

Investigating the reasons for a lack of women in leadership positions in selected male dominated companies in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

South African companies are steadily progressing towards the implementation of gender equality in the workplace, however, the existence of stereotypes and stigmatisation in the broader society, and more often in the working environment, are perceived reasons behind the misrepresentation of women in top echelon positions. The aim of this research study was to explore the reasons for the lack of women representation in leadership positions in selected male-dominated companies in South Africa. This study used a qualitative and interpretive research paradigm and also employed in-depth interviews through a snowball sample of nine females ($n=9$) occupying managerial positions in selected male-dominated companies.

The main findings of this study suggested that women representation is viewed in two ways, as it was found that five participants felt that women are seemingly well represented and four participants agreed that women are not well represented in male-dominated industries. This study indicated that black women managers were the most represented in various industries in South Africa. The reasons for the lack of women in leadership positions were identified as the search for a work/life balance and heavy workload; traditional gender roles; gender stereotyping; women overwhelmed by men; a lack of support from management; a lack of confidence and hindrances, and a lack of trust and capabilities of women. These reasons, therefore, correlate with the challenges identified in existing literature. Based on the research findings, various recommendations were proposed for future studies.

Key words: Challenges, women, leadership, male-dominated industries, positions.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction

Over decades the institutionalisation of gender equality has been a known issue in the world of work. Companies across the globe are continuously challenged and seemingly fail in their endeavours towards increasing women representation in higher ranks in corporate hierarchies. Traditionally senior leadership positions have been regarded as masculine jobs while domestic duties in the home have been perceived as feminine. In various countries and regions societal practices and conventional gender roles greatly affect the roles women portray overall in labour markets and leadership. These standards are frequently incorporated in the business arena and eventually form part of the framework of organizational culture (ILO, 2015:2).

Gender inequity among women and men is likely to be extremely evident in leadership arenas. Only a few women occupy leadership positions within public and private companies in greater societies across the globe. Over the past two decades in all regions and countries, advancement has seemingly been stagnant (United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs: 2015: xii).

Female representation among company executives, politicians and directors are continuously low with a proportion of 30% and more females in leadership positions of which no one has gained or exceeded equality. The gender compilation of executive committees of private institutions is nowhere near achieving equality, which significantly means that the glass ceiling is a real phenomenon for a significant number of women across the globe (United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015: xii).

Data presented by Mckinsey & Company (2016:12) (see table 1 below) shows that in Africa women occupy 47% of lower management positions, 40% of middle management, and 29% of senior management positions with a total deficiency of 18%. Female representation is significantly higher at 53% in lower management in China, with a total deficiency of 47%. In the USA, the total deficiency is 20%. Interestingly a low level of deficiency (7%) is noted despite considering the visibility of female representation in top managerial positions of African top quartile companies. At each level of the African business pipeline women are under-represented compared to men, both in top management and executive committees. Additionally, female representation declines as women advance through the pipeline, which is essential for women in lower level positions who later want to become executive managers (Mckinsey & Company, 2016: 11).

Table 1: Women’s Representation across the Corporate Pipeline (Adapted from Mckinsey & Company, 2016:12)

Percent	Non-management	Middle management ¹	Senior management ²	Total leakage ³ p.p.
Africa average	47	40	29	18
Africa top quartile companies ⁴	53	55	46	7
US average	45	39	25	20
China average	53	21	6	47

South Africa has parity compared to the other remaining countries in Africa, as women occupy 29% of its executive positions. South Africa also excels in its performance in contrast to some developed countries such as the United Kingdom (19%) and Australia (23%). However, the percentage of CEO female directorships held in South Africa are 10% less than the global average of 12%. Female representation is indispensable as it is proposed that underrepresented should be recognised as leaders and not as tokens. To achieve this, the above statistics concerning female representation statistics should exceed 30% (Farjardo & Erasmus, 2017).

Women have played a significant and crucial part at political and leadership levels by not only advocating for women’s rights and empowerment but also directing the overall transformation of the entire country. There has been a remarkable increase of female participation in political parties, Parliament, Cabinet, the judiciary, public and private sectors and executive positions (Department of Women, 2018-2019:10). South Africa has made extraordinary advances in driving female leadership specifically in politics. However, greater endeavours should be employed towards enhanced female representation in municipal management, executive positions, parastatals and the private sector. While increasing, female participation in the workforce currently remains a challenge (MDG, 2015: 13).

1.2 Problem statement

This study aims to examine the reasons for the lack of women in leadership positions within selected companies in South Africa. After the democratic elections in 1994, South Africa has seen more women in managerial positions in predominantly male environments. One of the country’s accomplishments of democracy is that of the representation of women in political and leadership roles (ANC, 2014:10; Department of Women; 2015:47).

Progress has been made by women in several industries which include the economy, engineering, science, technology, media and various others, but predominantly in politics. Prior to the democracy in 1994, women only had a 2.7% representation in parliament; since then, changes have occurred. Currently, 41% of ministers in Cabinet, and 47% of deputy ministers, are female, while women constitute 41% of the National Assembly (Pitamber, 2016).

Though remarkable advances of female presentation have been made in the political arena, the achievement of 50/50 equality in various industries in South Africa is an ongoing challenge. Evidently this issue remains apparent in the employment of women mainly in executive positions in the private and public sectors (Department of Women, 2018:10).

In various industries in South Africa women in general have taken on a minimal role within the business arena. Female involvement and advancement into leadership positions have been stagnant despite improvements made concerning gender equity in the workforce (Warburton, 2017). The misrepresentation of women in senior positions remains a political and economic issue (BWASA Women in Leadership Census, 2017:7).

Female directors make up only 19.1% of JSE listed entities. Women occupy 511 seats of 2671 JSE companies with the exclusion of subsidiaries. When compared to 2015 Census statistics, the number of female directors of JSE listed entities has declined from 20.8% since 2015 (BWASA Women in Leadership, 2017:35). Although progress has been made, gender inequity is still prevalent, with some exceptions in the workplace. Women are still insufficiently represented in executive positions nationwide (South African History, 2011).

Based on the aforementioned, the question arises, “*What prevents women from progressing into senior positions in male-dominated organisations?*”. Though there has been a notable increase in female representation in the hierarchy of various South African organisations, the extent to which women are currently represented in South African organisations will be explored within the context of this study.

1.3 Rationale and significance of study

The identified problem regarding women representation in South African companies has been addressed in scholarly literature and business research. The aim of this study was to explore the reasons women are still underrepresented in leading positions in male-dominated companies in South Africa. This study will provide senior management of the selected companies with viable suggestions concerning practices, policies, structures and procedures followed in talent management (recruitment, selection, retention, succession planning, promotion, remuneration, etc.) in traditionally male-dominated industries.

1.4 Aim and objectives of this study

1.4.1 General objective

The main aim of this study was to investigate the reasons for the lack of women in leadership positions in selected male-dominated companies in South Africa.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

- To determine the career advancement of women in leadership positions in male-dominated industries.
- To determine whether women are well represented, overrepresented or misrepresented in male-dominated industries.
- To determine the challenges that influence the career advancement of women in leadership positions in organisations.
- To determine whether women are exposed to any gender or racial stereotypes in organisations.
- To determine the reasons for women not attaining leadership positions in male-dominated industries.
- To determine whether biased or discriminatory decisions are made which interfere with the appointment of women in leadership positions in organisations
- To determine the measures that management can implement to increase the number of women representation in organisations.
- To make recommendations to increase female representation in leadership positions in organisations.

1.4.3 Research Questions

- To what extent has your career advanced leading to the leadership position you are currently occupying in the male-dominated organisation?
- To what extent are women represented, overrepresented or misrepresented in male-dominated industries?
- What are the challenges that influence the career advancement of women in organisations?

- To what extent are women exposed to gender or racial stereotypes in organisations?
- What are the reasons for women not attaining leadership positions in male-dominated industries?
- Are any biased or discriminatory decisions made which may interfere with the appointment of women in leadership positions in organisations?
- Which measures can be implemented by management to increase the number of women represented in organisations?
- Which recommendations can be made concerning the representation of women in leadership positions?

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Research paradigm

This study followed an interpretive paradigm. An interpretive approach provides a deep insight into “the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 1994:118). Interpretive research assumes that reality is socially constructed, and the researcher becomes the vehicle by which this reality is revealed (Cavana, *et al* 2001; Walsham, 1995a, 1995b). This approach is consistent with the social world construct that is characterised by the interaction between the researcher and the participants (Mingers, 2001).

1.5.2 Research method

For the purpose of this study, the researcher followed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological research approach using in-depth interviews. Qualitative research consists of the compilation, collection and decoding of data that are not scaled down to mathematical figures (Anderson, 2010). The purpose of qualitative research is to gain a detailed understanding of a specific phenomenon through the identification of socially constructed meanings of the phenomenon and the context within which the phenomenon occurs (Hennick, Hunter & Bailey, 2010:84). Qualitative research has the advantage of providing an in-depth explanation of people’s experiences regarding a research problem (Mack, Woodsong, McQueen, Guest and Namey 2011:1).

1.5.3 Research design

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used phenomenology as a chosen method for the research design. The rationale behind the use of this method was to compile the relevant information received from the participants, based on their personal experiences. In Logical Investigations, Husserl (1970) defines

phenomenology as “the science of essence of consciousness” and focuses on defining the concept of intentionality and the meaning of lived experience from the first-person point of view. An important tenet of the Husserlian approach to science is the belief that the meaning of lived experiences may be unravelled only through one-to-one transactions between the researcher and the objects of research. These transactions must involve attentive listening, interaction, and observation to create a representation of reality more sophisticated than previous understandings (Husserl, 1970).

1.6 Research Procedure

1.6.1 Population

A population is usually a large target group which the researcher does not study directly, but aims to develop a knowledge and understanding of this target group by drawing a sample (Punch, 2014:247). The population investigated in this research included women in senior positions in academia, sports, engineering, construction, transport, manufacturing, law, the military, paramilitary or finance careers (Gibbs, 2009; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

1.6.2 Sample

The researcher used snowball sampling to reach the objectives of the study. A sampling procedure may be defined as snowball sampling when the researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants. This process is, by necessity, repetitive: informants refer the researcher to other informants, who are contacted by the researcher and then refer her or him to yet other informants, and so on. Hence the evolving snowball effect is captured in a metaphor that addresses the central matter of quality of this sampling procedure: its accumulative (diachronic and dynamic) dimension.

Snowball sampling is arguably the most widely employed sampling method in qualitative research in various disciplines across social sciences. It is sometimes used as the primary vehicle through which informants are accessed, or as an auxiliary means, which assists researchers in enriching sampling clusters and accessing new participants and social groups when other contact avenues have dried up (Noy, 2008). The respondents that were interviewed, was a heterogeneous group of nine female managers aged between 25 and 60, currently employed as managers across different management levels such as executive managers, line managers and directors, departmental and regional managers from historically male-dominated industries.

The interviews continued to a point where saturation was reached. Strauss and Corbin (1998:136) suggest that saturation is a "matter of degree" and the longer researchers examine and familiarise themselves with and analyse their data, the greater the potential for "the new to emerge". As such, they propose that saturation should be more concerned with reaching the point where it becomes "counter-productive", a point where "the new" that is discovered does not necessarily add anything to the overall story, model, theory or framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:136). They admit that sometimes the problem of developing a conclusion to their work is not necessarily the result of a lack of data but of an excess of it. As the analysis begins to take shape, it is important for the researcher to become more disciplined and cut data where necessary. As for sample size selection using a phenomenological approach, Creswell (1998:64) suggests between five and 25 while Morse (1994:225) believes that at least six respondents are needed.

1.6.3 Data collection

1.6.3.1 Role of network members

The researcher sought to contact network members in order to identify nine female managers in traditionally male-dominated industries. Identified prospective participants were contacted to schedule a meeting. During this meeting, the objectives of the study were explained, and the confidential and voluntary nature was emphasized. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any given time. Once prospective participants agreed to participate, a date was scheduled for the actual interview. In addition, the researcher also probed for names of possible respondents (snowball sampling) that could participate in the study. Once identified, the same procedure was followed. The researcher obtained written informed consent form (see **Annexure B**) from the participants before the interview. Appointments for the interviews were made with each participant at a venue that they identified as safe, private and disturbance-free.

1.6.3.2 In-depth interviews

The data collection procedure was conducted using in-depth interviews for the duration of 20 -30 minutes with the identified nine female managers employed in various male-dominated industries. These female managers were continuously assured before the actual interview transpired about the voluntary nature of their participation and were also reminded that they might experience some emotional discomfort during the interviews, but that psychological support could be organised and was available if need be.

Permission had also been obtained from participants to make use of voice recording devices. The use of a tape-recorded interview is advantageous as it compiles nodules during the interview (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:394).

1.7 Data analysis

The analysis of data was the next step in the research process, which followed after the population had been accessed, decisions concerning sampling had been made, data collection had been conducted, and the recordings of the collected data data collected had been transcribed (Flick, 2013:9). The digital voice-recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim for data analysis (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi & Wright, 2010:214).

Myers (2013:167), coding is one of the easiest ways in which qualitative data can be analysed. A code is used to give a description or summary of the wording within an interview. The focal point within the coding process is through allowing the researcher to focus on making the attributes of data significant (Hair *et al.*, 2016:302). The open coding process of Tesh (as cited in Creswell 2014:198) was followed to identify in vivo and descriptive codes. The researcher read the full text to obtain a holistic sense of the data, developed codes and coded the text. Subcategories, categories and themes that emerged during the analysis were documented. An independent co-coder also analysed the data to ensure reliability. Consensus conversations confirmed the findings.

To ensure trustworthiness in this study, the researcher applied Lincoln and Guba's model (as cited in Botma *et al.* 2010:234–235). Prolonged engagement with the participants during the in-depth interviews ensured truth-value. The researcher reflected on what was being said by writing field notes during and after the interviews. Regular discussions among researchers enriched the process and improved credibility. Applicability was ensured through a well thought-through sample and a dense description of the research methodology. The possibility of an audit trail and the use of an independent co-coder during data analysis will also ensure consistency. Replication is possible, because of a dense description of the study and data. An audit trail and reflexivity will ensure neutrality. Authenticity will be evident in the quotes that will enrich the findings.

1.8 Demarcation of study

The demarcation of this study was limited to female managers employed in organisations based in North West and Gauteng provinces in South Africa. This study focused on investigating the reasons for the lack

of women in leadership positions within selected companies in South Africa. This topic falls under diversity management in the field of Industrial psychology, and more specifically organisation behaviour.

1.9 Ethical considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines as approved by the NWU Research Committee. Once ethical clearance (see **Annexure A**) was obtained from the NWU Research Committee, the researcher obtained written permission from respondents to conduct the study through the distribution of a consent form. The following ethical issues were taken into consideration: the objective of the study was explained to respondents; confidentiality and anonymity was communicated to reassure respondents that their identities would be protected throughout the study; the voluntary nature of participation in the study was emphasized and it was indicated to respondents that they may withdraw from the study at any given moment of the interview; the interviews took place in an environment that was safe and conducive for respondents; respondents were informed that they are allowed to request feedback of the results pertaining this study; reliability of the findings was ensured through the use of co-coders; avoidance and wariness of plagiarism were ensured through the adherence of the standard research guidelines of the NWU and acknowledgement of existing literature from resources and authors.

1.10 Layout of the study

This mini-dissertation will be presented in article format. Chapter 1 contains the introduction and orientation of the study, problem statement, and an outline of research methodology. In Chapter 2 is the research article based on the empirical study. The mini-dissertation is concluded in Chapter 3 and entails conclusions and recommendations pertaining this study.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH ARTICLE - FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN COMPANIES

ABSTRACT

South African companies are steadily progressing towards the implementation of gender equality in the workplace, however, the existence of stereotypes and stigmatisation in the broader society, and more often in the working environment, are perceived reasons behind the misrepresentation of women in top echelon positions. The aim of this research study was to explore the reasons for the lack of women representation in leadership positions in selected male-dominated companies in South Africa. This study used a qualitative and interpretive research paradigm and also employed in-depth interviews through a snowball sample of nine females ($n=9$) occupying managerial positions in selected male-dominated companies.

The main findings of this study suggested that women representation is viewed in two ways, as it was found that five participants felt that women are seemingly well represented and four participants agreed that women are not well represented in male-dominated industries. This study indicated that black women managers were the most represented in various industries in South Africa. The reasons for the lack of women in leadership positions were identified as the search for a work/life balance and heavy workload; traditional gender roles; gender stereotyping; women overwhelmed by men; a lack of support from management; a lack of confidence and hindrances, and a lack of trust and capabilities of women. These reasons, therefore, correlate with the challenges identified in existing literature. Based on the research findings, various recommendations were proposed for future studies.

Key words: Challenges, women, leadership, male-dominated industries, positions.

2.1 Introduction

A history of inequality and divisions has emanated from years of apartheid in South Africa. This system focused on exclusion based on race, class and gender, giving rise to poverty, inequality and unemployment. The challenges women are currently confronted with are enduring consequences of the past. Although progress in the socio-economic empowerment indicators have been made since 1994, gender disparities still prevail in favour of men (Department of Women, 2015-2020:11).

There are various issues related to the representation of women in the broader society in South Africa, because women are economically, socially and politically voiceless due to social attitudes and gendered norms, impeding their access to opportunities, the world of work and social structures (South African Local Government Association Women's Commission, 2017). The application, implementation and enforcement of applicable legislation for promoting and protecting gender equality remain barriers, both for private and public sectors in South Africa. More particularly, inequality in the workplace is an unachievable goal for various South African employers (South African Human Rights Commission Equality Report, 2012:24).

The main objective of this literature review was to provide an overview of female representation in South African companies, gaining perspectives related to women working in male-dominated industries, and critically analysing the challenges faced by women in leadership positions. Various scholarly studies concerning women leaders in the South African context have been performed (Daya, 2011; Doubell & Struwig, 2014; Motsa, 2016), in which the importance of women representation in companies was explored. However, the main objective of this study was to investigate the reasons for the lack of women in leadership positions in selected male-dominated companies in South Africa.

2.2 Female representation in South African companies

Women between the ages of 15 and 64 years comprise only approximately 51% of the workforce however, only 45% are employed in the South African workforce (Parliament, South Africa, 2017:11). Though significant progress has been made in South Africa, women representation remains beneath the targeted 50% in positions of power (Statistics South Africa, 2018)

There is an increased interest related to the board diversity found in South Africa and abroad. Only one fifth of JSE listed entities' directorships are held by women, though their representation on board levels have increased (Viviers, Mans- Kemp & Fawcett, 2017:7). The Businesswomen's Association of South Africa revealed in the Women in Leadership Census (2017:35), only 19, 1% of directorships are held by

women in JSE-listed entities. Only 511 out of 2671 seats in JSE listed companies are held by women, this excludes subsidiaries. From the 2015 census findings, it is evident that the proportion of total women directorships of JSE listed companies has declined from a high of 20, 8% in 2015.

The Hon. Minister Mildred Oliphant (as cited by Illoyd, 2014) stated that many black people, women and people with disabilities are still relegated to inferior jobs due to a supposed lack of skills, while many graduates from designated groups are still unemployed or underemployed. Most of the workplaces still have predominately white managements and they are often overrepresented by men, with isolated instances of black and women executives.

Research findings in the Jack Hammer Executive Report by Hammer (2018:22) indicated that South African companies' managerial teams comprise of a total of 334 people and only 21% thereof are Black South Africans. The need to specifically appoint black women leaders, is remarkably considered by companies, but despite this gender transformation agenda, females are still not appointed in senior positions (Jack Hammer Executive Report, 2018:6). The Black Economic Empowerment Report by the BBBEE Commission (2018:48) states that, of the listed companies who are disclosed to the BBBEE Commission, JSE listed directors' positions are still predominantly occupied by white males (58%), along with black males (20%) and black females (18%). Only 4% of directors' positions are filled by white females. 38% of black director positions account for the totality of the entire black directorships.

2.3 Women in male-dominated industries

Women are socially displayed as emotional and physically weaker beings and this is often viewed as a weakness, more so when employed in male dominated careers (Ramaite, 2013:2). Many women doubt their ability of succeeding in a senior position, because of being told that management positions are not necessarily a 'woman's job' (Vitee, 2016:9).

A study by Martin and Barnard (2013b:10) found in male-dominated domains women are either not capacitated or accommodated. It may be that women in the organisation are frequently excluded from informal networks, due to the occurrence of masculine activities, which therefore leads to gender barriers in the workplace (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013:494). For women, entering traditionally male-dominated careers is challenging and the reluctance men have towards accommodating them, make these environments appalling for attracting considerable numbers of women and retaining them (Martin & Barnard, 2013b:3).

Once women have progressed to the top, they are either alone, for instance the only woman occupying the position, or they are viewed as tokens of female representation or affirmative action, and therefore they are unlikely to exert managerial power (Nkomo, 2012:31). Women's opinions are disregarded, their

perceptions are ignored, and they are usually excluded from important discussions and decision-making when tokenism occurs (Hubbard, 2018:13). Women's token status coupled with biases relating to their capability to lead, may constructively restrict the availability of resources to women business leaders, resulting into a comprehensive lack of support of their leadership (Glass & Cook, 2016:53).

There is a small body of knowledge indicating that women who progress in male-dominated environments, may at times hamper the progression of other women (Kaiser & Spalding, 2015:600). In the findings by Johnson & Mathur-Helm (2011:53), female senior managers dread being excelled by women who have progressed to the top, they are consumed by selfish behaviour and prone to withhold information to prevent others from outperforming or being more empowered. In another study respondent suggested that women leadership could be improved through supporting one another or having support groups, and this study also emphasized that men feel inferior. Although there are exceptional cases in which women despise one another, it would rather be better for women to support each other (Ngcobo 2016:112).

2.4 Challenges faced by women advancing to senior positions

2.4.1 Gender stereotyping

Universal research related to gender stereotypes shows that women are generally known for lacking confidence and having the inability to deal with executive management issues when compared to men (Doubell & Struwig, 2014:532). Women are acquired to be assertive and firm, which is the opposite of the stereotypical notion of how women are. This leads to the perception of women lacking the necessary capabilities to advance to senior managerial positions (Heilman, 2012:116). In a study by Moloto, Brink and Nel (2014:5), it was found that men saw themselves as valuable, while women stereotypically view themselves as inadequate, incapable and deficient. They also perceived themselves needing to put in extra effort to perform their work in order to proof their capabilities, and to be bold by pulling rank, while also feeling undermined, underestimated and exploited as leaders.

Women who occupy top positions and presume conventional male leadership styles are criticized and their authenticity is questioned (Mgcotyelwa, 2013:23; Nikolaoau, 2017:50). Women who portray their leadership characteristics, are criticised for not being more feminine, but rather wanting to be like men. This results in being dismissed by men and women for doing other than what is recognised as normal, namely to be compliant and vulnerable, thus being restricted (Ngomane, 2017:391). Women who are subjected to stereotyping and criticism, have been perceived to adjust their behaviour by conforming to known masculine beliefs of management in order to be acknowledged as authentic leaders (Mgcotyelwa,

2013:23). The continuous occurrence of stereotyping causing the masculinity of leadership are the contributing factors leading to the resistance of female leadership, discrimination and other deterrents. Women in leadership positions are consequently restricted in respect to the execution of their work (Ngunyi, 2015:5).

2.4.2 Lack of confidence and support

Many women have the tendency of restricting themselves because of cultural norms causing them to not see themselves in leadership positions (Coward, 2010:4). Because women have a limited support structure and these positions are very stressful, it may result in them leaving their positions. Their departure is thus ascribed to a women's lack of expertise or the reluctance to work hard, which is necessary to successfully fill senior-level positions (Schwanke, 2013:19). Organisations offer more support to men, as a result of their numbers, and therefore the advancement of women to leadership positions is negatively affected (Kayi, 2013:13). The lack of support for women in the organisation, is a possible threat to employed women, causing them to have a negative experience in the workplace (Ramaite, 2013:69).

2.4.3 Absence of role models/ mentors

Women in senior positions point out that the lack of mentors amongst women destroys their progress in the corporate hierarchy. Because men traditionally hold the most senior-level positions, they are prone to have the authority to provide opportunities to those in lower positions. This is a major impediment for women's progression (Jakobsh, 2012:3). In a study by Shangase & Gerswel Proches (2014: 6280), some of the respondents stressed that certain female leaders would belittle each other rather than supporting one another. Johnson and Mathur-Helm (2011:50) reasons women are not supporting each other were because of preserving positions for oneself, self-doubt, intimidation, and vulnerability.

2.4.4 Work and family responsibilities

Certain female leaders who try to balance their careers and lives are under pressure, while others rather decide to be career-driven. Women's career advancement is affected by their absence from work due to family responsibilities. Women are viewed as unreliable and uncommitted to their work, this leads to a loss of confidence (Ngomane, 2017:391). Research has revealed, in the working environment when

gendered roles are performed at work, men perceive a woman subordinate to them and not as a leader (Awung, 2015:53). Bearing in mind that women's advancement is deterred by societal and cultural norms causing a woman to do extra work at home while the man does one (Awung, 2015:53).

2.4.5 Biased Appointments and promotions processes

If an employer has a choice of promoting a capable man or woman, selecting women is seen as a risk. (Kiria and Mukulu, 2012: 206). Men are more likely to progress to senior positions, because greater opportunities are granted to them (Nikolaou, 2017:14). Nyangiwe-Ndika (2015:50), explains, in general, men are excellent in negotiating for their compensation packages which is well suited to their needs, while women tend to settle for what is offered, rather than bargaining like men do. Promotion criteria usually focus on the assumption of one's performing role rather than on the required qualifications (Cross, 2010:105). In a study by Nikolaou (2017:50) female employees indicated that male employees are often promoted based on their potential, rather than their qualifications, while women need to work harder to make progress in their careers. Sometimes women are unwilling to negotiate for a promotion, because they lack confidence concerning their performance (Mathur-Helm, 2018:28).

2.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives are divided into general and specific objectives.

2.5.1. General objective

To investigate the reasons for a lack of women in leadership positions in selected male-dominated companies in South Africa.

2.5.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To determine the career advancement of women in leadership positions in male-dominated industries.
- To determine whether women are well represented, overrepresented or misrepresented in male-dominated industries.
- To determine the challenges that influence the career advancement of women in leading positions in organisations.

- To determine whether women are exposed to any gender or racial stereotypes in organisations.
- To determine the reasons for women not attaining leadership positions in male-dominated industries.
- To determine whether biased or discriminatory decisions are made which interferes with the appointment of women in leadership positions in organisations.
- To determine the measures that management can implement to increase the women representation in organisations.
- To make recommendations to enhance women representation in leadership positions in organisations.

2.6 RESEARCH METHODS

2.6.1. Research paradigm

This study followed an interpretive paradigm. An interpretive approach provides a deep insight into “the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 1994:118). Interpretive research assumes that reality is socially constructed and that the researcher becomes the vehicle by which this reality is revealed (Cavana, *et al.*, 2001; Walsham, 1995a, 1995b). This approach is consistent with the social world construct that is characterised by the interaction between the researcher and the participants (Mingers, 2001).

2.6.2 Research method

For the purpose of this study, the researcher followed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological research approach, using in-depth interviews. Qualitative research consists of the compilation, collection and decoding of data that are not scaled down to mathematical figures (Anderson, 2010). The purpose of qualitative research is to gain a detailed understanding of a specific phenomenon through the identification of socially constructed meanings of the phenomenon and the context within which the phenomenon occurs (Hennick *et al.*, 2010:84). Qualitative research has the advantage of providing an in-depth explanation of people’s experiences regarding a research problem (Mack *et al.*, 2011:1). The researcher collected the relevant information through an extensive literature search, consulting of scholarly literature which included academic journal articles, books, online articles, dissertations and legislation. The objective of this literature review was to explore the reasons for women under- or misrepresented in leading positions in male-dominated companies. Given the orientation of this study, the

researcher aimed to explore the views, personal experiences and perceptions of the identified female participants.

2.6.3 Research design

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used phenomenology as a chosen method for the research design. The rationale behind the use of this method was to compile the relevant information received from the participants, based on their personal experiences. In *Logical Investigations*, Husserl (1970) defines phenomenology as “the science of essence of consciousness” and focuses on defining the concept of intentionality and the meaning of lived experience from the first-person point of view. An important tenet of the Husserlian approach to science is the belief that the meaning of lived experiences may be unravelled only through one-to-one transactions between the researcher and the objects of research. These transactions must involve attentive listening, interaction, and observation to create a representation of reality that is more sophisticated than previous understandings (Husserl, 1970).

2.7 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

2.7.1 Population

A population is usually a large target group which the researcher does not study directly, but the researcher aims to develop a knowledge and understanding of this target group by drawing a sample (Punch, 2014:247). The population investigated in this research included women in senior positions in academia, sports, engineering, construction, transportation, manufacturing, legal, the military, paramilitary or finance careers (Gibbs, 2009; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

2.7.2 Sample

The researcher used snowball sampling to reach the objectives of the study. A sampling procedure may be defined as snowball sampling when the researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants. This process is, by necessity, repetitive: informants refer the researcher to other informants, who are contacted by the researcher and then refer her or him to yet other informants, and so on. Hence the evolving snowball effect is captured in a metaphor that addresses the central matter of quality of this sampling procedure: its accumulative (diachronic and dynamic) dimension. Snowball sampling is arguably the most widely employed sampling method in qualitative research in various

disciplines across social sciences. It is sometimes used as the primary vehicle through which informants are accessed, or as an auxiliary means, which assists researchers in enriching sampling clusters and accessing new participants and social groups when other contact avenues have dried up (Noy, 2008). The participants that were interviewed, was a heterogeneous group of female managers aged between 25 and 60, currently employed as managers across different management levels, such as executive managers, line managers and directors, departmental and regional managers from historically male-dominated industries. The interviews continued to a point where saturation was reached. Strauss and Corbin (1998:136) suggest that saturation is a "matter of degree" and the longer researchers examine and familiarise themselves with and analyse their data, the greater the potential for "the new to emerge". As such, they propose that saturation should be more concerned with reaching the point where it becomes "counter-productive", a point where "the new" that is discovered does not necessarily add anything to the overall story, model, theory or framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:136). They admit that, sometimes the problem of developing a conclusion to their work is not necessarily the result of a lack of data but of an excess of it. As the analysis begins to take shape, it is important for the researcher to become more disciplined and to cut data where necessary. As for sample size selection, using a phenomenological approach, Creswell (1998:64) proposes using between five and 25 participants, while Morse (1994:225) believes that at least six respondents are needed. Additional characteristics of the sample ($N=9$) are presented in **Table 2** below.

Table 2: Additional characteristics of sample ($N=9$)

Demographics	Demographic element	Frequency
Gender	Female	9
	Male	0
Age	29-39	2
	40-49	3
	36-45	1
	50-59	2
Qualifications	PhD / Master's	4
	Diploma	3
	B degree	1
Race	White	2
	Black	6

	Coloured	1
Occupational level	Senior management	4
	Middle management	5
Marital Status	Single	2
	Married	6
Sector	Higher Education	2
	Government	4
	Energy	1
	Retail	1
Years of experience	3-5	1
	5-10	2
	15-20	3
	20-25	2
	30	1

Table 2 revealed that female managers (100%) formed the total sample in this study, 33.3% of the sample were aged between 40-49, 44.4%, a PhD/ Master's degree have been obtained by 44.4% of the respondents, 66.6% of the female managers are black and 55.5% occupy middle management positions and 44.4% are in the Government sector and 66.6% have also indicated that they are married. The majority of the female managers had 15-20 years' working experience.

2.8 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

2.8.1 Role of network members

The researcher sought to contact network members in order to identify female managers in traditionally male-dominated industries. Identified prospective participants were contacted to schedule a meeting. During this meeting, the objectives of the study were explained, and the confidential and voluntary nature

were emphasized. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any given time. Once the prospective participants agreed to participate, a date was scheduled for the actual interview. In addition, the researcher also probed for names of possible respondents (snowball sampling) that could participate in the study. Once identified, the same procedure was followed. The researcher obtained written informed consent form (see **Annexure B**) from the participants before the interview. Appointments for the interviews were made with each participant at a venue that they identified as safe, private and disturbance-free.

2.8.2 In-depth interviews

The data collection procedure was conducted using in-depth interviews for the duration of 20-30 minutes, with the identified female managers employed in various male-dominated industries. Before the actual interviews were conducted, female managers were continuously assured of the voluntary nature of their participation and they were also reminded that they might experience some emotional discomfort during the interviews, but that psychological support could be organised and was available if need be. Permission had also been obtained from the participants to make use of voice recording devices. The usage of a tape-recorded interview is advantageous, as it compiles nodules during the interview (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:394).

The following interview questions were asked to the respondents:

1. Can you briefly describe your career path and how your career has developed to reach the leadership position you are currently in?
2. In your opinion, are women well represented, overrepresented or misrepresented in leadership positions in the organisation you are employed in?
3. What are the challenges influencing the advancement of women to senior levels of the organisation? Can you elaborate?
4. To what extent are women exposed to gender or racial stereotypes in your organisation?
5. Are there any reasons for women not attaining leadership positions in the organisation you are employed in?
6. Are any biased or discriminatory decisions made when women are appointed in leadership positions in your organisation?

7. In your opinion, what measures can be implemented by management to increase women representation in your organisation?

2.8.3 Data analysis

The analysis of data was the next step in the research process, which followed after the population had been accessed, decisions concerning sampling had been made, data collection had been conducted, and the recordings of the data collected had been transcribed (Flick, 2013:9). The digital voice-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim for data analysis (Botma *et al.*, 2010:214). Myers (2013:167) states that coding is one of the easiest ways in which qualitative data can be analysed. A code is used to provide a description or summary of the wording within an interview. In the coding process, the researcher is allowed to focus on making the attributes of the data significant. (Hair *et al.*, 2016:302). The open coding process of Tesh (as cited in Creswell, 2014:198) was followed to identify in vivo and descriptive codes. The researcher read the full text to obtain a holistic sense of the data, developed codes and coded the text. Subcategories, categories and themes that emerged during the analysis were documented. An independent co-coder also analysed the data to ensure trustworthiness. Consensus conversations confirmed the findings.

To ensure trustworthiness in this study, the researcher applied Lincoln and Guba's model (as cited in Botma *et al.*, 2010:234–235). Prolonged engagement with the participants during the in-depth-interviews ensured truth-value. The researcher reflected on what was being said by writing field notes during and after the interviews. Regular discussions among researchers enriched the process and improved credibility. Applicability was ensured through a well thought-through sample and a dense description of the research methodology. The possibility of an audit trail and the use of an independent co-coder during data analysis also ensured consistency. Replication had been a possibility because of a dense description of the study and data. Through an audit trail and reflexivity, neutrality was assured. Authenticity was evident in the quotes of the respondents to enrich the findings.

2.9 RESULTS

The results of this study were arranged in the following categories: (1) description of career paths and the advancement to leadership positions; (2) the representation, overrepresentation or misrepresentation of women in leadership positions in male-dominated industries; (3) challenges that influence the career

advancement of women into leadership positions in organisations;(4) the extent to which women are exposed to gender or racial stereotypes in organisations; (5) the reasons for women not attaining leadership positions in organisations; (6) the extent to which there is biased or discriminative decision-making when appointing women in leadership positions in organisations; (7) the measures implemented by management to increase women representation in organisations, and (8) recommendations for future research related to representation in leadership positions.

2.9.1 Description of career paths and advancement to leadership positions

The first objective was to determine the career paths and advancement into leadership positions of the respondents. The 100% (nine out of nine) of the female managers who participated in this study were requested to share their experiences on how they have progressed in their career paths and advanced to the leadership positions they are currently employed in. Three super-themes were identified that were frequently mentioned in the descriptions provided by the respondents: (1) growing through the ranks; (2) years of experience, and (3) highest qualifications. A variety of key phrases was mentioned and various descriptions were highlighted in their responses: started my career / was promoted to / appointed as Director/ permanently appointed in the position/progressed to long career plan/ qualified / have been employed/ appointed as the Head of Department / a senior management position/ permanently filled/ Worked through the different ranks of the position / was appointed as a director / worked temporarily / was appointed permanently as a senior lecturer/ started as an intern / currently a Regional Manager.

Growing through the ranks

In the first theme, namely growing through the ranks, seven respondents (77.7%) mentioned that they have advanced through different ranks within their profession prior to occupying senior leadership positions. Some of the statements made from the respondents in this regard, were as follows:

Respondent 1: *“I started my career as a social work officer in the SANDF where after I completed a Master’s degree in Social Work and continued to work as medical social worker in a number of private hospitals in the Mediclinic Group. I also had a private practice during this time. After completion of my PhD, I progressed towards my long-term career plan of becoming an academic. I was appointed as senior lecturer at a certain tertiary institution in 2005, became the HOD, was promoted to associate professor in 2013. In July 2013, I was appointed as acting School Director and was permanently appointed in this position in January 2014. I have a six-year contract with my term ending in December 2019.”*

Respondent 6: *“In 2009 I completed my PhD, worked temporarily as a clinical preceptor. In 2010 I was appointed permanently as a senior lecturer, became the programme chair for post-graduate studies and then in 2012 became programme chair for distance learning. In 2013 I was appointed as academic manager of the faculty. And in 2015 I was appointed as the senior lecturer in a research entity, then in the same year appointed as director in the research unit. In a period of nine years I have been in seven offices.”*

Respondent 4: *“I completed a degree in 1991 as a social worker. Worked through the different ranks of the position as social worker in different fields such as community work and probation. In 2014, I was appointed as a director because of the dedication, commitment and sacrifices I made. I had the opportunity to grow in my career.”*

Years of experience

In this theme, five (55.5%) of the respondents have indicated the years of experience that were needed to progress to top-level positions within their industries of employment. One woman replied and emphasized that it took her a number of years to obtain the position she currently occupies:

Respondent 2: *“I am qualified as a Medical Technologist in 1996. I have been employed as a Junior Lab Technologist for three years after qualifying. After three years I was promoted as a Senior Lab Technologist. In 2007, I was promoted as a manager. Three years later, I was appointed as the Head of Department in the laboratory department of the organization. It took me 11 years to be in a senior management position.”*

A female respondent also mentioned that she had been occupying a position within a male-dominated environment for a number of years:

Respondent 9: *“After completing my theological degree, I became a pastor within the youth church ministry and served for 19 years. Thereafter I applied for a position at the SANDF in which I have been serving for ten years. I am currently the senior chaplain in my unit and oversee three other units in my area of my responsibility.”*

Highest Qualification

Within this theme, most of the respondents referred to the highest qualifications they have acquired. Two (22.2%) of the respondents have indicated that they have obtained PhD degrees:

According to one respondent, she plans to pursue the career of her choice after completing her degree:

Respondent 1: *“... After completion of my PhD, I progressed towards my long-term career plan of becoming an academic. I was appointed as senior lecturer at a certain tertiary institution in 2005,*

became the HOD, was promoted to associate professor in 2013. In July 2013 I was appointed as acting School Director and was permanently appointed in this position in January 2014. I have a six-year contract with my term ending in December 2019.”

Another female respondent indicated that she acquired her qualification while employed temporarily in her field of expertise:

Respondent 6: *In 2009, I completed my PhD, worked temporarily as a clinical preceptor. In 2010 I was appointed permanently as a senior lecturer, became the programme chair for post-graduate studies and then in 2012, became programme chair for distance learning. In 2013 I was appointed as academic manager of the faculty...”*

Two (22.2%) respondents also stated that they have received their academic qualifications before they started their careers:

Respondent 8: *“I started as an intern in the local municipality after completing my first degree. I worked in various companies as an administrator in my chosen field of study, human resource management...”*

Respondent 5: *“I started working here in 2010, when I just graduated. I started as an intern and received the necessary training, which assisted a lot to be in the position I am in currently...”*

2.9.2 The representation, overrepresentation or misrepresentation of women in leadership positions in male-dominated industries

The second objective was to determine whether women are well represented, overrepresented or misrepresented in leadership positions in male-dominated industries. Five respondents (55.5%) agreed that women are well represented in leadership positions. Four of the respondents (44.4%) disagreed and have indicated that women are not well represented in leadership positions.

Gender representation

In this theme, respondents were requested to state whether women are well represented or misrepresented in their industries and they also had to indicate what percentage of women is represented in their organisations. Five respondents (55.5%) have agreed that women are well represented and indicated to which extent women are well represented within their industries. There were subthemes such as: gender not race; nature of profession; in directorships and trained for leadership roles:

Gender, not race

One of the respondents (11.1%) reported that women are well represented within leadership positions in her organisation though transformation has been slow with regards to racial equality:

Respondent 1: *“Yes, on various levels women are represented well represented. In the broader faculty, we have a very good female representation in terms of leadership, but staff equity in terms of race is still in progress... Furthermore, she also stated: In our faculty, four out of five School Directors are females. Both my deputy directors are females. On the mid-level management group of the school, five out of eight are females. I am also satisfied with the team being representative, but not as much in accordance to race.”*

Nature of profession

This respondent replied that, based on the type of work they are employed for, women are well presented in her organisation:

Respondent 4: *“Women are represented well. The nature of this profession is dominated by women. Starting from the head office, the HOD is a woman, the DDG support is a woman, chief director cooperate is also a woman. Demonstrating key high positions that women involved in and other posts follow different direction in which women are also appointed in. On top level, the HOD is a woman, the DDG cooperate is female, Chief Director is a woman and on middle management directors for different programmes, the majority of men are available.”*

Top-level management

This respondent has stated that half of the directors in the faculty she is employed in, are women:

Respondent 6: *“Within the faculty I work in more than 50 % of the directors are female. So yes, females are well represented.”*

Trained for leadership roles

This respondent answered that females are well represented in the organisation she is employed in and that there is room for improvement for women who aim to pursue managerial positions in the future:

Respondent 8: *“Yes, women are well represented. It will have to be senior management; most women occupy senior positions in my organisation. In the middle management, there are few women, as this level is mostly occupied by males, for an example, in the organisation I am employed in, women have roles in which previously were occupied by males.... There is a development pool where people are trained for futuristic leadership roles. This pool is not discriminatory, as it involves both males and females.”*

Room for improvement

A respondent indicated that progress has been made concerning gender representation in the organisation she is employed in, but evidently more effort should be made:

Respondent 9: *“At this point in time, regarding representation on women in my organisation of employment, there is plenty of room for improvement, though tremendous progress has been made thus far, already been made. In the army. You will find women being mostly represented in middle management positions.”*

Gender representation

Four respondents (44.4%) identified with this theme. The women have indicated that there is no gender representation within their employed industries. Evidently, subthemes extracted from the findings were: nature of profession, still male-dominated and incapability of women.

Nature of profession

Two respondents (22.2%) suggested that women are not well represented. According to the one (11.1%) respondent, this is due to the nature of her profession, since men are preferred as successful candidates for senior positions even though they are incapable of performing their job. She also mentioned not being recognized in the organisation, even when working hard. Lastly, she highlighted that women fail to reach top positions due to their work/family responsibilities:

Respondent 2: *“I believe women are not well presented in the Medical Technology organisation.. Most of the time, laboratories employ male to head the lab departments. As women, to get this position, you have to prove yourself. For an example: when I joined my organisation, they were looking for a laboratory manager. There were two of us in the interviews, the other person was a male. He got the position as a Lab Manager. I was considered for the position after this guy failed to manage the lab. Basically, I was managing the lab for him, while he sat in his office...Recently, I went for a director position within the organisation, even though they know my work ethics and my hard work, I was not successful. Successful candidate was a male”.* Furthermore, she indicated that women are mostly represented on supervisor level. She also believes that the required work and family responsibilities could be one of the factors leading to the fact that women are not considered for leadership positions:

“Women are mostly supervisors. Most laboratory supervisors are ladies, and a few laboratory managers. My guess is, because we take care of families, we get pregnant and we take longleave, our kids get sick, etc., whereas men are always at work, seven days a week. They can easily work shifts. In our organisation, we are required to work after hours, including night duty.”

Still male-dominated

One respondent (11.1%) replied that the organisation she is employed in, is still largely dominated by males and women mostly occupy lower-level positions:

Respondent 3: *“Women are not well represented. This organisation is still male-dominated. You always find men the majority in all the meetings that are convened by our senior managers. At this campus we only have ten members who form the campus management team. Only four of these members are females. Women are least represented in top-management level. We have three colleges in the province. One college is led by a female principal. They are mostly represented in the lower level. Most of them are appointed as Office Administrators.”*

Incapability of women

A female respondent has mentioned that progress is stagnant in her working environment and women's capabilities are often questioned:

Respondent 7: *“Women are not yet well presented, even though we are getting there, but the process is very slow, Men are still dominating, as a woman, you need to always prove yourself in-order for you to be trusted with these systems, people don't automatically trust you to be capable of running these systems.”*

2.9.3 Challenges that influence the career advancement of women into leadership positions in organisations

Towards the third objective, female respondents were requested to mention the challenges that influence the career advancement of women in leadership positions in organisations.

From the responses to this question, the following subthemes were extracted: Work/life balance; being bullied/judged; having to work twice as hard/having to prove yourself; unwillingness to be accepted as a leader; males feeling threatened/ intimidated, and difficulty in managing conflict.

Work/Life balance

Women are often expected to prioritise between work and their families. They may, however, fail to do so due to the expectations to perform in their jobs, especially if they are required to work after hours, are away from home and completing strenuous tasks, as well as attending to their maternal duties. This problem was indicated by two of the respondents:

Respondent 1: *“... My biggest challenge is, however, to integrate my roles as a leader in the workplace with my personal roles as woman, wife, mother and member of the community...”*

Another respondent expresses herself negatively and emotionally:

Respondent 6: *“...Constant guilt trip about my children and husband. Missing out on children’s lives when I cannot leave the office for a school- or sport-related event. It remains a challenge to maintain a work/life balance...”*

Being bullied/judged

Because men are perceived as firm, aggressive and dominant beings, they have a tendency to use these attributes to demoralise and undermine women for the mere reason of intimidation. They also demotivate women in the working environment, and this may affect the overall performance of females. In this regard, one of the respondents clearly stated:

“Being bullied can make a woman leader to withdraw and let things be. This affects the performance of the department. When challenged, we can easily show emotions and men tend to take advantage of that.”

Work twice as hard/ having to prove yourself

Three respondents identified with this subtheme. The respondents perceive that men tend to assume that they are unable to perform as leaders in their jobs, therefore women have to do more than what is normally expected to show their capabilities.

Respondent 9: *“women have to work harder to prove their capabilities...”*

Respondent 3: *“You work twice as hard to influence them...”*

Respondent 4: *“The disadvantages is that one needs to put more efforts in than men, be firm and understand what one is doing...”*

Unwillingness to accept you as a leader

Two of the respondents (22.2%) have mentioned this subtheme. The respondents perceived that they experience resistance from men towards their leadership. Some of the remarks were as follows:

Respondent 3: *“...Only a few are prepared to learn from you as their leader and appreciate you”*

Respondent 9: *“...men are still resistant to change and might make it difficult for women to excel.”*

Threatened or intimidated

This subtheme was indicated by one respondent (11.1%). Men are perceived as the dominant and authoritative gender, and therefore there is a tendency for women to be submissive when instructed by men. This results in men refusing to serve under the authority of a woman:

Respondent 7: *“Culturally men still refuse or feel intimidated by women in higher positions than them, in some cases it is still a taboo for other men to be told or led by a woman...”*

Difficulty in managing conflict

One (11.1%) respondent replied on this subtheme. Women are perceived as emotional beings and should often suppress their feelings to guard against overanalysing conflict situations, since this may cloud their judgement when faced with making conflicting decisions. In this regard the respondent stated:

Respondent 6: “...I also constant overanalyse conflict to ensure that I am not too emotional or too sensitive, but to maintain the balance between processes and human dynamics.”

2.9.4 The extent to which women are exposed to gender or racial stereotypes in organisations

The fourth objective was to determine the extent to which women are exposed to gender or racial stereotypes in organisations. Four of the respondents (44.4%) agreed that they experience racial and gender stereotypes and five disagreed and have indicated that they have not been exposed to gender and racial stereotypes.

Gender and racial stereotypes

Four respondents (44.4%) agreed that they are exposed gender or racial stereotypes in their respective working environments. In this regard the subthemes pertaining the responses were: racial discrimination; criticism/lack of support; gender stereotyping.

Racial discrimination

This subtheme was mentioned by one respondent (11.1%). In this regard, the respondent felt that she is being racially discriminated against by the ethnicity group she belongs to, because she behaves morally and ethically through the non-acceptance of sexual harassment:

Respondent 3: “Yes. In my case I sometimes feel that it is because I did not give in to their sexual advances. They also label me as a racist, because I get more respect and support from some of the staff members from other races than mine.”

Criticism, lack of support

One respondent (11.1%) identified with this subtheme. Women are often reluctant to pursue leadership positions, because they are challenged by men in the working environment and there is no support from other women in the workplace. One female manager stated the following in this regard:

Respondent 5: “Yes, they are exposed to gender stereotypes, men would criticize that women are not strong enough to make tough decisions and this makes it difficult for woman to perform. Another thing is that women also criticize each other and don't encourage one another.”

Gender stereotyping

With regards to this subtheme, one respondent (11.1%) replied. She expressed that she often experiences the dominant nature of men and that certain women are given preference:

Respondent 6: “...*But I have experienced male dominance on a regular basis. In addition, I experience that sexy women are handled differently than the rest by male management.*”

Gender or racial stereotypes

In this regard, five respondents (55.5%) mentioned that they do not experience any gender or racial stereotypes. Subthemes identified in this regard were the following: Not in work environment, but in my professional background as social worker; Equal and fair treatment; equal and fair treatment; opportunities to move into leadership roles are high; Take note of the management of situations and people and Systems are in place to deal with.

Not in work environment, but in my professional background as social worker

One respondent (11.1%) identified with this subtheme. She articulates not having experienced any gender or racial stereotypes in her immediate working environment, however, she highlights that she has been confronted by it in her profession:

Respondent 1: *I haven't experienced much stereotyping in terms of gender in my immediate work environment... I have experienced a bit of stereotyping in terms of my professional background as social worker...*

Equal and fair treatment

This subtheme was mentioned by one respondent (11.1%). One of the respondents stated the following in this regard:

Respondent 2: “*In my organization, I don't think so. As an NPO, all employees are treated equally and fairly.*”

Opportunities to move into leadership roles are high

One respondent (11.1%) agreed with this subtheme. She stated that there are opportunities for women to advance into leadership positions:

Respondent 8: “*The organisation I am in have more women than men, which in the future means that they will move through the ranks. Chances of them moving to leadership roles, are very high.*”

Take note of the management of situations and people

This subtheme was mentioned by one respondent:

Respondent 4: *“No, I have indicated that it is important to take note of the management style you use or the system of managing situations and people. If there is any gender or racial stereotype, it needs to be managed immediately.”*

Systems are in place to deal with it

One respondent related to this subtheme. In some organisations, there are policies and procedures in place to deal with discriminative and biased practices. In this regard, the female manager mentioned:

Respondent 7: “In some cases, yes, but there are systems in place which protects women from being discriminated.”

2.9.5 The reasons for women not attaining leadership positions in organisations

To reach this objective, the respondents were requested to share their views on the reasons for women not attaining leadership positions in their organisations. The subthemes identified in this regard were: Work/life balance and heavy workload; Traditional gender roles; Overwhelmed by men; Lack of support from management; Gender stereotyping; Lack of confidence and hindrances; Lack of trust and capabilities of women.

Work/life balance and heavy workload

Three respondents (33.3%) mentioned this subtheme. Some of their statements were:

Respondent 1: *“Women are often expected to juggle their career and personal responsibilities along with a heavy and strenuous workload...”*

Respondent 2: *“...Men are flexible; women have a lot of commitments at home.”*

Respondent 4: *“...women don’t apply for higher posts looking at how the post is demanding and men grab the opportunity to exploit the situation. Women also need support, especially if one is still raising children.”*

Traditional gender roles

Two of the respondents (22.2%) replied on this subtheme. Women are often perceived to be suitable only for taking on maternal responsibilities and domestic duties. In this regard, the respondents indicated:

Respondent 2: *“...Women are too soft; they belong to the kitchen. Only a man can lead and make tough decisions.”*

Respondent 3: *“People think that women leaders take emotional decisions and that they fail to separate work from personal issues.”*

Overwhelmed by men

This subtheme was mentioned by one (11.1%) respondent. Women are expected to adopt masculine characteristics to be deemed fit for a position. The respondent said:

Respondent 5: “...women are expected to move in the shadow of males even though they are more capable of doing what is expected and even more.”

Lack of support from management

Two (22.2%) respondents identified with this subtheme. Women do not have anyone to vouch for them as leaders. This results in the fact that women are not progressing in the workplace. In this regard, it was mentioned:

Respondent 5: “I would say a lack of support from management could also be one of the downfalls of a woman progressing to the next level...”

Respondent 6: “there is simply not enough support or a supportive structure in place, assisting women to climb the corporate ladder progressively.”

Gender stereotyping

One respondent (11.1%) mentioned this subtheme. In the working environment she is employed in, the notion exists that women are incapable of acquiring leadership positions:

Respondent 9: “Having the army be a traditionally male-dominated organisation, women are thought not to possess the same levels of capability as men and thus, are not promoted purely based upon gender stereotyping...”

Lack of confidence and hindrances

Two respondents (22.2%) identified with this subtheme. Women often do not believe in their own capabilities; therefore, they fail to advance to leadership positions. Thus, women create their own hindrances, which keep them from progressing:

Respondent 6: “I think that some women experience a lack of confidence and do not necessarily believe that they are adequate enough to fill senior positions...”

Respondent 8: “To be honest, in my organisation progression lies within your hands. Nobody deprives you or denies anyone any opportunity of growth. Individuals work to succeed and step out of their comfort zone. If there are women who are not progressing, they are to be blamed for that.”

Lack of trust and capabilities of women

One respondent (11.1%) answered to this subtheme. This respondent feels that women are not progressing, because their capability of making decisions as leaders is mistrusted:

Respondent 7: *“I believe it is about trust, men do not trust us to make the correct decision and proving your capability as a woman is the problem behind them not trusting us enough.”*

2.9.6 The extent to which there is biased or discriminative decision-making related to the appointment of women in leadership positions in organisations

To reach the sixth objective, female respondents were requested to share their views concerning the decision-making during the appointment of women in leadership positions. 44.4% of the respondents agreed that biased or discriminatory decisions are made when appointing women in leadership positions. Three respondents disagreed that biased or discriminative decisions are made in the appointments of women in leadership positions.

Biased/Discriminatory decision-making

Four (44.4%) of respondents mentioned the prevalence of biased and discriminatory decision-making in senior position appointments. In this regard the following subthemes were identified: Maternal responsibilities; Stereotyping – support of other women; Discrimination – Favouritism and unfair practices; Male preferences.

Maternal responsibilities

This subtheme was mentioned by one (11.1%) of the respondents. Women are judged based on their childbearing and family responsibilities, as it is perceived that those responsibilities could possibly interfere with their work. Therefore, they are not appointed in senior management positions:

Respondent 2: *“for the fact that we get pregnant, we look after kids, we are too soft. Already you have to convince an organization that you can actually lead even better than men and that your family life will not interfere with your work. Before you go to an interview, this is against you...”*

Stereotyping – support of other women

One of the respondents (11.1%) identified with this subtheme. Women who are already occupying leadership positions will not support those who aim to acquire these positions. In this regard, the respondent mentioned:

Respondent 3: *“Yes. People think that women are weak and that they do not want to empower other women”*

Discrimination – Favouritism and unfair practices

Two respondents (22.2%) mentioned this subtheme. These respondents feel that there are women who are favoured above others, and those who are favoured, do not necessarily deserve to be appointed in their specific positions. In this regard, it was said:

Respondent 5: *“Yes, it is plain discrimination. There are no fair practices followed where the appointment of women is concerned. Women deserves to get the job because of merit are overlooked, instead the jobs are either given to men or given as favours to women, management are supposedly in like of...”*

Respondent 6: *“...male management will appoint females of which they are in liking of, it is not necessarily granted to women that have earned the position by merit, by means of experience or expertise”*

Male preferences

One of the respondents (11.1%) answered that there is male preference. Women are overlooked when promotions are made in the workplace. In this regard, this respondent stated:

Respondent 7: *“In some cases, there are, men are considered first when it comes to things like promotions.”*

Biased or discriminatory decision-making with appointments

Regarding this theme, three female respondents (33.3%) mentioned that they have not experienced biased or discriminative decision-making with regards to the appointment of women in senior positions. Herewith the following subtheme identified through the responses: No room for biased or discriminatory actions and fair practices.

Biased discriminatory actions and fair practices

Three respondents (33.3%) referred to this subtheme. Some of the respondents stated that the appropriate procedures are used for recruitment purposes.

Respondent 1: *“In the organisation I work in, there are fair and equal procedures followed regarding the appointments of women on various levels. The recruitment policy and overall process is thoroughly followed, therefore there is no room for biased or discriminative actions per se, our HR department does well by ensuring that the correct protocol is followed.”*

Respondent 6: *“All the recruitment processes within my organisation are dealt with according to the candidate’s experience, qualifications and suitability for a required position.*

Respondent 9: *In my specific area of work within this organisation, no.”*

2.9.7 Measures implemented to increase representation in organisations

To answer to this objective, eight respondents (88.8%) shared their views concerning the measures that management could implement to increase women representation in organisations. Those respondents who made recommendations about the measures that should be implemented, mentioned the following concepts that management should look into: mentoring/role models; training and promotion opportunities: exposure of women; succession planning/retention strategies: capacitate women; identification and exposure of potential managers, and fair recruitment practices / elimination of discrimination.

Three respondents (33.3%) mentioned that women should be groomed for senior positions from a young age and when employed, management should invest in preparing and empowering women from lower-level positions. Male management should create platforms on which women can voice their needs and they should support and encourage women to move up the ranks. Two respondents (22.2%) felt that management should capacitate women through means of consulting succession planning as a measure, thus it was also emphasized that management should improve their retention strategies in order to retain women who add value to the organisation. Two respondents (22.2%) stated that management should create training and development opportunities for women who aspire to advance in their careers, and they should create opportunities for promotional courses. Three respondents (33.3%) were of the opinion that discrimination should be considered taboo in organisations and that management should employ equal and fair procedures when recruiting and appointing suitable candidates for senior positions. The willingness to take the risk to employ women as senior managers, should thus be taken into account. One respondent (11.1%) had no recommendations and commented that management is well on par with regards to the representation of women in the organisation she is employed in.

2.10 DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study was to investigate the reasons for the lack of women in leadership positions in selected male-dominated companies in South Africa.

The first objective of this study related to the description of the career paths and advancement of women into leadership positions in the male dominated companies. The nine respondents who participated in this study provided descriptions of their career backgrounds. The researcher identified three subthemes from the provided descriptions: (1) growing through the ranks; (2) highest qualifications, and (3) years of experience. Three super-themes were identified that were frequently mentioned in the descriptions provided by the respondents: (1) growing through the ranks; (2) years of experience, and (3) highest qualifications.

The second objective of this study was to determine whether women are well represented, overrepresented or misrepresented in leadership positions in male-dominated industries. The following subthemes were identified: gender not race; nature of profession; in directorships; trained for leadership roles and still male-dominated. Five respondents (55.5%) in this study agreed that women are well represented in their respective industries. These respondents were from various ethnic groups, one black female in Higher Education, one black and one coloured female in Government, one black manager in the Energy Sector and one black female in the Retail Organisation, two white managers with Directorships in Higher Education, one black manager with a Directorship in Provincial Government, one black Senior Manager in the Health Sector. It is noteworthy that coloureds were the least represented among the ethnic groups. Four respondents in the study mentioned that women are not well represented in the industries they are employed in. This assumption was made by four black female managers (44.4%) who are employed in male-dominated organisations, namely Health, Higher Education, the Energy Sector, Government and the Retail organisations.

To determine the challenges that influence the appointment of women in leadership positions, was the third objective of this study and they were related to various themes, such as: Work/life balance; being bullied/judged; having to work twice as hard/having to prove yourself; unwillingness to be accepted as a leader; males feeling threatened/ intimidated, and difficulty in managing conflict. Female managers experienced the need of having to work hard and putting in extra effort to proof their competency and capability as leaders. This finding concur with Moloto, Brink & Nel (2014) who found that that men saw themselves as valuable, while women stereotypically view themselves as inadequate, incapable and deficient. They also perceived themselves needing to put in extra effort to perform their work in order to proof their capabilities, and to be bold by pulling rank, while also feeling undermined, underestimated and exploited as leaders. The respondents also emphasized that men are often unwilling to accept their leadership. Furthermore, a female respondent expressed that she experienced difficulty in managing conflict, since women are attempting to suppress their emotions when faced with conflict in the working environment, because they do not want to be perceived as weak.

As a fourth objective for this study, the researcher aimed to determine whether women in leadership positions are exposed to any racial or gender stereotypes. Racial discrimination referred to women experiencing racial discrimination for refusing to fall victim to sexual harassment in the workplace. Four respondents (44.4%) agreed that they experienced racial or gender stereotypes in their respective working environments. One respondent (11.1%) mentioned being exposed to racial discrimination because of giving in to sexual advances from men. Concerning criticism/lack of support, one of the respondents (11.1%) perceived that women are not supporting one another when confronted by men criticising their leadership characteristics, which thus results in poor performance. One of the respondents (11.1%) experienced gender stereotyping, as women who are perceived as attractive by men, thus they are also preferred for leadership positions. Five of the respondents (55.5%) felt that they are not exposed to any gender or racial stereotypes. One of the respondents (11.1%) mentioned that she has not been exposed to gender or racial stereotypes in her current working environment, but has experienced stereotyping in her professional background. Another respondent felt that equal and fair treatment are experienced in her working environment. One respondent (11.1%) was of the opinion that women are given equal opportunities in leadership positions. Another respondent pointed out that, should stereotypes occur, it should be managed effectively, and one respondent indicated that there are systems in place in her organisation that ensure that women are protected from experiencing discrimination.

To determine the reasons why women are attaining leadership positions in their organisations was the fifth objective in this study. Three respondents referred to work/life balance/ heavy workload, since they have experienced that women are expected to maintain balance between their work commitments and their family responsibilities when they are employed in leadership positions. Concerning traditional gender roles, two respondents (22.2%) experienced that women are perceived as being best suited to take on maternal responsibilities and they do not have the ability of making decisions in the workplace. One respondent felt overwhelmed by men, since men expect women to follow and adapt to their ideas of leadership, even though they have the ability to perform better than men do. A lack of confidence/hindrances was identified by two of the respondents as a reason for women not progressing, as women do not believe that they have the ability to be a leader, which results in women being responsible for the lack of confidence they experience. This finding concurs with the authors, Coward (2010) and Vitee (2016) who both agree that women restrict themselves by doubting their abilities in occupying a leadership position. One respondent experienced lack of trust/capabilities in the workplace, because their capability as women leaders is mistrusted by men perceiving that women cannot make appropriate decisions.

The sixth objective in this study was to determine whether biased or discriminative decisions are made that interfere with the appointments of women in leadership positions in organisations. Four respondents (44.4%) agreed that biased or discriminatory decisions are made concerning the appointment of women in leadership positions. One of the respondents felt that women are judged because they have maternal duties and family responsibilities to attend to, and these responsibilities have the tendency to interfere with their work. This finding concurs with the findings by Ngomane (2017) who found that certain female leaders who try to balance their careers and lives are under pressure, while others rather decide to be career-driven. Women's career advancement is affected by their absence from work due to family responsibilities. Women are viewed as unreliable and uncommitted to their work, this leads to a loss of confidence. Stereotyping/ support of other women was mentioned by one of the respondents, since she experienced women as weak and therefore they do not support one another, this finding concurs with the findings in Ngcobo, 2016. Two respondents (22.2%) referred to discrimination/favouritism and unfair practices, since certain women are favoured over others and they have not necessarily earned the positions they are in. The following finding in this study concurs with the findings of Nikolaou (2017). One respondent (11.1%) perceived that men receive preference when promotions are considered. Three respondents (33.3%) mentioned that there is no biased or discriminative decision-making when appointing women in leadership positions and they also stated that the correct procedures are followed in organisations.

To determine the measures that could be implemented to increase women representation in leadership positions in organisations was the final objective of the study. Three respondents (33.3%) mentioned that women should be groomed for senior positions from a young age and when employed, management should invest in preparing and empowering women from lower-level positions. Male management should create platforms on which women can voice their needs and they should support and encourage women to move up the ranks. Two respondents were of the opinion that management should capacitate women through means of consulting succession planning as a measure, thus it was also emphasized that management should improve their retention strategies in order to retain women who add value to the organisation. That management should create training and development opportunities for women who aspire to advance in their careers and opportunities for promotional courses were mentioned by two of the respondents. Three respondents (33.3%) felt that discrimination should be considered taboo in organisations and that management should employ equal and fair procedures when recruiting and appointing suitable candidates for senior positions, therefore the willingness to take the risk to employ women senior managers should also be taken into account. One out of nine respondents had no recommendations and commented that management is well on par in relation to the representation of women in the organisation she is employed in.

2.11 RECOMMENDATIONS

A gender-sensitive work environment might boost the acceptance of women as counterparts to men in positions in which they work, it might boost the idea of women being as equally suitable and qualified for a position as men. Ultimately, a gender-sensitive workplace will lead to equal treatment and opportunities for both men and women (Tarifenyika, 2016:57). Women have been omitted from the old boys' networks for a very long time because most organisations have been predominantly led by men. For women to obtain the advantages provided by these networks, it is proposed that organisations attempt and ensure that female employees gain access to insider networks which will not only allow them to grasp new things but also making it possible for them to interact with promotional gatekeepers and mentors (Risper, 2011:141).

The appointment of applicable persons in senior-level positions could be assured through facilitating career development and exposing these persons to more challenging work. The role played by talent management could be the key to ensure that appropriate talent is trained, developed and retained within companies. (Motsa, 2016:111). It is crucial that recruitment is directed to improving the representation of women in senior positions (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012:4970). Men in leadership roles could serve as leading examples, by providing support through training, coaching and mentorships, and the recruitment and promotion of women entering senior positions (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012:1288). Organisations should implement strategic planning by employing retention strategies which are aimed at women who are pursuing leadership positions. Organisations can benefit from having a pool of women targeted for succession purposes (Ngomane, 2017:396).

Women are in need of assistance to establish a balance between the roles of being a mother at home and a manager in the workplace, thus, by involving career advisors, women could be assisted where career planning is concerned. Planning could assist women with appropriate career development and management, including balancing various conflicting roles (Hlophe, 2014). Organisations should focus on supporting the career advancement of women by establishing a workplace that is family friendly and has flexible and part-time career benefits. Women could be assisted in balancing their family life through the provision of childcare facilities in the work environment, as this could emulate the organisation's interests in supporting women in the workplace (Daya, 2011:66). No circumstances associated with a woman's maternal role should jeopardise her opportunity to be promoted. A woman who possesses adequate qualifications and performs well, should be considered for a promotion in the organisation (Kiria & Mukulu, 2012:212). The execution of work-study programmes by professionals aimed at ensuring

reasonable work distribution and job descriptions are provided for all employees, irrespective of gender or any other classification, will discourage a culture where women have to work harder for their promotions (Kiaye & Singh, 2013:39).

2.12 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The sample was limited to a small sample of nine ($N=9$) female managers from various male-dominated companies. The geographical location of the female managers was confined to only two provinces in South Africa, due to their availability and accessibility. This had implications on the generalisability of the findings in this study. The participants in this study were strictly focused on gaining insight from the perspectives of women only. A combined gender-based study, with the incorporation of male participants, could have been more favourable in collecting more enriched data. Another limitation of this study had been the population of this study, as a majority of the women respondents were black. A more representative population could also have been more favourable in this instance.

2.13 CONCLUSIONS

Evidently, women are still subjected to gender stereotyping and discrimination in the workplace and the broader society and they are negatively impacted by this phenomenon. It is thus of critical importance that management employs effective measures to eradicate traces of discrimination, prejudice and gender stereotyping in order to ensure the increased performance of female managers. Furthermore, it is also crucial to employ platforms of communication on which female managers can voice their uneasiness, uncertainty and inferiorities to their male counterparts in order to ensure a harmonious working environment for all.

CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the concluding remarks based on the research results presented and discussed in the empirical study (Chapter 2). The chapter is also conclusive of the research findings, conclusions, the limitations of the study as well as recommendations for managers and future research.

The conclusions and recommendations from this study are related to the primary objective, (investigating the reasons for the lack of women in leadership positions in selected male- dominated companies in South Africa), as well as the secondary objectives (as listed in Chapter 1 of this study):

- To determine the career paths and advancement of women in leadership positions in male-dominated industries.
- To determine whether women are well represented, overrepresented or misrepresented in male-dominated industries.
- To determine the challenges that influence the career advancement of women in leading positions in organisations.
- To determine whether women are exposed to any gender or racial stereotypes in organisations.
- To determine the reasons for women not attaining leadership positions in male- dominated industries.
- To determine whether biased or discriminatory decisions are made which interferes with the appointment of women in leadership positions in organisations.
- To determine the measures that management can implement to increase the number of women representation in organisations.
- To make recommendations to increase women representation in leadership positions in organisations.

3.2 Conclusions

The main aim of the empirical study was to obtain and gain insight into the reasons for the lack of women in leadership positions in selected male dominated companies in South Africa. To achieve the research objectives of this study the researcher sought to collect relevant data through conducting in-depth

interviews with nine female managers until data saturation was reached. Based on the research objectives and the research findings of this study the following conclusions were drawn.

Results of this research study reveal that female managers have moved up the ranks in their careers in male-dominated organisations. The respondents of this study have also made reference to the number of years as well as the highest qualifications they have obtained along their career paths while being employed in male-dominated companies.

When considering female representation, overrepresentation or misrepresentation at various levels of management, it was found that the majority of female managers occupied middle management positions. In a study by Khoza (2015), participants pointed out that a number of women are at junior and middle management levels, but circumstances are different at senior levels where career advancement opportunities are concerned. The participants also noted that once women progress on the corporate ladder, it becomes more difficult for them because of the intensified competition and pressure experienced.

Interestingly, black female managers occupy the majority of leadership positions but more specifically middle management positions in this study. Findings also suggest that white women and black women are among the respondents who occupy directorships in the sectors: One black female in Higher Education, one black and one coloured female in Government, one black manager in Energy Sector and one black female in Retail Organisation, two white managers with Directorships in Higher Education, one black manager with a Directorship in Provincial Government, one black Senior Manager in the Health Sector organisations. These findings concur with results in the BWASA Women in Leadership Census (2017). Black women are more favoured in directorships of JSE listed entities in adherence to in race distribution. In totality, black women constitute 58.7% of directorships in JSE listed entities whilst white women account for 21.9%.

Based on the challenges that influence the career advancement of women in leadership positions, the results of this study seemingly could be articulated in various studies in scholarly literature relating to career advancement of women in South African organisations (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012; Doubell &Struwig, 2014; Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012; Kayi, 2013; Khoza, 2015; Martin, 2013a, 2013b; Mgcotyelwa, 2013; Ramaite, 2013).

In this study the following challenges faced by women in leadership positions were identified: work/life balance; being bullied/judged; having to work twice as hard/having to prove yourself; unwillingness to be accepted as a leader; males feeling threatened/ intimidated; and difficulty in managing conflict. Findings related to this study concur with the findings found in Khoza (2015), organisational pressure and demands are associated with women who are often pressurised to prove their ability compared to males. Male

counterparts are frequently reluctant to accommodate these women and it is clear that their environments are determined to uphold the masculine status quo. Findings in a study by Chiloane-Tsoka (2012) revealed that women have difficulty seeing themselves in leadership positions, and portray negative behaviour towards women advancement due to cultural factors that are possibly indicative of the absence of female mentors in management. Hofmeyr & Mzobe (2012) found that women have progressed to senior management positions despite challenges. These authors propose that women will advance as capable leaders with adequate support from companies and the provision of family friendly policies and environments (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012).

Respondents in this study have also mentioned the reasons for a lack of women in leadership positions in male-dominated industries. The reasons have been identified in this study as work-life balance/ heavy workload; traditional gender roles; being overwhelmed by men; lack of confidence, hindrances; lack of trust/capabilities. Reasons pertaining to this study are in line with the findings of Mgcotyelwa (2013) the perceived norm of women needing to maintain a work-life balance was found to be problematic; female managers who try to maintain the work-life balance are immensely pressured while others are fixated on their professions. There are prevailing, persistent societal stereotypes associated with the inability of women to share management positions with men. Many women believe in being responsible for the execution of administrative duties and domestic duties in the workplace (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012). Respondents in this study offered management numerous measures towards increasing women representation in leadership positions in organisations, including women being trained for leadership positions at an early age and being prepared for leadership roles in the workplace at the start of their careers. It was also repeatedly mentioned by the respondents that management should create platforms where the visibility of women could be increased and the availability of growth opportunities could be offered to women in the workplace. The importance of fair and non-discriminatory procedures was also highlighted by respondents as one of the solutions to eliminate unfair practices related to the appointment of women in top and senior managerial positions.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS TO MANAGEMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN COMPANIES

A gender-sensitive work environment might boost the acceptance of women as counterparts to men in positions in which they work, it might boost the idea of women being as equally suitable and qualified for a position as men. Ultimately, a gender-sensitive workplace will lead to equal treatment and opportunities for both men and women (Tarifenyika, 2016:57). Women have been omitted from the old boys' networks for a very long time because most organisations have been predominantly led by men. For

women to obtain the advantages provided by these networks, it is proposed that organisations attempt and ensure that female employees gain access to insider networks which will not only allow them to grasp new things but also making it possible for them to interact with promotional gatekeepers and mentors (Risper, 2011:141).

The appointment of applicable persons in senior-level positions could be assured through facilitating career development and exposing these persons to more challenging work. The role played by talent management could be the key to ensure that appropriate talent is trained, developed and retained within companies. (Motsa, 2016:111). It is crucial that recruitment is directed to improving the representation of women in senior positions (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012:4970). Men in leadership roles could serve as leading examples, by providing support through training, coaching and mentorships, and the recruitment and promotion of women entering senior positions (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012:1288). Organisations should implement strategic planning by employing retention strategies which are aimed at women who are pursuing leadership positions. Organisations can benefit from having a pool of women targeted for succession purposes (Ngomane, 2017:396).

Women are in need of assistance to establish a balance between the roles of being a mother at home and a manager in the workplace, thus, by involving career advisors, women could be assisted where career planning is concerned. Planning could assist women with appropriate career development and management, including balancing various conflicting roles (Hlophe, 2014). Organisations should focus on supporting the career advancement of women by establishing a workplace that is family friendly and has flexible and part-time career benefits. Women could be assisted in balancing their family life through the provision of childcare facilities in the work environment, as this could emulate the organisation's interests in supporting women in the workplace (Daya, 2011:66). No circumstances associated with a woman's maternal role should jeopardise her opportunity to be promoted. A woman who possesses adequate qualifications and performs well, should be considered for a promotion in the organisation (Kiria & Mukulu, 2012:212). The execution of work-study programmes by professionals aimed at ensuring reasonable work distribution and job descriptions are provided for all employees, irrespective of gender or any other classification, will discourage a culture where women have to work harder for their promotions (Kiaye & Singh, 2013:39).

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The sample was limited to a small sample of nine ($N=9$) female managers from various male-dominated companies in this study. The geographical location of the female managers was confined to only two

provinces in South Africa due to their availability and accessibility. This had implications on the generalisability of the findings in this study. The respondents in this study were strictly focused on gaining insight from the perspectives of women only. A combined gender-based study with the incorporation of male respondents could have been favourable for collecting more enriched data. Another limitation of this study was the population of this study, as a majority of women in this study were black. A more representative population could also have been more favourable in this instance.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings in this article supported that black and white women are amongst the majority of designated groups occupying top and middle management positions in South African organisations. Coloured women seemed to be among the minority of the racial groups in this study. It is therefore recommended by the researcher that future research studies focus on exploring the experiences of coloured female managers in South African companies.

Future research should also explore a broader spectrum of female managers employed in industries other than those covered in this study as this might influence the overall outcome of the research. In addition, it may also be suggested that a more comprehensive framework of managerial experiences could be explored by focusing future studies on a combined gender-based experience of male and female managers working in South African companies.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article sought to investigate the reasons for a lack of women in leadership positions in selected male-dominated South African companies. This study added to the body of knowledge related to female leaders in the South African context (Daya 2011; Doubell & Struwig 2014; Mkhize 2011; Motsa 2016; Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike 2012).

Findings in this study have confirmed that despite the attempts made by South African companies towards increasing women representation in the workplace, a lack of women in management is still prevalent. The findings of this study are consistent with the conclusion drawn by Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike (2012). The visibility of women in senior management has additionally caused more complexities; women are represented in management but a number are still absent or incredibly misrepresented.

Additionally, several challenges were depicted and it became apparent that traditional gender roles, stereotyping and discrimination are still among the main contributing factors behind the misrepresentation of women in leadership roles. The importance of the employability of women in male-dominated companies was highlighted in this study and evidently women in general are still battling with the issue of gaining acceptance from men along with receiving fair treatment from them. It is thus imperative for organisations to look into balancing the score by dispensing of gender-based appointment in leadership positions, and ensuring that diversity in the workforce is achieved as this could have an improved impact on the overall performance of all employees in the workplace.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
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Research Ethics Regulatory Committee
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20 September 2018

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) on 14/09/2018, the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Investigating the reasons for a lack of women in leadership positions in selected male dominated companies in South Africa.

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof L Jackson

Student: S Anthony

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	0	8	0	6	-	1	8	-	A	4
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Institution Study Number Year Status

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type:

Commencement date: 20/09/2018

Risk:

Low

Expiry date: 19/09/2019

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

ANNEXURE B: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER



Informed consent form

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
RESEARCHER: S ANTHONY
CELL NUMBER :071 782 7488

Dear Respondent

This Informed Consent Statement serves to confirm the following information as it relates to the MBA mini-dissertation: Investigating the reasons for the lack of women in leadership positions within selected male dominated companies in South Africa.

1. The main purpose of this study is to obtain relevant information from experts (such as yourself) employed and/or operating in a male dominated industry in an attempt to determine the nature of your daily experience related to the research topic.
2. The procedure to be followed is that of a qualitative research design, which includes open ended questions in a in depth interview, you will have the opportunity to communicate your views on the relevant topic. Basic background information will be needed such as your name, academic qualifications and related experience to the topic.
3. The duration of the completion of the in-depth interview will take no longer than 20 -30 minutes.
4. Should you experience any form of discomfort at any given time, you will be provided with the opportunity to make your feelings known or immediately have the option to withdraw from your participation from this process.
5. This interview takes place on a voluntary basis.
6. The confidentiality of the collected data is guaranteed. Fictitious names will be utilised when quoting statements in this dissertation.
7. Confidentiality and anonymity is ensured as personal details and identity of participants will be protected and not revealed;
8. A summarised copy of the final dissertation will be made available upon request to the participant.
9. The data gathered from the open questions will only be used for research purposes.

I, _____ (signature), hereby declare that I have read and understood the contents of the Informed Consent Statement, and give my full consent to Ms S Anthony to progress with the interview on _____ (date) and use the information communicated by myself in completion of her MBA dissertation.

ANNEXURE C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Annexure C: Interview schedule

The following research questions were developed, and will be asked during the interview:

- Good morning madam / miss / doctor / professor /
- How are you doing today?
- Can you briefly describe your career path and how your career has developed to reach the leadership position you are currently in?
- In your opinion, are women well represented, overrepresented or misrepresented in leadership positions in the industry you are employed in?
- What are the challenges influencing the advancement of women to senior levels of the organisation? Can you elaborate?
- To what extent are women exposed to gender or racial stereotypes in your organisation?
- Are there any reasons for women not attaining leadership positions in the organisation you are employed in?
- Are any biased or discriminative decisions made when women are appointed in leadership positions in your organisation?
- In your opinion, what measures can be implemented by management to increase women representation in your organisation?

ANNEXURE D: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Language Editor's Declaration



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Date: 20 May 2019

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To whom it may concern,

This document certifies that the manuscript listed below was edited for proper English language use, spelling, grammar, punctuation and overall style by one or more qualified text editor(s) at Language Matters.

Manuscript title: Investigating the reasons for a lack of women in leadership positions in selected male-dominated companies in South Africa

Author(s): S Anthony

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Date Issued: 20 May 2019

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