatly known for? They are only a handful of innumerable phenomenal females who are extraordinary in their leadership whose style of leadership has disrupted the clichéd long-established leadership patterns women have been associated with.

Trait theories habitually appreciate leadership characteristics as innate, (e.g., leaders are born, not made). They have, however failed to consider the influence of social-environmental

dynamics that have precluded women from such positions. As such, much to their detriment, concept equivalence across gender when measuring attributes or traits have not been considered by trait theories. For example, dominance expressed through one facet might render women insufficient; a broadening to embrace diverse terminologies might eradicate the men and women stereotypical differences (Zaccaro and colleagues, 2001).

The development of trait theory is based on the view that upright leaders have certain characteristics or traits that distinguish them from bad leaders. Kutz (2012) argues that leadership traits are inherent characteristics or sacred attributes of individuals that enable them to lead successfully, even if they have no previous leadership experience.

Leadership qualities linked to demographics, for example age, education, and gender; task competence, for example aptitude and assiduousness; and interpersonal attributes, for example boldness and likeability were suggested by (Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman & Humphrey (2011). In different situations, particular qualities consistently elicit the specific behaviour patterns inherent in the leader. Chetty (2016) argues that there is no typical list of characteristics that can be directly attributed to the success of leaders.

Mahatma Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, and Nelson Mandela for example, have been universally acclaimed as extraordinary leaders. What enabled these leaders to be effective were their idiosyncratic attributes and traits. This list of traits is of course by no means exhaustive as pointed out by Gqaji (2013).

Derue et al. (2011), after much analysis of the effectiveness of leadership characteristics, such as gender, argue that the difference in the effectiveness of leadership behaviours is not only the characteristics of leadership, but also that the effectiveness of leadership requires a leadership paradigm of consolidated characteristic behaviour, in which the leadership behaviour regulates the attributes of leadership.

Trait hypotheses have been found to have flaws by some researchers. Hoque (2013) contended that trait theories ignored cognitive abilities, values, problem-solving skills, experience, social skills, and motives, in favour of a limited collection of individual attributes.

Gqaji (2013) noted that, although proponents of trait theories studied what makes great leaders, they were unable to demonstrate how the traits or attributes helped them lead successfully. The claims suggested that even if a leader has these characteristics, he or she might not be able to use them efficiently for the organization's success. Chetty (2016) explained that trait theories emphasized the leader's success at the expense of the followers' contributions to the leader's success. Another flaw, as Gqaji (2013) points out, is that trait theories are old and out of date,

but they can still be used to describe emerging modern-day sets of theories and can be integrated with other related theories.

2.6.3 Contingency Theories

Contingency, also referred to as a theory of situational leadership, proposes an alternate method to address the shortcomings modelled by theories based on traits as the former proposes that different situations call for different characteristics of leadership; consequently, a solitary framework of a leader does not exist. Situational leadership look at situations within contexts, as well as the interface between leadership characteristics, and behaviour alongside characteristics of followers. Even though these theories afford themselves the inclusivity of diversity intricacies, the leadership context in these studies is, as usual, the organisational culture in which leadership is carried out. A wide-ranging characterisation of frameworks to include the social and cultural frameworks would be more vigorous particularly as we are beginning to look the task of leadership through a diverse society and global context lens (Fiedler, 1964).

Belief that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership; rather, given the leader's expertise and strengths in a given situation, the leader chooses the most suitable technique or conduct for success is what contingency theories hinge on, according to Peretomode (2012). Chetty (2016) further states, in contingency theory, that there is no ideal leadership style in all cases, and the effectiveness of which leadership style is used is determined by many different factors, inter alia, traits of the followers, styles of leaders and circumstantial factors.

Contingency theories, Peretomode (2012) further elucidated, are founded on the supposition that leadership approaches are quite inflexible and rigid, rendering it strenuous for the task-oriented leader or dictator to expeditiously switch his or her approach to become a friendly and participative leader. Seepersad (2012) asserted that important decisions are taken for a variety of circumstances, be it internal or external, based on a variety of factors, including the degree of significance, availability of information, previous similar decisions, and their outcomes, how inspired the followers are, and just the general relationship between the followers and the leader.

Needs, cohesion, training, and maturity of the followers, as well as circumstantial aspects including work, structural context, and surroundings, all influence leadership style choice, clarified Daft (2011). Before making a decision or acting, the leader must diagnose the problem

and respond correctly based on what he or she has learned, and a successful result is more than likely (Daft, 2011).

Fiedler's leadership contingency theory emphasizes that the effectiveness of a leader depends on the correct leadership method implemented in the correct context. Seepersad (2012) argues that the Leader-member relationship, task organization, and position power are essential emergency elements for leaders in various situations. The successful application of task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership styles in the workplace is Fiedler's contingency model. As a relationship-oriented leader, effective leaders employ interpersonal abilities to establish a pleasant group mood or work scenario, as well as the capacity to take command, define the task, and provide directives. If they are a task-oriented leader, they will explain the task and provide guidance that everyone will readily follow without difficulty (Daft, 2011).

Fiedler's contingency theory, according to Peretomode (2012), contends that a leader's efficacy is determined by the interplay between their style and the situation's features, which are characterized as leader-member-relation, leader-position power, and task-structure. The following are the characteristics of the situation: “*very favourable situation, intermediate favourableness, unfavourable situation*” (Ndlovu, 2017, p. 17).

The line between contingency and situational theories is thin, in that both emphasize that there is no generic leadership style. What distinguishes them from each other, explains Peretomode (2012), is that contingency theories take a broader view of the elements of a particular situation, including the leader's talents as well as other elements in a given circumstance, and the style of leadership is quite obstinate and rigid, whereas situational theories emphasize the behaviour that the leader should adopt in light of the followers' behaviour and maturity level, and the leader's style must be adaptable enough to deal with a variety of scenarios.

2.6.4 Transformational Leadership

Several studies of research have validated that one of the most successful forms of leadership is Transformational Leadership. Women, as found by various studies, are most likely to be more transformational and more dedicated to the leadership traits that foretell effectiveness than men (Eagly et al., 2003; Ely & Rhode, 2010). In spite of that, the presence of females in positions of influence remains disproportionately insignificant.

A transformational leader is an individual who inspires (transforms) and stimulates followers to realize astonishing results (Robbins & Coulter, 2007). He or she is able to inspire, arouse, and excite followers to put forth extra effort to realize group goals by paying attention to

individual followers' concerns and developmental needs; they change followers' awareness of issues by aiding them to view existing challenges in new ways. Transformational leadership theory is about leaders that inspire positive transformation in their followers by encouraging them to look out for one another and act in the best interests of the group (Warrilow, 2012). James Macgregor Burns first proposed the notion of transformational leadership in 1978 in his descriptive study of political leaders, but it has since extended into organizational psychology and management, with subsequent revisions by B.M Bass and J.B Avolio (Jung & Sosik, 2002). Through a variety of techniques, transformational leadership improves the morale, motivation, and performance of followers. These include tying the follower's sense of self and identity to the project as well as the organization's collective identity; becoming an inspiring and engaging role model for followers; motivating followers to take greater responsibility of their work; and recognizing followers' strengths and shortcomings so that the leader may assign activities that will improve their performance.

Warrilow (2012) identified four transformational leadership style components:

- 1) Charisma or idealised influence: The extent to which a leader behaves admirably, demonstrates convictions, and takes stands that encourage followers to identify with the leader who has a clear set of principles and functions as a role model for the followers.
- (2) Inspirational motivation: the extent to which the leader clearly expresses a vision that engages and motivates followers with hope for future goals while also providing significance for the current duties at hand.
- (3) Intellectual stimulation: the extent to which the leader challenges the followers' assumptions, galvanize, and champions their creativity - by giving a framework for followers to recognize how they link [to the goal, each other, the leader, and the organization], they may ingeniously prevail over any hurdles in the path of the mission.
- (4) Personal and individual attention: the extent to which the leader addresses the needs of each individual follower, serve as a coach or mentor, and respects and values the individual's contribution to the team. This satisfies and strengthens each team member's need for self-fulfilment and self-worth needs, inspiring followers to strive for even greater success and growth.

Despite several criticisms, transformational leadership has gained appeal in recent years (Yukl, 1999). Managers in various organizations, such as the military and industry, have discovered that transformational leaders are more effective, higher performers, more promotable, and more interpersonally sensitive than their transactional counterparts, according to studies (Rubin et al, 2005; Judge and Bono, 2000). According to empirical evidence, transformational leadership

is also highly linked to employee work outcomes such as increased productivity, follower well-being, lower turnover rates, goal attainment, creativity, and employee satisfaction. (Eisenbeiß and Boerner, 2013; Garcia-Morales et al, 2008; Piccolo and Colquitt, 2006; Keller, 1992).

2.6.5 Path Goal Theories

Haller (2013) states that the assumption in path goal concepts is that in order to attain leadership success, the path that leads to the goal must be set. Some scholars have found that an effective leader is one that shows their subordinates the expected incentives to complete the task at hand or completing the job obligations. Daft (2011) argues that the Path goal notion is part of the contingency techniques, in which a leader gets his followers more motivated by defining the behaviours required to complete a task as well as subsequent incentives desired and valued by the followers.

The leader establishes a routine actuality route that addresses any obstacles or obstructions in the way of attaining the goal. The communication style, directive, support, and engagement of a leader are path goal theory characteristics that describe and connect followers' satisfaction and motivation, according to Haller (2013). The ability of the leader to keep their word and ensure followers are motivated to willingly execute tasks is a fundamental flaw in the path goal theory. If the organisation runs into hard times, subordinates may get demotivated, provide subpar work, or resign and take their skills elsewhere where they are valued.

2.6.6 Great Man Theories

The great man theories, as explained by Daft (2011), are among the oldest theories of leadership, having gained popularity in the 1940s. According to these philosophies, leaders are born influential, have heroic attributes, and possess natural capabilities that set them apart from followers. Kendra (2016) proffered that exceptional leaders are born gallant, phantasmal, and are fated to lead in due course; they are intelligent, charismatic, exude confidence, and possess enviable social skills, rendering them ordained to lead. Daft (2011) further states that this philosophy presumes that leadership ability is innate and mostly a male trait, with a concentration on political, social, and military leadership. That leaders possess certain traits and qualities is not in doubt, but they must be nurtured and refined in order to deal with any situation that may arise. Various researchers have found the great man theory to be flawed and have criticized it. It differs from contingency theories, which, according to Daft (2011) accept

that any information or skill that a leader needs to succeed can be taught to them, as well as behavioural theories, which claim that leaders can be developed through observation and training (Sharma & Jain, 2013). This theory's fundamental flaw is that, in addition to being antiquated, it is also inapplicable in today's world because it solely believes that men are born leaders, therefore the moniker "Great Man" (Kendra, 2016). Margaret Thatcher, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Joyce Banda, Jacinda Ardern, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Hillary Clinton are just a few examples of today's talented and brilliant female political leaders.

2.6.7 Situational Theories

Situational theories are founded on the idea that the situation in which a leader finds themselves in dictates the type or level of action that must be pursued. According to Chetty (2016) the issue at hand is the focal point, which dictates the most appropriate leadership style for different types of decisions. In one setting, the leader may choose to be autocratic, while in another, he or she may choose to be democratic, and each style may be fitting and effective for that situation. Peretomode (2012) stated that situational theories place emphasis on the behaviours that the leader ought to embrace in light of the followers' behaviours. The leadership approach is fairly adaptable, allowing him or her to move along the continuum and cope with the situation. The length of time it takes to transition from one leadership style to another is determined by the leader's maturity level, intelligence, personality, and being sensitive to occurring events in his or her vicinity, and their adroitness as well as capability to swiftly identify the track the organization must be on (Peretomode, 2012). For a leader's success and effectiveness in reaching the desired goal, adopting the appropriate leadership style at the correct time in a specific scenario is crucial.

As stated by Daft (2011), contingent upon their followers' willingness the leader may employ various styles of leadership, for example, delegating, selling, telling, and participating in each given situation. At each given time, the suitable and effective leadership behaviour will be determined by the level of readiness of followers. As maintained by Peretomode (2012), followers' maturity levels are characterized by their desire, preparation, and ability to face the work in front of the group, but the leader's style flexibility determines the group's success in each situation. Because the followers' preparedness level is low at maturity level 1, the leader must tell them what to do, how and when to do it. Situational leadership theory, as explained by McCleskey (2014) proposes that leadership effectiveness necessitates a lucid grasp of the state of affairs and a reaction that's appropriate, as opposed to a charismatic leader with a great

number of devoted followers. Situational leadership in general and Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) specifically grew out of a task-oriented vs people-oriented leadership continuum. The continuum depicted the degree to which the leader prioritizes the required tasks or on their relationships with their followers. SLT was created by Hershey and Blanchard to characterize leadership style and emphasize the importance of matching the leader's style to the followers' maturity level. Task-oriented leaders define followers' duties, issue clear instructions, build organizational structures, and develop formal communication channels. Relation-oriented leaders, on the other hand, show concern for others, try to resolve emotional issues, maintain harmonious relationships, and ensure equal involvement. SLT has been categorized as a behavioural theory or a contingency theory by several authors. Both conceptions have some merit.

SLT centres on leaders' conduct as either task or people oriented. This substantiates its incorporation as a behavioural leadership styles approach (autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire), comparable with the Michigan production-oriented vs employee-oriented approach, the Ohio State initiation vs consideration dichotomy, and the directive vs participative approach. It also depicts effective leadership as being reliant on the maturity of the followers. This aligns with other contingency-based leadership hypotheses which include Fiedler's path-goal theory, leadership substitutions theory, contingency theory, and Vroom's normative contingency model. Both conceptualizations of SLT acknowledge that relation-oriented and task-oriented behaviours are not mutually exclusive, but rather interdependent and an effectual leader employs a combination of them, depending on the leader's maturity level and the situation.

The optimal leadership style is determined by the level of maturity (both job and psychological maturity) of followers and is related to prior education and training interventions.

SLT are not above reproach, however (McCleskey, 2014). They were a prevalent leadership paradigm at the time, but as experience with the original Hersey & Blanchard model grew, flaws in the construct surfaced. Three SLT flaws relating to conformity, consistency, and continuity were called out by Nicholl (1985). Bass (2008) concurred, noting ambiguities, conceptual contradictions, and deficiency in internal consistency. According to research, no single leadership style is universally successful, and behavioural theories rely on difficult-to-identify abstract leadership types (McCleskey, 2014).

2.6.8 Behavioural Theories

Scholars, in attempting to discover the distinct conduct distinguishing exceptional leaders, developed behavioural theories. Exceptional leaders are developed by being taught and observed, according to Chetty (2016), and an individual's action has the potential to guide the individual to developing into a great leader.

When defining the theory, Lorilla (2012) stated that a leader's behaviour is an excellent predictor of the influences of leadership that predict success within leadership. This suggests that these leadership behaviours are not inborn but can be learned and anyone may become a leader through a guided leadership journey.

Derue et al. (2011), explained that behavioural theory examines four types of leadership behaviours:

- Task-Oriented Behaviours: "Expectations, levels of performance, and rewards for fulfilling targets are all clearly stated by the leader."
- Relational-Oriented Behaviours: "Approachable and friendly disposition centring on group's welfare."
- Change-Oriented Behaviours: "Focus on expressing the vision and encouraging innovative thinking and risk-taking to facilitate and drive change."
- Passive Leadership Behaviour: "An inert leader who does not participate in any activities other than dealing with upcoming issues. In the absence of the leader's behaviour, it is a laissez-faire or free-run organization."

Furthermore, explained Derue et al. (2011), the relational characteristics of leaders influence the level of participation in all of these types. Gregarious leaders pursue their followers' input, talk energetically, and easily establish the group's direction, whereas agreeable leaders are more approachable, friendlier, and respectful to their followers. Contrastingly, Derue et al., (2011) above discussed four categories, while Daft (2011) recognized only two types of leadership behaviours: autocratic and democratic, explaining that leaders modify their behaviour to align with the situation so as to achieve success in their positions of leadership.

Daft (2011), further asserted that an Ohio State University research of leadership behaviour revealed two broad categories of leadership behaviour: "initiating structure" and "consideration."

In the initiating structure category, the leader, to get tasks completed and achieve their goals, managed work activities and tasks with an iron fist. Whereas in "consideration", the leader exhibited respect, care, gratitude, and formed reciprocated trust with followers (Daft, 2011).

The new behaviours apparent in today's leaders are still to corroborate or invalidate what research has up to now identified as effective or ineffective behaviours of leadership.

2.7 Summary

Based on the investigation of the different descriptions of leadership and what leaders are and/or not in this study, there seems to be no suggestion of a correlation between leadership effectiveness and gender, but rather success in leadership hinges on the leader and how they relate to the people in their care. The literature reviewed in this research study affirmed that an individual's competencies, knowledge, and capabilities, can influence whether or not they are an effective leader.

An analysis of traditional theories and assumptions was conducted, and diverse experts offered alternative perspectives on leadership. Some of these theories were dated, while others were merged with other theories. By way of illustration, the situational and contingency theories both took the situation into consideration, but different variables were integrated with the leadership style utilized in the correct situation in the contingency theories (Seepersad, 2012). The petroleum industry has always been a "boys club" with not much transformation over the decades. As a result, if female leaders were to succeed, they need to function at their highest level. They are required to employ a variety of leadership styles to be effective, which depend on the followers' needs.

From time immemorial, the universal philosophies undermining the abilities of women leaders have prevailed. Female executives confront hurdles throughout their careers, as the literature has attested. When women display authority, assertiveness, or domineering conduct, they are scorned and deemed unfeminine.

The approach used to acquire the data will be discussed in the next chapter, as well as suitability of the selected methods and finally how the collected data will be stored. A discussion on the validity and reliability of the collected data will also be undertaken.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the techniques used to conduct this research and discusses the research design and methodology used in this research. The research methods are consistent with the research questions, research goals and objectives.

This chapter introduces and discusses the interviewees, the research environment, and the research design used to provide research models that depend on the research question.

Furthermore, this chapter also presents and discusses the methods of collecting data and approaches employed, data analysis, as well as the validity and reliability of the results.

3.2 The aim and objectives of the study

The main aim of this study, as was outlined in chapter one, was to explore the impact of the leadership of women in the petroleum industry in Durban, a city on the east coast of South Africa. Durban is the base for two of the country's biggest refineries, Enref, which is Engen Petroleum Ltd.'s refinery and a Shell SA Refining and BP Southern Africa joint venture - SAPREF.

Emanating from the aim, the following objectives were derived:

1. To ascertain if women and men lead differently within the petroleum industry;
2. To establish if gender influences an individual's leadership effectiveness within the petroleum industry;
3. To determine the factors that affect women leadership within the petroleum industry; and
4. To make recommendations to petroleum industry's senior management towards enhancing women leadership.

3.3 Research paradigm

Creswell (2008) defined a paradigm or worldview as an underlying set of beliefs that inform action. These beliefs have been called philosophical assumptions, paradigms, alternative

knowledge claims, broadly conceived research methodologies, and epistemologies, and ontologies. Creswell further stated that these paradigms can be viewed as a common inclination about the nature of research and the world in general that a researcher holds. These paradigms are formed by experiences from past research, the inclinations of the student's advisors/mentors, as well as the field of discipline of the student. The quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach arises out of the types of beliefs or inclinations that an individual researcher holds (Creswell, 2014).

Dependent on the set of beliefs they bring to the research, qualitative researchers use varying paradigms, and over time, the types have evolved continually. To make this point, one could contrast the worldviews of Denzin and Lincoln (2005) with the worldviews of Denzin and Lincoln (1994). Researchers may also make use of multiple worldviews in their qualitative research that are well-suited to their research, for instance participatory and constructionist paradigms (Creswell, 2008).

This research study focused on four paradigms that underpin qualitative research, being pragmatism, post-positivism, constructivism, and advocacy/ participatory (Creswell, 2008).

3.3.1. Pragmatism

Creswell (2008) posits that pragmatism takes on various forms. Researchers embracing this worldview, as opposed to post-positivism, focus on the consequences of the research, i.e., situations, actions, and outcomes of inquiry instead of antecedent circumstances. The focus is on applications and resolutions to problems and consequently, rather than a focus on approaches, the central aspect of research is the problem under study as well as the questions asked concerning this problem.

Pragmatism is not dedicated to any single system of reality and philosophy. Researchers, at their discretion, are unrestricted in choosing techniques, procedures and methods of research that best meet their requirements and purposes. Just as researchers who choose mixed methods rely on various methods for gathering and analysing data instead of subscribing to a single way (e.g., qualitative, or quantitative), pragmatists do not have an absolute single view of the world. What works at the time is truth; it is not founded in a dualism between reality within the mind or independent of the mind.

Researchers with a pragmatic worldview take heed of the “what” and “how” to research based on its envisioned outcomes. Pragmatists concur that research always happens in political, social, historical, and other contexts.

Practically, a study based on this worldview will utilise various approaches for collecting data to best address the research question, will use both quantitative and qualitative sources of collecting data, will emphasize the practical consequences of the research, and will focus on the significance of conducting a study that addresses the research problem more effectively.

3.3.2. Post-positivism

The researcher who undertakes qualitative research with a post-positivism outlook will take a scientific approach to research. The method is deterministic based on priori theories, emphasizes empirical data collection, has the components of being logical, reductionistic, and is cause-and-effect focused. This approach is evident amongst researchers who have had quantitative research training previously, and in disciplines such as the health sciences where qualitative research is a new method to research and must be understood in phrases tolerable to quantitative researchers and the agents funding the research. In practice, post-positivist researchers will probably understand inquiry as a sequence of sensibly interrelated steps, believe in several viewpoints from participants instead of a single reality, and advocate laborious approaches of qualitative data gathering and analysis. They will employ numerous levels of data analysis for precision, use computer programs to help in their analysis, promote the utilization of validity approaches, and transcribe their qualitative research in the form of scientific reports, structured in a manner that resembles quantitative methods (e.g., problem, questions, collection of data, outcomes, deductions) (Creswell, 2008).

3.3.3. Social Constructivism

According to Creswell (2008), social constructivism (which is often combined with interpretivism) is a worldview where researchers seek to understand the world in which they live and work. A researcher develops idiosyncratic interpretations of their experiences-interpretations aimed at certain things or objects. These interpretations are manifold and diverse, which leads the researcher to search for the intricacy of views instead of narrowing the interpretations into a few philosophies or categories. The objective of research, then, is to as much as possible depend on the participants' opinions of the situation. These subjective meanings are often negotiated historically and socially. That is to say, they are not merely imprinted on persons but are shaped through dealings with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural customs that function in individuals' lives. Instead of

opening with a theory (as in post-positivism), researchers produce or inductively generate a theory or outline of meaning. Practically, the questions tend to be general and broad so that the participants can come up with the interpretation of a situation, an interpretation archetypally formed in interactions or discussions with other individuals. The more unrestricted the inquiry, the better, as the researcher listens attentively to what persons say or do in their environment. Consequently, constructivist researchers habitually focus on the "processes" of interaction amid persons. They also concentrate on the precise circumstances in which persons live and work to appreciate the cultural and historical environment of the participants.

Researchers admit that their own backgrounds shape their understanding, and they "locate themselves" in the investigation to realize how their understanding derive from their own history, culture, and personal experience. Consequently, the researchers explain their findings, an explanation formed by their own background and experience. The researcher's goal, then, is to interpret (or make sense out of) the meanings other people have of the world. Qualitative research is often referred to as "interpretive" research for this reason.

3.3.4. Advocacy/Participatory

The fundamental tenet of this paradigm is that research ought to include an action agenda for transformation that could possibly transform the lives of participants, the organizations in which they work and live, or maybe even the lives of the researchers. These side-lined groups face issues that are of utmost importance to examine, issues such as hegemony, alienation, suppression, domination, and oppression. Participants are given a voice by the researchers, bettering their lives and increasing their level of consciousness. The key elements of advocacy/participatory practice can be summarized as follows: Participatory action is dialectical or recursive and is centred on bringing transformation in practices. Advocacy/participatory studies focus on assisting individuals to unshackle themselves from work policies, language, and media constraints as well as in the relationships of power in educational institutions. This is why, at the conclusion of advocacy/participatory studies researchers advance for an agenda of transformation.

Crucial issues or stances are often what advocacy/participatory studies commence with, issues such as the necessity of empowerment. It is emancipatory in that it aids in the liberation of individuals from the constrictions of unreasonable and unjust systems that limit self-determination and self-development. The objective of advocacy/participatory studies is to initiate a political discussion and dialogue to facilitate change. It is collaborative and practical

because it is research conducted "with" others instead of "on" or "to" others. Pursuant to this, advocacy/participatory researchers work with the participants as active co-partners in their research. Practically, this paradigm has moulded numerous approaches to research. Distinct social ills (e.g., inequity, domination, oppression) help formulate the research questions. Collaborations with research participants help advocacy/participatory researchers avoid further marginalising persons participating in the research. They might request participants to assist with formulating the questions, data collection and analysis, and providing a shape to the research's final report. To this extent, throughout the research process, the participants' "voice" is heard. The research also incorporates an action agenda for change, a specified strategy that talks to the discrimination against the overlooked individuals (Creswell, 2008).

For this research study, the advocacy/participatory paradigm was employed since post-positivism enforces structural theories and laws that are not suitable for marginalized persons or groups and the constructivism worldview does not sufficiently advocate for action to support individuals.

3.4 Research design and methods

Sekaran and Bougie (2013) state that research design can be described as a method of collecting, measuring, and analysing data based on the objectives of the research study. The main aim of a research study is to come up with current information that will provide a richer appreciation of the subject matter being investigated. Sekaran & Bougie (2013) further state that the researcher must come up with a road map or plan to measure, collect and analyse data to respond to the questions of the research study, along with adopting the appropriate research approaches to gather information that is required. The research design supplies the general approach that combines the various elements of the research study in a logical and coherent manner to deal with the research problem.

Mouton (2009) argues that the research approach selected must be apposite for the objective of the research study, hence it is crucial to comprehend the distinctions between the approaches prior to opting for one. Mixed methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, are research methods that are mostly employed. Different approaches can be used by the researcher to gather information using these methods.

3.4.1 Mixed research method

The combined research approach necessitates the utilisation of both qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting and analysing data within a single study. The mixed research method involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, to respond to hypotheses or research questions (Creswell, 2014).

A notable characteristic of the mixed research method is its methodological pluralism, which often produces superior research in comparison to monomethod designs. The fundamental premise and general intent of mixed approaches is that the combined use of qualitative and quantitative methods might possibly offer an improved understanding of research problems than either approach on its own (Molina-Azorin, 2012).

Creswell (2014) postulates that the mixed research method can be broadly appreciated through three typologies:

3.4.1.1. Explanatory sequential

In this approach, a quantitative study is carried out first, then the qualitative study is conducted to clarify or explain the results from the initial phase.

3.4.1.2. Exploratory sequential

A qualitative study is carried out first in this approach, succeeded by a quantitative study to realize the research objectives. For the most part, the qualitative phase is used to come up with an instrument for the quantitative phase or to point out the variables.

3.4.1.3. Convergent parallel

Both qualitative and quantitative data collection takes place at almost the same time and is then combined.

3.4.2 Quantitative research approach

A quantitative research approach proffers a comprehension of an experience by gathering numerical data, by means of well-defined and substantiated data gathering methods (Littlefield, 2013). Instruments, for instance surveys and questionnaires provide an inflexible technique to

obtaining and cataloguing answers to questions, making use of decidedly structured instruments such as surveys, structured observations, and questionnaires.

Therefore, given that quantitative data is centred on accurate quantification, no room for researcher bias is afforded.

Quantitative research is concerned with numbers and quantity as opposed to descriptions and quality. Littlefield (2013) further explained that, from a sizeable number of participants, the researcher obtains a limited amount of data, as the collection of appropriate information that can be measured as well as statistics to facilitate statistical significance and enable predictions is emphasised. In order to disapprove or confirm the hypothesis, the objective data is assessed and an analysis process that is grounded on intricate structured approaches is used.

The analytical intents are to define the attributes of a population, measure dissimilarities and prognosticate causal relationships, without taking into consideration the connection of the participants as well as personal exposure to the subject matter being researched. Participants are not able to go into detail on the topic, the responses they provide do not determine or influence which questions and how the researcher asks next, opportunities to probe further do not exist, and as such, the researcher is not able to make further interrogation (Henning, 2013). The format of the finalised transcribed report may comprise of an overview of the study, scholarly research, and theory pertinent to the study, methods used to collect, analyse etc., the data, and finally, discussion of the outcome (Creswell, 2008).

A quantitative research approach is convenient whenever the numerical quantity in the study is regarded as definitive to standard and it is not valuable to appreciate in detail the comprehensive motives for a specific behaviour. Sofaer (1999) proffered that the quantitative approach does not reproduce the expressive insights, thus declarations made by participants are not easy to make congruous with an interpretative method for the reason that they are tallied and presented in the form of a table. The assignment of digits to responses and intangible hypotheses could impact the genuineness of the outcomes in most cases. Taking the above elucidation into consideration, the study therefore took on a qualitative research approach to encourage the advancement of a better appreciation of the subject matter being explored.

3.4.3 Qualitative research approach

Qualitative research offers comprehensive insights that endeavour to ascertain in what way and for what reason events take place and why individuals conduct themselves in the manner that they do. Qualitative research is characterised as being constructivist and interpretivist,

whereupon the researcher makes use of his/her expertise and erudition in the analysis of the data (Ndlovu, 2017). Interpretivism in its subjective nature is rooted in the credence that reality is manifold and comparative (Edirisingha, 2012). In addition, (Edirisingha, 2012) put forward that interpretivists are inclined to make use of observation methods as well as interviews to deliver qualitative research findings. On the other side of the coin, positivists are unbiased, making use of quantitative research approaches such as surveys and experiments to gather statistics and facts, with the confidence that reality is not internal. Creswell (2008) states that qualitative research endeavours to investigate and comprehend human behaviour and its meaning. George (2008) argues that exploratory purposes are what it is primarily designed for, it is expressive, and generally tends to obtain very detailed knowledge about a relatively small sample of participants. Qualitative methods provide an open and informal approach that emphasizes experience, feelings, and attitudes. Du Plooy, Cilliers, Davies & Bezuidenhout (2014) pointed out that qualitative research refers to general experience, and researchers seek an encyclopaedic perspective of specific phenomena that people experience. Hynes (2012) also explains that because it allows researchers to link the needs, feelings, and concerns of the community from one perspective, qualitative research is reasonable. Henning (2013) observes that qualitative research can effectively unearth details, allowing researchers to understand the puzzle and participants more deeply. As Creswell (2008) said, researchers are very close to participants through long-term observations and in-depth interviews. It also allows the researcher the opportunity to modify the research design based on factors that the researcher believes are critical in the research process.

Qualitative data collection methods employed time and again are focus groups, interviews, observations, and questionnaires. Data gathered through qualitative research is evocative and leaves matters open. However, it should be considered that the data takes on identified samples' views and experiences into consideration when making recommendations, which may well be dissimilar if another sample were to be utilized.

This research adopted the qualitative method because it can better address the goal and purpose of this study, that is, to have a greater and more comprehensive understanding of the obstacles faced by female leaders in the Boy's Club that is the petroleum industry, and how they handle these challenges. The selected research design is based on the aim, objectives and research questions of the research. The technique used to collect data was semi-structured in-depth interviews with elected female leaders from one of South Africa's leading petroleum companies. The interviews were via Skype and Zoom and were recorded by the applications'

in-built recorder to accurately transcribe and analyse the data. Sekaran and Bougie (2013) argue that qualitative research involves the analysis of data that is descriptive in nature and cannot be immediately quantified. Creswell (2008) further adds that the qualitative research questions start with "how, what, when, where, and why" to extract intangible elements related to the research question; they are not based on metrics or variables.

The participants of this qualitative study were directly involved in the subject and the discussion was carried out with an attitude of acceptance and impartiality.

Participants were allowed to express their opinions, professional knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs, with regards to the research topic. Qualitative studies as argued by Gumus, Borkowski, Deckard & Martel (2011) are employed to grasp the fundamental motivations and rationales, as well as to reveal common thoughts, ideas, and tendencies. Qualitative research calls attention to the cultural, social, and intricate nature of human beings, hence delivering a rounded illustration of what 'real life' looks like for some individuals.

Choosing a qualitative research approach has its tests. For instance, participants can give inaccurate or misleading information in an attempt to offer the best version of the subject or vice versa, trying to please the researcher. If the interviewee does not understand the importance of research, they may also take it casually. This behaviour was averted as the researcher had already built an understanding with the participants. At the commencement of interviews with each participant, the researcher explicated the significance of the research study, emphasising the manner in which the data will be applied and guaranteeing discretion.

3.5 Study Setting

The participants for this research study were female senior leaders at one of South Africa's leading petroleum companies.

The female leaders in this organisation have had different experiences in their careers and at the senior level they currently occupy. All the participants' experiences, perspectives, perceptions, and knowledge were essential in aiding to address the objectives and aim and of this research study.

Durban is an east coast city of South Africa with both affluent and impoverished communities. The interviews were conducted via Skype and Zoom at different times and locations that suited and were convenient for the participants.

3.6 Population of the Study

The population has been described by Sekaran & Bougie (2016) as things of interest, the entire group of events, or people that the researcher desires to explore. For this research study, the sample size drawn represented the whole population. It was the opinion of this study that the drawn sample would yield reliable results (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

The interviewees were 6 females from diverse socio-economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds from the different petroleum companies having offices in Durban.

3.7 Sampling Techniques

3.7.1 Snowball Sampling

Atkinson and Flint (2011) defined snowballing as a method for assembling research subjects through identifying an initial subject who then aids in identifying other actors. This study employed the snowball sampling technique as it was important to gain access to the correct people at the correct levels to get information (Pitt, 1997, Atkinson, Rowland and Flint, 2001). A total of 6 participants were interviewed for this research study as that was the total number of senior leaders within the organisation available to be part of the study.

3.7.2 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is the purposeful sourcing of subjects of a study which are believed to be pertinent to the research objectives. This technique intends to find ‘information-rich cases’ that assist in enriching the study (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). This study used this data collection method to add to the body of knowledge.

3.8 Construction of the Instrument

3.8.1 Interviews

For this research, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews by way of Skype and Zoom and was recorded by the applications’ built-in recorder to accurately

transcribe and analyse the information. For this study, the questioner generated a set of predetermined questions to establish consistency, that notwithstanding, the participants were afforded the opportunity to furnish further details if they had the desire or felt the need to do so, as elucidated by Henning (2013).

Interviews with all their variability, are an invaluable qualitative technique, as they present a one-of-a-kind prospect to listen to and make a recording of the interviewees' genuine lived experiences as well as their opinions, and give first-hand information (Ehigie & Ehigie, 2005). Interviews are a type of discussion where information gathering can be through, inter alia, unrestricted questions (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). In an in-depth interview, the interviewer deems the interviewee as a subject matter expert and seeks to learn as much as possible from them. In-depth interviews are also valuable in obtaining detailed information about individual's thoughts and behaviours or to explore new predicaments (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Moreover, in-depth interviews offer an environment that is relaxed, creating a safe space to collect required information.

An additional benefit of semi-structured interviews is that they provide participants with an opportunity to disclose interrelated thought-provoking data that may have been missed in the questions, which may then be further explored (Mcneill & Chapman, 2005). The flexibility of interviews affords the researcher the opportunity to clarify, to probe, and to ask new additional questions based on what s/he is being told (Westbrook, 1994). Doody & Noonan (2013) also asserted that one of the benefits of interviews is that the interviewer can explore the participants' responses and ask for further elucidation, while the participants can also request explanation on a question. The objective of the interviews was for the interviewer to appreciate the participants' opinions on their circumstances, perspectives, and experiences, communicated in the participants' own words in a comfortable setting.

English was used to conduct the interviews and the interviewer was able to take note of parts that required further clarity or were left out and inquire for added elaboration or explanation. Some declarations were noted as prompting new lines of research (Westbrook, 1994). The study explored ascertaining an appreciation of the modern-day leadership challenges of senior female leaders at Engen Petroleum, which meant organizational hierarchy, the human aspect of conduct and traits were made focal points by examining personal opinions, perceptions, experiences, and job satisfaction.

Prior to conducting the interviews, pilot interviews were conducted in this study to test the efficacy of the instrument, sampling 4 junior female employees aspiring to become leaders

within the petroleum company selected for this research. No changes were suggested for the instrument.

A total of six interviews were carried out with senior female leaders at Engen Petroleum. Four of these interviews were conducted in December 2019 and two at the start of 2020. All six interviews were conducted through Skype/Zoom and were recorded digitally.

3.9 Data Collection Techniques

Research study data subsumes the sort of data deemed by the researchers to be pertinent and gets collated to give a response to the research questions. In the process of collecting data, the gathering of information is within the specified research study boundaries, by way of suitable procedures or techniques for recording. Ndlovu (2017) suggested that various methods could be employed to collect data on the phenomenon being investigated. Qualitative research can aid researchers gain insight into the opinions and sentiments of research participants, which may help in understanding the way people feel about their experiences (Hosp, 2015). This study made use of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative data collection strategy where the researcher asks participants a sequence of predetermined but open-ended questions giving participants an opportunity to add information or ask questions pertaining to aspects of the research that is of interest to them (Given, 2008).

3.9.1 Qualitative Data Collection Methods

Qualitative data can be gathered through various means, namely data that is secondary or primary. Creswell (2008) observed that some scribes are in agreement on a precise technique for collecting data, analysing it, and documenting feedback on qualitative research. Collecting qualitative data can be undertaken with the aid of interviews, that can either be unstructured, semi structured, and structured; indirect or direct observations; documents such as newspapers and reports; visual materials and questionnaires. Creswell (2008) suggested a few boundaries for collecting data, that is, what will be investigated, and how, who the participants are, and where the study will take place. Some scholars believe that in qualitative research, types of data and sources are only inhibited by the creativity and energy of the researcher (Ndlovu, 2017).

3.10 Data Analysis

Data analysis entails the collection of information, transcription, and rigorous reading to interpret the information gathered. This is done to understand, ahead of comparing, evaluating and narrowing the data down to the most pertinent information through using codes.

A code can be described as a classification identifier for text units that are later categorized into themes (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Concepts have also been defined for coding units (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Coding assists the researcher in organizing the data into relevant groupings from the start (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The data analysis process, according to Westbrook (1994), entails categorizing data, splitting it into manageable components, looking for patterns, learning critical lessons, and deciding what will be shared with everyone.

For a quantitative study, all the information or results collected needs to be submitted on account of them being crucial in an arithmetic analysis, while on the contrary, a qualitative study pins down the outcome into themes and subthemes that provide clearer insights of the outcomes (Creswell, 2014). For this study, complex and finer particulars needed to be carefully observed, so as to not lose the broad view of the study. This resulted in a richer degree of comprehension, that was embodied and construed with its extensive denotation.

Braun and Clarke (2006) clarified that analysing the data involved constantly shifting back and forth between the data set as a whole, the coded data under analysis, as well as data produced for the research study, whereas Sekaran & Bougie (2013) explained that being properly familiar empowers the researcher to identify connections and patterns and aids in data organisation.

Examining data involves indexing or data coding with a focus on a broad-spectrum of classifications and recognising and designating patterns or themes from the participants' point of view (Chenail, 2012). As they emerge from the context, these patterns and themes are articulated in greater detail and comprehended. As the investigation progresses, analysis of data is an on-going process that entails data evaluation, making logical enquiries, as well as document compilation as the research advances.

For this study, the qualitative data analysis approach was used. According to Chenail (2012), analysis of data qualitatively is a matter of managing analytical processes to turn data into information, information into knowledge, and knowledge into wisdom as a technique of

managing knowledge. It necessitates the possession of a broad variety of information and skills, including the ability to write effectively when presenting the results of a quality data analysis. For this study, the data obtained by the recorded audios, was separated it into separate subjects, and coded. As an inquisitor, the researcher shaped or perceived a theoretical connection between data features and articulating quality by coding and categorization.

The transcribed data was coded into expansive topics which were dependent on the exploration of objectives and interview questions. At that point every broad topic is exposed to a more comprehensive examination, prompting the arrangement of more explicit groups inside each subject (Cassel et al., 2006). For this study, a significant amount of time was spent going over the transcribed material, noting unified units of qualitative value and qualitative contrasts that were relevant.

Chenail (2012) emphasized that in order to develop a worthwhile coding, each qualitatively idiosyncratic code should draw on and incorporate the recognizable aspects of what is being coded. This demonstrated that the researcher was able to scribble down an analysis while coding, as well as incorporate all of the different issues that arose and organize the analysis chronologically. For this study, a thematic approach was adopted to analyse the data, and as a result, a logical arrangement of the themes emerged from the data analysis. Thematic analysis considers all the participants' information to pick out the key themes and shared challenges and compiles a summary all the participants' sentiments (Patton & Cochran, 2002).

According to Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall (1994), a thematic analysis is a clear method of structuring and organising information related to specific research questions. Thematic analysis incorporates diverse theoretical frameworks in its methods such as a realist approach which studies the ways in which realities, happenings and practices mirror the array of discourses entrenched and functioning in society. Flexibility is one of the key advantages of thematic analysis. Coding, grouping, organising, identification, and the transcription process are just some of the steps within data analysis.

As stated by Ryan and Bernard (2003), the importance of a subject is determined by how frequently it appears, how comprehensive it is across various groups of thoughts, and the degree to which the force, variety, and number of a theme's pronouncements are steered by precise factors. By comparing the findings from the collected responses, analysis of data along with interpretation were assessed.

However, Holloway and Todres (2003), warn that, notwithstanding the flexibility, the researcher must have a clear notional position in relation to the analyses. That is to say, the researcher and research questions must match the theoretical framework and methods.

3.11 Trustworthiness

Although many opponents are sceptical of qualitative research's reliability, standards for assuring rigor in this type of study have existed for many years. Guba and Lincoln (1989)'s structures, in particular, have gained a lot of traction. Researchers are looking to meet four requirements in qualitative studies. Investigators strive to exhibit credibility by demonstrating that a true picture of the phenomenon under investigation is being given. To account for transferability, they provide enough description of the fieldwork context to allow a reader to evaluate whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can be justifiably applied to the other setting. In qualitative research, achieving the dependability requirement is tough, but researchers should endeavour to make the study repeatable for future researchers. Lastly, in order to attain confirmability, researchers must show that their findings are based on the facts rather than their personal biases (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings and de Eyto, 2018).

In this research study, consistency and dependability of methods employed were assured, and all processes were properly documented. As recommended by Creswell (2008) questions asked in the interview were written in basic language understood by all participants, and they were all tailored to the study's objectives. The acquired data, as well as all notes and transcripts, were extensively reviewed for accuracy. To prevent missing any material and ensure transcripts accuracy, this study solely relied on audiotapes and no handwritten notes were made while the interview was on-going. To ensure all the participants had the same understanding of the questions being asked, all the interview questions were explained in detail.

The goal of qualitative research is to interpret the subject area in its whole, and triangulation plays a crucial role in reaching that goal. In this study various responses were examined as well as all the important viewpoints that were gathered as a result of this approach. Qualitative study is centred around people's circumstances, encounters, opinions, and perceptions. Maseko (2011) further argues that it should not be expected that interviewees' responses will be identical considering that they are driven by their own emotions and opinions, which are in turn affected by specific conditions at specific periods. Due to the distinctiveness of the situation, which also depends on people's opinions, knowledge, emotions, and situations, getting the same results repeatedly is impossible.

3.12 Bias

Bias, a term derived from the quantitative research paradigm, is described as a drift or deviation from the truth in data collection, data processing, interpretation, and dissemination, which might lead to incorrect conclusions. Bias can occur either consciously or unconsciously. It is unethical to intentionally incorporate bias into one's research. Nonetheless, taking into consideration the prospective repercussions of a biased research, it is virtually equally irresponsible to perform and publish a biased research accidentally. It is worth drawing attention to the fact that every study has its confounding variables and limitations. It is impossible to completely eliminate the confounding impact. Every researcher, consequently, should be aware of all potential causes of bias and take all steps possible to reduce and limit the divergence from the truth. If there is still a divergence, authors should admit it in their publications by stating their work's acknowledged limits. Editors and reviewers are also responsible for detecting any potential bias.

If bias still remains, the editor must determine if the bias has a significant impact on the study's conclusions. If this is the case, such studies should not be published because their findings are invalid (Šimundić, 2013). Most acknowledge the notion as being contrary to qualitative research's philosophical underpinnings. As an alternative, qualitative researchers are usually in agreement that taking into account notions such as rigor and trustworthiness is more germane to the subjective, reflexive nature of qualitative research. A number of strategies for maintaining these notions during the process of qualitative research have been advanced and written about expansively (Galdas, 2017). Pretesting is one such strategy. This entails polling a sample population to see if the questions are suitable and if they understand them (Sekaran and Bougie, 2003). This can reduce bias by proactively correcting shortcomings prior to administering the instrument to the participants (Sekaran and Bougie, 2003).

No bias was encountered in the duration of this research study.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

Ethics represent a vital feature of any social scientific research. Though policies, principles and codes are crucial and valuable, like any set of guidelines, they are not exhaustive. They involve significant clarification as they are often conflicting. Therefore, as a researcher, learning how to assess, interpret and apply data collected will be imperative (Resnik, 2015).

Ethical matters are paramount in carrying out research, especially if the research has a people element. Thus, researchers are required to comply with certain ethical ideals ahead of commencing research, and participants' rights must always be held in high regard by the researcher. Participants' participation in the study is voluntary and participants are at liberty to pull out at any moment.

This study considered all the ethical steps required before starting the research.

Ethical clearance had to be obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal before commencing with the collection of data. A gatekeeper's letter was requested from Engen Petroleum requesting approval to undertake research on senior female leaders in the company. An informed consent letter was issued to each participant and it was acknowledged by the participants prior to commencement of the interviews. Jiang & Cova (2012) state that the informed consent letter assures the participants of the protection of their confidentiality, and it delineates the objectives of the study and how it could be beneficial to them.

Creswell (2008) asserted that anonymity of participants needs to be guaranteed and that the information they have shared will remain confidential; accordingly, the respondents were advised that the knowledge they shared in the interviews would not be shared with the other participants. The participants' names were not used in the analysis of data. The codes R1 to R6 were used in the analysis, discussion chapter and results as a replacement for the participants' names, to safeguard their identities. Permission to record the interviews from each of the participants was requested and granted.

To guarantee confidentiality, UKZN zealously preserves all data gathered at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership for a five-year period. Subsequent to that, the Ethical Clearance Committee ensures that the data is disposed of so that it does not come into the possession of anyone else or other researchers who might use it inappropriately.

3.14 Summary

In this chapter, the focus was on the research methodology, commencing with the study's aims and objectives to determine the best research methods. The research methodology was described, and then mixed methods, quantitative, and qualitative methodologies were explained. The qualitative method was utilized in this research study as it was the most appropriate. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were also discussed as a method of gathering qualitative data, followed by a discussion of ethical concerns. The analysis of data analysis was

shown in detail, and the chapter was concluded with a review of the study's reliability, validity, and bias.

The succeeding chapter will present the interview results.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study's main aim was to investigate the influence of female leaders in the petroleum industry, with the purpose of enhancing views about female leaders and fostering a more positive perception of female leaders' ability to successfully lead in a male-dominated industry. The preceding chapter furnished a comprehensive elaboration of the procedure employed to carry out the research, whereas this chapter focused on the key findings of the research study. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were utilized as a data collection tool. Analysis and presentation of data emanating from the interviews was carried out in this chapter, with an emphasis on the key topics arising from the analysis of the data. Durban was the setting for this study, a city on the east coast of South Africa.

4.2 Participants' demographics

Interviews were conducted with six female leaders plying their trade in the petroleum industry in the Durban area. The participants for the interviews were chosen through purposive sampling.

Table 1: Participants' profiles

PARTICIPANT CODE	DEPARTMENT	LEADERSHIP POSITION EXPERIENCE	RACE
R1	FINANCE	>20 YEARS	WHITE
R2	HSEQ	>10 YEARS	BLACK
R3	HR	>10 YEARS	INDIAN
R4	ERA	<10 YEARS	BLACK
R5	PERFORMANCE & PLANNING	>20 YEARS	WHITE
R6	TECHICAL ADVISORY	>20 YEARS	INDIAN

Table 4.1 above showed the demographics as well as leadership tenure of each of the participants.

Table 2: Themes

The below table summarizes the themes emerging after analysing the responses obtained during the interviews.

RESEARCH QUESTION	RESEARCH OBJECTIVE	INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTION	THEME
Do women or men lead differently within the petroleum industry?	To ascertain if women and men lead differently within the petroleum industry.	a) Given the male-dominated nature of the petroleum industry, as a female leader, have you experienced different reactions when managing both males and female employees? Have you ever experienced resistance from a male employee which you believe is driven by the fact that you are female? How did you handle the situation?	Unemotional Leadership Attitude
Does gender influence an individual's leadership effectiveness within the petroleum industry?	To establish if gender influences an individual's leadership effectiveness within the petroleum industry	a) Do you believe that there are mistakes which female leaders make more frequently than their male counterparts in the	a) Self-sabotage b) Gender unbiased

		<p>petroleum industry?</p> <p>If yes – could you give me some examples of these, and your thoughts as to why this phenomenon occurs?</p> <p>b) Given the scarcity of female leaders within the petroleum industry, when faced with two equally qualified male and female candidates, how do you determine whom to hire?</p>	
<p>What are the factors that affect women leadership within the petroleum industry?</p>	<p>To determine the factors that affect women leaders within the petroleum industry.</p>	<p>a) As a female leader, have you experienced any significant barriers to your personal growth and aspirations in your career within the petroleum industry? Would you be prepared to share some of the specifics with me?</p> <p>b) How do you handle work/life balance challenges? Are there any</p>	<p>a) Gender Discrimination</p> <p>b) Work-life balance</p>

		sacrifices (both personal and professional) in your career that you have had to make in dealing with work / life balance challenges?	
What recommendations can be made to the senior management towards enhancing women leadership within the petroleum industry?	To make recommendations to petroleum industry's senior management towards enhancing women leadership.	<p>a) Do you believe that the Petroleum Industry could gain from being more inclusive in leadership? What are the leadership components that you believe we could benefit from by being more inclusive and how would this benefit the industry?</p> <p>b) Do you believe that there are specific initiatives that can be undertaken by the Petroleum companies to attract the next generation of women to join the Industry? If yes – could you give me a few examples of such initiatives?</p>	Deliberate action to attract females into the petroleum industry.

		What is it about these initiatives that will help the Petroleum companies achieve their inclusivity?	
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Table 4.2 above is a summary of the themes that emerged from the responses of the participants in the interviews.

4.3 Findings for objective 1: To ascertain if women and men lead differently within the petroleum industry

This section presents outcomes aligned to Objective 1 of the study. This objective sought to establish if women and men lead differently within the petroleum industry. To address this objective, the question *“given the male-dominated nature of the petroleum industry, as a female leader, have you experienced different reactions when managing both males and female employees? Have you ever experienced resistance from a male employee which you believe is driven by the fact that you are female? How did you handle the situation?”* was asked of the participants and the data analysed below.

4.3.1 Unemotional Leadership Attitude

One participant expressed a view that she has never experienced such and she attributed that to how she handled herself and everything flowed from there:

“No. Actually, so personally I’ve never found that. And I think what’s important, when you’re in a leadership position, well, I think everything in life, even as a human being, everybody is equal. So that’s your starting point, regardless of whether they’re male or female, or same race as you or whatever it is, then you should not actually encounter differences or resistance, because of any of those factors. So, for me, that’s the starting point. So, it’s up to me, how I handle myself, and then everything kind of flows from that. So, I can’t really say that I’ve had a difference with a male because I will treat them equally. And I think it really is up to the person in leadership to decide or to also be conscious about how they’re behaving, how do I show up and because of that, how do people respond to that, it doesn’t matter who they are. If you treat people equally you get the same response, regardless of the kind of background where they’re coming from. So, I can’t really say that I have experienced that.” (R1)

Two of the participants simply responded “yes” and “I have” and were not willing to share any further details or circumstances around the situations:

“Yes.” (R3)

“I have.” (R6)

Participant number four felt it hasn't been obvious that the resistance was gender-based, but she'd been second-guessed:

“So obviously, so I haven't had a situation where someone said, I'm not going to do it, because I'm thinking it's because I'm a woman, I haven't had that experience. But obviously, I've had people who will challenge maybe what I'm suggesting needs to be done. And they'll second guess it, you know?” (R4)

Participant number two expressed that she did face resistance from males, but wasn't sure if it was because she's a woman or it was inherent to the role:

“When I first started at Engen, I had huge challenges... because as you know I have been here almost 11 years. So, at times I would feel like there was a bit of resistance...but I am not so sure was it just because I am female... because the other thing is I am not an Engineer but, in my work, I have to deal a lot with Engineers who are male. So, I'm not so sure was it because I am a female or because I am not an Engineer. I cannot really say.” (R2)

Participant number five expressed that she had, in fact, faced resistance on account of being a woman and that the resistance was based on cultural nuances:

“My answer to that has to be yes and some of that is culture. In a previous role I have managed a black Zulu male with a strong cultural bias towards a female. I understood the cultural differences so I adjusted my style. I would never call it resistance, I would respond that, because I am aware of the cultural differences, I just treated them differently. So, it wasn't a problem for me. In fact, what I did, and I am talking 20 years ago, we actually had a couple of honest conversations about how it feels for him to have a female manager and I was fortunate enough that he was able to be honest with me and that gave me a new perspective, I was actually quite comfortable with the difference. But no, I have males and females in my team now and they have equal pay. There is no difference in the treatment. And there is no difference in the treatment back to me either, I think.” (R5)

4.3.2 Summary Discussion of Findings based on Objective 1.

Even though some participants, to some degree, have felt undermined on account of being female, the leaders, from their responses, displayed a great sense of professionalism and great leadership attitude and didn't let their emotions cloud their judgement when handling the situation. This finding coincides with the assertions of Loden (1985) who observed that there was an expectation on women managers that function in environments dominated by males to apply styles of leadership leaning towards virile cultures for self-preservation and recognition. Stereotypical agentic characteristics such as hierarchical authority, emphasis on control, and effectiveness are said to characterise "masculine approaches to management".

4.4 Findings for objective 2: To establish if gender influences an individual's leadership effectiveness within the petroleum industry

This section presents outcomes aligned to Objective 2 of the study, which seeks to ascertain if gender influences an individual's leadership effectiveness within the petroleum industry. To address this objective, the following two questions were asked of the participants: "*do you believe that there are mistakes which female leaders make more frequently than their male counterparts in the petroleum industry? If yes – could you give me some examples of these, and your thoughts as to why this phenomenon occurs?*" and "*given the scarcity of female leaders within the petroleum industry, when faced with two equally qualified male and female candidates, how do you determine whom to hire?*".

Below is the analysed gathered data.

4.4.1 Self-sabotage

Organizational behaviour experts assert that people's perception of themselves is important in interpreting their behaviours, attitude, decisions and motivation, including decisions in the working environment.

People, whether in the workplace or in their personal lives, aspire to be successful individuals and work hard to accomplish this objective. In some circumstances, they are not satisfied with being successful and putting forth effort; instead, they want to project themselves as a successful individual, manage the perceptions and impressions towards themselves, and manipulate others' perceptions of them.

Individuals who find themselves in situations where the likelihood of failure is greater than the likelihood of success, even if they are qualified, can often use a variety of cognitive methods and defence mechanisms to overcome the negative patterns that can emerge when they are uncertain about the outcomes of their performance and the possibility of their performance being evaluated. These cognitive strategies are referred to as self-sabotage and self-handicapping.

Uncertainty about success, self-efficacy, self-esteem, negative self-perception stemming from past experiences, fear of making a mistake, perception of new and difficult tasks, locus of control, maladaptive perfectionism, anxiety, individual-physical characteristics, personality, task importance to the individual, defensive pessimism, individual mood are among reasons for self-sabotage (Gülsüm and Zeynep, 2019).

The question “*do you believe that there are mistakes which female leaders make more frequently than their male counterparts in the petroleum industry? If yes – could you give me some examples of these, and your thoughts as to why this phenomenon occurs?*” endeavoured to explicitly solicit if the participants believed gender influenced an individual’s leadership effectiveness and if women themselves were partly at fault for their lack of representation at the upper echelons in the industry.

The participants seemed to share the sentiment that, for a variety of reasons, among them ambiguity about success, past experiences and negative self-perception, women in some cases did sabotage their own prospects:

“Yeah, I think it does happen. I think it’s a case of not believing in ourselves as much as our male counterparts do. So, the actual confidence that comes with the position that you eventually attain.” (R1)

“There is to some extent. When you keep on saying my child this, my child that... we tend to again continuously bring the family issues...” (R2)

“...the self-sabotage phenomena where women tend to become more accommodating and don’t speak up.” (R3)

“...women second guessing ourselves and not talking about our achievements and the things that we can do boldly. And I don’t want to call it brag, I mean, if I compare women versus their

male counterparts, men will definitely showcase their achievements and the things that they've done, and sometimes not even that well, but they'll talk about them and make sure that people know that...they'll actually say, "you know what? I had to do this, I did this and that." And I think women tend to shy away from that. And I think that can be self-sabotaging, because then you don't get recognised or you don't get to be seen as having the ability or anything like that. You sort of rely on people just maybe making the observation "by the way". (R4)

"...females make the mistake of apologizing a lot. We make excuses for our emotions and for me that is a problem because that's a strength, the fact that we are in touch with our emotional part is not something that I must apologize for, it is something that I must focus on to get the most out of. So, we apologize for our emotions. You know we have this whole label about emotional females, that is not a positive label, that is a negative label, but it is actually a good thing, it is a strength, men are a different animal. But I think we apologize a lot and if you think about why, it is probably around confidence. So, we need to believe in ourselves more so that we are confident, and we don't feel the need to apologize." (R5)

"For me the mistakes that we are making is, as females, and it's not different to males but specifically females, are assuming that our softness or hardness, whatever it is, is wrong. And therefore, what we do in our career, we then hide. We want to hide it and behave differently." (R6)

4.4.2 Gender unbiased

The responses to the second question asked for this objective also confirmed that gender did not necessarily influence an individual's effectiveness. All but one participant displayed a sense of consciousness towards gender parity. The rest of the participants expressed that gender was not a determining factor in who they recruited, proving that females were not biased towards other females on account of gender, but were capable of making tough or unpopular decisions as any male leader would.

Participant number one and two expressed that their decision would be based on the level of transformation and diversity required within the space they were recruiting for:

"So, if we were to go through the whole process and they are completely equally matched? What I would also do is just to consider how transformed the department is that we are

recruiting into. So, if, for instance, it's into one of our areas that really hasn't transformed much, then there would definitely be a preference given to the female candidate. So, we face this all the time, where you have areas in the business where it's really difficult to find the right calibre of... let's say assuming we're looking for African female candidates for a certain role in a certain environment or business, maybe IT or something like that, it's difficult to transform. Then we would be inclined to get the female candidate even if they weren't entirely equally matched. Because we will have this agenda that we wanted to address as well.” (R1)

“I take a look at the makeup of my current team, how diverse it is, and take into account what is needed broadly. So, I think the things that I'll take into account is the team dynamic that I have and what I need to bring into the team. What personality because remember, you also need, depending on what role you're hiring them into, there are certain personal traits that become important as well, that might mean that you will go with that person.” (R4)

“I look at diversity. And I've tried to attract females, by the way, I specifically got to look in the Refinery in my Technical Lubricants space and I struggled. I think a lot of the females are hesitant, for various reasons, but I think it's changing, so I do look at diversity. I don't only look at it obviously from a gender perspective, I do look at racial and those targets as well which is perfectly in line with what we do and I also look at cultural footprint...so, I definitely look at diversity and gender diversity is top of my list and I do look at cultural fit as well over and above the competency experience part.” (R6)

The above is probably the correct approach, but it unfortunately does not address the elephant in the boardroom: under-representation of females in top leadership within the industry and these leaders are in a unique position to influence that.

Participant number two unequivocally expressed that she would hire a female:

“In terms of our policy if they are equally the same, I'll always have to go for the female candidate, absolutely. Because it is part of what we have to do, we still have to advance female candidates.” (R2)

For participants three and five, gender was a non-factor:

“I don’t look whether the person is male or female. I would look for additional qualities in determining ultimately who do we hire?” (R3)

“Sex is certainly not a part of that decision...I have been in a situation where I have interviewed both candidates and the fact of whether the person is male or female does not come into it, it is who is best qualified for the job.” (R5)

4.4.3 Summary Discussion of Findings based on Objective 2.

The findings based on this objective affirmed that women in general and women leaders specifically did, to some degree and somewhat unconsciously, sabotage themselves and thereby putting in question their effectiveness as leaders. But this affirms what Gülsüm and Zeynep (2019) argued when they observed that individuals who find themselves in situations where the likelihood of failure is greater than the likelihood of success, even if they are qualified, can often use a variety of cognitive methods and defence mechanisms to overcome the negative patterns that can emerge when they are uncertain about the outcomes of their performance and the possibility of their performance being evaluated. These cognitive strategies are referred to as self-sabotage and self-handicapping. Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky (1992) argued that leadership theories endeavouring to justify the leadership gap hinge on the premise that males and females are different. One argument in this vein is that women’s marginalisation from top leadership spots exists as a consequence of dissimilarities in effectiveness and leadership style. In stark contrast to orthodox beliefs, female leaders are not more relational or have a lower task orientation in comparison to their male counterparts. Granted, it’s been observed that participative leadership is more adopted by women leaders.

The finding that female leaders were not gender biased coincides with what Yukl (2002) offered as a definition of leadership: “The process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish the shared objectives”, proving that gender or personality traits are not indicators of effective leadership. This is in stark contrast to Trait theories who habitually appreciate leadership characteristics as innate, (e.g., leaders are born, not made), as argued by Kutz (2012). They have, however, failed to consider the influence of social-environmental dynamics that have precluded women from such positions. Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman & Humphrey (2011) also supported the notion of gender as an indicator for effectiveness in leadership by recognizing leadership traits related to demographics, such

as education, gender, and age; task competence, such as conscientiousness and intelligence; and interpersonal attributes, such as extraversion and agreeableness.

This also applies to Great Man Theories who reference gender or personality traits for leadership effectiveness.

4.5 Findings for objective 3: To determine the factors that affect women leaders within the petroleum industry

This section presents outcomes aligned to Objective 3 of the study, which sought to establish the factors that affect women leaders within the petroleum industry. To address this objective, the following questions were asked: *“as a female leader, have you experienced any significant barriers to your personal growth and aspirations in your career within the petroleum industry? Would you be prepared to share some of the specifics with me?”* and *“how do you handle work/life balance challenges? Are there any sacrifices (both personal and professional) in your career that you have had to make in dealing with work / life balance challenges?”* and below is an analysis of the data that was gathered on the respective questions with the themes that emerged.

4.5.1 Gender discrimination

Gender discrimination can be defined as any situation where a person is disadvantaged solely on the basis of their gender.

Surprisingly, the majority of the participants expressed that they had not faced any barriers and that their growth within the industry had been fairly good. This particular finding did not necessarily align with the literature reviewed that investigated the challenges faced by females in their quest to climb the proverbial corporate ladder. These obstacles have long been referred to as “the glass ceiling” which alludes to the frequently unseen and universal impediments that prohibit women from progressing up the corporate ladder or earning equal pay.

Eagly & Carli (2007) argued that the glass ceiling metaphor is no longer relevant, as some barriers were not elusive. The pair continued to argue that by portraying a solitary, constant hindrance, the glass ceiling neglects to incorporate the variety and complexity of challenges that women can encounter in their journeys to leadership. The truth is, women are not ruled out only as they arrive at the penultimate juncture of an illustrious career. They vanish in copious numbers at various stages getting to that point. Eagly & Carli (2007) argued that the labyrinth

is a better metaphor for what women face in their professional lives. As a present-day image, the labyrinth conveys the concept of a difficult path toward a worthwhile objective. Passing through a labyrinth is not easy or straightforward; it necessitates perseverance, knowledge of one's success, and careful study of the puzzles ahead. There are paths for women who want to be top leaders, but they are full of twists and turns, both anticipated and unforeseen. It is assumed that goals are attainable since all labyrinths have a feasible path to the centre. The metaphor acknowledges difficulties but is not ultimately depressing. We can work more effectively to improve the situation if we understand the various barriers that make up this labyrinth and how some women get around them.

“So, I think I can’t say that I have, and I think it’s probably also the career that I chose. So being in a finance environment which is generally female oriented, it’s been easier for women to progress in the support roles in any type of industry... But since I’ve been in the industry, I can’t say that I’ve really experienced that. But I do think a big part of it is that the transformation within finance started a long time ago whereas in the front-line, front-line sales, obviously the refinery or supply chain, it’s been a lot slower. And it’s been, I think, a lot more difficult for women to progress in that environment.” (R1)

“...personally, I haven’t experienced any barriers and I think sometimes you have your own personal priorities, but they’re not necessarily barriers as women. And I think as long as you are comfortable with the constant learning approach, keeping yourself skilled, my take on it is that your personal growth and aspirations in an organization will always be fulfilled. Because, for me the trick is to keep yourself, what would I say? An expert in whatever you do. So, from a specifics point of view, I have focused heavily on my own academic career. And I believe that it’s been a very important aspect into my ability to learn and change roles from being in the science space, to being in the operations space, to being in marketing, to leading the audit and risk team. And now I move into general manager of HR. So, I think part of creating personal growth and aspiration is your own personal development journey.” (R3)

So, for me it’s difficult, I don’t think I’ve had any barriers. Unless of course, I always sometimes wondered if it’s the way my mindset is in general. So, within Engen, I’ve been very fortunate. Firstly, when I joined Engen, I didn’t think I would stay this long, number one. Because I started out as a contractor thinking, “Okay, I’m supposed to be in a different sector completely from oil and gas....” (R4)

“...I feel my growth was actually fairly good. And it was almost an advantage because it was so rare to find females. However, I have a caveat, I do think that I had to prove myself, more so than a male in those roles, and I did come across gender stereotypes that I may not necessarily have been negatively impacted by but I could see other females being impacted”
.... overall, I'd say my journey has been fairly good in terms of my female growth and getting to the leadership roles. I've often been the only female in the team. I've often been the youngest in the team so, but definitely I can't ignore that I've had to work hard as well to change perceptions”. (R6)

For participant number two, it was navigating the responsibility of motherhood and the rest of the family responsibilities that fall on women that she felt had been a barrier for her:

“The issues that I have discussed already...having children.... those are some of the barriers that I think you would experience because now, you struggle to get people you need to assist you so that you can have your family as you work. And you have issues that I've just discussed, that when you call that the child is sick, it may not necessarily be said by your managers that this is too much or whatever but I've seen it now, when you sit in senior positions, the discussions sometimes come. So those are some of the barriers that you'll see as women.” (R2)

Participant number five felt that, in as much as there were no obvious barriers that she felt hindered her, there were subtle covert ones:

“Sexist barriers are a little bit...are very similar to racist barriers, everybody pretends they don't exist but they do. So, my answer to you is that there were no obvious visible barriers. There were none that I could approach the person, because you know me...if they were apparent, I would confront the person and address it. But it is a bit more difficult if it is invisible, things like the old boys' network, the boys' club that is very strong in Engen. The fact that women are not involved, if there is a project, if there is an exciting project, or if there is a new skill to be gained or if there is a new technology that's going to be shared, it will always go to a group of men, women will always fall short because they are not given exposure to the same opportunities, it is not even something concrete that you could say I failed at. If you are not given the opportunity, you don't even know whether you can succeed or not.
So long-winded an answer to your question, no immediate obvious barriers but they were very definitely there. They still are.

Even to this day. If you look at, just look at the equality spread, you still got 70% to 80% men in leadership positions.” (R5)

4.5.2 Work-life balance

Work-life balance is the idea that one needs time for both work and other aspects of life. Women in general have found it difficult to achieve the optimal balance between navigating their career aspirations along with all the other hats they wear in the home and societal fronts. Sprunt (2006) claimed that for women in the petroleum industry work-life balance was important, pointing out that flexible working arrangements such as part-time work and telecommuting could assist keep women in the field. The findings of this research study concurred with Sprunt’s view as the participants found it difficult to balance the demands of leadership with home responsibilities.

The leaders were asked the question “*how do you handle work/life balance challenges? Are there any sacrifices (both personal and professional) in your career that you have had to make in dealing with work / life balance challenges?*” to ascertain if work-life balance and the expectations on women in society was a factor that the female leaders felt disadvantaged them or limited them to fully thrive in their leadership capacities:

One of the participants was brutally honest in that she wasn’t handling it well, to the point that it took a health scare for her to realise she needed to bring more balance in her life and the time away from work and in hospital allowed her to reflect and she came to the conclusion that she simply could not continue the way she had been and needed to reset and be more mindful of her health and spend more time with her family:

“Firstly, I'm going to say, I'm not handling it, work life balance right now... I had emergency surgery. I honestly thought I was going to die. But what it (the near-death experience) did do on the positive side, because it shook me up, and it shook my family structure and it really took me out of the workplace... I had some time to reflect, and I realized that I cannot continue, how I was before that... for me, nutrition is something that’s an often-missed component to leaders, I wonder if you notice there are a lot of CEOs that I know get sick, suffer with, you know, heart disease and all of that, it almost seems like to be a senior leader, you have to give up your health.” (R6)

One of the participants was quite confident that she had mastered the art of work-life balance expressing that she is very disciplined and so has a very focused approach to work-life balance:

“I’m a very disciplined individual. So, I have a very focused approach to work-life balance. I do believe sometimes work requires you more than your family and then you just have to prioritise. And then there’s times when your family needs you more than your work needs you, and you just have to be able to delegate effectively...but your support structure is critical. When we had... my husband’s also a professional, and we decided that we were going to need support, we needed help. My mom came to stay with us. So, you need to have the right support structure. I think you’d be kidding yourself if you think you could do everything. I definitely couldn’t. And I felt that in order to maintain a quality of time with my family, with my husband, with my daughter, with my mom, I would need to have support. So, support is critical. I really, I can’t emphasize that more.” (R3)

Participant number one, as much as she didn’t directly express it, you got the sense that she didn’t handle the balancing act well:

“So, the big thing is, we don’t know what we’re getting into until you’re into it... I still want to be a mother, I still want to be a good wife, but I want to have a career and be open about it, and then find a way to make all of that work... Yeah, if your partner can’t support you in what you need and what you want to do there’s going to be conflict, and there are going to be sacrifices that have got to be made. But just being transparent is what counts at the end of the day.” (R1)

Participant number two at some point did find the going tough, expressing that the price of leadership was higher for women:

“When my daughter was almost 9 months old, and I had to start doing a lot of travelling and be two weeks away so she grew up with our auntie. And it was our life. My son had to go to boarding school, so from primary he was in boarding school because as a parent, I was a single parent for a number of years. So as a parent, I wouldn’t be able to take them to school, to do this, to do their homework. So, I had to put finances into making sure that he goes to boarding school. From grade 5 he was in a boarding school, he loved it fortunately. So, he was in boarding school from grade 5 till matric. My daughter just finished her matric...she has been in boarding school since grade 8 fortunately. But when we moved to Cape Town, it was a bold move from my side I think, the language was not the best. So, I moved here and I had to find a

place, fortunately I had a very supportive manager. So, she gave me an opportunity to go and look for schools and I managed to get my son into a boarding school here and also managed to get a secure house. And fortunately, because I rented for two years, the woman from the agency also assisted me, showing me here's the school, here's some aftercare. So, once I moved from Pretoria to Cape Town, I had no family support...there is no "malume" who can take the children...

So, I had to take my daughter to school and have to arrange and get an aftercare that will pick her from school to the aftercare. Then I had to travel...then I had to make additional arrangements with the aftercare that when I'm travelling, they drop her off at home and then in the morning they pick her up from home to school. So those were some of the disadvantages of moving to Cape Town where I didn't have support. So now my husband is in Pretoria and I am in Cape Town so there's that balance that still has to happen. And we've been doing this since I moved to Cape Town.

There is a higher price to pay for us women." (R2)

For participant number four and participant five it has been a real challenge which they've had to navigate with the support of their spouses:

"Well, work from home is a disaster in itself for my work-life balance perspective... So, basically, I am the kind of person that if work needs to happen, I will push through, it must happen. And maybe in the process will sacrifice a number of things... So, I think, personally, I feel like half the time, I'm not handling when it comes to work-life balance... So, for me at the moment, the work-life balance is currently also difficult, because when I was not married my time was all mine so I could do exactly that. But now it's a bit difficult because when you are married and have got family and other responsibilities that you think you can postpone, but other people don't think so, it becomes quite important to quickly reach that point of being able to balance your work and the rest of your life. So, I think right now I'm just faced in with the fact that I need to create that shift... So yeah, I think it is a difficult challenge. Because I think as you now just reflected on where we are at the moment with work from home, being able to just structure your day such that you've got time to work out, time to read, time to be at work, time to cook and time to catch up with family and friends, it becomes quite a difficult thing, it will definitely always be skewed, at least on my part." (R4)

"Yeah, it is harder for me being at home. I have extensive support systems at home but when you are in it you actually can't pretend that it is not happening around you. So, I think the

sacrifices that I have made are actually against my family because working from home, there is no off switch. At least if you are in the office you could say at half past five that's it for the day, yeah it is kind of never ending, it is meetings at 7 o'clock at night, seating on a weekend catching up with your email, so that's a bit of a challenge and I think I am very fortunate that my husband supports me but I need to work on separating the two lives because it could become a problem. I am very fortunate that my husband has supported me, whether I have been studying or whether I have been on a secondment where I have... I commuted at one point in my career, I commuted between Durban and Cape Town for a year. Yes, 2011, 2012, I was in Cape Town Monday to Friday and flew home every Friday night, my husband just managed everything that needed to happen at home." (R5)

4.5.3 Summary Discussion of Findings based on Objective 3.

The findings of this objective based on the balancing of work and personal life highlighted some of the very real challenges that females are faced with, that are unique only to women. Hoyt & Chemers (2008) argued that the prominent explanation for the gap in leadership rests on gender biases stemming from stereotypical beliefs that "men take charge and women take care". The findings were collaborated by Eagly & Carli (2004, 2007) who argued that one set of justifications that is prominent in attempts to explain away the labyrinth has been that female employees do not invest as much as male employees do when it comes to training, learning, and practical knowledge of the workplace. The dearth associated with qualified women, sometimes referred to as the "pipeline problem" was due to this supposed lack of human capital, it was alleged. Conversely, upon closer inspection at the statistics, it was discovered women were in actual fact in the pipeline, but the pipeline was leaking. Mainly due to unbalanced obligation women assume for raising children and other domestic duties, women due to some extent have less work experience and employment stability than men (Bowles & McGinn, 2005; Eagly & Carli, 2007). However, the elucidation of women self-selecting out of the "leadership track" preferring rather the "mommy track" roles which ultimately did not translate into roles of leadership (Belkin, 2003; Ehrlich, 1989; Wadman, 1992); was according to Eagly & Carli (2004) found to be baseless as far as research was concerned. Cobble (2005) argued that not considering women for positions in senior levels of management gives rise to a problem of unjust discrimination, which further supports the findings for this objective.

Bell & Nkomo (2001) argued that gender typecasts embrace views on the traits of women and men and advocate how women and men ought to be. Along with facing gender-biased prejudice, non-white women repeatedly also tackle ethnic or racial prejudice.

4.6 Findings for objective 4: To make recommendations to petroleum industry's senior management towards enhancing women leadership

4.6.1 Deliberate action to attract females into the petroleum industry

The participants were asked, with a view to make recommendations to petroleum industry's senior management towards enhancing women leadership, firstly if they believed the industry would benefit from gender equality and secondly, what they believed needed to be done to achieve this.

The participants unsurprisingly unanimously agreed that greater inclusivity would be a great unlock for the industry:

“I think any organisation and any industry can benefit from being inclusive at a leadership level and at any other level. And I think it's become pretty well researched, but also the experience in different organizations has supported this to a large extent. So, if we, if you just think of the dynamics that a range of people that come into a boardroom or into a management committee, if you have different, not even just gender, but people who think differently rather than everybody being from the same club. It changes the way you do things; it changes the way the organisation will lead and manage the staff. So, I think the impact that you get is, just from a gender perspective, can be... I don't know if you've seen or listened to anything recently about what happened with Steinhoff. One of the big things there was that essentially, the board and I think probably to a large extent, the management committee was essentially a Steinhoff boys club, if you know what I mean. So, it's the extreme opposite of a diversified and inclusive environment. And if you look at the outcome of that, and a lot of that could probably be contributed to the fact that, that is what it was. So, if we then turn it around and say, so then what is the value of real diversification and inclusivity? So I think the impact that it can have, can be huge. And it can definitely improve, ultimately, obviously the shareholder value, but leading up to that, just the engagement of the whole organisation, I think can be improved because you will have a different approach from leadership than you would if you just had, let's say, all males kind of boys club approach, which is very different to an organisation that

has a diversified leadership team. So, I think the value is enormous. And it becomes culture, nobody sees any problem with it so that is the culture of the organization. And it's always been like that, and nobody sees any problem with that. And especially when, on the face of it, the organization is financially sound, and everything looks great. Nobody asks questions.” (R1)

“Well, my view is... I think it would gain because the way females are and the way men are, there's a little bit of a difference in terms of how they approach leadership. There's that warm part that comes with the females. They will consider things beyond work, so they will consider the issues around family. Not things that males readily consider... I think females have more tendency of looking at not just the numbers, but the people behind the numbers. I think it will be beneficial for the industry to be more inclusive and it would also improve, I guess, in terms of performance.” (R2)

“You are aware that Engen has been very progressive in this space. Right now, we have probably 50% of our executive team who are women. The current profile sits at 50% at the executive leadership team. And I think at the level of middle management we have a very good representation of women. I can't quote the percentage because I'm not 100% sure, but we have made significant strides and we have definitely focused on having women in leadership. Because, like you correctly say, we see the benefit of having inclusivity, not only from an organizational level, but also benefiting the industry. So, if you look at Engen statistics, it's very progressive. And not from now, I sit on the leadership team for almost 12 and a half years now already. So yeah. So, I am not a recent appointment for people to fix numbers or anything. Yeah. So, for that one, I definitely think the answer is yes, that Engen is very proactive in this space and that we definitely see benefits for the industry.” (R3)

“So, definitely the industry would benefit. In fact, I think it has benefited by being inclusive. Not only within Engen but also within industry and across the value chain, I'd say and that I think has brought in a lot of flavour and a lot of impact in terms of how things are done and what successes are attained within the organisation. Obviously, women have come on board into executive leadership in oil companies or petroleum companies. And obviously, they've contributed quite immensely, as you may have seen in other companies as well. So, I do believe that there is a gain, and that the aspects or components that really benefit the company are obviously, that women are value contributors themselves, they have got a lot to bring to the table, maybe with a bit of a different flair, by virtue of them being women. It's also about

adapting, and it's not necessarily adapting to the "boys club" but finding your own rhythm to be able to sort of play, to play accordingly and make sure that the company achieves its strategic objectives, I suppose." (R4)

"The straight answer to that question is, most definitely. Because whether we like it or not, men and women are different, men and women approach things differently. Men are less driven by emotions and more rational. Females are, in my view, more balanced, they focus more on communication, they are less ego driven versus men who are happier to work independently, who are less inclusive. So, the short answer to that question is men and women bring different things to the game. So, to answer your question, there must be an improvement if we are encompassing both viewpoints. If we are only looking at things focusing on the majority, from a male point of view, we must be worse off." (R5)

"In terms of the petroleum industry being more inclusive in leadership, of course, yes. I mean, the numbers speak for themselves there's no getting around that. There are more males that are in leadership positions than females. But I don't think that is unique to the petroleum industry. I think it's general across many industries, we know this and it's not just a South African thing. It's also a global thing in terms of the number of women that are in leadership. So, I think the petroleum industry, and industry in general can definitely be more inclusive in leadership. But you talk about leadership components that we could benefit from, I think the leadership around diversity and the understanding of what as a leader diversity means and bring things to the organization is something that, you know, is an area for the petroleum industry and the industry in general, to build on, building diversity capacity in leaders, because it's leaders that recruit others. Generally, if we're talking about being more inclusive, I think diversity and understanding its place would be a very, very important part. And I think another one which is again a general thing but leadership component or training around gender and gender biases and making leadership aware of gender biases, why they have it, and these biases are not only existing in men, but they also exist in women as well. So, for me, I think, in terms of making it more inclusive, we need to get our leaders in and the industry at large to understand that, as I said the concepts around diversity from a gender perspective. And also, you know as I'm saying the gender roles and norms and breaking down some of those paradigms, and it can go into so many areas, you know, even things like gender-based violence, and those types of things also, for me, gender and diversity training would particularly help from an inclusivity perspective." (R6)

The second question: *“do you believe that there are specific initiatives that can be undertaken by the Petroleum companies to attract the next generation of women to join the Industry? If yes – could you give me a few examples of such initiatives? What is it about these initiatives that will help the Petroleum companies achieve inclusivity?”* was around specific initiatives that the industry should engage in, in order to attract females, and subsequently, promote them into leadership positions to transform the industry so it becomes more inclusive and change the narrative.

The participants believed that there were initiatives that could be undertaken and chief among them was introducing the careers available in the petroleum industry to girls while they're still in school, before they choose subjects, so that Maths and Science could be top of mind and therefore open the door to a career in this historically male dominated industry.

“Yeah, so I think organisations need to be deliberate about who they're attracting in employing. So, if you want to attract and employ women into your organisation or into your industry, then I think you need to be deliberate about that. And it's really about, I think at the very basic level, the recruitment process that you engage upon or embark upon when you're trying to transform an organization in any way. So, you know whether it is gender or equity, or whatever it is. To me, it must be deliberate, because you can't just sit back and say, well the organization looks like this today. And in 10 years' time when we look back again, that hasn't changed. So, I think there has to be deliberate steps that need to be taken to make sure that transformation and inclusivity processes are deliberate. So, I don't think there's a shortage of attractiveness into the industry for women. Because whether it's, I think any industry these days, I don't think women are put off from an industry perspective. I don't know, if you have found that, but I think that if there are women out there who are looking for jobs, they're not going to say, well I'm not going to go to that industry, because it's male dominated. In fact, they might say I'm going to go there because it's male dominated. So, I don't think, I can't imagine that women are saying, I don't want to go into this industry because it's male dominated. I think that might have been the case many, many years ago. Today it's not a deterrent. I think it's more a requirement of the organization to be deliberate about it when they employ people, to not just say, well, it's too difficult to find a female engineer, because it's not. At our Refinery for instance, there are women in those roles that traditionally would have been males. There are not too many, but we've got truck drivers that are female now, which 10 years ago was unheard of. You didn't even think that a woman could do that, but they can. I think it's more on the

organization to say, make sure that when you're recruiting, that you don't have that bias in the organization that says this is a male dominated industry, the truck driver must be a male, process engineer must be male, because it doesn't have to be. Things have changed, the world's moved on. And it's more up to us as an organization to ensure that there are a lot of opportunities for everybody, everybody who's interested in that type of role. And to kind of take a new look at what is possible, and not to come with a biased opinion around who can and can't do a certain role.

You have to say, I'm not going to allow my inherent bias to influence who I will recruit into this role. If people, if there are women that are interested in coming into a role that's traditionally been a male dominated environment, then be open minded about it. And I think that is why you almost have to make that deliberate, conscious decision to say I'm going to look at it differently from a recruitment perspective. Otherwise, it's not going to change." (R1)

"I think so. I think the way the petroleum industry has been previously structured created a barrier in terms of women progressing. For instance, you find that in the petroleum industry if you check the requirements space, the working hours and the issues around pregnancy tended to make senior male counterparts not want to have females because they tend to go on maternity leave and the children get sick, and if you are now in a facility like the Refinery, it becomes a challenge. So, I think there are initiatives that can be taken to try and attract females into the industry as well as to retain them. I think something like your family responsibility needs, that would try and capture those issues especially if you have young children, they get sick often so there should be some flexibility. Also, what we have just done at Engen in terms of relooking at our maternity leave policy, we extended it to 6 months. What we have also done in terms of these 6 months, it's up to the individual to try and structure it so that they can have the full 6 months at a go or say I am going to take 4 months and then the remaining 2 months I will work half a day. Those are some of the initiatives that I think could enable women to progress in this industry because it allows for them to have families, it allows them to be able to deal with your babies and enable you to stay with them and the weaning period to be more stable. So, I think those are some of the things that can be looked at which our counterparts don't suffer from. So, I think it is something that we have done which other industries may start looking into. And what this will also do is to enable the company to plan in advance in terms of this. Because now, if you put these initiatives in place, women as well will have to come to the table and deliver. Because what I've seen is that we demand, which is good, but I think we need to be flexible as well to help the organisations that we are in then we make our lives easier. With

issues around working from home, which takes a lot of discipline. It can be considered as initiatives from the industry but it's up to us as individuals to make sure that when we are working from home let's say that, now my baby daughter is a bit sick but not that sick enough to be taken to the doctor. I just want to be close enough to monitor her at home. So those are some of the things but like I said, we as women also need to deliver on the promises.” (R2)

“Okay. So, you would also be aware that Engen has focused, for the past 20 years, on maths and science. We run a maths and science school that is country wide. And we entice youngsters to get into the maths and science program from a very early age. And that is from grades 10 through to matric. And the whole objective of that is to take individuals, both male and female into the program. Those are the top students who aspire to get into the petroleum or into the engineering space per se. So, we don't only train them for the oil industry, we also train them for the, what we call the STEM subjects or the STEM professions, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. So definitely these initiatives help and the Petronas companies are also focused on the same programs that they run a similar program in Malaysia as well.” (R3)

“In terms of initiatives that could be useful, I mean, from an Engen perspective, maybe that's where I should try and focus and look inwardly. Within Engen, I believe that there are specific initiatives that exist in terms of, or maybe by virtue of the processes that are in place where people development is top of mind, where there are specific forums that look at how success is identified within the organization. So, in my mind there is very much a considered effort to sort of understand what type of talent you have and what plans do you have for them in terms of their career progression, etc. And I think that those kinds of initiatives, if they are done, if they're intentional, and they're done in a proper manner, will allow you to identify talent, and also be able to assess that talent enough to know what will get them ready for those roles at a senior or executive level and then obviously committing to making sure that they support that journey, and also enable it so that when the time comes, and the opportunity is there for a female or woman to step into an executive role, that they are ready to do that. I think that type of initiative is a very important one. Obviously within the Engen context, it's not so much a female focused, it's broader than that, it's all the talent, but I think because of what we know, from an industry perspective, from the sector codes that exist, there's obviously always a drive to sort of make sure that there is representation, so you can't, you have to definitely always keep on top of mind, your black women in mind when you do an initiative such as that. I do

think that that type of initiative makes you really look through the entire organization and see what type of talent you have. And having recognized that, see what you can do with that talent to progress the talent and be able to make sure that you are pulling up the right, or pulling up the next generation of women to be able to be readied for taking up those leadership roles. I think that definitely would begin to address or help the industry to make sure that they are inclusive.” (R4)

“So, do I believe that there are specific initiatives that can be undertaken? Very definitely. I think that as a start, the industry needs to be made to look more attractive to women. When you think oil industry you think, in my head, you think, engineers, you think oil rigs, you think, very masculine. Yeah, there is a place in the oil industry, you don’t have to wear a hard hat to belong in the oil industry. Initiatives that I could think of is starting right from an educational point of view, invest in science, maths, technology programs for young females, I don’t know if you... I certainly remember 100 years back to my guidance and counselling days....

The oil industry was certainly not something which came up from the guidance counsellor. It is not an industry that women are encouraged to go into. I am conscious that throughout these questions I am trying to stay away from stereotypes, but ...

Yeah, so that’s what I would do, I would start in the education system. In the, what are they called? Class tens, I want to say standard 8, in the grade 10s where the kids are encouraged to start picking their subjects. Make it more appealing for females, then once we have moved in the educational system, in the workplace, start looking at apprenticeship, even before they go into the workplace, apprenticeship, mentorship. I mean, if you had an apprenticed staff program for females, not mentorship. Mentorship has a slightly more negative connotation because for me, mentorship almost, there’s a danger that there’s a level, like you cannot do it on your own. Apprenticeship is very different. Apprenticeship is, I see your potential, this is what we need, let’s plug it to your course as opposed to mentorship. Mentorship is very different; mentorship is let me be your sounding board as you go through this. Apprenticeship is mapping up the course, so I would look at something like that to encourage increased participation from females. Here is the difficult one, we need a culture shift in the society and in the organisation where there is a whole shift in the way that women are looked at. Women are not necessarily secretaries or PAs, and I don’t want that to sound like I am disrespecting secretaries, there is a space for them too... but speaking from experience, when I first joined the Lubricants division, my very first management meeting I walked into, I walked into the room, I was the only female and there was a whole boardroom full of men and some person popped up and said, “Oh here

is our token female, she is going to take minutes.” It’s that stereotype that you need to change.”
(R5)

“So, I think they are doing a number of these, you know, in terms of the recruitment practices, employment equity targets and those must continue. They mustn't stop. If I can think of additional ones, I come back to what I said in the beginning with me, having taken a technological or a science, let's call it a science, maths, type of direction. We find one of the areas where I think the industry, petroleum companies can look at is actually going back to the school level. So generally, what we do, we don't interfere with the high schools and primary schools, we get involved after they have made their mind up, that young person has made her mind up. I'm going to go now and I'm going to study a particular place, in a sense, let's say they're going to choose something and as again I'm talking mainly from the STEM perspective. And in my experience, I've got a daughter who's going into high school in a couple of years so I spent time going to schools and going to the road shows and I found that the maths and sciences are not attracting the females as much as they can be. So, I think the petroleum industry can partner with schools in going really right down to the high school level to show the petroleum or showcase the petroleum industry to women. I know a lot of female only schools where we could showcase the value of getting a career in the petroleum industry.

I don't think we're doing enough of that at the high school level, we do it after they've made up their mind. I do know of other organizations that do partner, and they go, you know, deeper down at the high school level, and then they start to already attract people into their industries. So, I think that could be an initiative. Also, I think about initiatives around policies in the workplace that will be attractive to females, you know, women have a different kind of career path to men. And nobody can disagree with that we know that the burden of childcare, the burden of house you know, taking care of the home is overwhelming, so their career paths look a little different and I think HR policies to support women in those spaces is going to help them get, firstly, attractive to them, and also for them to want to take on leadership roles, and move up the corporate ladder. I think a lot of women get to a point where it's difficult...not my personal experience, but it's been difficult to have the time available to commit to more senior roles, and they don't know how to get around and so I think specific initiatives to support women could be, could be another opportunity and then also around remuneration specific initiatives to ensure that they are paying fairly we know that females are paid less than males. And it's not just at the leadership level it's at all levels, and I don't describe leaders as only being people that are in formal leadership meaning senior people. For me leaders can be at any

level in the organization but they are people that step up, they take on accountability they lead informally as well. So, in all of those levels formal leadership and informal leadership levels and things like policies around remuneration aspects for women to bring them on par with men is definitely something that industries and organizations need to look at.” (R6)

4.7 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to analyse and present the findings of the research study that has been conducted. The findings were organized into themes and thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the results. Chapter 5 will provide the conclusion reached based on the findings and also make recommendations to senior management.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will table the conclusion and offer recommendations based on key findings of the research study.

This study endeavoured to explore the impact of female leaders in the petroleum industry, with the purpose of enhancing views about female leaders and fostering a more positive perception of female leaders' ability to successfully lead in a male-dominated industry.

5.2 Conclusion: Literature review

The above study set out to explore why the gender gap in leadership exists and how to close it, within the petroleum industry. Based on the secondary research conducted, yes, to some extent, women and men do lead differently, but women's leadership styles are unlikely to be less effective; as a matter of fact, the leadership styles of women are more successful within the environment of team-based, consensually driven organisational structures that are more ubiquitous in today's business environment. Effective leadership is indiscriminate, both genders can learn from one another. According to Northouse (2016) "in sum, substantial empirical evidence reveals that gender stereotypes can significantly alter the perception and evaluation of female leaders and directly affect women in or aspiring to leadership roles".

Eagly & Carli (2017) disputed the "glass-ceiling" metaphor, which refers to an indiscernible blockade hindering the ascendancy of females towards positions of executive leadership roles, citing that it implied that men and women had the same right of entry to junior positions up until this one, undetectable and impassable barrier has been reached where every single woman has been taken in. The pair suggested a labyrinth of leadership for women, the picture depicting an expedition plagued by challenge after challenge progressively - not only when they are about to get to the summit – which women have navigated efficaciously. Vocal advocate for gender equality and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Facebook, Sheryl Sandberg, likened the metaphor to a jungle gym. Powell & Graves (2003) observed that the gender leadership gap

was a worldwide manifestation in which it is inexplicably women that densely populate the junior-authority and junior-level roles of leadership in comparison with their male colleagues. There are commonly three explanation varieties when women underrepresentation discussions with regards to elite management are held: differences in human capital, differences in gender leadership styles as well as effectiveness, and prejudice.

5.2.1. Differences in Human Capital

Eagly & Carli (2004, 2007) remarked that one set of justifications that is prominent in attempts to explain away the labyrinth has been that female employees do not invest as much as male employees do when it comes to training, learning, and practical knowledge of the workplace. The dearth associated with qualified women, sometimes referred to as the “pipeline problem” was due to this supposed lack of human capital, it was alleged. Conversely, upon closer inspection at the statistics, it was discovered women were in actual fact in the pipeline, but the pipeline was leaking. Mainly due to unbalanced obligations women assume for raising children and other domestic duties, women due to some extent have less work experience and employment stability than men (Bowles & McGinn, 2005; Eagly & Carli, 2007).

However, the elucidation of women self-selecting out of the “leadership track” preferring rather the “mommy track” roles which ultimately did not translate into roles of leadership (Belkin, 2003; Ehrlich, 1989; Wadman, 1992); was according to Eagly & Carli (2004) found to be baseless as far as research was concerned.

5.2.2. Differences in Gender Leadership Styles as well as Effectiveness

Further theories endeavouring to justify the leadership gap hinge on the premise that males and females are different. One argument in this vein is that women’s marginalisation from top leadership spots exists as a consequence of dissimilarities in effectiveness and leadership style. In stark contrast to orthodox beliefs, female leaders are not more relational or have a lower task orientation in comparison to their male counterparts. Granted, participative leadership is more adopted by women leaders (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992).

5.2.3. Prejudice

The prominent explanation for the gap in leadership rests on gender biases stemming from stereotypical beliefs that “men take charge and women take care” (Hoyt & Chemers, 2008). Cerebral shortcuts that impact the manner in which individuals process information about groups and group members are called stereotypes. Gender typecasts embrace views on the traits of women and men and advocate how women and men ought to be. Along with facing gender-biased prejudice, non-white women repeatedly also tackle ethnic or racial prejudice (Bell & Nkomo, 2001).

Sadly, for now, the inevitable reality is that women within the senior ranks of petroleum companies remain conspicuous by their absence.

5.3 Conclusion: Primary Data

Based on the objectives of this study, the following conclusions have been made by this study and are presented below:

Objective 1: To ascertain if women and men lead differently within the petroleum industry.

This research study concludes that women and men are different which means, in some cases, they will lead differently, but the difference is not to the detriment of women, as is the belief that women are emotional and erratic.

Objective 2: To establish if gender influences an individual’s leadership effectiveness within the petroleum industry.

Research findings of this study did not find a suggestion of a correlation between leadership effectiveness and gender, but rather success in leadership hinges on the leader and how they relate to the people in their care. The literature reviewed in this research study affirmed that an individual's competencies, knowledge, and capabilities, can influence whether or not they are an effective leader.

Objective 3: To determine the factors that affect women leadership within the petroleum industry.

A review of literature on this subject confirmed that women face a myriad of obstacles and barriers, with the glass ceiling no longer adequate to fully highlight these challenges and the labyrinth being proposed as the better metaphor to capture these challenges.

The findings of this research study found that there were some challenges that affected female leaders in the petroleum industry, one of them being all the societal expectations on women and trying to balance that with a career can be a hindrance to some women's growth and aspirations, especially if they do not have a support system. But more tellingly, this research study found that, in as much as generally women faced myriad obstacles and challenges along the leadership track, the majority of the participants in this study, as much as they are aware of the plight of females not just in the petroleum industry, but across all industries, they themselves believed their growth within the industry had been fairly good; they had not faced any significant barriers that hindered their career growths.

Objective 4: To make recommendations to petroleum industry's senior management towards enhancing women leadership.

This study concludes that the petroleum industry can gain by being more inclusive from a gender perspective and the findings of this research highlighted what needs to be done to achieve inclusivity. Petroleum companies need to put gender parity on their agenda by making deliberate and intentional commitments as well as embarking on initiatives to attract women into the industry, and this needs to be done as early as high school where female students are to be encouraged to go the STEM route.

5.4 Recommendations for the organisation

The following recommendations are made with regards to the impact of female leadership in the petroleum industry:

- Deliberate and intentional address of the structural and institutional obstacles and challenges that females face in their ascendency to senior leadership positions

In as much as the participants of this research study themselves believed their growth within the industry had been fairly good; and had not faced any significant barriers or faced obstacles that hindered their career growths, they did agree the petroleum would benefit by being more inclusive from a gender perspective and therefore this study recommends to the senior management to make a concerted effort to making the work environment conducive for females to thrive, for example flexible working hours to achieve work-life balance, addressing gender bias, discrimination and stereotyping.

- Initiatives to attract women into the petroleum industry

There needs to be initiatives undertaken to attract women into the industry and they be undertaken as early as high school by encouraging young girls to go the STEM route.

- Current female leaders help bridge the gender gap

Madeleine Albright, former (and first female) United States Secretary of State is quoted to have said “There’s a special place in hell for women who don’t help each other.” And while this may be perceived as a bit harsh, women in unique positions of privilege really need to do their bit to fuel the agenda of changing the status quo and changing the narrative for the next generation of female leaders.

The results of EY’s survey underlined the value [gender] diversity brings to the bottom line. It therefore stands to reason that emphasis on more action ought to be taken to catapult women into leadership positions to help meet a composite set of contemporary business challenges. Various research prove that diverse teams make better decisions.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

This research study only explored the impact of female leadership in the petroleum industry through the lens of Engen Petroleum senior female leaders. It was a small sample in just it focused on only one petroleum company and only their views were sampled. It would be beneficial to the industry at large for future research to interview female leaders from different petroleum companies and also include men in their sample to establish their views on the obstacles and challenges that women have to navigate to make it to leadership positions within the petroleum industry and hear their views on how these obstacles can be eradicated or at least minimised. The qualitative approach using the interview instrument to gather primary data was used. A quantitative approach could be used, and such instruments such as questionnaires could be used which would allow for a larger population to be sampled.

5.6 Summary

Based on the objectives of the research study as well as the questions that were required to be answered by the study, the key findings were presented. From these findings, a conclusion was drawn, and recommendations to senior management were made as well as further research were made.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Informed Consent Letter

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

MBA Research Project

Researcher: Nonsikelelo Munyaka ([REDACTED])

Supervisor: Prof. Ana Martins (031 260 7172)

Research Office: Ms. P Ximba (0312603587)

Dear Participant,

I, Nonsikelelo Munyaka am a Master of Business Administration (MBA) student at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: *“The Potential Impact of Women Leadership in the Petroleum Industry in Durban”*. The aim of this study is to explore the impact of women leadership in the South African petroleum industry with particular focus on Engen as one of the leading petroleum companies in the country and determine possible solutions to address challenges facing female leaders within the organization.

Through your participation, I hope to understand the role of female leaders at Engen, challenges they face in this male-dominated industry and possible solutions to address those challenges. The results of the interview are intended to proffer recommendations to Engen senior management, as well as the petroleum industry at large for inclusive leadership to address gender and employment equity.

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 interview. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the interview or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above.

The interview should take about 45 minutes to an hour. I hope you will take the time to participate.

Most of the data had been collected before COVID-19. However, an additional interview still needs to be conducted and due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the social distancing requirements, it will be conducted online via Zoom.

Sincerely

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

MBA Research Project

Researcher: Nonsikelelo Munyaka ([REDACTED])

Supervisor: Prof. Ana Martins (031 260 7172)

Research Office: Ms. P Ximba (0312603587)

CONSENT

I..... (full names of participant)

hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby consent/do not consent to the interview being recorded.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

.....
.....

This page is to be retained by the researcher

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

MBA Research Project

Researcher: Nonsikelelo Munyaka ()

Supervisor: Prof. Ana Martins (031 260 7172)

Research Office: Ms. P Ximba (0312603587)

The Potential Impact of Female Leadership in the Petroleum Industry

Interview Questions

1. Given the male-dominated nature of the petroleum industry, as a female leader, have you experienced different reactions when managing both male and female employees? Have you ever experienced resistance from a male employee which you believe is driven by the fact that you are female? How did you handle the situation?
2. Do you believe that there are mistakes which female leaders make more frequently than their male counterparts in the petroleum industry? If yes – could you give me some examples of these, and your thoughts as to why this phenomenon occurs?
3. Given the scarcity of female leaders within the petroleum industry, when faced with two equally qualified male and female candidates, how do you determine whom to hire?
4. As a female leader, have you experienced any significant barriers to your personal growth and aspirations in your career within the petroleum industry? Would you be prepared to share some of the specifics with me?
5. How do you handle work/life balance challenges? Are there any sacrifices (both personal and professional) in your career that you have had to make in dealing with work / life balance challenges?
6. Do you believe that the Petroleum Industry could gain from being more inclusive in leadership? What are the leadership components that you believe we could benefit from by being more inclusive and how would this benefit the industry?

7. Do you believe that there are specific initiatives that can be undertaken by Petroleum companies to attract the next generation of women to join the Industry? If yes – could you give me a few examples of such initiatives? What is it about these initiatives that will help the Petroleum companies achieve their inclusivity goals?
8. What do you believe will be the biggest challenge for the next generation of upcoming female leaders? Do you have any advice for them?

Appendix 3: Ethical Clearance Letter



10 September 2019

Mrs Nonsikelelo Thembelihle Munyaka (217075086)
Grad School Of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Mrs Munyaka,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000358/2019

Project title: The Potential Impact of Women Leadership in the Petroleum Industry in Durban

Full Approval – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 28 August 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

This approval is valid for one year from 10 September 2019.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

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