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**Challenges experienced by females who lead secondary schools in
the Bojanala district of South Africa**

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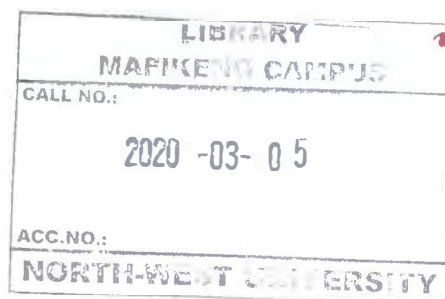
Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
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Leadership* at the North West University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study conducted on women who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district of South Africa is to explore the factors that pose as challenges to women who occupy leadership positions in secondary schools. A case study design was used and the constructivist and feminist perspectives helped in exploring the challenges experienced by females who lead secondary schools. The population for this study composed of female leaders in Bojanala district. It is from this population that a total sample size of 9 participants was purposefully selected to participate in the study. Participants provided rich data which was analysed through content analysis with the help of qualitative data analysis software. Interview guides with open ended and semi-structured questions were used for data gathering. Data were collected through document analysis an unstructured individual and focus group interviews. Among the key findings of this study were that, despite the policy provisions that intended to transform gender relations in schools, patriarchal, societal, organisational and personal factors still challenge females who lead in the Bojanala district secondary schools. The chief conclusion drawn was that, barring attempts made by women themselves and education authorities to create a conducive environment for female leadership to thrive, female leaders still operate in an environment that is patriarchal. This study recommends that strategies that female leaders use to overcome challenges that they experience because of their gender should further explored further, documented, shared with female leaders themselves and with all parties that are interested in education leadership and female leadership in particular.

KEY WORDS: Female leaders, secondary schools, challenges, patriarchy, gender inequality.



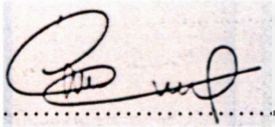
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6. The authors cited in this study for their insights which contributed to the study.
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DECLARATION

I Gadifele Cleopatra Mompei, student number 26936852, hereby declare that this dissertation: Challenges experienced by females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district of South Africa is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Masters in Education Management and Leadership degree at the North-West University, is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. All sources cited or quoted in this research paper are indicated and acknowledged with a comprehensive list of references.

Signature.....

Date 19/11/2018

DEDICATION

The research is dedicated to female leaders in secondary schools and all other teachers who aspire to become leaders in secondary schools. It is also dedicated to my husband and children who supported me and encouraged me throughout my study. Finally, to my mother whose confidence in me is unwavering.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Affirmative Action
CGESA	Commission for Gender equality in South Africa
DWSP	Department of Women Strategic Plan
EEA	Employment Equity Act
FET	Further Education and Training
FSSLs	Female Secondary School Leaders
GET	General Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
NWED	North West Education Department
PMG	Parliamentary Monitoring Group
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team

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CHAPTER: 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored factors that are experienced as challenges by females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala education district of South Africa. It specifically sought to understand female leadership experiences in relation to gender factors such as stereotypes and prejudices from society, from the school as an organisation and from the female leaders themselves. These factors seem to persist despite the opportunities and strategies that are put in place such as legislative framework passed by the South African government to redress historical gender discrimination which negatively affect the leadership of females who lead secondary schools Diko, (2014).

These factors pose as challenges to females who lead in secondary schools. Moorosi (2010:16) is of the view that, traditional cultural values often compromise women, and that the interplay between home and work issues perpetuates the reproduction of male domination. Schmidt and Mestry (2015:813) concur that male domination still exists in South Africa and that gender bias affects female leaders negatively. The current Minister of Education in South Africa, Angie Motshekga echoed her concern about the leadership of women when she expressed concern about the under-representation of females in secondary school leadership. She lamented the continued domination of the position of school principals by men despite the overwhelming number of women in the education sector, City Press, (2013). This underrepresentation may pose as a challenge for females who lead in secondary schools in that it may rob them of potential and adequate number of role models and or mentors Bradshaw (2014:27).

The study also investigated how the status of gender inequality in the district affects the leadership of females who lead secondary schools. The problem of gender inequality according to Barmao (2013:40) is that it robs communities, and societies of the capabilities of women. Gender inequality contributes to the underutilisation of women and women leaders as a national resource in schools. Additionally, the way in which leadership support opportunities provided and utilised by the Bojanala district authorities affect the leadership of women who lead

secondary schools was explored. Finally, an attempt to find out how the factors that are seen as challenges by participants could be addressed concluded the study.

Those factors were explored through a qualitative study that was anchored in a feminist liberal theoretic framework. Then interpretivist-social constructivist paradigm guided the study using the case study method. Data was collected from ten participants and a focus group using face to face interviews with open ended questions. Content analysis method helped in the analysis of data which was supported with a qualitative data analysis software programme (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Creswell 2014; De Vos *et al.* 2011). The chapter presents the study background, aims, questions, objectives and significance. Definition of key concepts and the structure of the dissertation are also outlined. In the context of this study, female secondary leadership includes the position of the principal, the deputy principal and the head of department (HOD) in a school. The motivation of this study was prompted by several factors that are explained in the next section which also discusses the study background (Creswell, 2014; De Vos *et al.* 2011; Kumar 2015 & Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The post 1994 democratic dispensation ushered in significant changes, mainly through the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (hereafter referred to as the constitution) and other legislative frameworks such as the Employment Equity Act no. 55 of 1998. These frameworks affirmed the equality of all citizens before the law. They were intended to redress societal imbalances created by the apartheid government. The education sector also has to comply with these constitutional dictates. Men and women are to be treated equally and fairly in their workspaces. The Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 Chapter 2 section 7 (1), calls for School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to ensure that the democratic principles of equity, redress and representation are complied with. However, this is not the case in some schools.

Concluding the study of female principals, Moorosi (2010:16) argues that women still face challenges in organisations in which they work, in the societies in which they live and in their families. Some researchers agree with Moorosi that female secondary school challenges fundamentally originate from three areas, female leaders themselves (personal), the historic gender role, or cultural perceptions and stereotypes (societal) and organisational structures where female leaders are based (organisational). These factors confirmed the continued

existence of gender inequalities and the prevalence of patriarchy in schools (Diko 2007: 7, Diko, 2014: 832, Msila, 2014:469, Naidoo and Perumal, 2014:15, Schmidt and Mestry 2015: 820 & Shin and Bang, 2013:1).

Chisholm's (2001) conclusion that education in South Africa is still patriarchal and that it resists change is confirmed by more recent studies like Msila (2013:469) who purports that women are oppressed by a male dominated society. Confirming the underrepresentation of females in school leadership as reflected by the Ministers of Education above, the Pula (2013) statistics revealed that females dominated the teaching fraternity. It reported that 68.3% (257 633) of the teaching force in South Africa is female, and 31.7% (119 570) is male. However, only 8 210 were female principals, whereas male principals were 14 337. The situation is no different at provincial level. The Commission for Employment Equity Report (2014-2015:33) indicates that the workforce profile shows gender inequalities in the Northwest educational institutions especially at top management level. For example, by 2014, 62% of top management was male and 38% female. Males are still dominant at this level of educational leadership. The challenge according to Chisholm 2001, is that those who manage to make it into leadership positions ultimately become frustrated and leave the sector. Schmidt and Mestry (2015:819) also reported in their study that the three female principals they were investigating were planning to leave their posts.

Gender representation at school level in Bojanala district indicates that not much has changed. Female representation at top secondary school leadership level is still very low. This is the position of the principal. The North-West Education Department HR Persal document (2017:3) reveals that of the 258 secondary school principals in the Bojanala district, only 56 are females. This confirms the continued existence of the challenge of male domination in secondary school leadership of the district. For example, the education office that the author managed from 2009 to 2013 had 88 schools, of which 22 were secondary schools. Of the 22, only 2 were female led. This low number could be indicative of poor or ineffective implementation of the Gender Policy in schools in the district. In the Gauteng province, the Department of Education had 201 principal's posts, of these, only 84 were occupied by females (Schmidt & Mestry, 2015:813). This situation continues despite the many inequality redress measures that have been introduced by the South African government. The problem is that low numbers result in a limited pool for the potential appointment of females into school leadership positions. Research

has proved that participation of females in leadership positions does not only benefit the education system, but the entire nation. A study conducted on science teams in the US found that there is a gender dividend in science, that teams can benefit from various types of diversity including gender, and concluded that gender diversity allows organisations (schools also) to derive the “innovative dividend” that leads to smarter, more creative teams that lead to new discoveries Nielsen, *et al.* (2017:1).

In addition to the above, the study by gender activists Desvaux *et al.* (2010) investigated nine key areas that match organisational excellence with leadership and found that, women frequently adopt at least five of those in their leadership style, while men use only two of those (control and individual decision making). Grogan confirmed the findings of Nielsen *et al.* (2017) and Desvaux *et al.* (2010). Her study of women in business revealed that when a country educates its women and girls, its gross domestic product grows, when a corporation adds more women to its senior leadership, the company performs better financially than if there were only men at the top (Grogan, 2010:784).

On the basis of this finding, they then concluded that, women contribute to stronger organisational performance than men. That is why this study on female leadership is significant. Wittenberg-Cox (2014:1) also found that smart leaders have understood for a while now that gender balance delivers better and more sustainable performance. Mollel and Shabangu (2014:51) further explicate this by advancing a view that says, valuing diversity leadership, particularly gender inclusivity, is critical in education if a nation hopes to be successful in the development of its vision. Schwanke (2013:1) submits that there are corporate, social and economic benefits in allowing women to fairly advance to decision making positions, that removing barriers and improving their working environment is significant to the strengths of companies, social networks (schools) and jurisdictions. These arguments make the need for this study compelling.

Diko (2007:4) grappled with the question of whether education offers females an opportunity to lead in an environment that is not limited by gender and concluded that implicitly and indirectly, it does not. The preceding paragraph indicates the benefits that could be obtained if females operate in an environment that is not limited by gender.

While there is reasonable literature study on the experiences and or challenges of secondary school principals, it seems that no study that I am aware of has addressed the challenges faced by FSSLs at different levels of the Bojanala District of education. The positions of the Deputy Principal and that of the Head of Department (HOD) are significant in school leadership. Understanding and addressing leadership challenges experienced at the level of HOD and deputy principal may improve not only the challenge of female underrepresentation in school leadership, but may also better prepare incumbents into these two leadership positions to operate more effectively. Significantly, the preparation may increase chances of promotion to the top most position of Principal Bush (2015:215).

The exploration of the experiences of HODs and deputy principals may provide deeper understanding of the experiences and challenges of principals. Lalla (2013:36) posits that the most powerful influences on a woman's career patterns come from her early past experiences. Therefore, understanding the experiences of female secondary school leaders as a collective might best be achieved through the voices of deputy principals and HODs. The female secondary school leadership challenges in Bojanala district have not been sufficiently studied. Monare's (2015) study focussed on the management of discipline by female primary school principals, while Monametsi (2013) addressed the issue of professional teacher development and instructional leadership. These studies did not address female school leadership challenges, hence the need for research in this area. Importantly, those interested in the study of female secondary leadership, female teachers, the department of education, the school community and the research participants may benefit from a better understanding of FSSLs and thereby respond and navigate those challenges more effectively in different contexts. For instance, participants' awareness and understanding of the challenges may help prepare them for these. The discourse on female leadership may be encouraged, and strengthened so that gender issues in education are brought to the fore and are prioritised and consequently, the leadership challenges they face will be reduced (Lalla, 2013). While a significant number of studies focussed on the experiences of top education leaders, the exception here is the Lalla (2013: V) study that focussed on schools female HODs. The study found that as curriculum leaders, HODs possess transformational capabilities to lead schools.

The a foregoing review shows that women in school leadership experience challenges in at least three ways. Broadly speaking these are: personal, organisational and societal or cultural.

Mbepera (2015:55) calls this the “Gender Organisational System”. This is a system that traces female leadership challenges to the difference in the way male and female leadership roles are perceived. The challenges of females in secondary school leadership as a problem are outlined in the next section

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1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Creswell (2014:50) indicates that a research problem comes from a void in the literature. It is a concern or an issue that needs to be addressed. For this study, the research problem is that, while the South African government has come up with a number of measures that are intended to reduce gender-related challenges that female leaders experience, these measures seem not to have adequately helped to improve the leadership environment in which female leaders in secondary schools operate. Moorosi (2010:560) concurs that policy efforts are not enough to eliminate deeply entrenched cultural stereotypes.

Female leaders still operate in an untransformed environment that is challenging, mainly due to gender inequality in the department of education, in secondary schools in a particular and in society in general. They operate in an environment that is not very inviting, a space that is fraught with patriarchal tendencies and stereotypes that render the leadership environment unpalatable. Further to the above, Msila (2013:464) contends that the uninviting conditions are typical of circumstances under which female leaders carry out their duties. Naidoo and Perumal (2014:15) concur with (Msila (2013) as well as, Schmidt and Mestry (2015:1) that female secondary school leaders are caught in a web of gender discrimination which is difficult for the leaders to get out of. This means that gender discrimination is still a factor that women who are in positions of leadership in secondary schools still need to face and grapple with. In addition to gender discrimination, scholars such as Moorosi (2010:553) argue that underrepresentation is a challenge that affects female leaders who occupy higher levels of the school leadership hierarchy. It does this by limiting their opportunities for upward mobility or promotion. Further to this, the underrepresentation denies them the encouragement and support they could get from the role modelling of those in senior positions (Schmidt & Mestry, 2015). These scholars further note that the pool for mentorship and networks for female leaders is limited and that in itself is a challenge as the opportunity for role modelling and support may be compromised (Schwanke, 2013:1). In view of the previous discussions, the following research questions were formulated.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to explore the topic: challenges experienced by females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district of South Africa, four subsidiary questions which were informed by the following main question were asked.

1.4.1 Main research question

What are the experiences of females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district?

1.4.2 Subsidiary questions

- How does the status of gender equality or inequality in the Bojanala district affect women who lead in secondary schools?
- What are the challenges experienced by female leaders in secondary schools in the Bojanala district?
- How do opportunities provided by the authorities in the Bojanala district affect the leadership of female leaders-in secondary schools?
- How can challenges experienced by females who lead secondary schools be addressed?

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to establish factors that are perceived as challenging experiences for females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district. Pursuant to this aim, the following objectives were formulated:

- To establish how gender inequality or equality impacts on the leadership of females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala education district.
- To determine the factors considered to be inhibitors of positive leadership experience for females who are secondary schools' leaders.
- To determine how female leaders in secondary schools experience the utilisation of leadership support opportunities by the Bojanala district.
- To identify possible strategies that can address the negative leadership experiences of females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district and thereby improve female representation in the leadership of schools.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The intention of a study is to contribute to literature of a particular field by providing a different perspective or to support an existing one (Creswell, 2009). It is anticipated that this study could in general provide deeper understanding of factors that challenge female leadership in secondary schools. In discussing the significance of this study, attention is given to the practical, theoretical and policy contribution that it could make.

At a practical level, the study could help inform female leaders, especially study participants, on the measures they could consider using in attempting to improve their leadership practice. It may help them become more effective agents of change by better utilising both their agency and existing leadership improvement and enhancement strategies. Maynard and Purvis (1994:23) quoted in Mbepera (2015:98), posit that “one of the driving forces of feminism was to challenge passivity and the silencing of women”. This study might help them actively participate in initiatives that may alter and better their leadership journey. The implementation of suggested available opportunities for female leaders and measures suggested for the reduction of their challenges may improve the leadership effectiveness of the participants and other aspirants to school senior leadership positions.

The study could also help create awareness about the importance of having females in school leadership positions and the value of gender diversified school leadership. As the study seeks to address issues of gender equality, female leadership studies are important. Diko (2014:829) argues that at the core of education, is quality teaching and educational leadership. Moreover, the roles of females in education and FSSLs are significant and are a component of educational leadership in schools, respectively. At a theoretical level, the study adds to the existing body of knowledge by providing a perspective on female leaders of the Bojanala education district on what women view as factors that challenge their leadership in schools. In connection with policy development, this study could also serve as a guideline for policy makers and developers of programmes that are intended to help females lead better and more effectively by ensuring that they are more gender sensitive and focussed in their interventions. Many studies emphasized the need for the establishment of mentorship and networking systems that could support women and help them deal with their leadership challenges Bradshaw (2014:45) and Bartling (2013:52). Finally, the study could stimulate further research work specifically on the

value of gender diversified education leadership in Bojanala district. The significance of this study is elaborated further in the literature reviewed below.

1.7 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.7.1 Challenges

In this study, challenges which are sometimes referred to as barriers, are obstacles that hinder females aspiring to occupy secondary school leadership positions or any other factor that interferes with the execution of leadership by those who are already in leadership positions.

1.7.2 Secondary schools

According to the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996), secondary schools refers to schools that provides educational opportunities to learners in grades 8-12, a phase referred to as the General Education and Training band (GET), and the Further Education and Training band (FET) that consists of grades 10-12 learners.

1.7.3 Leadership

Cuban in Bush (2007:392) views the meaning of leadership as influencing the actions of others in achieving a desirable end and leaders as people with much ingenuity, energy and skill. While on the other hand, management is the maintenance of efficient and effective current organisational arrangements. Cuban argues that managing well often exhibits leadership skills. Therefore, in this study school leadership will also include managerial skills.

1.7.4 Secondary school leadership

In the context of this study, secondary school leadership refers to the three leadership positions that constitute a team that manages and leads the school. These are the positions of the principal, the deputy principal and the head of department. All three-exercise leadership at different levels.

1.7.5 Concrete wall

Lumby (2003) describes the concrete wall as a period/phenomenon where there were separate and distinct gender roles, where men were bread winners and women were home-makers. This wall began to fall around the 1970s to the 1980s when although women were employed in middle management positions, they faced an invisible barrier that excluded them from the upper levels of management. In this study, this includes any non-physical challenge that plaque

female school leaders and prevent them from reaching their leadership goals because of their gender. This invisible barrier was called “a glass-ceiling”.

Cotter *et al.* (2001) in Msila (2013:465) suggest that a number of elements indicate the existence of a glass ceiling: gender or racial inequalities that may not be explained by the employer, a gender or race difference that occurs more in senior than lower positions in organisations and gender or racial differences in opportunities for advancement to senior positions, and any discrimination based on race or gender which becomes more prevalent as the career progresses. This implies that even though women can see the top positions, they are unable to access them.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A brief explanation of the research paradigm, design, population and sampling, data collection and data analysis methods, ethical consideration as well as measures to ensure trustworthiness are provided at this stage, with a more detailed discussion provided in chapter three of the dissertation.

1.8.1 Research paradigm

The study adopted an interpretivist paradigm as the world view (Creswell, 2009). Among the many and varied research paradigms such as pragmatism, interpretivism, positivism and transformative, interpretivism was chosen on account of its ability to provide room for the researcher and participants to co-construct meanings in the research process (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012). The research design followed as a plan that maps how research is conducted. It was a qualitative design and a case study as the design genre. Creswell (2009:04) views the qualitative design as a way of exploring and understanding the construction of reality and the meaning attributed to a social problem by individuals or groups and its significance in allowing the use of multiple sources of data gathering. The design is discussed in the next section.

1.8.2 Research design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study design. A case study was the preferred design genre because it allowed the researcher to explore deeply the case of the leadership

challenges experienced by a population of females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district.

1.8.3 Population and participant selection

The population for this study comprised female leaders in the Bojanala district and it was from this population that a total sample size of nine female participants was purposefully drawn. These were selected because of the leadership position they held in the schools and their years of experience in those positions as these two were some of the features that were of interest to the study.

1.8.4 Data collection methods

The data collection methods for this study were face to face individual interviews and focus group interviews which consisted of semi-structured open ended questions which allowed participants to freely articulate their views.

1.8.5 Data analysis methods

Data collected through the methods and instruments mentioned above were analysed through the Hermeneutic and Content analysis methods.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To ensure that the research process was conducted ethically, the following issues were attended to; permission to conduct research was obtained from the University Ethics Committee. This was followed by an authorisation letter from the Education District office allowing the researcher access to schools. Thereafter a permission letter to enter the school and engage with participants was obtained from gate keepers of the two sites. Significantly, consent letters were also received from the participants after detailed description of the study project with emphasis and assurance on the confidentiality and voluntarism of their participation in the study. The researcher ensured that participants were treated with mutual respect as valuable partners who possessed rich information that was significant to the study Nieuwenhuis (2016:125).

1.10 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

The measures adopted to ensure trustworthiness are as follows: pilot study, triangulation, member checking and audit trails. A detailed discussion of these measures is given in chapter three.

1.11 CHAPTER ORGANISATION

The study consists of five chapters as follows: Chapter 1, which introduces the study by highlighting the purpose of the study, clarifying the aims, objectives, research problem statement, research questions, significance, research design and methodology as well as data collection methods. It in fact, maps out the entire study.

The second chapter (2) focuses on the literature review of issues related to the study with a view to help the researcher gain better insight and understanding of the research gap especially as regard to the challenges that are experienced by females who lead secondary schools. The theoretical framework that underpins the study is also provided in this chapter followed by headings drawn from the objectives stated in the study. In chapter 3 a presentation of the research design and methodology is discussed beginning with the research paradigm, design, population and sampling, data collection and analysis methods, ethical considerations and measures to ensure trustworthiness.

The fourth chapter presents an analysis, interpretation and discussion of the findings. The chapter adopts a thematic approach towards data analysis. It records the findings through verbatim statements, summary tables and narrative vignettes and clusters the themes into code families or what Nieuwenhuis (2016) calls super ordinate themes, which ultimately form the basis of the discussion of the findings for the study. The final chapter presents a summary of the major findings, limitations, conclusions and recommendations from the study and for further studies.

1.12 SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the challenges that are experienced by females who are in leadership positions in secondary schools in the Bojanala education district of South Africa. The chapter served as a roadmap into the study by outlining the problem statement, study aims, objectives, research questions and the rationale for the study. In the next chapter a review of the literature related to the study is conducted.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a review of the literature to the study is conducted. The philosophy behind the review of literature is that the more a researcher understands the trends in the field not necessarily similar but related to her or his study, the more she or he can approach her/his new study from an informed position. Additionally, the literature review helped to ensure that this study is not a duplicate of what has already been researched (De Vos, *et al.* 2011:134). In light of this, the review of literature is conducted with the following sub-heading; theoretical framework, understanding gender inequality in education, factors affecting female leadership in education, measures adopted to support female leadership in education and strategies for addressing female leadership challenges in education and in schools.

Various ways to organise the reviewed literature are suggested, e.g. organising by date of study, by school of thought, by theme or construct, by hypothesis, or by method (De Vos *et al.* 2011:140). This study employed thematic organisation because of its relevance in addressing research subsidiary questions.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts a feminist theoretical framework as the lens for viewing the research. There are a variety of feminist theories. Lorber (2010:8-16) classifies them into three broad categories of; gender reform, gender resistant and gender revolutionary feminism. These broad categories are further sub-categorised. The reform feminism includes liberal feminism, Marxist and Socialist feminism and Development feminism. Resistant feminism includes radical feminism, lesbian feminism, and psychoanalytic feminism and Standpoint feminism. The following constitutes Gender Revolutionary feminism; Multi-ethnic feminism, Men's feminism, Social Construction feminism and the Queer Theory. A detailed discussion of these versions is given in the sub-sequent sections of this chapter

These theories focus on the need for equality between females and men with emphasis on human rights. Grogan (2007:5) and Shakeshaft (1996:86) discuss a common thread that focus on bringing light into how male domination stifles and resist female contribution to education. Blackmore (2013:139) views the use of the feminist perspective in research as a tool that is

able to amplify the gross unjust treatment levelled against women. One of the Feminist theory goals is the transformation of social inequalities and the creation of awareness of women issues and concerns (Kumar, 2014:160). The feminist perspective view as problematic women's diverse situations and the institutions that frame those situations (Creswell 2009:62). This theory is relevant to this study because the study discusses the situation that female secondary school leaders operate in, a situation that negatively affects their leadership capabilities because of its patriarchal nature. By highlighting the plight of the female secondary school leaders, the study seeks to contribute to the transformation of their work environment. A detailed discussion of the various feminist versions is given in the sub-sequent sections of this chapter.

2.2.1 Radical feminism

Radical feminism argues that sexism is so deeply rooted in society that the only way to eliminate it is to eliminate the concept of gender. This perspective views sex and gender as inseparable and therefore the only way to dealing with sexism is to eliminate the 'concept carrier. This is a perspective that in practice, may take very long to eliminate the concept of gender, given the "historic period" it took to construct and entrench the concept of gender in all spheres of life. The existence of sexual division of labour is a contested debate, however, it may be safe to suggest that it dates back to primitive societies.

Lerner (1987) cited in Lorber (2010: 9) argues that the origin of the concept gender is not sexual based. She contends that male dominance over woman is not "natural" nor biological, but a product of a historical process that began in the second millennium B.C., in the Ancient near east, and therefore because it was historically established, it can also be historically ended. Arguably radical feminism may not help the course of this study. The reduction of female challenges should be a process that benefits not only future secondary female leaders, but current practising ones as well.

On the other hand, those who are advocates for social feminism are of the view that male domination is the only source of women oppression. The theory links female oppression to financial dependence on males. Its proponents argue that women are subject to male rulers in a capitalist system due to the uneven distribution of wealth and therefore, to eradicate oppression and liberate females, both economic and cultural sources of oppression should be eliminated. This study suggests that cultural factors are partly responsible for women's economic oppression as the designers of capitalism are the carriers of patriarchal beliefs, norms

and attitudes that design and influence every facet of people's lives, the economic one included. Patriarchal beliefs and norms find expression in feminist version such as the Post-colonial one discussed below.

2.2.2 Post- colonial feminism

Post-colonial feminism developed as a response to feminism that solely focussed on the experiences of women in Western cultures. It seeks to explain how racism, economic and political colonial cultural effects affect non-white women in post-colonial era. Therefore, it should be noted that leadership in South Africa is different from western models because of the complexity of South African history (Schmidt & Mestry, 2015: 813). Female secondary school leaders in South African schools deal not only with gender oppression but racial and ethnic discrimination as well, especially in cases where a female lead in a school that is not identical to her ethnic or racial background. This feminist perspective may apply to the study, but may not be considered because the study focus is on gender but not on race. The same notion is held with the Marxist and socialist feminist perspective discussed in the next paragraph.

2.2.3 The Marxist and Socialist feminism

The theory criticises the family as the source of women oppression and exploitation because of the unpaid labour such as child care. According to the theory, government policies favour the state at the expense of women needs and interests and that policy need transformation to make room for the increase of salaries of women doing traditional jobs so that women no longer depend on their men economically. This argument may not apply in the context of secondary school leadership in South Africa as salaries in government schools are gender non-discriminatory. However, the argument is based on socialist states and for housewives in particular (Lorber, 2010:10). While there are different feminist paradigms, all are to a certain degree applicable to the study as their basic assumptions are all about the fight against women's oppression. However, the liberal feminism theory was the preferred one for this study because of its focus and approach. It is discussed next.

2.2.4 Liberal feminism and education leadership

The gender reform liberal feminism, one of the many types of feminism theories is the one from which the study views the challenges of female secondary school leaders. Firstly, Lorber (2010:10) argues that liberal feminism strives for sexual equality through legal and social reforms. South Africa came up with numerous legal measures that sought to redress gender inequality in the country, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act (108 of 1996) is the fundamental law that addresses gender discrimination. The theory also claims that gender differences are not based on biology and that women are not that different from men and therefore they should not be treated differently from men, and that their humanity supersedes their sex. Second, its politics are said to be practical and that could make it the best way to redress gender equality at the present time (Lorber, 2010:36).

The study looked at how the implementation or non-implementation of existing legal frameworks and policies impacted gender status in South Africa and in the North-West province in particular. It also looked at gender representation in the district and in the case schools and views the increase in numbers of female leaders at secondary schools as one of the ways to address gender inequality. The study therefore advocates for the policy of Affirmative Action (AA). The implementation thereof would advance the realisation of gender equality because it calls for aggressively seeking out qualified people to redress gender imbalance in the workplace (Lorber, 2010:10).

Liberal feminism explains the position of a woman in terms of unequal rights or artificial barriers that prevent women from participating beyond their family and into public space. This study views as a problem, gender inequality that promotes unequal rights and artificial barriers posing as a glass ceiling. The study explores how gender inequality may contribute to the challenges experienced by secondary school leaders on their way up or while already in the position of leadership as heads of department, deputy principals or principals. The liberalist theory demands equal opportunities through legal reforms and more women in decision making positions. Diko (2014:832) argued that while equality might be reached in some instances in schools, such as in the school management team of the school she investigated in the Eastern Cape, that numbers do not necessarily mean possession of decision making capacity, they are not a reliable indicator of gender equity. Therefore, the assumption of the liberalist theorists above was relevant in the exploration of female leadership decision making ability or the lack

thereof. The theory further claims that being a woman is not a biological but social construct, that women are products of a society. It advocates for the treatment of women according to their talents, skills and determination and not on the basis of their biological differences (Monnathoko, 1992 in Mbepera, 2015:53). Lorber (2010:10) concurs that the existing inequalities are the results of the socialisation of women which supports patriarchy and keeps men in power. The challenges of females who are in leadership positions in schools are associated strongly with patriarchy, a social order that keeps males in position of leadership and decision making, therefore the reduction of such challenges requires a theory with the potential to deconstruct society's perception of women capabilities, the feminist theory claims to do this (Schoeman 2015:3).

According to Gosette and Ruth (1995:1), (cited in Wakshum 2014:16), the power of the feminism paradigm is that it focusses on gaps, and blank spaces of dominant cultures and knowledge bases and behaviour. This study identified a gap in the literature of school leadership at deputy principal and head of department level, rendering the feminist theory relevant in the study of the exploration of challenges leaders face particularly at those two tiers of school leadership. Feminist researchers opine that the feminist perspective is able to understand oppression and offer solutions to that phenomenon. Purnell (2007) in Kallie (2015:30) concurs in their assertion that academic feminists tend to explore and have understanding of the theory that underpins oppression, but, significantly, offer knowledge on the source of this oppression, and solutions to its eradication. It is also on the basis of this assumption that the Liberal feminist theory is the perspective from which challenges that females who are leaders in the Bojanala district secondary schools were explored.

While Purnell and Blackmore correctly acknowledge the feminist theory to offer solutions to issues of female oppression, research still points to the existence of challenges that are related to female oppression due to continued male dominance in education Msila (2013). This study therefore, may not claim to offer solutions that will eradicate female leadership challenges emanating primarily from gender related issues, but seeks to contribute to the discourse on how the challenges could be minimised and by among others continuing the dialogue about the negative leadership experiences women and documenting those experiences for reference by any party interested in the topic of female leadership. However, the feminist theory helped

framed the understanding of gender equality in education (Turner & Maschi, 2016; Lorber, 2010).

2.3 UNDERSTANDING GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

The section explains the concept and status of gender equality in the education sector, its importance and the benefits not only to the sector, but also to the nation. It further advances strategies employed in an attempt to eliminate gender discrimination and thereby advance inequality gender equality in education and in secondary schools in particular.

2.3.1 Gender and its effect on female leaders

Gender equality is a principle that addresses the limitations, exclusions or discriminations that are based on people's sexes. Its purpose is to increase the recognition of women as equal to men and enjoying the same equal freedoms in all spheres of life including education. Gender equality ensures women's access to education, including promotional and senior management and leadership positions in education and in schools (South Africa 1996:25). Females in the positions of HODs, deputy principals and principals in schools are therefore according to gender equality principles eligible for promotion to next level positions to the current posts they are occupying. The third question this study investigates is the status of gender equity in Bojanala secondary schools and how the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in secondary schools effects their daily operations. The preceding paragraph revealed underrepresentation of females at principal ship level, suggesting the existence of male domination at that level of school leadership

Equality in informal terms requires that people in the same situations such as male and female school managers and leaders be consistently treated in the same way. Characteristics such as gender, race, religion or ethnicity should not be used to discriminate against females who are in positions of leadership in secondary schools. The discussion on the Liberal feminist theory in the preceding section confirms that liberal feminists share similar view on the need for fair treatment of females and males. However, literature reveals that similar treatment for females and males is not the practice in education in South Africa (Lalla, 2013; Msila, 2013; Moorosi, 2010; & Naidoo & Perumal, 2014).

In 1999, The CGE Report stated that gender equality remained entrenched and that equality was distant dream for majority of women in the country (South Africa 1996:133). It further argued that while women then had access to a broader scope of positions in the labour market, that those opportunities were only available to a small pool of females, those who largely got training and development skills and education. It further stated that the majority of women were still in lower levels of employment and in positions that were traditionally and culturally considered to be feminine such as teaching. This implies that women's access to higher leadership positions is limited (South Africa, 1996:5).

2.3.2 Limited access to leadership positions and underrepresentation of females in leadership positions

The marginalisation of women is not only limited to the education sector or secondary schools, it is worth noting that (though not the scope of this study), it extends to other sectors as well. This is confirmed by the paper presented at an International Women's Conference held in August 2017 in Durban. The paper reported that: women have limited access to education....and continue to be side-lined in accessing opportunities for significant economic empowerment and continue largely to exist in the periphery of economic decision making (South Africa, 2017:2). This limited access of women to educational and economic empowerment opportunities could partly account for the small pool of women who are ready to take up school leadership.

The view that women's access to education is limited is corroborated by a report on the supplementary employment equity hearings on gender transformation in the workplace. The hearings were held in the NWED (South Africa, Gender Equity 2014-2015:13). This suggests that principals in particular could have limited access to education. The report stated that the department was not doing well in the appointment of principals and conceded that its profile was not good. Other studies also highlighted the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Moorosi (2007) reported that, even though women formed 70% of the teaching population, they constitute only 30% of the population of principal's population. Five years later, Rajkumar (2017) referred to the report by the Department of Economics and Bureau of Economic Research at Stellenbosch University that indicated that in 2012, only 19% of the 71% of teachers in South Africa represented women in secondary schools.

Similar numbers have been recorded in studies such as Schmidt and Mestry (2015) who argue that stereotypes concerning perceived insufficiencies of female leaders persist and that those stereotypes act to distort perceptions of male and female potential and performance. The numbers below could be indicative of the prevalence of those perceptions in South African workforce. Statistics South Africa's (2013) reflected in the publication *Insight*, (2013:1) that 55% of males occupy managerial positions to 45% of women, and that 12.3% of women compared to 7.3% of males' complete tertiary education. Interestingly, notwithstanding this progressive national statistical information, the situation in secondary school leadership in Bojanala district reveals a different scenario. Of the 258 secondary school principals, only 56 of these are female principals.

The question is why is this situation still prevalent after so many years of the introduction of measures that are intended to redress gender discrimination. One of the reasons advanced by the report is that generally some state entities such as the education departments are not adequately influenced to invest enough in gendered focussed work, e.g. allocation of adequate budgets for gendered programmes and projects (*Insight* (2013:1). This view of lack of focus on gender was corroborated by the report on the Northwest province education department that revealed the lack of political will and the absence of budget allocation for gender transformation in the department (South Africa: Gender Equity, 2014-2015:14).

2.3.3 Not pursuing gendered work and policy implementation

Additional to the seeming lack of persuasion by the DoE to pursue gendered work, Rarieya *et al.* (2014) expressed concern about what happens when policy implementation is pushed. She argues that pushing policy implementation often ignores the fact that implementers have attitudes about the gender being propagated by the policy. They would prefer that nothing changes. The challenge is that education officials who are to implement gendered policy sometimes have themselves conservative and moralistic attitudes that prevent them from implementing the gender policy effectively. They are often uncomfortable discussing issues such as gender equality as it affects and threatens their own positions and promotion opportunities (Rarieya, *et al.* 2014:4). Concurring with Rarieya *et al.* (2014), the report emanating from the hearings of the gender transformation in the education department, North West province also pointed to the existence of the patriarchal attitude within the department. It

refers to the remarks of the head of department who concluded that *there is also a mind-set problem that lies with male functionaries- the more women advance themselves, the more it upsets functionaries who feel entitled to the positions* (South Africa: Gender equity, 2014-2015:14).

2.3.4 Inappropriately located gender office

Rarieya *et al.* (2014) further refers to the location of the Gender Directorate unit at provincial level as creating bureaucratic challenges. She argues that the directorate lacks the authority to enforce gender equality because their mandate is largely advisory. This situation is worsened by the fact that the unit is mainly staffed with people who do not possess sound knowledge about gender issues. Additionally, they view the implementation of gender procedures and systems as added responsibility. This situation and their attitude contribute to poor policy implementation and therefore, the policy continue to be a challenge to gender equality (Rarieya, *et al.* 2014:4).

While the challenge may be the capacity of gender directorates to execute their mandate as suggested by Rarieya *et al.* (2014) the Northwest education department in the province reported that it does not have such a directorate because of financial limitations (South Africa: Gender Equity, 2014-2015:13). In concurrence with the Liberal feminist paradigm that accentuates the use of law for the realisation of gender equality, South Africa (1996:25) states that gender equality should be approached from the application of the law. Therefore, gender equality policies that are informed by legal frameworks such as the Constitution of South Africa Act (108 of 1996). The Employment Equity Act no. (55 of 1998) which ensures equitable representation in the workplace and the eradication of all barriers or challenges to equal participation and advancement in the workplace should be implemented. Policy statements such as the National Gender Strategy 2006-2015, should be consistently implemented to ensure that gender equality is realised in the leadership of secondary schools. This act is supported by the Employment of Educators Act (76 of 1998) (amended in 2000) which makes provision for the application of the rights to substantive equality. The school management teams and most important, the school governing bodies should have knowledge of these legal frameworks that promote gender equality and non-discrimination of females in school leadership appointments (South Africa, 2015).

2.3.5 Politics in appointments into promotional posts

The challenge is that SGB committees may themselves be guilty of perpetuating gender inequality in secondary school leadership. The Ministerial Task Team Report by the South African Parliamentary Monitoring Group recommended that the powers of the SGB committees to make recommendations for the appointment into promotional posts be taken away. This recommendation was made following an investigation that looked into allegations of the selling of posts reported in several media platforms (Tondwa, 2015:1).

The report further stated that it has become evident that the process of selection of candidates for appointment in the education sector is riddled with inconsistencies. The chairperson of the Task Team reported North West Provincial Education Department as one of many implicated in those allegations and that it had the highest (29%) number of the 75 cases that were investigated. The chances of gender equity policy implementation may therefore be compromised by processes that are riddled with inconsistencies. The results of this negative practice may affect the underrepresentation of females in secondary schools, as it is common knowledge that organisations (schools and SGB committees included) are still male dominated especially in their top leadership echelons (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014; Diko 2014; Moorosi 2010).

SGB members need to understand and implement these policies in order to ensure that gender diversified leadership with its benefits exists in schools. It is also important that the practices emanating from the interpretation of the law be noted as they are important in advancing female rights as human rights. While the implementation of the law is important for gender equality, studies have shown as Moorosi (2010:2) suggests that the law alone does not guarantee gender equality. South Africa (1996) advises that, in order to achieve gender equality, individuals should internalise the law and policies. They should be willing to ensure that the policies are enforced. The literature reviewed suggested a number of steps and measures that can be taken to reduce challenges that female leaders encounter in their leadership. Some of the suggested measures are not legal, but emanate from practical organisational procedures that ensure implementation of policies.

Additional to law enforcement, people who responsible to ensure that gender equality laws and policies are implemented should be held accountable. According to the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996), the School Governing Body of a school has the responsibility of making recommendations to the Head of the Education Department for the appointment of teachers, including appointment into promotional senior positions. The SGB structures should be held accountable for the realisation or not of gender equality in school leadership. They are to ensure that diversified gender school leadership is realised. Stressing sameness perpetuates male domination, and this undermines the important value of gender diversity. The statistics in the ratio of male and female school principals in the Bojanala district suggests the existence of patriarchal practices by the majority of schools. This situation creates an environment conducive the challenges for females who lead secondary schools.

Besides SGB committees that make recommendations for appointments of leaders, there are the officials who endorse such recommendations. Endorsements that do not promote gender equality by individuals and structures that deal with district and provincial Human Resources recruitment and selection processes may also perpetuate male domination in the appointment of school leadership. The SASA (84 of 1996) provides the provincial Head of the Education Department with the responsibility of appointing teachers, including HODs, deputy principals and principals of schools. This person has the opportunity of ensuring the implantation of gender equality policies by appointing female leaders so that gender equality is realised (South African Schools Act 84 of 1996).

This calls for the application of substantive equality by all who deal with the selection and recruitment processes in education. Substantive equality is an approach that ensures that policies do not reinforce the suppression of people who were already politically, economically or socially disadvantaged such as secondary female leaders. This study argues for substantive equality for the realisation of gender equality. It supports the implementation of the government policy of Affirmative Action in the appointment of people to school promotional posts. Appointments in those positions should involve fair discrimination (South Africa 1996:26 & South Africa, 2006:10).

South Africa (2006:17) recommends that managers be actively involved in providing guidance in relation to gender mainstreaming. It also suggested that managers create supportive environment for staff to explore issues of gender equality. This refers to managers at all levels of organisational structures, from schools to the top levels of the education department. The application of substantive equality would therefore advance the achievement of gender equality in secondary schools.

2.3.6 Application of substantive equality

The application of substantive equality in creating equal opportunities for both male and female school leaders would help in the reduction of challenges that FSSLs experience South Africa, (2006:10). For example, quotas should be set as targets until both males and females have equal opportunity for appointment into senior school management positions. Arguably, the implementation of quotas alone will not necessarily equal gender equality, however, it will create a platform for the realisation of gender equality when it is supported by measures that capacitates and empower females to become effective leaders. For example, Mautle (2013: 92) suggests that training women and the provision of preparatory programmes that focus on social justice would address FSSLs challenges. The combination of such measures with Affirmative Action (AA) and a quota system would advance the status of FSSLs.

The incorporation of indirect discrimination in gender rights and invariably women rights, is a necessity for gender equality realisation in the schools. Also for the advancement and empowerment of female leaders in education. It is important for SGBs in schools to realise that gender equality is not an event, but a process that should be achieved over a long period of time. Therefore, any opportunity that arises for the realisation of gender diversity in schools needs to be taken advantage of. The (Educators Employment Act 76 of 1998 & South Africa, 2006:10).However, it seems that gender equality does not apply in education at all levels. In monitoring the implementation of this framework in the North West Education Department (NWED) that hosts the Bojanala District, South Africa (2015:31) found that the NWED did not meet its employment equity and gender transformation obligation and said that its attitude towards gender was poor. It should be noted that the non-implementation of gender policies and the continued discrimination of female leaders is a violation of a number of pieces of legislation, for example, the marginalisation of women in decision making is a violation of the

Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995). The act supports worker participation in the work place. Second, The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (4 of 2000), which prohibits unfair discrimination on the basis of gender and race is also violated. It also seems that the non-implementation legal frameworks that are intended to create a non-patriarchal, fair and non- gender discriminatory environment results in females who lead secondary schools experiencing various gender related challenges in their leadership of schools.

2.4 NATURE OF CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY FEMALES IN EDUCATION

The preceding discussion indicated that various attempts have been made at the realisation of gender equality. However, it has not been realised. The next section discusses the different views expressed in literature with regard to the main study question that asked: What are the experiences of females who are leaders in secondary schools? The international, continental (African) and South African perspectives on the question are examined (Mbepera, 2015, Kanjere 2010; Mautle, 2013, Kanjere, 2010). The section attempts to explain the nature of the origin of the challenges. It also highlights the opportunities that could be taken advantage of in the leadership arena so that gender equality is advanced. Final, it suggests various measures that could be taken in order to minimise challenges that are experienced by female leaders.

The study by Pirouznia (2013) on the aspirations of female leaders in Ohio, United States found that gender role stereotypes were reasons for the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Schwanke *et al.* (2013:17) found that women face challenges from two areas; organisationally and societally. A number of studies confirm this finding. Shin and Bang (2013), in their investigations on factors that prohibit women from advancing to leadership position, found through their ecological model that the challenges of women leaders can be traced to three sources, namely; societal factors (assumptions stereotypes and norms), organisational factors, and individual factors such as the communication style is viewed as unlikable and not assertive as it would have been perceived if it was from a man.

In Ethiopia, Wakshum (2014) explored challenges facing women leadership in secondary schools in Irbid and also concluded that women face challenges, personally, organisationally and from the society. Most literature reviewed concurs with the argument that says, factors

challenging female leadership in education are influenced by the individual leaders themselves, by the organisations and organisations that leaders work and live in, and by the society with its patriarchal attitudes, beliefs, norms and practices. Schwanke (2013:16) and Shin and Bang (2013:1) calls this an ecological model. Mbepera, (2015) says it is the Gender Organisational Systems (GOS).

2.4.1 Societal factors that challenge female leaders

There are several societal factors that negatively affect the leadership of leaders who are females. Among others are; cultural stereotypes, The leadership styles used by women, women's perceived ability to lead and a combination of gender and in some instances race related pressure and discrimination.

2.4.1.1 Cultural stereotypes

The source of the majority of challenges that female leaders experience seems to emanate from cultural historical gender stereotypes that societies formed. According to the strategic plan of the Department of Women in South Africa, gender stereotypes are persistent cognitive structures that influence the way individuals process their experiences. It means they are embedded in the psyche of those that harbour them. The plan argues that the stereotypes become highly increased when they become internalised by an oppressed group such as women and are very resistant to change (South Africa, 2015:37). Therefore, while the South African government may have passed legislation and policies intended to bring relief to the oppressed and redress past injustices, these cognitive structures resist that change. This may explain the prevalence of gender stereotypes attributed to men and women. This model emphasizes factors that encourage discriminatory practices such as culture and societal norms.

The model is sometimes called Woman's place model. This labelling emanates from the traditional historical notion that says that a woman's place is in the kitchen. The norms, cultural practices, coincide with different socialisation patterns that channel men and women, boys and girls into certain areas of work. They segregate them according to how much they are paid, and what status a teacher's gender holds in the society. The report further states that, right from birth, boys are clothed differently and treated differently from girls. As they grow older home chores are also segregated according to gender and not ability or competency. These

socialisation practices are then later carried over to schools and school leadership (South Africa: Department of Women Strategic Plan, 2015-2010:37).

The media also entrenches these societal norms by projecting images of leadership representing men as experts and female executives as “anomalies”. Women at home are projected as younger than men. This sends a message that says women are professionally incompetent (Shin and Bang, 2013:3). It is such messages that perpetuate gender stereotypes and, male domination. This suggests that the oppression of women within societies and in the workplace, is perpetuated by the gendered systems and structures such as the media. International studies on female education leadership reveal three categories of challenges. The second body of knowledge on African studies confirmed the existence of common female leadership challenges to those found on international research. One such challenge is the leadership style of women.

2.4.1.2 Leadership style

In a study that investigated the factors that influenced underrepresentation of Indonesian female principals, inability to manage emotions was identified as a challenge. Airin (2010) argues that this conclusion about women being unable to manage their emotions was the results of an assumption that emanates from a gendered double standard that assumes the following; that a male is confident while a woman is conceited, that he is enthusiastic while she is emotional, he follows through while she does not know when to quit, he is firm and she is stubborn, he speaks his mind, while she is difficult to work with, that he has authority while she is a tyrant (Airin, (2010:5). These are beliefs and stereotypical assumptions that speaks negative of female leadership. There is a strong view that says that these stereotypes should not be left unchallenged. Diko (2007:10) suggested that one of the ways of addressing these cultural traditional stereotypes, values and beliefs is for women themselves to stand up and exercise their democratic rights. Msila (2013:465) concurred that women need to set the agendas for their meetings. Arguably women leaders need to determine what their work places should be like. Also women should speak against these perceived injustices if gender equality is to be achieved.

2.4.1.3 Ability to lead

Rarieya *et al.* (2014) argue that female leaders are also challenged by the societal perception that questions their ability to lead. These negative discourses continue to impact school female leadership experiences. Over and above the assumption about female leadership ability to lead, are among others, the old school belief that certain agentic traits are associated with men and with leadership, e.g. assertiveness, decision making and control. On the other hand, certain gendered norms regarding domestic and physical labour such as nurturing, caring and gentleness are associated with women and not with leadership, and these are traits mostly prevalent in women. These are characteristics used in the practice of excluding women in positions of leadership, and these practices lead to challenges for women in positions of leadership (Rarieya *et al.* 2014:2).

Lumby (2003) agrees with Rarieya (2014) above and says that that communities do not trust women to be appointed as school managers because school management is perceived as an important job that demands seriousness they think only men could provide. It is a concern that such perceptions suggest that women may not be able to provide their seriousness. (Mekonnen 2014:60) on female principals in Egypt confirmed Lumby's findings when it found that 89.9% of women in its study perceived lack of confidence, fear of additional responsibilities and lack of talent as a factor that prevents women participation in secondary school leadership. The conclusion of the study was that the lack of confidence by female leaders contributes to their underrepresentation in leadership positions.

Atkinson, Wyatt and Senkhana (1994:19) cited in Mwingi (1999) agrees that even though women hold the same title as their male colleagues, female principals were rarely viewed as equals by their male colleagues, and by their male and female staff. Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) conducted a study on female teachers' aspirations to participate in school leadership by surveying sixty-two female secondary school heads. They revealed that although the majority of female teachers aspired to leadership post in secondary schools, they were hindered by a lack of confidence. Chisholm (2001) in Naidoo and Perumal, (2014:822) attributed the lack of confidence in women leader to the influence of race and gender. This suggests that women fight a constant battle against social and organisational discrimination. The gender stereotypes, norms and attitudes of the society affect schools as organisations. Contrary to this view, a study

conducted by Naidoo and Perumal (2014:822) found that women in their study had confidence. However, some female leaders still had to deal with both gender and race stereotypes in their workplaces.

2.4.1.4 Gender and racial bind on female leaders

Literature also reveal that additional to societal gender discrimination, in some instances, female leaders need to deal with racial discrimination as well. While racial discrimination is not the subject of this study, it is important to indicate how, when added to gender discrimination, it complicates the challenges that females need to deal with. Kanjere (2010) agrees with this when asserting that women in South Africa faced oppression from two fronts, referring to political oppression from Apartheid and the psychological one from communities. Gardiner *et al.* in Naidoo and Perumal (2014:810) claim that one of the factors that contributed to underrepresentation of women in Nigeria and South Africa was race coupled with gender. Chisholm (2001) cited in the same study also suggested that lack of confidence which is associated with gender, was the result of race and gender. The impact of race as a challenge is also accentuated by Lumby (2010) in a study that found that race coupled with other factors such as gender, ethnicity, religion, age etc. were part of what she calls a web of identities that either create or maintains the gender status of male domination.

These thoughts emanate from cultural and traditional beliefs and practices. Interestingly, this *three-tier* model is described in feminist scholars such as Eagly and Carl's work wherein three barriers that inhibit women's advancement to leadership positions are enumerated as; the Concrete wall, the Glass-ceiling and the Labyrinth. These are subtle sexist behaviour and conduct that prevent especially women holding senior positions from breaking through into the highly male dominated organisational executive positions.

2.4.1.5 Glass ceiling and Labyrinth

Lumby (2003) describes the Concrete wall as a period/phenomenon where there were separate and distinct gender roles, where men were bread winners and women were home-makers. This wall began to fall around the 1970s to the 1980s when women were employed in middle management positions, but faced an invisible barrier that excluded them from the upper levels of management. Women were described as bumping against a "glass-ceiling". This was an

imperceptible impediment that nonetheless restricted access to higher level jobs and pay. The “glass ceiling is a metaphor that was first used by Nora Frenkiel in *Adweek* in March 1984 to explain the subtle invisible obstacles females face after they occupy middle management but are unable to pass through this barrier to get to executive leadership positions. (Schwanke, 2013:1). Msila (2013:467) suggests that some gender activists still believe in the existence of the glass ceiling in education. Kanjere (2010) concurs that women in South Africa faced oppression from two fronts, referring to political oppression from Apartheid and the psychological one from communities. The subtle psychological one from communities is transferred to schools as extensions of communities.

The underlying attitude that contributed to the existence of a glass-ceiling was the notion that it was risky to employ women because they would leave their jobs to raise a family. As a result of these challenges, women found themselves travelling through a maze to reach to the top of organisations. Their path to leadership was not always a straight one because of cultural discriminatory stereotypes and believes. The cultural stereotypes exist because some organisations still define and perceive leadership in masculine terms. (Bremer et al, 1989, Scheine and Muller, 1992) cited in Mollel and Shabangu 2014:46. Contrary to this definition of leadership, some studies found that leadership capabilities are not gender based and that leadership effectiveness is not different between the two sexes. (Guerra, 2011:382, Rosener, 2008:411 cited in Schwanke, 2013:3; Llala, 2013). It seems that a different, more gender balanced understanding and definition of leadership capability is gaining ground as more studies such as the latter ones confirm the gender neutrality of the leadership capability notion. Additional to societal challenges that plaque female leaders, are those challenges that emanate from organisations themselves.

2.4.2 Organisational perspective on female leader’s challenges

The gender related factors that at times hinder the leadership operation of leaders who are females in organisations are influenced by societal factors discussed in the preceding section. Among them are; the practises and cultures of organisations, lack of training and empowerment for female leaders, placing females in crises positions and locating authority and power in offices held by males (Mautle, 2013; Mbepera, 2015, Kelsey, 2013; Lalla, 2013; Kanjere, 2010).

2.4.2.1 Organisational structure and practice

Organisational challenges in this study refer to factors in organisational systems, processes, procedures and practices that are influenced by societal cultural gender stereotypes. Those are obstacles that prevent aspiring female leaders from advancing into leadership positions, and or bar those that are already in leadership positions from moving further into more senior positions. They also speak to any factor in a school that challenges women because of their gender (Mautle, 2013; Mbepera 2015).

Moorosi (2010) argues that schools are an extension of communities within which they are located, therefore, the community social context influence their operations. This means that societal attitudes and beliefs are carried over to schools. These attitudes are reflected earlier in the female leaders' lives while they are still girls in schools. Mutekwe & Modiba (2012: 290) found in their study that the curriculum of the school they studied revealed entrenched patriarchal elements and tendencies. They concluded that a school is an instrument of societal design and regulation, which informs how a boy and a girl is to be taught, and that teacher attitudes engender and perpetuates patriarchy. This means that females are prepared earlier by schools for their future social roles such as school leadership. People working in organisations such as schools bring with them, their gender biases (Moorosi, 2010:16). Organisational gender policies and practices are influenced by the policy developers who are themselves not immune to gender bias. Policy implementers at organisational level are also influenced by their own views on gender equality. For example, the provincial head of the education department in a report referred to males in the education department who instead of implementing gender equality policies by appointing females in promotional posts, thought that they themselves deserved the positions (South Africa, 2014:13). Therefore, organisations that are not gender sensitive and are slow in their advancement of gender equality may create challenges for female in leadership positions.

Schwanke (2013:1) advances a number of areas from which organisational barriers emanate, among them, the way organisations are structured, their selection and recruitment practises, programmes and policies, limited human capital and the general societal expectation of female participation in the service sector such as education.

Schwanke (2013) further argues that organisations expect women to bring to the table certain skills sets, experience and knowledge. Often, female employees do not possess these requirements because of a number of reasons, e.g., career breaks that women have in order to take care of children or ageing parents. This is a cultural expectation from which men are exempted. The career breaks may lead to women not meeting the job requirements of certain leadership positions. The understanding of such challenges necessitates the application of fair discrimination. Treating women who had employment breaks in the same way as their male counterparts may not be fair. This applies to all employment sectors, education and secondary school management included.

2.4.2.2 Lack of training and support

Second, lack of training and development that is specifically targeted at capacitating women and preparing them for leadership roles limits their skills, knowledge and experience to participate fully and bring to the table the requisite information. This expectation is unrealistic given the historical leadership background that women possess as a result of cultural gender stereotypes that limited their participation in leadership positions. Msila (2013:1) agrees with Schwanke that despite progress registered in terms of women involvement in top leadership positions, their experience, skills set and knowledge remain limited compared to that of men. Therefore, support and training of various forms is critical for women leaders. Mautle, (2013:92) found that secondary school female principals in his study were not trained and prepared for the school leadership role. He appropriately recommended training as preparatory measure that will help women confidently venture into the challenging male dominated position of principal. Naidoo and Perumal, (2014:817) reported how lack of parental support affected the principals' operational activities. Parents would agree to issues in meetings and then renege on their agreements and would not implement. That frustrated the principals.

Additional to lack of support is unwritten organisational codes. Schwanke (2013) further argues that challenges women are not limited to lack of skills, knowledge and experience only, because promotion to senior positions requires more than superior skills and experience. She feels that there are other subtle unclear guidelines that may influence the appointment of females into leadership positions. These are issues such as amicable relationships with powerful people.

Second, there may be expectations that are not stated, and therefore unknown to the female leader that may also influence the involvement of women in higher positions. This situation may be exacerbated by the fact that often, due to the slow changing status of gender equality, people in powerful higher positions are mostly males. Women are sometimes uncomfortable breaking into existing networks that may be homogeneous and women are also unable to commit the extra time outside of work hours due to their home commitments. It is a challenge for women to navigate through hidden unscripted expectations for promotion because naturally, their relationships with men at the top are limited. These unsuitable human resource practises inhibit female leaders' abilities to secure senior placements (Schwanke, 2013:3).

2.4.2.3 Placement in crisis units

Furthermore, women sometimes find themselves placed in units that are in crisis. This creates a scenario where fatigue, burnout or failure is a high risk. Women are also given work with higher standards than men are. There is a view that this is more common in the business sector than in the public sector such as education where job requirements are standardised. For example, the salaries of female HODs, deputy principals and principals are non-discriminatory. Specifically, when women make it into senior positions, they are isolated and denied the much-needed support they need to fairly deal with the normal leadership challenges and consequently make it into those leadership positions (Scwanke, 2013:3).

The result is that they eventually leave, and when they do, they are said to be lacking skill or lack commitment for the hard work needed at higher levels of leadership. They may even be accused of incompetence. The challenge is that when women come back from these breaks to re-join the workforce, they may have to play catch up with their male counterparts who had been advancing up the leadership ladder during the women's break periods. While the issue of exposing women to jobs in which they are likely to fail may be a reason for them leaving their employment, some studies found that these women later get employed elsewhere. The studies show that 90% of them find employment elsewhere and 70% of which is fulltime (Schwanke, 2013:3, Shin and Bang, 2013:1 & Miles, 2013:8).

This therefore suggests that women may not leave their jobs because of incompetence or lack of commitment to the challenging leadership positions. Some leave because of the deliberate exposure to patriarchal environments that put them under undue pressure and set them up for

failure. This pressure is compounded by the fact that women additionally have other family responsibilities to contend with.

2.4.2.4 Family-work conflict

Shin and Bang (2013: 1) explain the phenomenon of work –family balance as having emerged from the 1960s when women began to make strides in education and with their careers. Though progress has been made and there are shifts in societal norms and changes which allow women to participate in non-traditional jobs such as school leadership, the stereotypical masculine traits of controlled emotions, independent, aggression, goal orientated, achievement and feminine traits of emotion expression, dependence, nurturing, physical weakness still exists.

Women are still therefore expected to conduct themselves as per the traditional norms, e.g. care for their family. At the same time, they have to lead their schools with societal traditional expectations. Shin and Bang (2013:1) argue that while women domestic responsibilities have marginally decreased, partly because of the available modern equipment now used in the kitchen, their participation in the workplace has increased. This creates the challenge of work family balance. Kelsey *et al.* (2014) in their exploration of the career paths of eight female superintendents and Parker (2015) in the study that focussed on work-family conflict for women who are mothers also concluded that the cultural stereotypes that filtered into organisations were responsible for the work –family tension that female leaders experience.

The family responsibility often competes with work responsibility. Women believe that their family obligations hinder their ability to reach top management positions. When male leaders can stay behind at work to complete the day's job or prepare for the next day, female leaders are often unable to do so because of family responsibilities.

It seems the family-work conflict challenge is experienced differently by female leaders in various settings. For example, Wakshum's (2014:74; Shin and Bang, 2013:2) study in Ethiopia, found a small percentage (only 1.7%) whose leadership was affected by family responsibilities. There are varying perspectives to the family-work conflict phenomenon. The study by Naidoo and Perumal, 2014:822, suggested that women sacrificed their family life in favour of work, and their hard work could be viewed as an attempt to prove their competence. Because if they failed, they could be viewed as entrenching the stereotypical view that women are not capable of leading.

The study conducted by Miles (2013:8) on twenty women to determine reasons why women leave their jobs through the eyes of women who have left the work place altogether or are working in non- traditional jobs found that women leave the workforce because they cannot balance work and home responsibilities. The study then proposes dynamic flexible time as a solution for working women. It suggests that women need fulltime flexibility which they prefer to working from home. In secondary school leadership, flexibility as suggested by Miles may not work as female leaders' work involves them having to engage physically with their supervisees and learners. There is need for regular contact time with their teams.

While there are diverse opinions and findings about the issue of family-work balance as one of the contributing factors to the challenges of female secondary school leaders, it seems there is a phenomenon that is experienced by the majority of women. The other challenge is the assumption that when numbers balance with regard to female and male representation in school leadership, that fairness and gender balance in terms of power and authority balances too (Diko, 2014; Kelsey, 2013).

2.4.2.5 The locus of power and authority in organisations

Literature indicates that, gender equality does not necessarily translate into gender equity which promotes fair treatment for both male and female. The ratio of male to female in an organisation does not mean that females receive the same treatment as their male counterparts, nor does it mean that females have the same opportunities and power as men. The reality as argued by researchers such as Diko (2014:832) is that while the numbers of females in leadership positions may have increased, those numbers do not necessarily reflect women operating on a level (in 2004) platform with their male counterparts. Diko's research (2014) that revisited her initial study of female leaders of Hope school in Eastern Cape Diko, (2007) found that, the challenge of gender equality was compounded by continued male domination. That study revealed the reality that, despite women occupying senior positions and the school having achieved equality with three of the school's management team of five being women, males remained strategic decision makers in that school. Women still did not exercise the power carried by the positions of their posts.

A classic example was the cases of an HOD in that study whose decisions were either reversed by her male principal or simply rejected by her junior male Maths teacher. Her conclusion was

therefore that numbers do not necessarily mean the achievement of social justice (Diko, 2007; Diko, 2014). This therefore means that women being in positions of power do not translate into them being effective decision makers. They still have to deal with issues of male domination and need empowerment to help them act the role of their positions. This behaviour may be the result of traditional cultural perceptions about the leadership capacity of the female Head of Department. In that case, the school's construction of leadership was still in male terms.

The same study found that decision making power lay with male and not female teachers in that school. For example, males chaired school governing body committees that were powerful while women chaired committees that were not empowering. The school's sports committee that had a budget and many annual activities was chaired by a male. An events committee that seldom met and could have few annual activities and had no budget was woman led. The latter did not expose the female teacher to any decision-making skills and was therefore not empowering to the female teacher who led it. On the contrary, the male who led the sports committee had regularly to make financial decisions regarding the committee, learning valuable management and leadership skills in the process. This prepared him for a leadership position in future while his female counterpart in the events committee did not have the same opportunity (Diko, 2010:832). This indicates that gender equity is important, nevertheless, female secondary school leaders should work towards the realisation of gender equality.

Msila (2013: 469) concurs and attributes those perceptions to societal creation. This is well captured by De Beauvoir- quoted in Msila (2013:464) stating, *successful women in history have demonstrated that it is not women's inferiority that has determined their historical insignificance, but their historical insignificance that has doomed them to inferiority*. Indeed, women are not inherently inferior, they are the products of their societies, hence, they are capable of rising above societal women design and expectation, and become successful. Women continue the struggle for the transformation of their workplaces to be environments in which their potential, skills and competencies could add value to the quality of education and to the economy of the country.

According to Schmidt and Mestry (2015:813), three women principals in the Gauteng province whose experiences they explored coped with their challenges because of their strong

upbringing, family support and sound educational background. These three elements empowered women in this study to be decision makers. Family support enabled them to withstand patriarchal practices such as the one displayed by the male leaders in the case of the Good Hope School mentioned above. South Africa (2006:13) argues that women's involvement in decision making is not only a human rights issue, but a social justice matter as well. The organisational practice of marginalising women when it comes to decision making may therefore be viewed as a violation of women's rights and a violation of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Female leadership challenges manifest themselves in diverse complex manner and through various platforms such as the media.

2.4.2.6 The role of the media

Schwanke, (2013) asserts platforms such as newspapers, television and other forms of media are said create an impression that women who make it into top organisational positions reflect the realisation of gender equality. This adds to women leadership challenges by portraying the few women who manage to make it into top leadership positions as rare exceptional species (Schwanke, 2013:4). The media uses these few women as tokens to make a point that women are in top leadership positions. The problem is that people may perceive these limited opportunities to be as good as gender equality. The few women (21%) in the study district may be portrayed by the media as a good representation of females in secondary schools in the district. People then begin to relax their concern about gender equality while women continue to grapple with issues such as the pressure created by cultural and organisational patriarchal challenges explained above.

These organisational challenges such as the unrealistic expectation of women to possess certain skills knowledge and experience, lack of training focussing on women, deliberate placing of women in crisis units in organisations and the need to balance work- family responsibilities extend the leadership of women. Literature reveals that complex female leadership issues are compounded by challenges that are created by women in the way they assess and view themselves.

2.4.3 Women's own challenges

In the context of this study, individual challenges refer to factors that negatively affect the leadership of females, and this emanates from the way in which women themselves as

individuals have internalised patriarchal gender ideology. This internalisation of the gender construct in practice undermines the chances of women securing senior leadership positions. Lack of confidence is cited as one of the self-limiting factors that emanate from women themselves (Mautle, 2013; Mbepera, 2015 & Msila, 2013).

Some studies regard societal stereotypes, beliefs attitudes and norms discussed earlier as largely being responsible for the personal factors that inhibit women from advancing in their careers. These factors are the results of a socialisation process that starts just after a girl child's birth and proceed throughout a women's life. Some authors refer to the personal factors as a 'psychological glass ceiling (Crosby-Hiller, 2012:26). This includes women's self-perception of the confidence in their ability to lead.

2.4.3.1 Confidence and ability to lead

Mekonnin (2014:81) argues that because the school community considers a woman not to be capable of leading, women tend to underestimate their own worth. This self-assessment, influenced by societal perception about women capabilities may demotivate women and dampen their aspirations to occupy senior management school positions. Women are not formed in isolation; they are products of their societies and communities. They work in gendered organisations that are themselves the products of gendered societies and communities.

Undeniably, women have the responsibility to fight and overcome gender based discrimination. Nevertheless, it remains significant to note that the origin of female oppression and discrimination needs to be acknowledged. Lorber (2010) posits that while there are varying feminist perspective as to how gender inequality could be eradicated, the radical feminism view that suggests that elimination of the concept of gender is the answer to the eradication of sexism seems to be the relevant approach in uprooting the challenge because sexism is deeply rooted in society (Lorber, 2010:18). This theory therefore suggests that gender equality should not be an individual but a collective issue.

This implies that women's self-perceptions are not solely the creation of women themselves. Msila (2013: 469) attributes those perceptions to societal creation. This is well captured by De

Beauvoir in Msila (2013:464) stating, successful women in history have demonstrated that it is not women's inferiority that has determined their historical insignificance, but their historical insignificance that has doomed them to inferiority. Self-efficacy is rooted in societal perceptions. It has to be dealt with by both women themselves and the society that incubates it. The view is that lack of self-efficacy limits the influence of role models. Mekonnen (2014: 81) investigated the participation of women in educational leadership in schools in Ethiopia, and found that female teachers fear additional responsibilities that would increase their pressure. They therefore do not make themselves available for challenging senior promotional positions in schools.

The study also found (with 84% of participants) that females are not talented to lead. This notion of women not being talented to lead is disputed by a number of studies that found that there is no difference in the leadership capacity of male and female leaders. Oboegbelum (2013:13) in the studies on the competencies of female principals in Nigeria found that females possess management, administrative and leadership skills that enable them to effectively lead their schools, contrary to the belief that women cannot lead. Naidoo and Perumal (2014:823) in their study that investigated female principals leading disadvantaged schools found that women have confidence to lead. The study also revealed that women actually employ both communal and agentic leadership skills in their school leadership. Many recent studies found the women leadership confidence is increasing and their leadership potential and capacity is abundant (Lalla, 2013; Mollell and Shabangu 2014; Msila 2013 & Schmidt and Mestry 2015).

The report from the Department of Women in South Africa refers to another gendered professional stereotype that says that women are less likely to promote themselves because they run a risk of being called arrogant or not feministic. This is because patriarchal societies and organisations expect women to behave in a modest way. They anticipate that even highly accomplished women should still behave in a modest and womanlike manner (South Africa, 2010:26). The gender based behavioural expectations of women are the results of cultural societal perceptions such as the belief that women are less agentic than men. As a result of the perception that women are less agentic than men, women may internalise this perception and consequently come to perceive themselves as less agentic resulting in their reluctance to negotiate for what they believe is good for them.

2.4.3.2 Inability to negotiate

According to Shin and Bang (2013:12) the other challenge emanating from women's own beliefs and perceptions is that women are less likely to negotiate for what they want. When women assert themselves and negotiate, they are not praised for being tough negotiators, but are branded as demanding, unreasonable and are considered less attractive, less likeable and less hireable. Additionally, they posit that women negotiating for what they stand for and believe what they are worth are not associated with communal leadership. They further argue that men use negotiation with praise, while women use it with the risk of being labelled arrogant. It is through negotiation that women could change their working environment. They could negotiate not only for salaries to be on a par with those of their male counterparts, but could negotiate for issues like flexible working time, targeted women's mentoring and training programmes, any other practical steps that could support them with family and caring responsibilities and support their career planning (Shin and Bang, 2013:12).

The studies cited in this section indicate that females are challenged by their own self thoughts and perceptions which in turn influence the actions they take or do not take to improve their leadership working conditions, or specifically to occupy school leadership positions. Among others are the underestimation of self-worth, lack or low self-confidence, less likelihood of self-promotion. All these are largely psychological self-limitations founded, according to Msila (2013) on cultural traditional norms and beliefs.

The above exposition shows that female leaders in education experience different challenges that can be classified into three broad categories of societal, organisational and personal or individual factors. The discussion also indicated that the major source of barriers and challenges that female leaders experience is fundamentally traditional societal stereotypes, perceptions norms and values that suggest that females are unable to lead, that associate leadership with male traits.

2.5 MEASURES ADOPTED TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY FEMALES WHO LEAD SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE BOJANALA DISTRICT

The review of literature revealed a number strategies that could be used in addressing female leadership challenges. There are steps that female leaders themselves can take to transform male domination in their workplaces. Other measures that could also improve gender relations and thereby address the challenges that female leaders experience could be externally provided.

2.5.1 Female leaders addressing leadership challenges

The steps to be taken include those that females themselves could take and those that can be externally provided as support to them. Among steps that female leaders themselves can take to address their leadership challenges are; the recognition and use of female agency, self-empowerment training as a preparatory mechanism for leadership and the recognition of second generation gender bias. Personal factors such as the agency of women is said to be significant in how women deal with gender discriminatory leadership challenges (Mbepera, 2015, Kelsey *et al.* 2014; Mautle, 2013; Faulkner 2013).

2.5.1.1 The agency of women

Agentic leadership is the leadership mostly found in the business field by someone who controls subordinates by being assertive, competitive, independent, courageous, warm, good natured, friendly, considerate, understanding and is masterful in what they do (Faulkner, 2013: 225). This is a combination of leadership characteristics that are culturally and historically perceived to be both masculine and feminine. The studies in Faulkner found that top women leaders possess this combination, that they are both agentic and communal. Experienced female principals, who are top school leaders, confirmed leading from both perspectives. Oboegbelum, (2015:157) concurs that principals of public schools she studied in Nigeria use transformational leadership style, and at times adopt transactional leadership and once in a while, laissez faire leadership style. Rosette & Tost (2010) also concur in their study that considered whether perceived role incongruence between the female gender role and the leader role led to a female advantage. They found that female leadership agency exists in experience. Their findings suggested that once a woman breaks through a glass ceiling, they may experience a leadership advantage relative to men. (Rosette, & Tost, 2010:221). It is important then that female leaders

at the top of school leadership who are experienced be conscious of the leadership advantage they may possess. Eagly (2003a), cited in Rosette (2010:233) argues that good leadership should not only be about the achieving of goals, competing to win, decision making and independence which are traits associated with male leadership style. It should also take into cognisance the importance of strong relationship building, collaboration with others and care for employees, leadership qualities which are associated with women.

It seems that over the years as women watched men lead, they learnt, practiced and copied some of the male leadership characteristics and combined those with their communal feminine leadership qualities. Whether males learnt lessons from their female counterparts and thereby strengthening their masculine characteristics is a question of another study. Or because of societal, historical and cultural stereotypes values and norms did they dismiss female leadership qualities as irrelevant and ineffective? If they have learnt anything significant from the way females lead, then male domination would not be in its current state because, that would have influenced the way society views leadership.

Kanjere (2010:3) suggests that women principals have to convince men in their schools and surrounding communities that they are capable of leading. Women need to recognise and take advantage of the transformation that has taken place over the years in their leadership space as gender stereotypes have been gradually challenged and minimised. They need to realise that they have the agency to utilise whatever leadership trait works for them as individuals or as a collective. Msila (2013:469) concurs by concluding that the challenge is upon women themselves to deal with factors that inhibit their attempts at assuming leadership positions in schools. He contends, and I agree that women empowerment can be successful only if women set the agenda and believe in themselves. Gaetane & Martinez (2007:47) suggests that confidence development is necessary to change the male dominated perspective of secondary school leaders and encourage females to seek leadership opportunities.

In line with the feminist assumption that seeks to deconstruct the existing masculine view that associates leadership with leading from the head, these scholars suggest that females be courageous and lead from the heart, that women should not imitate men but maintain the integrity of their leadership styles. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) posit that, women themselves

are agents of change, they are themselves a form of change in leadership situations. Naidoo and Perumal (2014:822) found in their study that women have positively and successfully used leadership traits of compassion, nurturing and spirituality in their leadership of schools. However, when required, they coupled this with autocratic style. These women strengthened their leadership style with ethical moral and material values to help them deal with their leadership role. This means that female school leaders need to be aware that they are change agents and as such have the agency to transform their work environments. Therefore, they are largely responsible for the change that has to occur in schools in relation to gender equality and equity (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011+; Naidoo & Perumal, 2014; Kelsey, 2013).

This notion is in line with the feminist assumption that women are agents of change. In her study of how feminist pedagogy can influence change in the South African classroom, Schoeman (2015:7) argues that South African teachers could be educated to be agents of change in transforming learners from being passive recipients of gendered knowledge, to being active agents of change who will be able to identify bias devices in historic cultural discourse and open up space for multiple interpretations that are gender fair. In that way, female leaders themselves (as teachers) could address the challenges of gender stereotypes right in the classroom and produce learners who are gender conscious and sensitive. De Beauvoir in Msila (2013:465) avers that women need to drudge for their liberation against their historical insignificance and various kinds of oppression. Diko (2007:10) concurs that women need to do it themselves by exercising their democratic rights and speaking against the perceived injustices if gender equality is to be achieved. Women have to recognize, accept and utilize their capacity and potential to lead.

These scholars argue that it is this notion of change, of female change agency, introduced by feminist research into challenges that females have to deal with as secondary school leaders to change their situations, to push boundaries, so that education leadership changes for the better. So that those teachers who want to be HODs, and HODs who wants to be deputy principals and deputy principals who wants to be principals, until each reaches a school leadership position of her desire (Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011). The empowerment initiatives taken by women themselves or provided to them.

2.5.1.2 Empowerment of female leaders through training

Training as a requirement for preparation for pre-service for school leadership aspirants or in-service development strategy for those females who are already in senior school leadership positions is emphasised by numerous studies. Sparandio and Kagoda (2015:10) opine that provision of training and support for women aspiring to school leadership and removing barriers is a challenge that must be addressed if women are to have a voice in educational development worldwide. Women have to recognize, accept and utilize their capacity and potential to lead. Rarieya *et al.* (2014:5) and Mautle (2013:92) posit that teacher development programmes that are reflective in nature and deal with gender issues in education should be developed. The former stated that teachers lacked the capacity to deal with gender issues in the classroom and in the wider school environment because they have limited pedagogical repertoire that is gendered. This limited gendered teaching practice inhibits them from engaging with both learners and other teachers in a diverse manner.

Arguably, when teachers at classroom teaching level are gender sensitive, and are able to recognise second generation bias, they will transit to gender sensitive school managers and leaders. This will consequently enable them to handle gender based leadership challenges better, thereby reducing those challenges.

2.5.1.3 Recognition of second generation bias as a solution

Ibara, Ely and Kolb (2013) suggest that these challenges and or barriers could be overcome by recognising what they call “second generation bias” which says that there is something that cannot be pointed out, but that thing creates an environment which makes women fail to thrive. They found that this could be overcome by female leaders developing a sense of identity as purposeful leaders. In that way, female leaders will be guided and driven in their leadership by a greater sense of purpose than the gender challenge Ibara, *et al.* (2013).

Other studies mentioned above suggested other ways in which the challenges experienced by female leaders and the factors resulting in their low numbers in schools’ management positions could be improved. Among others, are the provision of mentoring programmes, participation in training programmes, involving women in succession plans and identifying mechanisms for female leaders to help them develop problem solving skills (Schmidt and Mestry, 2015;

Wakshum, 2014). Additionally, structural factors such as recruitment could also assist improve female leader's working conditions by addressing the female underrepresentation in school leadership.

2.5.2 External support to female leaders

Development of political will by the Department of Education to realise gender equality, getting buy in from top management, support networks etc. The importance of support by the authorities from the Bojanala district and from upper levels of the education department also seemed to help in the reduction of the challenges that female leaders experience as they lead secondary schools.

2.5.2.1 Political will and gender-neutral recruitment as a solution

Gaetane *et al.* (2007:43) assert that the challenge of underrepresentation of females in secondary school leadership roles could be addressed by increasing the effort to recruit females. Currently, the human resource recruitment and selection structures of the education department are male dominated because of the historical nature of patriarchy. Processes such as shortlisting, interviews, interview reviews and appointments are conducted by men being in the majority. This is more prevalent in secondary schools where female leadership is still underrepresented.

Provincial and district offices should tap into an underutilised resource, and thereby create a leadership pool that reflects not only the demographics of the society but, the researcher adds and argues, also demonstrate the willingness on the part of the Department of Education to comply with the spirit and principles of fair treatment, social justice and equity as entrenched in the (South Africa Act no 108 of 1996). Finally, the implementation of all measures emanating from the implementation of Gender Equality may reduce the secondary schools' female leadership challenges. Researchers such as Diko (2007:2) and Msila (2013) contend that the little focus on the implementation of the right to gender equality still nurtures the thriving of patriarchal attitudes. Successful implementation of any policy requires the buy in of senior officials in an organisation.

2.5.2.1 Buy- in from top management

Female secondary school leadership challenges could be reduced through a combination of factors and effort from all stakeholders in the school and education environment. Critical to this exercise is the role of top management in the education system. The district and provincial leadership has to buy into the value of a gender diversified leadership in secondary schools. The chairperson and CEO of a medical company commented about the significance of top management buy-in and support if programmes that are intended to bring about successful change are to succeed. Gender transformation in school leadership will require the support of top management in the school, district and province (Desvaunx & Devillard, 2015:18).

Parallel to buy-in from top management is the need for the development of explicit school-specific gender policy and goals which will allow the trickling down of provincial and national gender policies. Rarieya *et al.* (2013) states that managers should also establish meaningful and enhanced engagements between schools and local communities in order to jointly and collaboratively address gender issues, because schools do not exist as islands. They are part of the communities that often discriminates against women because of tradition and culture that is patriarchal (Rarieya *et al.* 2014:5).

These authors argue that top management has to be convinced that diversity creates competitive advantage and is committed to changing the organisational culture. According to these scholars, the challenge of gender equity and equality which affects female leadership practice should be addressed from the top as well. The provincial and district leadership have to lead in transforming the schooling landscape such that female secondary leadership challenges are minimised. They need to have the will and the strategy to effect the changes necessary to change the patriarchal male dominated school management and leadership environment within which female leaders work. Once the strategy and implementation programs are in place, the authors argue, the top management should not let go (Desvaunx & Devillard 2015:18).

2.5.2.2 Setting up women's support networks

Educational professional networks are viewed by most researchers as one of the ways to address challenges that females are faced with in their leadership role. Schmidt and Mestry call this Professional Learning Communities (Schmidt and Mestry, 2015:820). These scholars posit

that these networks could address a number of factors that would advance the leadership course of women, such as raising awareness of female challenges in the workplace, creating opportunities for professional exposure, explore their aspirations, ambitions and challenges, and raising women leadership profiles within organisations. The networks are seen as platforms where women's success stories could be shared so that these stories act as inspirational tools for women to learn from the experiences of others and thereby inspired to move to next level leadership positions Shin and Bang (2013). The study further advises that women should be involved in leadership succession planning and that they do so with clear diversity goals.

Mentoring and coaching is a measure to help reduce female leadership challenges, to help raise awareness of the self-imposed limitations and to help females manage their career better in an environment that is male centred. Motivating women and facilitating their development in retaining and even expanding the female talent pool is necessary. Motivation develops confidence in young aspirants to senior school posts (Kelsey, *et al.* 2014:8; Desvaunx & Devillard, 2015:17). The authors suggest that mentoring can significantly increase income and promotion possibilities for individuals involved in mentoring relationships, reduce the turnover especially for younger workers and assist in speeding their assimilation into the organisational culture. Mentees benefit because someone cares enough to support them and at times interpret the information or situation for them. Such support, coupled with the use of transformational leadership could help females in secondary schools manage the pressures associated with their leadership role better (Kelsey et al. 2014; Desvaunx & Devillard, 2015).

2.5.2.3 The use of transformational and servant leadership

The debate on the kind of leadership that is successful in schools has been raging for a long time. The argument supporting the significance of transformational leadership as the leadership style associated with female leadership because of its emphasis of relational and consultative aspects has gained traction in recent years. Schwanke (2013:1) posits that the acceptance of transformational (characteristic such as nurturing, relational, motherly) and servant leadership (such as role modelling) styles with less emphasis on the use of agentic qualities (such as control and decision making) may eventually prove advantageous to women being accepted to more senior positions.

When female leaders are successful, this may contribute to the eradication of cultural beliefs about their leadership capabilities. Society may be forced to acknowledge the facts and not perceptions about the capacities and abilities of women to lead. Rosette and Tost (2010) conducted a study that considered whether perceived role incongruence between female gender role and leader role disadvantaged female leaders. They found that a female leader advantage would emerge. Their research findings suggested that once a woman shatters the glass ceiling, she may experience a leadership advantage relative to men. Her studies further revealed that once women succeed in top senior positions, they are likely to be viewed as agentic and their communal characteristics are likely to be beneficial. This is due to the changing construction of what it means to be a good leader (Rosette& Tost, 2010:233). It therefore implies that communal leadership and transformational leadership intersect on consultation and relation building which skills affect effective communication. In turn, communication may impact female leadership practice and challenge management. This illustrates the complexities of the phenomenon of female leadership which clearly requires multiple approaches such as integrating gender into mainstream education.

2.5.2.3 Integrated approach to gender mainstreaming in education

This refers to the integration of gender issues and considerations in planning and daily activities of departments and entities across all sectors of public life. Wakshum (2014) and Mbepera (2015) recommended collaboration between politicians and the district office because gender mainstreaming involves the translation of political commitments into practical programmes. This collaboration could look into issues such as; knowledge, understanding, policy and programme implementation in which gender is mainstreamed. Mbepera (2015) suggested that in the case of Tanzania where her study was located, the Ministry of Education was to work closely with that of Children. Such collaboration she argues, could fast tract the implementation of gender equality policies in schools. Therefore, Wakshums's recommendation could be considered in ensuring that gender transformation issues are a discourse that cuts across all government sectors, departments, and schools and are part of the daily operations of various entities structures and organisations.

The use of women's agency, exposure to training, buy in from organisation top management, development and use of existing networks, utilisation of transformational leadership style,

political will to change the status of women by the education department and integrated approach to gender mainstreaming in education are a few strategies identified to challenge the gender hostile work environment in which female leaders practice their leadership. There is clearly a need to utilise these measures effectively and to discover for if female leadership challenges are to be addressed.

2.5.2.4 Available legal frameworks

The section above discussed the challenges experienced by female leaders in education and in secondary schools. This section will explain the opportunities that authorities in the department of education provide with the purpose of supporting the leadership of women in schools and in education in general, and achievements that could be present in the current challenging uninviting workplace that female educators operate in. Arguably, the opportunities may be transformed into possible solutions for patriarchal practices that undermine the leadership efforts and capabilities of female secondary school's leaders. The following pieces of legislation; Constitution of South Africa Act (76 of 1996); Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) & South Africa (2006) provide opportunities for female leaders to improve their gender status. Female leaders could also utilise existing networks, their educational backgrounds and qualifications to address some of their challenges.

The strategic framework for gender equality within the republic service is a powerful tool if effectively implemented. This framework protects the rights of women as human rights because it is founded on the South African Constitutional principles and values of non-sexism and non-racism. The significance of the framework is that it contends that the equal role that women play with men in decision making is a human rights issue. It argues for the equality of opportunities in the treatment of the workforce, including female secondary leaders South Africa Strategic framework (2006:10).

Second, the framework argues for the need of women to be involved in decision making because this is a not just a social justice issue but that it is an essential requirement for the acceleration and effectiveness for development South Africa, (2006:13). Finally, the understanding and implementation of strategies such as Affirmative Action could advance the status of females in secondary school leadership. The policy promotes a quota system and the

promotion of previously disadvantaged persons such as secondary school leaders. Sperandio and Kagoda, (2015:10) explain the need for negotiating for such in the recruitment and hiring practices of schools. This policy is an opportunity that when effectively utilised, could help address female underrepresentation in secondary schools. The use of networks could also help advance the status of female school leaders.

2.5.2.5 Utilisation of existing support- networks

The strategy further propagates the need for the establishment of efficient gender networks, appropriate training to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes in gender analysis, gender mainstreaming and gender responsive research (South Africa: Strategic Framework, 2006-2015:11). All these are opportunities if appropriately used, could assist the plight of female leaders in secondary schools. Ensuring the knowledge, understanding and implementation of this document by women could help in the creation of opportunities that will strengthen females in education and in schools. For an example, Mautle (2013:92) found that education training could increase the preparedness of women for leadership roles. This opportunity presented by education training was acknowledged by Schmidt and Mestry (2012), when they attributed the leadership success of the female principals they studied to their educational qualifications and training. Therefore, educational training before or during the leadership role coupled with effective networks seems to be an opportunity for female secondary school leaders.

While networks are potential tools for women empowerment, Schwanke cautions about the existing old boys' networks that can be homogeneous and long standing. She further indicates that women are often uncomfortable to break into these networks and may also be unable to commit to the extra hours outside of work because of home commitments (Schwanke 2013:2). She suggests that women only networks can be effective tools for the support of female leaders. While this view of the significance of female only networks is acknowledged, some studies points to the value of heterogeneous networks (Mbepera, 2015). Some networks provide emotional and practical support to women, such as those created in the United Kingdom or the USA in the wake of the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1980s Coleman (in Schwanke 2013) explains that the two women only networks that she investigated became a safe haven where women could express their doubts and concerns

The education district of this study has a woman support programme called Women in and into Leadership. It is a provincial initiative with limited activities. It provided a one off training to middle managers and celebrates events such as the Womens Day, a day celebrated annually and nationally by all. The challenge with this network seems to be the following. First, it is geared towards all female teachers in the district. Secondly, it does not have a permanent leadership structure, nor terms of reference that are focussed on the capacitating of and preparing of females to take up leadership positions when they become available. This limitation of female only networks could be minimised by mixed gender networks. However, this network remains an opportunity for female leadership development.

The framework argues and acknowledges that while women currently have access to broader scope of positions in the labour market, that these opportunities are only available to a small pool of females. This is true of the number of females in top secondary school position in Bojanala schools with only 21% of secondary school principals being females (South Africa, 2017). In this context, the awareness of the contents of this policy document can be an opportunity for female leaders in the district. The more female leaders are knowledgeable about gender issues and gender policies, the better they would be able to deal with their leadership challenges. Msila (2013:465) argues that women should tackle the impediments to their success and set the agenda of meetings seems apt here. Women should themselves advocate for this leadership qualification requirement as men are not likely to do so, as it may disadvantage their domination of secondary school leadership. When women use available opportunities that could empower them, challenges created by male domination in the leadership of schools could be reduced. Other measures to reduce the challenges that female leaders experience are the following: gender diversified leadership, alignment to democratic society and advancement of democratic principles.

2.5.2.6 Aligning female participation in leadership to democratic society

According to Crosby-Hiller (2012), there is an uncontested view from numerous studies of the need for leveraging gender leadership equalities and yet women are largely excluded from decision making roles, not only in the education sector but others such as finance and the economy (Crosby-Hiller, 2012:19).

Gender leadership imbalance is viewed by these authors as an opportunity for organisational development and growth. Moorosi (2010:560) contends that like male leaders, females are an important component of the leadership in organisations and yet they are compromised by the cultural values and practices in organisations. Blackmore in Kallie (2015:31) concurs with Moorosi and states: *the presence of women in school leadership is more in alignment to a democratic society, productive economy and an inclusive social life which currently represents the current global needs which nations are working towards*. Therefore, the eradication of gender discriminatory practices in secondary school leadership is the advancement of constitutional goal and principle of fairness and non-discrimination in South Africa. It is an issue of social justice. Female participation in leadership is also critical to societal economic development. These advocates of gender inclusivity, emphasise the economic advantage of this phenomenon, not only for the benefit of schools, but for the nation. Schwanke (2013:1) agrees that there are many benefits of fairly allowing women to advance to decision making positions. She further asserts that removing gender challenges strengthens companies and social networks such as schools.

Gender inequality is further exacerbated by traditional beliefs about women leadership. Though evidence suggests that the proportion of women in management is increasing in most parts of the world, literature continue to record doubts that still exist about the abilities of women and their leadership skills. And some organisations still define and perceive leadership in masculine terms. (Bremer *et al.* 1989 & Scheine and Muller 1992 cited in Mollel and Shabangu 2014:46). Moreover, some studies have found that leadership capabilities are not gender based and that leadership effectiveness is different between the two sexes. (Guerra, 2011:382 & Rosener, 2008:411 cited in Schwanke, 2013:3). Some secondary schools as organisations still perceive leadership in masculine terms and this partly accounts for the numerical status of females in secondary school leadership. Advancing democratic principles could reduce some of these traditional stereotypes about women's ability to lead.

2.5.2.7 Advancement of democratic principles

In addition to the economic value of gender diversified leadership, there are other significant reasons why women should play an equal role with their male counterparts in decision making. South Africa (2006:13) argues that the participation of women in decision making processes is

a Human rights issue because women constitutes about a third of the workforce, and that equality of opportunity and treatment in employment is their right. Secondly, the gender strategy further posits that the involvement of women in decision making is a social justice matter, and that discrimination against women is the harshest when it comes to employment (South Africa 2006:13). The low number of female school leaders in Bojanala secondary schools could suggest the harshness of discrimination in employment of women in this area. Employing more females in secondary school leadership will therefore be the promotion and advancement of constitutional democratic values in South Africa as much as the opposite constitutes a violation of those values.

The policy further rightly argues that their participation in decision making enables women to contribute their creativity and abilities. Participation enables females to showcase their agency in navigating the leadership arena (South Africa, 2006:13). Significantly, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 indicates that diversified inclusive leadership allows female leaders an opportunity to change their narrative from that of gender oppression and marginalisation, to that of nation building through participation in secondary school leadership. Female participation in school leadership through talent showcasing will therefore contribute to the South African nation building vision as expressed in the National Development Plan. The plan states that, therefore, in 2030, we experience daily how: we participate fully in the efforts to liberate ourselves from conditions that hinder the flowering of our talents (South Africa, 2011:3). The utilisation of women talent is value add to organisations.

2.5.2.6 Economic value of diversified inclusive leadership

Proponents of gender diversified leadership highlight not only the educational significance of diversified organisational leadership, but organisational economic value as well. Wittenberg-Cox (2012: 1) argues that smart leaders have understood for a while now that gender balance delivers better and more sustainable performance. Mollel and Shabangu (2014:51) elaborated on this when they argued that, valuing of diversity of leadership, particularly gender inclusivity, is critical in education organisations if a nation is hoped to be successful in its developmental vision and goals. These economic benefits of gender diversified leadership are confirmed in various publications (South Africa, 2015:17).

These advocates of gender inclusivity emphasise the economic advantage of this phenomenon, not only for the benefit of schools, but of nations. Schwanke (2013:1) posits that there are

corporate, social and economic benefits in allowing women to fairly advance to decision making positions, that removing hindrances is significant to the strengths of companies, social networks (schools) and jurisdictions.

Schwanke further argues that media and cultural references paint a picture that suggests that women have achieved equity when actually they have not. She attributes this to the comparison that media makes about the current presence of females in management positions to the housewives of the 1960s Schwanke (2013:1). While this view about the media may not be confirmed or disputed in this document, what can be confirmed is that women have not achieved equity nor equality in Bojanala schools district. These studies confirm the complexities of the question of female leadership challenges as the status of gender equality still reflects imbalances that would take long to resolve. This is because cultural and traditional perceptions about female leadership are still prevalent.

The cultural stereotypes exist because some organisations still define and perceive leadership in masculine terms. (Scheine and Muller, 1992 cited in Mollel and Shabangu 2014:46). Contrary to this definition of leadership, some studies found that leadership capabilities are not gender based and that leadership effectiveness is not different between the two sexes. (Guerra, 2011:382 & Rosener, (2008:411) cited in (Schwanke, 2013:3 & Llala, 2013). It seems that a different, more gender balanced understanding and definition of leadership capability is gaining ground as more studies such as the latter ones confirm the gender neutrality of the leadership capability notion. The above exposition indicates that gender equality is not yet realised in education in South Africa and in many parts of the world. It confirms the continued domination of males in the education leadership positions especially in secondary school principal ship posts.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has examined the literature related to the topic: Challenges experienced by females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district of South Africa. It has focussed specifically on: the theoretical framework underpinning the study, understanding gender inequality in education, factors affecting female leadership in education, measures adopted to support female leadership in education and strategies for addressing female leadership challenges in education and in schools. In the next chapter, a discussion of the research design and methodology is given.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the rationale for the choice of the research paradigm and the design strategies that inform the basis for this research study that explored factors that challenge females who lead in secondary schools in the Bojanala district of South Africa. It explains why a case study as a design of enquiry was regarded as appropriate for the study focus. The selection of data collection methods, instruments and data analysis are explained. Factors that motivated the site and participant selection are advanced. Finally, the role of the researcher, the research ethical considerations and study trustworthiness process are discussed. The research paradigm that guided the study is discussed in the next sub-section.

3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm is used in designing research. The following three major perspectives are used in research; Objectivism/positivism, Interpretivism and Constructivism (De Vos *et al.* 2011: 309). Objectivism is the ability to know things the way they are. It is based on the belief that there is an external reality that can be studied objectively. On the other hand, Interpretivism assumes that reality should be interpreted through meaning that participants attributes to their life, and in this way, the social researcher is able to appreciate the subjective meaning of the social action. Social constructivism believes that individuals seek understanding from the world in which they live and work Creswell (2014:37).

Among the many and varied research paradigms briefly explained above, the combination of interpretivist-constructivist was chosen on account of its ability to provide room for the researcher and participants to co-construct meanings in the research process (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012). Interpretivism, also known as constructionism, is preferred because it puts emphases on the ability of the individual female leaders to construct their own meaning of what factors they interpreted as challenges to their leadership of secondary schools Niewenhuis, (2016:60). This means that the creation of reality involves ones' thinking. Participants' construction of what they experience as challenging to their leadership was theirs. This is because the qualitative constructivists believe that reality is not out there but can be socially and personally constructed and the subject should be actively involved. Interpretivists assume that the interpretation of

what constitutes reality should be done through participant's meaning attribution to their life world De Vos, *et al.* (2011:310). This has led to better understanding of the behaviour displayed, the meanings, the descriptions and interpretations that participants gave to their life worlds.

This study makes an assumption that the phenomenon of female leadership in secondary schools is interpreted and understood differently by different participants and therefore, has multiple realities for the individuals and groups that construct this reality. For example, HODs experienced gender stereotypical attitudes from a community differently from the way principals and deputy principals experienced it. Firstly because of their individual historical life experiences that frame their interpretation of their world. The research paradigm is aligned to the qualitative research design discussed below (Llala, 2014).

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Nieuwenhuis (2007:70) defines a research design as a plan or strategy that moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to determine participants selection, data gathering and analysis techniques, methods , instruments to be used (Nieuwenhuis, (2016:72). It is an approach that explores the meaning and understanding that individuals or groups attach to a social or human problem Creswell (2014:35). He subsequently outlines the following five qualitative research designs; narrative biography, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory and case study, Creswell (2007:72).

The Narrative biography is a research design that is based on the assumption that a person can be understood from personal account and perspective of own life experiences. It relates these individual life experiences to the social and cultural context within which the individual is located De Vos *et al.* (2011: 313). Ethnography research design is defined as a study of intact cultural or social group based largely on observation over prolonged period of time spent by the researcher in the field Creswell (2007:242). The other design is phenomenology which focus on the description of what the life world consist of, what concepts and structures of experience give form and meaning to it De Vos *et al.* (2011:316). Grounded theory seeks to develop a substantive theory that is grounded in data. Essentially, grounded theory is based on the study of social situations where techniques such as induction, deduction and verification is employed, De Vos *et al.* (2011:318). For the purpose of this study, and in order to understand

the experiences that were perceived as challenges by women who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district, a descriptive Case study research design was preferred.

3.2.1 Case study research design

A Case study, is an empirical inquiry about temporary phenomenon set within its real world context. Nieuwenhuis (2016:81) posits that it investigates a contemporary phenomenon in real life where there are a number of sources of evidence and the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clear. Creswell (2014:42) is of the view that, a Case study allows a researcher deep analysis of the case, and therefore, it helped the researcher to delve deeply in the analysis of the meaning participants attach to their experiences as challenges. Better and in-depth understanding of the work environment of participants and how they interpret and present that understanding was made possible by the use of a case study design (Nieuwenhuis 2016; Creswell, 2014).

This research method was preferred as it provided a possibility for the voices of participants to be heard. Participants themselves expressed what they viewed as leadership challenges Kumar (2014:155). A descriptive case study, also known as intrinsic case study allowed the researcher to provide detailed description, analysis and interpretation of the challenges that women who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district experienced. While the purpose of the descriptive case study is primarily to describe the case being studied, deeper insight into the leadership of women emerged (De Vos *et al.* 2011; 321; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:75).

Another strength of the qualitative Case study design is that it allowed in-depth data collection from multiple data gathering techniques and sources, such as individual interviews, group interviews and content analysis (Creswell 2014:234; de Vos *et al.* (2011:320). This allowed triangulation and thereby strengthened the credibility of the study findings. However; the method was limited by its dependence on a single case which rendered it incapable of providing generalised conclusions Creswell (2014:42; de Vos *et al.* 2011:322). Creswell further argues that the real business of a case study was never generalisation, but particularisation. On the basis of the latter view, this limitation of the strategy does not concern the researcher as this qualitative study does not intend to come up with generalised findings, rather, it allowed the gaining of deeper understanding of how females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala

district are challenged in their leadership. The strategic significance of the Case study method enabled the study to draw attention to what has been learned from it (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:320). Lessons were learnt from participants who were selected from the research site.

3.3 SELECTION OF RESEARCH SITE

In 2010, the population of the Bojanala district was estimated at 1 323 921 persons. This constituted 38% of the population of the North West Province in South Africa. Bojanala is one of the five districts in the province. There were 674 503 males and 613 332 females. (52.37% and 47.63 %, respectively (Bojanala Platinum District Municipality, IDP 2012/17:5). The municipality is the largest in the North West Province and has five local municipalities. The district was selected because it is the largest education district with regard to the number of schools and learner population in the province. The district offices are located in the biggest towns of the province. It also has the highest number of secondary schools in the province and yet, only 21% of its secondary school principals are females (Bojanala Platinum District Municipality, IDP 2012/17:5).

Secondly, the district was preferred because of its geographical dynamics. It constitutes schools from urban and rural settings. Factors that distinguish the school's location (such as, infrastructure, school buildings, transport system, and the culture) affect the leadership of the school Creswell, (2014:239). For example, a bad transport system, especially where teachers have to commute long distances, may discourage females from taking up leadership in schools that are far from their residences. This may lead to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in secondary schools. This may consequently lead to shortage of role models and sponsors who may help the females who are experiencing challenges in their work environments. Teachers may come late at school as a result of long commuting (Shin and Bang, 2013, Kelsey *et al.* 2014). Travelling adds pressure to the already limited time. This may subsequently become a leadership challenge.

The culture of schools in rural areas may be different from that of schools in urban areas. Kanjere (2010) argues that traditional influences on leadership are more in rural areas than in urban areas. She further posits that females are less likely to occupy leadership positions in far flung rural areas because of family commitments. The rural school studied is located in a village

that is adjacent to a mine. The school is about five kilometres from the mine. The majority of learners are from the local and surrounding villages. The presence of the mines presents a unique perspective because of the socio-economic factors associated with mining communities. They are distinguished by migrant labourers and a visible presence of males. The geographical location and cultural diversity of school B appealed to the study. Creswell, (2009) points out that qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. This makes the selection of rural schools appropriate for the study.

However, a school with different residential features, School B, which is urban situated was also selected. This school is located in the predominantly Indian populated section of the town. It is close to the main bus and taxi ranks Creswell (2014:239). This makes it possible for the majority of learners who are from the surrounding villages and townships to attend the school. The learner population is exclusively black, but the teaching staff is racially diverse, Africans being in the majority, with a few Indians and Whites. The school management team is also racially mixed (1 white, 2 Africans and 1 Indian) with a gender mix with females dominating (3 females and 1 male). The staff is also female dominated with 19 females and only three males.

The culture of urban schools is dynamic and diverse. The double bind of gender and race referred to as some of the challenges that female leaders have to deal with in their leadership positions Moorosi (2010), applies to some of the schools in the area. School A is one such a school. The diversity of perspectives influenced by the location of and population demographics of the schools enriched the study.

Third, the district was selected because of its accessibility. The researcher is based in the district and this made schools reasonably accessible. This purposeful selection of the site helped the researcher better understand the research problem Creswell, (2014:234). The selection of participants is discussed below.

3.5 POPULATION AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Population for this study comprised female leaders in the Bojanala district and it was from this population where a total sample size of nine participants was purposefully drawn.

3.5.1 Research participants

In this research, the unit of study consisted of: two female principals who each had at least four years of leadership experience; one female deputy principal who also had at least three years of experience, two female heads of departments also with three years' leadership experience and three male heads of departments who had been leading and managing their departments for three years. The male participants were selected because they had experience of being supervised by females. They bring a male perspective on the understanding of the experiences of their supervisors and may confirm or dispute the existence of patriarchal attitudes in the schools. The three years were assumed to be adequate for participants to possess rich in-depth data on the challenges experienced by females who are in secondary school leadership (Creswell 2014; De Vos 2011; Nieuwenhuis 2016).

Kumar (2014:155) explains that the number of participants does not determine the quality of data obtained from participants, but that the richness and depth of the data determines the adequacy of the sample size. The respondents were therefore limited to nine to allow in-depth enquiry that yielded in-depth individual responses. Patton (2002:244) in de Vos *et al.*, (2011:391) concurs that, there is no rule for sample size. This purposive selection of respondents therefore provided rich individual gendered perspectives on the leadership challenges of female secondary schools. It did not produce generalised perspectives that might have been obtained had a larger sample been used. Nevertheless, typical and divergent data was obtained through purposive sampling Kumar (2014). Due to time limits and financial constraints, a larger population was not possible, nevertheless, it was not the intended objective of this study to provide generalisations and that is why a case study method was used. The aim of the study was to provide findings that could shed more light by providing different perspectives on existing studies on female leadership Kumar, 2014 & Creswell 2014).

Participants ranged from the ages of 36 to 60. This was important in that the participants were brought up and attended school, and probably started their careers during a common decade or

period. This common age factor was important in that it determined commonalities or differences that might have influenced participants' leadership experiences. The generational issue revealed the impact of patriarchy over time. Patel and Buiting (2013:4) referred to the differences within generations and concluded that the younger generation will face a different set of challenges. While age was not a purposeful selection criterion for participation, it turned out that the two principals, one deputy, one district official and three HODs were of the same, 36 to 56 years, age group. Only two male HODs were from a younger age group Creswell, (2014: 239).

3.5.2 Participant's selection criteria

These were selected because of the leadership position they held in the school and their years of experience in those positions as these two were some of the features that were of interest to the study De Vos *et al.* (2011:392). All participants worked in secondary schools in the district and each had a minimum of at least three years of leadership experience. The female Circuit managers are supervisors of school principals and were themselves in secondary school leadership positions. Both of them had been HODs, deputy principals and one was a principal of a secondary school and the other of a primary school De Vos *et al.* (2011:392).

The selection of participants was further informed by other research questions, such as how can the challenges of females who are in positions of leadership in secondary schools be minimised? The assumption was that as leaders experiencing leadership challenges, they should have views on what they feel could be done to change the challenging environment under which they are exercising the leadership role. The feminist theory emphasizes the need for women to be able to tell their stories Kowalski-Braun (2014:48). Arguably, they should be able to provide solutions to what they perceive and view to be their challenges. A few such women related their leadership stories Braun (2014:48; Turner & Maschi, 2015:153).

The main selection factor considered was that principals were females, and deputy principals and heads of departments could be either male or female but should be supervised by a female leader. The significance of the sex identity of the supervisor to the male participant lies in the focus of the study. It is about how female leaders experience challenges in their leadership.

Though the feminist paradigm argues for research that is conducted by females for females, and emphasizes the value of women's voices, lives and experiences as central to the research process, the involvement of both male and female participants at the two lower levels of school leadership was considered significant because this is study about the experiences of women leaders which seemed to be influenced largely by gender issues. Therefore, the few (3) male voices enriched this study as it provided a different gender perspective on the topic (Haring, 2006 in Kowalski-Braun, 2014:48).

The other criterion for participant selection was that the school principals should be representative of various race groups. Some studies indicated that female leaders are challenged by both race and gender issues. In the study that provided an understanding of how the movement of women to higher leadership positions is affected by race and gender, Gaetane and Martinez (2013:46) found that while gender was an issue resident in the leadership experience of principals, race was of equal importance. Moorosi also (2010) corroborated this finding and argued that female leaders face oppression from two fronts, that of gender and race, that these leaders are confronted with a double bind.

Contrary to Faulkner (2015:61) who asserts that racial classification as a means of selection in pursuit of diversity was too limiting and rooted too much in the apartheid past, I decided to select a white woman principal who led a black majority school. Though this study is not about race, diversity was significant in the understanding of the kind of challenges that the women leaders experience in terms of the double bind of race and gender (Kanjere 2010; Naidoo & Perumal 2014; Lumby 2010). The six women and three men who participated in the study were from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. It was a mixture of black, white and Indian participants.

The inclusion of the two other levels of school leadership, i.e., deputy principal and HOD in the concept of secondary school leadership is significant because participants occupying those two leadership positions experienced leadership challenges at different levels than principals Lalla, (2013). Their experienced shed some light as to why female underrepresentation still exists at principal level. These two levels attempted to explain the "glass ceiling" notion. They shed light on the understanding of factors that specifically prevented the HODs and deputy

principals from cracking the glass ceiling and making it into the underrepresented position of school principal. (Moorosi, 2007, Moorosi, 2010, Msila, 2013 & Schmidt and Naidoo 2015). Additional, the collective conceptualisation of leadership in the context of this study allowed the determination of convergence or non-convergence of the voices from the three levels of school leadership. It shed light on the engagement dance that exists within the school leadership spectrum. In that way, the study provided an overview and in-depth understanding of the case process and the interaction dynamics within a study. This enriched the understanding of the attribution of meaning to the study phenomenon by individuals, and sub-groups (individual participants, HODs as a sub- group and schools as both individual and sub-group (Kumar, 2014:120). Methods of collecting data from participants is discussed in the next section.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

This study employed multiple methods in collecting data from participants holding positions across the three levels of leadership. Creswell (2014:234) points to one of the characteristics of qualitative research as being the researcher's ability to collect data through examining documents, observing behaviour or interviewing participants. For the empirical data, document analysis and the use of open ended interviews allowed the researcher to generate relevant information to address the research questions for the study. This implies that the data for this study was gathered through the aforementioned methods.

3.6.1 Open ended semi-structured interview questions

An interview guide with semi-structured open ended interview questions was used in this qualitative study to facilitate the interaction between the researcher and the participants Nieuwenhuis, (2016:93). The interviews were preceded by a preliminary visit by the researcher to the site. The visit was intended to establish a mutual relationship of respect between the researcher and the participants so that participant confidence in the research project as well as in the researcher is gained Creswell (2014). The guide was not a fixed instrument that was strictly followed; rather it guided the line of questioning. Creswell (2009:233) explains qualitative interviews as face to face interaction between the researcher and the participant. The strength of using interviews is in their ability that allowed the researcher flexibility with regard to the wording and order of questions in terms of how they cover the research questions. Where there was indication that the respondent misunderstood the question, reflexivity allowed

the researcher opportunity to follow up with differently worded questions because the whole purpose of qualitative interviews is to seek to understand the meaning of what the participants make of their world (Creswell 2009; De Vos *et al.*, 2011; Nieuwenhuis. 2016).

Flexibility allowed the researcher to be in control of the flow and direction of the interview. The researcher was considerate of how the participants shaped and influenced the study and therefore their responses to questions, especially common questions posed to all participants in their different leadership positions were of special interest to the researcher. The semi-structured questions were pre-determined in the way they ensured that the interview process was standard as the same questions were posed to all participants, except one different question that was directed at female principals and the circuit managers as well as two questions posed to the focus group of HODs and deputy principal in one school (Nieuwenhuis 2016).

Questions on challenges for FSSLs, opportunities and achievements, gender policies and strategies for addressing challenges were common to all participants. The exception was a question on the girl child issue which was for principals and officials. Follow-up questions were asked. In that way, probing with the purpose of in-depth exploration of participants' views on the topic became possible. For example, the question on the girl child issue as a challenge was only added as a standard follow-up question after it emerged from the second interview (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:93).

The use of semi-structured questions provided an opportunity to learn more about this issue. The advantage of using semi-structured questions is that they created an environment where respondents freely expressed their attitudes, excitements, concerns, and emotions. Even when at times they felt doubtful, they freely articulated their views and eventually provided information that shed more light on the study phenomenon De Vos *et al.* (2011). They freely expressed their fears because they were not limited and restricted in the manner that closed questions limit participant responses. For example, in responding to a question on the challenge of girl learners to female leaders, two male participants freely raised their concerns about what they referred to as female revenge. The strength of semi-structured questions is that they allowed probing and requests for clarification Maree (2007:87; Creswell, 2014:241). For example, the participants who spoke about what he referred to as female revenge was asked to clarify what he meant by the concept. He elaborated on his understanding of the meaning of

the concepts. This provided better understanding and interpretation of this data by the researcher. On the contrary, semi-structured questions can be side-tracked. When this happened, the researcher off-set this limitation by guiding the participant back to the question because face to face interviews allows the researchers to control the line of questioning (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Creswell, 2014).

In school A, participants suggested that interviews be conducted in one of the HODs offices as the location of the office was far from possible disruptions and interferences. Interviews were conducted on a Wednesday, a day on which the school day is shorter and learners leave school early. Participants voluntarily organised one of their colleagues to work near to the interview venue to (entry control) and ensure that interviews were not disrupted (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Each interview took about thirty to fifty-eight minutes. The duration of the interview was intended to ensure that all questions were adequately dealt with, that all respondents had enough time to articulate their views, attitudes and concerns regarding what they consider to be challenges for female HODs, deputy principals and principals in secondary schools. In the other school, the same strategy was used with minor interruptions such as the out of school bell ringing and a knock on the door from someone who felt that his/her issue could not wait regardless of the notice on the door that indicated that interviews were in progress in that office (Creswell, 2014). This however, did not impact negatively on the interview process as this happened towards the end of the interview. Emerging from the face to face individual interview was a suggestion of a group discussion, and this resulted in a focus group interview, which was not in the initial plan of the research process (Creswell, 2014 & De Vos *et al.* 2011).

3.6.2 Focus group interviews

In one school, a few participants suggested that it might be interesting for them to have a joint discussion on some of the issues raised through the individuals question responses, thereby creating an opportunity for getting more detailed data (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:95). That suggestion led to a focus group interview with HODs and one deputy principal. However, this was conducted in school B only. A focus group is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perception on a defined area of interest in a permissive non-threatening environment (Kingry *et al.* 1990:124 in de Vos *et al.* (2011:351). Its strength is that it provided better understanding on how HODs and the deputy principal feel and think about the politics in the appointment of

teachers into promotional posts and how underrepresentation of females in leadership positions in schools affect them as leaders de Vos *et al.* (2011:360). It also revealed the consensus view of HOD as a tier of secondary school leadership. The use of focus groups also confirmed and disputed some individual interview information. This helped in ensuring that the information obtained was rich and was socially constructed by a group of HODs and the deputy principals. In this way, the focus group enabled the production of concentrated data (from HODs and deputy principal) on the issue of teacher appointments into promotional posts. De Vos *et al.* (2011:373). In this way, the researcher was able to get context, compare, interpret and explore various thoughts on the question of promotion posts and how underrepresentation creates challenges for women who occupy different leadership positions in a school.

The disadvantage of this tool of data gathering was that it was time consuming as the researcher had to revisit the site for the purpose of conducting it. Secondly, it might have created bias as the deputy principal wanted to dominate the discussion and at times strayed from the discussion Nieuwenhuis, (2016:95). However, the researcher redirected her back to the topic and ensured that other participant's voices are heard. The other weakness of this focus group was that it was very small and its findings may not be automatically projected on the population De Vos *et al.* (2011:374). This latter disadvantage did not concern the researcher much as this is a qualitative Case study. My write up notes were shared with participants for corrections especially as I took the notes myself while facilitating the discussions. The audio tape also helped minimise inaccuracies in the notes Nieuwenhuis (2007:194). The use of multiple data gathering techniques yields better results than the use of a single technique. In both individual and focus group interviews, semi-structured interview questions were used and data obtained from these was supplemented with data obtained from field notes.

3.6.3 Field notes

Field notes are a record (written) of things the researcher hears, thinks about, or experiences during the interview (De Vos *et al.* 2011:359). These were taken during site visits. The notes captured my impression of the school in general, buildings, people's general behaviour, the reception I got, the attitudes of potential participants during the pre-research meetings and during subsequent interview visits. This assisted to determine how to structure interview appointments and how the research project would be affected in terms of time frames Creswell

(2014: 242). Notes were also made on participants' non-verbal communication clues that reflected how they felt, what irritated them, what excited them during the interviews. The notes were also a record of any information heard or anything observed that might have relevance to the study. In line with Barbie (2007:311) in De Vos *et al.* (2011:359), my approach of note taking was to first write my observation and what I heard or saw, and to write an interpretation thereafter. My write up notes were shared with participants for corrections especially as I took the notes myself while facilitating the discussions. The audio tape also helped minimise inaccuracies in the notes Nieuwenhuis (2007:92). Field notes generally helped during the data interpretation stage as they gave context to some of data obtained through other data collecting sources, such as interviews.

3.6.4 Document analysis

Documents may be personal or non-personal. Babbie and Mouton (2001:300) in De Vos *et al.* (2011:378) defines personal documents as human or personal documents in which the characteristics of somebody who is somehow the author of the document finds expression so that through the document, the reader of the document comes to know the author, and his or her views. Non personal imply those that are compiled and maintained on a continuous basis by organisations such as governments and schools.

Non-personal documents were collected during site visits, while others were emailed to the researcher Creswell (2014:239). These documents provided information that could not be obtained through interviews. Gender policy documents and minutes of human resource recruitment and selection processes were collected to shed light on the status of gender equality in secondary schools. Emails from the Department of Education provincial office provided equity data on secondary school leadership. These documents were important to the researcher as they were non-personal and as secondary sources, they provided important research data and their authenticity and accuracy were verified before use, as advised by Nieuwenhuis (2007:83). While information from the documents was not recorded, interview data was as explained in the next section.

3.7 DATA RECORDING

The interviews were recorded on an audio tape and supported by note taking. Decisions taken during visits to the site and during interviews were recorded so that the notes could serve as a record and reference later. All interviews were audio taped as participants consented to that Nieuwenhuis (2007:89). The transcription of interviews followed immediately thereafter to minimise time lapse and memory loss. The cost in terms of interview resources (time and finance) was viable as the researcher stays relatively near to the research sites which were, in most cases, interview sites as well (Creswell, 2009 & Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

Manual data analysis ran concurrently with data collection. The findings of the initial large portion of the data collected supported similar views, concepts, and the themes emerging from the first data analysis were recurring. This led to the conclusion that a point of data saturation had been reached and hence, only nine participants were involved in the study. The data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group interview, and documents were then analysed through content analysis method which is explained below.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data content analysis refers to a process of extracting some form of understanding, explanation or interpretation from qualitative data collected from people and or situations that are being investigated Nieuwenhuis (2007:99). The data analysis process followed a thematic approach with the themes emerging recorded, transcribed, analysed and interpreted before being clustered into code families or what Nieuwenhuis (2016) calls super ordinate themes that eventually formed the basis of the discussion of research findings reported in chapter four. This process of data analysis was conducted as an ongoing iterative process that involved the researcher engaging in multiple research processes simultaneously. It started right at the beginning stage of data collection and proceeded throughout the research project up to the stage of project report writing. It was definitely not a linear process that followed prescribed chronological steps Nieuwenhuis (2007:100). For example, a follow up trip to the two sites was undertaken to obtain and verify some demographic information that was necessary only during the analysis stage as that information provided better context and interpretation of participants' expressed views. Creswell (2009:187) notes that this is an ongoing non-linear

process which he calls a “Spiral image” which, according to Seidel (1998) cited in Nieuwenhuis (2007:100), involves observing, collecting, and thinking about things.

The understanding, interpretation, explanation and description of factors that challenged females who lead in secondary schools was done through two methods of analysing qualitative data, the Hermeneutics and Content analysis which are discussed in the next section (Creswell, 2014, Creswell, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

3.8.1 Hermeneutics and Content analysis methods

This study employed a combination of the Hermeneutics and Content analysis methods to develop the results of the data collected qualitatively through individual interviews, group interviews and documents (Maree 2007:101). The Hermeneutic method as a study of meaning and interpretation was preferred because of its grounding on interpretivism, which allowed for the deduction of meaning from the transcripts and documents Nieuwenhuis, (2016:60). The second method, Content analysis refers to a systematic way of qualitative data analysis that identifies and summarises message content. It involved looking at written data from various angles to identify keys in the text that helped the researcher to understand and interpret participant’s views (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Creswell 2014, Creswell 2009; Maree, 2007).

In applying both data analysis methods, the seven steps suggested by Creswell were followed. First, all transcripts were read to gain comprehensive meaning and understanding of all data, including data from documents. This was followed by the reading of individual participants’ views in each transcript as part of the whole data. Second, one transcript was read and re-read to better understand the participant’s meaning of the transcript as a whole, thereafter, the understanding of participant’s responses to individual questions was then established (Creswell 2014, Maree, 2017). This analysis methods assisted the researcher to understand the general meaning of what participants viewed as challenges to their leadership (the whole) and then the categories and parts of those challenges such as societal ones, organisational ones and the ones that are related to female leaders themselves. The researcher moved from understanding the text as a whole, to understanding the parts thereof and back to understanding the whole again (Creswell 2014).

The feminist liberal theory used in the study and the literature reviewed provided constructs (such as gender, patriarchy, women voices) for data analysis. These constructs were then linked to raw empirical data from interviews and field notes. Because the data was raw and rich, it had to be winnowed, i.e. only data that was valuable and could be used was selected. The segregation of data into smaller themes was guided by Creswell's suggested seven steps of data analysis procedure protocol (Guest, *et al.* 2012 in Creswell, 2014:245).

During the first step, data was organised and prepared for analysis. This involved transcribing interview data and typing field notes. Once transcription of data was completed, these were shared with participants for corrections Creswell, (2014). One transcription could not be corrected as the participant was not available to do the exercise because she was on sick leave. The correction of transcripts helped increase data credibility. The second step involved grouping each category of information source. Each category of information source was thoroughly read to first obtain its general sense and to reflect on its meaning and credibility. Creswell (2013:187) suggests that what one should be looking for at this stage, among others, should be the credibility of information, the tone, and just the general impression about the data. The initial reading allowed for the general understanding of the participants views and also provided for identification of language for coding.

The third step involved coding data, categorising it and then classifying it according to emerging patterns and themes. Data denoting similar meanings were coded using language. Information from interviews transcripts that addressed research questions were highlighted and coded Creswell (2014:247). The coding of data from documents followed. Coded data was then grouped into categories. The same process was undertaken with data from documents. This manual process was then repeated through the use of the Atlas-ti, version 7.14 computer programme. A masters fellow students who had better skill in the use of the computer programme assisted during this process. He helped in the loading of data from the first transcript in the programme. The former was used minimally (Creswell, 2014:248).

The computer programme was preferred because of its ability and efficiency in organising and storing qualitative data. Once codes were created, the programme helped with attaching specific codes to text as quotations Maree (2007:108; Creswell; 2014). In this way,

relationships among codes and relationships between codes and texts were established. The relationships among codes led to the establishment of code families and eventually themes and patterns Creswell, 2014:245. The themes that emerged from the data collected were the following: status and effects of gender equality on the leadership of females, Opportunities intended for support for females who lead in secondary schools, challenges experienced by female leaders and ways in which the challenges could be addressed. Creswell acknowledges the fast pace of programme analysis and states that it works faster than manual data coding. In the fourth step, the coded information was then described in details. These descriptions were also coded because as Creswell contends this kind of analysis is helpful in the design and development of detailed descriptions for case studies (Creswell, 2014:248). As the findings from the first large portion of data collected became recurrent and were supportive of similar views, concepts and emerging themes, it was concluded that a saturation point was reached. This led to only nine participants being involved in the study. The research findings which are discussed in detail in the next chapter were descriptively presented with quotes from interview raw data used as support.

3.9 MEASURES ADOPTED TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

Techniques (Measure)	How it was used in the study
1. Pilot study	Through this preliminary survey the methods of data collection were piloted with a group of female leaders from schools in a different district to ensure not only their transferability but also feasibility. Purposeful selection of participants ensured rich detailed data description Babbie & Mouton, (2010).
2. Triangulation	Babbie and Mouton (2010) define triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection to study a phenomenon. Two types of triangulation for this study, namely data triangulation (literature review, document analysis and unstructured interviews) and methodological triangulation were used in-order to have more comprehensive and trustworthy data set.
3. Member checking/ Peer review	Creswell (2014) defines peer review as the review of the data and research process by someone who is familiar with the research or the

	phenomena being explored. For this study this was given as support, for the necessary member checking.
4. Audit trails	Audit trails document the course of development of the completed data analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). In developing an audit trail, the researcher provided an account of all research decisions and activities throughout the study She made explicit all decisions taken about theoretical, methodological and analytical choices (Creswell, 2014). Prior study preparation of documents such as consent letters, instruments and authorisation letters from various authorities ensured trustworthiness. This view as supported by Creswell (2014) shows that the research process and the product of inquiry conducted to determine the findings' trustworthiness is carried out with considerable care.

3.10 RESEARCHER'S ROLE

The purpose of my interaction with the participants was, according to Maree (2007:41), to create a partnership with an objective of soliciting raw data for analysis, interpretation and understanding. This process started with a discussion of research objectives, aims, and ethical issues to be observed during the study process, so that rapport and trust is developed in the partnership. This was followed by the administration of research semi-structured questions during individual and group interviews. Creswell (2013:177) suggests that in a qualitative study, the researchers' personal values, assumption and biases should be identified right from the beginning of the study. This is contrary to the positivist assumption expressed by England (1994:242) in Kowalski (2014:46) that an impersonal, neutral detachment is a good criterion for research.

My personal view and perception gathered from my experience working in the Department of Education, has shaped my understanding of what constitutes challenges for secondary school

leadership Creswell, (2014:235). From 1992 to 2006, I served as a secondary school leader in three positions of HOD, deputy principal and principal. Thereafter, I served as an education manager and leader based in an office for about seven years. I also facilitated the development and capacitation of schools' leadership teams. These experiences may influence my interpretation of data. However, the views of the participants remained core to the study because Creswell (2014:61) indicates that not much is written about the topic and the population being studied, the researcher seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on what is heard, and not what the researcher's views obtained from personal experience are.

I resigned from the department of education five years ago and no longer have contact with the employees of the department. I therefore do not have any authority that may negatively affect my partnership with participants as they may not feel obligated to participate in the study, nor respond in a constrained manner for fear of victimisation. While my current work put me in rare contact with the senior officials of the district as I now work for a mining house, it does not link me in any way to participants of the two schools. The schools are situated in the Eastern side of the district, and I am working in the Western side of the district in a different sector to education. The intention of the research partnership was therefore to construct a mutual reciprocal relationship that exhibited respect for one another. My relationship with participants emanated from a premise that says, they are important partners in the research study because they are more knowledgeable than I am in their responses to questions asked. It is their responses and not mine that produce the research findings, and that is why the research had to observe some important ethical issues.

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The term ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos* meaning one's character disposition. Akaranga and Makau, (2016:1) defines the word ethics as a branch of philosophy that deals with the conduct of people. It guides standards of behaviour of people. In research therefore, ethics speaks to how the researcher should conduct herself or himself and how to treat participants and information gathered in a way that complies with the general guiding principles of research. Compliance to those guiding research principles is imperative.

3.11.1 Ethical clearance and consent

The first step to ethical compliance was obtaining clearance from the University Ethics Committee to conduct this study. Then permission to conduct research was obtained from the Bojanala District office. Requests to access participants (gate keeping) was obtained from the principals of the two sites (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Creswell 2014, Kumar 2015; De Vos et al 2011). This was followed by obtaining informed consent to participate from purposively selected participants. The consent to participation was preceded by a clarification of the research aims and objectives and ethical considerations. This was done in the two separate sites in pre-research meetings with participants at their schools so that participants understood and knew what they would be getting involved in. De Vos *et al.* (2011:117) argues that participants should be able to choose as to what shall or shall not happen to them. In that regard, participants were informed of the confidentiality and voluntarism of their involvement in the study. Possible benefits of being involved in the research project, such as their contribution to literature in the field of female leadership in education were explained. They were also told that they may withdraw from the project any time they wished to do so by just informing the researcher.

3.11.2 Avoidance of harm

In order to apply the principle of avoidance of harm, especially psychological harm, questions in interviews were framed in a non-offensive manner which would not disturb participants' personalities. De Vos *et al.* (2011:119) suggests that if any harm is discovered, it be immediately corrected during or after the debriefing interview. The researcher was mindful of this important ethical issue and treated participants as equal partners of the study project. Creswell (2014:15; Akaranga & Makau, 2016:6) posit that confidentiality is upheld when information from a participant is not disclosed in a way that might identify the individual or that might enable the individual to be traced. Therefore, participants' real names and site names were not mentioned in the report. Their privacy was respected. Participants were labelled in terms of the chronological order of their interviews. They were labelled as Participant 1 to 9. The schools were also entitled school A and school B. This was done to ensure that data was not obtained at the expense of participants as researchers are cautioned (De Vos *et al.* 2011:113).

Finally, even though this study is considered low risk, participants were debriefed at the end of the research project. This was done with individual participants to provide them with the privacy and freedom to articulate whatever issue they wanted to. This process allowed participants to reflect and work through their experiences and the results and consequences thereof. It was also an opportunity for the researcher to correct any misconception that might have occurred during the research process (De Vos *et al.* 2011:122).

Finally, even though this study is considered low risk, participants were debriefed at the end of the research project. This was done with individual participants to provide them with the privacy and freedom to articulate whatever issue they wanted to. This process allowed participants to reflect and work through their experiences and the results and consequences thereof. It was also an opportunity for the researcher to correct any misconception that might have occurred during the research process (De Vos *et al.* 2011:122).

3.12 SUMMARY

The chapter detailed research methodology used from project inception to project end. It highlights the ontological and epistemological study perspectives and advances reasons that motivated the choice of the qualitative case study design which is rooted within the constructivist-interpretivist qualitative paradigm. The positives and limitations of the research design as well as the considerations for research trustworthiness and ethics are discussed. The next chapter presents analysed and interpreted data obtained from the engagement with participants through multiple data collection strategies.

CHAPTER 4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the presentation, analyses and interpretation of findings that were gathered through face to face interviews conducted with open ended semi-structured qualitative questions, document analysis, and focus group interaction. The discussions and findings were a response of participants to the question: What are the experiences of females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district? From the discussion, five themes developed, namely: the effects of gender inequality of female leaders, challenges experienced by female leaders, Opportunities for participation in leadership in secondary schools and strategies to address challenges that are experienced by females who lead in secondary schools. While female leadership experiences may be positive and negative, this study will focus mostly on the gender factors that create a challenging environment for female leaders. The female leadership experiences are outlined in the next sub-section.

4.2 DATA PRESENTATION

The data obtained from transcripts and documents emanated from responses to four study sub-questions that were further broken down into several questions in the interview guides. The study sub-questions were the following:

- How does the status of gender inequality in the Bojanala district affect women who lead in secondary schools?
- What are the challenges experienced by female leaders in secondary schools in the Bojanala district?
- How do opportunities provided by the authorities in the Bojanala district affect the leadership of female leaders-in secondary schools?
- How can challenges experienced by females who lead secondary schools be addressed?

4.3 THE LINK OF QUESTIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEMES

The first question in appendices I, J and K sought to establish whether motivation helped female leaders to prepare for the challenges they encountered in their leadership of secondary schools. Question 2 on the appendices referred to above about opportunities, aimed at determining the provision of support opportunities for leadership support by district authorities and whether those helped improve the work environment of women or not. Questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 dealt with factors that negatively affected the leadership of secondary schools females. The questions sought to elicit participants own meaning attribution to what they considered to be factors that act as barriers to their advancement or challenge their leadership practice.

Questions 7, 8 and 9 in appendices, I, J and K extended the inquiry, providing participants with an opportunity to express their views, feelings, attitudes and understanding of how specifically their family and work responsibilities compete for their attention and thus create a tension that affects their leadership role. Questions 10, 11 and 12 were intended to establish the participant's awareness, knowledge of the status of patriarchy which led to the underrepresentation of women in the leadership of the two case study schools and in the district. The questions also enquired about gender policy implementation and its effects on female leadership in education and in secondary schools. The last set of questions enquired into participants own views on how the female leadership challenges could be addressed so that the secondary school leadership environment is conducive to the leadership of women. The questions presented a reflective moment for participants to relook into themselves as individuals and as a collective leadership to provide tools that could fight patriarchal practices in schools as organisations and in the society in general. Finally, the information on participants is provided in the table below.

The professional characteristics of interviewees are summarised in a table and the challenges that are experienced by females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district are then discussed. Participants were informed of ethical considerations the study would observe and assured of their right to confidentiality and anonymity. Quotes from the participants and documents are written in italics and concluded with the bracketed code numbers used for participants. The quotes are used to substantiate the discussion. Participants are represented by the letter P and followed by a number which indicates the chronological order of interviews with participants. Male participants are further distinguished by the letter M and females with

the letter F after the number, e.g. P3M. This means that the third participant interviewed was male. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed in verbatim. Documents from the schools were analysed in-depth to reflect on the status of gender inequality in schools. From the reflection, four themes indicated on the last column of the table below emerged.

Table: 1. The table represents a summary of emergent themes, sub-themes and codes from transcript data and document analysis.

study questions	question no.	codes	codes, categories& sub-themes	emergent themes
1	1 and 2	-Leadership skills -vacancies - promotions -Self-belief, experience -Opportunities, achievements	-Motivation for leadership participation -growth and development -Legal and policy framework	Opportunities provided by authorities and their effects on the leadership of women (Theme 3)
2	10,11 &12	-Gender policies -Gender statistics -Gender impact	-Underrepresentation in education -Gender policies and their implementation	The status of gender equality in the workplace and its effect on the leadership of women. (Theme 1)
3	3,4,5 &6	-Cultural beliefs	-Societal challenges	Challenges experienced by women in position of school leadership.(Theme 2)
		-Initiation school -Racial bind -Community view -Gender bias		

		-Colleague relationship -Initiation schools		
		-Learner misbehaviour -Politics and union role -Curriculum - generational matters -Family-work conflict	-Organisational challenges	
		-Confidence -Self-belief -Ability to lead	-Personal individual challenge	
3	7,8 & 9	-DoE support -Professional support -Colleagues support -Vacation camps time	-Organisational support -Family support. -Spouse support -Family-work conflict	Challenges experienced by secondary school leaders. (Theme2)
4	13 &14	- Agency of women - Advice to women - Leadership skills - Qualifications.	- Agency of women - Advice to women - Leadership skills - Qualifications	Ways of addressing female leadership challenges. (Theme 4)

Table I above summarised the themes that emerged as participant's responded to the questions asked. One of the themes revealed by participant's discussions is the condition of gender representation in the district and how that negatively affects women leaders.

Table: 2. Participants' personal and professional information

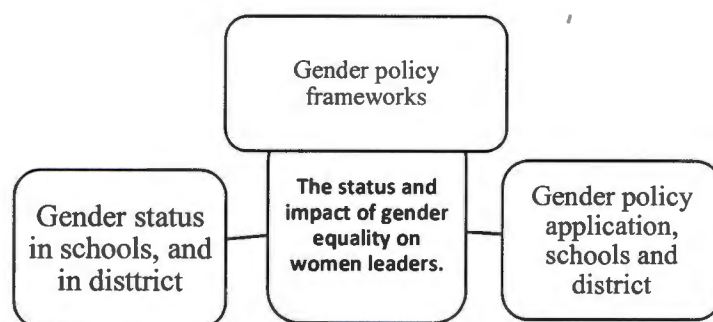
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Gender	female	male	male	male	female	female	female	female	female
Age range	50-60	50-60	30-40	50-60	50-60	50-60	50-60	50-60	50-60
teaching Experience	20-30	30-40	10-20	20-30	30-40	20-30	30-40	30-40	20-30
Leadership experience	10-20	20 & above	3-5	10-20	10-20	10-20	20-30	10-20	10-20
Qualification	degree	master's degree	degree	degree	degree	honours degree	degree	honours degree	honours
No. of children	20-30	10-30	1-20	10-20	20-30	10-20	20-30	20-30	20-30
Marital status	married	married	married	divorced	married	widowed	married	married	married

The data represented in the above table is a summary of participants. They are characterized by a number of factors such as gender, age, teaching experience, leadership experience as indicated in the following table.

4.3 THE EFFECTS OF GENDER EQUALITY ON FEMALE LEADERS

The theme stated above emerged from participant's responses to the study sub-question that asked; how does gender equality affect females who are leaders in secondary schools? The status and effects of gender equality in schools were revealed through analysis of the following documents: The National Gender Equality Framework, the Provincial Gender Equality Framework entitled The HOD's 8-Principles, and gender policies and documents from the school. Data from transcripts also painted a picture of how gender equality or equity is in practice in the case study. The effects of gender equality and policy implementation on women who lead secondary schools is discussed in this section. The discussion is informed by the emergent sub-themes, schools gender policies, gender status in schools and the implementation of gender policies. The theme and the sub-themes are represented in the graphic design below.

Figure A: The graphic design below indicates the main theme and sub-themes on the effects of gender equality on the leadership of women who lead secondary schools



4.4.1 Legal Framework: Gender policies

Gender policy frameworks from the education authorities are informed by the supreme law of South Africa, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, and Act 108 of 1996). These policies guidelines are intended to influence among others the following; the condition of gender representation, gender relations and considerations in the two case schools (South Africa, 2006). It involves issues of equal access and provision of employment and/or leadership opportunities to both males and females in schools. It speaks to equal treatment of both males and females in a school as well as the numbers of male and females who occupy leadership positions in schools. The Bojanala district and school's authorities are expected to implement provisions of gender related frameworks promulgated at National level, which frameworks are aimed at improving the working environment under which female leaders operate (South Africa, 1996; South Africa, 2006).

These frameworks were intended to redress past gender discrimination which resulted from patriarchy and render the leadership space in education and schools challenging for women. However, as Moorosi (2010) posits, policy efforts are not enough to eliminate deep entrenched cultural stereotypes and beliefs about the capabilities of women to lead, and may I add, they are not enough to create an environment that minimises the challenges that are experienced by females who lead in secondary schools Moorosi (2010:560). The report on the contribution of the Commission for Gender Equality in South Africa concurred that while there has been some action taken, that has unfortunately not translated to impact on gender transformation which is critical for the minimisation of challenges that are experienced by women who are in leadership

positions South Africa (1996-2016:1290). The political will to implement the policies such as the National Gender Equality Framework which is discussed in the next section is significant to their effectiveness.

4.4.2 National Gender Equality Framework (NGEF)

The NGEF was developed by the South African government in 2007 as a guideline on how the government envision gender equality in the society and how it intends to realise its implementation. This is a fundamental tenet under the Bill of Rights of the (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996). This framework is important in ensuring the following: new gender attitudes, values, behaviour and a culture of respect for all human beings are promoted, women are empowered and gender relations are transformed in all aspects of work at all levels within the broader society, the voice of women in civil society is strengthened and overall, the framework was to serve as a guideline for gender implementation in all sectors of society. Its focus is the creation of an enabling environment so that an individual is fully developed (South Africa, 1996; South Africa, 2007). The premise of the framework is that:

Gender equality cannot be attained without women's participation in all spheres of life as well as the empowerment in particular of the most deprived women. It further declares that: until women and men have equal opportunity with respect to access to control and decision making in the economy, we will need to draw distinction between gender issues and women issues so that resources can be set aside to meet specific needs of women. The policy then concludes that: women empowerment is thus a means to achieving gender equality rather than an end in itself (South Africa, 2007:6).

Additionally, the NGPF cites factors that are of concern to gender equality for women in education. The statistics that reveal a high representation of women in the education sector, and a low representation in senior positions. It also reported on the factors that lead to high learner dropout rates and lower secondary school performance. Such factors include but are not limited to learner's unplanned pregnancy, domestic responsibilities, women subordination, gender based violence, gender stereotypes and the low representation of women in academic affairs (South Africa, 2007:12). While the leadership challenges that are highlighted in this framework are not unique to female leaders, female leaders tend to be more affected by these than their male counterparts are South Africa (1995-2015:129). The framework further stated that the persistence of the male domination culture in organisations is a stumbling block for

women to penetrate the glass ceiling in order to make sure that their voices are heard (South Africa, 2007:18) It also noted that inequalities based on gender and other factors such as religion, age and geographic location applies to South Africa because of the apartheid past. (South Africa, 2007:19). This framework informed the provincial gender policies.

4.4.3 Provincial Gender Equality Framework

Seemingly, there is no provincial gender equality policy. In the researcher's attempts to find such a document, it was indicated that there is no specific provincial gender equality policy. Instead, the provincial education department utilises the National Gender Policy Framework mentioned in the section above. It is guided by the HODs' eight principles reflected in the document which is entitled Heads of Department's 8-Principle Action Plan for promoting Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality within the Public Service Workplace: 2007:1-14), hereafter referred to as The HOD's 8-Principles. The district office also uses the same document as a guide for gender equality and equity implementation. The HODs 8-Principles states that:

Transformation for non-sexism; establishing a policy environment, meeting equity targets, creating an enabling environment, gender mainstreaming, empowerment, providing adequate resources, and accountability, monitoring and evaluation. The HOD's 8-Principles (2007:13).

Like the NGPF, these principles were to be institutionalised through giving women a voice to raise any factor they view as a challenge to them as leaders because of their gender. Secondly, this framework was to help address other factors which may hinder not only women's access to leadership positions in schools, but also to create an environment that will allow them to develop and grow as leaders. This policy document revealed that the barriers affect the attainment of the 50% target set by government. It also indicated that the barriers hinder the promotion of gender equality. (South Africa, 2007:13). Policies such as this are intended as support provisioning to female leaders by the education authorities from national to district. However, it seems as though the support is not as effective as it was meant to be, because women still experience numerous gender challenges in the workplace (Msila, 2013, Naidoo & Perumal, 2014, Mautle, 2013, Lalla, 2013, Schiemidt & Mestry 2014). One such policy example is the Gauteng Department of Education Gender Equality and Women Empowerment policy.

The Gauteng Department of Education Gender Equality and Women Empowerment policy (2014), hereafter referred to as GDGEP also acknowledged the need to redress past gender injustices meted out against women. The provincial policy guideline recognised the need to promote human rights as women rights because of the historical exclusion of women from enjoying basic fundamental rights. It stated the following in its preamble,

The department recognises that women could not enjoy their political, economic and socio-economic fundamental freedoms and human rights in the workplace or anywhere in society because of the exclusions and discriminations exercised on them on the basis of race, class and sex. (South Africa, 2014:3). This is an acknowledgement that the workplace may due to its adherence gender discriminative values and practices, be restrictive of women's freedom to exercise not only their rights as human beings, but their rights as women leaders too.

Arguably, any work environment that limits women to freely exercise their leadership potential, skills and abilities pose a challenge to women. It restricts their contribution to education and to the national development agenda, thereby robbing the country of an untapped human resource. Failure to fully implement the provisions of this National framework or provincial ones such as the one in the Gauteng province by the Bojanala district authorities and schools, pose a challenge to women who lead secondary schools.

The GDGP valued empowerment of women as an essential gender relations transformation tool. This suggests that the empowerment of women has the ability to address underlying causes of discrimination as it strengthens their agency (South Africa, 2014:3). However, it seems as though causes of gender discrimination continue to exist in schools in the Bojanala district. The absence of a specific provincial and district gender equality guideline document (the reliance on a broad document that is neither specific to the province nor the district) is a concern that is highlighted by the report of gender commission when it observed that, the Northwest province wherein the Bojanala district is situated performs poorly on gender issues. Such an attitude is demonstrated by School A of this study which did not have a school's gender policy (South Africa 2014:3).

4.4.4 Schools Gender Policies

Schools policies are developed by the schools in terms of their context. They serve as a guideline of how gender issues in the school are to be addressed. They are informed by provincial or national policies on gender. When appropriately applied, these policies have the potential to transform gender relations in schools and also address patriarchal issues which may negatively affect the experiences of women who are in leadership positions. School A did not have a gender policy. It used a gender form obtained from the local education office. This form is to be completed each time a recruitment and selection process for promotional posts is undertaken in a school. The form reflects gender representation status of the school and informs how appointment in relation to gender equity should be done. In school B, documents such as gender policy, the district office gender equity form, minutes of the SGB on interviews and SGB constitution were received for analysis. The gender equality policy from school B corroborated the claims made during face to face interviews with participants stating that the school had a gender equality policy with clear objectives and is being implemented. Some of the policy declarations read as follows:

in this school, we recognise the rights of both genders, be it staff members or learners, we believe that neither gender should dominate the other, we believe that men and women are equal in the workplace, lastly, that there should be no discrimination against anyone in the school community on the basis of gender (School B Gender Equality Policy, 2014).

The minutes of the selection and recruitment processes revealed that gender equity was considered in school B. For example, they indicated that the principal explained the status of gender equality in the school during the interview process that was about the appointment of an HOD. Secondly, both short listing and interview processes culminated in the drafting of a list that reflected the gender status of the applicants. The minutes revealed that the list was aligned to the principals' explanation that the school required a male HOD as there was no male in the school leadership team then. The minutes also reflected an interview outcome that was consistent with the policy of the school. A male leader was recommended and eventually appointed. That appointment resulted in the school realising equity in its school leadership team. It is interesting to note that despite the availability of policies that promote gender equity and eventually equality, this development has not sufficiently removed factors that challenge women who lead in secondary schools in the Bojanala district because implementation of the policies is still a challenge. Some school documents indicated this notion.

The analysis of documents also revealed that the composition of School governing body committees was male dominated at leadership level. Table: 3 explicates this. For example, the SGB chairperson positions in both case of the study schools was held by males. The chairperson position is the most powerful and influential in decision making. In school A, all five functional SGB committees were chaired by males (Fundraising, finance, maintenance, safety and security and the treasury). School B was no different. Of the ten committees, only four were led by females. This is the gender status of SGB committees in schools that have females in the majority in their teaching staff as well as in the membership of SGB committees. Persons chairing committees are exposed to leadership experience that prepares them for leadership in other areas. It is evident from this data analysis that with most males chairing committees, they are exposed to leadership skills, knowledge and competencies. This exposure may give them added advantage when it comes to them competing for promotional posts with their female counterparts. The exposure may also help them as women, better manage and cope with the challenges of leadership in their schools. It therefore seems that, failure to effectively implement gender policies, robs women of the opportunity presented by the Bojanala district authorities. This study therefore found that males occupy most decision making positions in the SGB leadership structures. The table below confirms this assertion. Secondly, it also found that males get an advantage over their female counterparts in terms of exposure and preparation for leadership. Arguably, failure to fully utilise the opportunity to empower women for leadership through implementation of gender policies in school A, may entrench patriarchy in the workplace. This perpetuates challenging work environments for females who lead in secondary schools in the Bojanala district.

4.4.5 Gender status in schools

Table: 3 Gender representation in school's management and governing structures

	SCHOOL A			SCHOOL B		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Staff	7	19	26	9	14	23
SMT	1	3	4	2	2	4
SGB	8	6	14	7	8	15
SGB chairpersons	1	0	1	1	0	1
SGB committees' chairpersons	5	0	5	6	4	10
Total	24	28	50	25	28	53

The question resulting in the development of this theme sought to establish the ratio of female to male teachers in each school staff and management, the extent/status of female underrepresentation in each secondary school leadership and in the district schools in general. The status of gender representation in a school reflects on the extent of gender transformation in that school. The lack of gender transformation in schools is viewed by some women leaders as hampering school progress. One participant observed that the underrepresentation of females in secondary school leadership lies in organisational systems, processes and practices that continue to focus on the appointment of males. She concluded:

I think the fact that there is still presently a focus on male appointments is hampering progress in schools... many other schools according to me are not moving because of the appointments of males who are not capable... but the system does not allow us(P8F).

Table 3 above reveals that there are more females than males in the staff of both school A and B, and a gender representation balance at administration-management level. Gender equality in terms of numbers is realised in this instance. The numbers suggest that female leaders have equal opportunity with men to influence decision making at that level. It also suggests that their voices have a chance to be heard. However, this does not mean that the opportunity is utilised. Arguably, the opportunity for decision making may not advance the status of women if gender relations are not transformed in the school. If women are not empowered and capacitated to make decisions, men may continue to make those decisions while women are merely occupying leadership positions, and therefore women should continue to empower themselves, demand training and take steps that will catapult them ahead in the leadership environment (Diko, 2010; Msila, 2013; Moorosi, 2010; 2013; Diko; 2014 & South Africa, 200).

The gender composition of the school's governing structures suggests gender relations that are not sufficiently transformed to improve the patriarchal work environment for women who lead in these two schools. While the two case schools are led by women, the SGBs that govern the schools are still male dominated, suggesting gender relations that are not adequately transformed. It also suggests that no creation equal opportunities are created so that challenges and barriers to females who lead in secondary schools are reduced through substantive equality South Africa (1995:26). This implies that indirect gender discrimination may be necessary in the application of women's rights as human rights so that the challenges that plaque women in

the leadership of schools is addressed. Unfortunately, male domination still persists in schools as demonstrated by the composition of the school's governing structures. Both SGBs committees are chaired by males. All five committees of school A are chaired by males. This is a school that does not have a gender policy, and whose principal argued that they struggle to get male teachers as the department of education is female dominated in terms of teaching staff. Similarly, six of the ten SGB committees of school B are led by males. Evidently, patriarchy is prevalent in the influential position of chair in the governing structures of the case study. This suggests that gender bias may exist in decision making of the SGB committees (Diko, 2014).

School A has a staff complement of twenty-six members, nineteen of whom are females and seven males. The school management has three females and only one male who is an HOD. The principal's rationale for this gender status was;

you know if you want to be realistic in education... there are no males, so you need to cater for the whole spectrum with what you have. (P8F) In the other school, the participant reported a similar trend in the gender staff composition. She commented:

Mmm, I am not sure mam, I think we are about 22 or 23, yes we are 23 because another HOD joined us about three months ago.... Females, it's me and the principal in the SMT, the others are... 7, jah, we have only 7 women, women are short in high schools you know, most of them like the primary schools (P5F). The other participant agreed and said:

but what I have seen there's gender balance because let's say in management so far there are two females and two males. Before we had a male deputy principal and you can just see that there is a balance in staffing now. In the past two years, we have been trying to bring about gender balance because now we are employing more males than females (P3M).

The school appears to be aware of the significance of gender balance, as their focus as reported had been an attempt at the realisation of a balanced gender status in terms of numbers. The other view expressed is that females preferred to teach in primary schools. This view was corroborated by participant (4) who commented that:

maybe one of the things that could be the contributory factors is the fact that they feel comfortable at primary because they try to avoid contact with young developing boys and girls because that age group is forever challenging (P4M).

The finding of this study is that there are more females than males in the two schools. However, female representation at school leadership level differed with school A having more females in its leadership team and school B with a gender balanced representation in its leadership team. This implies that equality is realised in the staff complement of the case schools.

While female representation in the two schools (A&B) seemed to be balanced in terms of numbers, participants acknowledged that generally, females were underrepresented in the district's secondary schools. One participant confirmed that *Males are still dominating (P6F)*. The other participant said this in response to a question as to whether gender equality is realized in secondary school leadership.

The ratio of males to females is not good. Most top positions are occupied by males, in the vacancies, there are males (P9F).

The district official (P9) acknowledged and confirmed the prevalence of patriarchy in secondary schools when she declared, *we are not there because for quite some time, women have been neglected*. The report suggested that because the involvement of females in leadership positions in the education sector has not been a priority, that it has been neglected, addressing this challenge will take long.

While most participants acknowledge the shortage of males in secondary schools and some attributed this to the understanding that female teachers prefer to teach in primary schools, they also observed that most leadership positions are occupied by males. The challenge is that such a situation denies women leaders in secondary schools the opportunity of having a wide pool of mentors who may guide them on how to deal with leadership challenges as women. It seems that the education authorities attempt to support women is not yielding the intended results because policy is not effectively applied and appropriated.

4.4.6 Gender policy application and appropriation

Gender policy application and appropriation refers to the utilisation of gender policy to achieve the policy main goal which is transformation of gender relations in schools and the realisation of gender equality. The study revealed that some schools are not adequately knowledgeable about gender policies. The problem of ignorance on gender policy issues for women leaders is that the gender discriminatory work environment is allowed to continue when policy is not

implemented because those who have to benefit from the policy are ignorant. They are unable to insist on exercising their rights as stipulated in the policy. They showed lack of understanding of the significance the policy and how it could influence gender relations if it was effectively applied. In school B, most participants acknowledged the non-existence of these policies in their schools. Some were not aware of them as indicated by the following remarks:

I don't, I am not aware of any gender policy in the school (P1F)

One participant who is a school principal revealed an attitude of no appreciation for a school gender policy because in her view, it is not possible to apply a gender policy. The reason she advanced was that women are dominant in the education system. Implied is that because women are in majority in the system as reflected in the school she leads; they should be in the majority in other areas of school operation. The school management team of a ratio of 3:1(female: male) may be the result of this attitude or understanding. The following extracts explain the participant's attitude.

Interviewer- can we quickly go back to what you mentioned about no gender policy in the school, that's fine, but there are policies about equity, gender equity, your comment;

Respondent- *mmmm, yah... we don't have a school one, but there is the departmental one (P7F).*

Interviewer- yes, do you think it's been implemented? And reasons if not.

Respondent-

I don't think it's possible because if you look at applications, if you go through a pile applications, mostly it is females and there and here and there is a man (P7F). A

similar understanding and attitude is expressed by participant (P1F) who remarked:

I think regarding gender many things have been open for women, there's lots of opportunities and so I don't think there should be any gender policy in an institution, you should rather look at the quality and the caliber of a person that is in a management position, whether it's male or female, but bottom line should be the quality that you looking for (P1F).

A colleague participant from the same school said:

I have to scratch my head first to check my file I'm not aware of any gender policies (P2M).

Participants in school B acknowledged the availability of a school gender policy. They reported an attempt at implementing it with regard to the appointment of teachers in the staff and in the management team. He responded as follows to a question asking for a comment on the existence and application of the policy:

Yes, we have gender policies; they are applying mostly on leadership posts. If there is a promotional post in the area, in our district, they would always ask schools to submit their SMT gender profile to check whether the number of male and female in leadership positions balances (P8F).

There is also a claim from some participants that gender transformation is taking place in some schools. The extract below indicated:

In the past two years, we have been trying to bring about gender balance because now we are employing more males than females. Before we had a lot of females in our staff, it was like a ratio of one is to three (P3M).

The other participant added that gender policies are even available at area office (district level) where there is a reported attempt at policy implementation, the participant said:

Yah I think they do because from the district and area office, the Wellness unit normally does that. They take women more seriously; they are trying to use equity policies to empower the women (P3M).

In the focus group discussion, one participant emphasized that the school with just one male in its leadership is because they did not have a gender policy. She commented:

You should develop one, it will help you... I think that you have so few males because you don't have a policy, get it and read it... You need to speak for the boy learner in your school, that policy will help. Our school was like that, but we have changed, no we are still changing. Learners know what to do, we tell them about our gender policy, mmm... mam, I think they must get one (P5F).

In the question of gender policies and their implementation in schools, participants reported conflicting perspectives on the availability and significance of gender equality policies, their

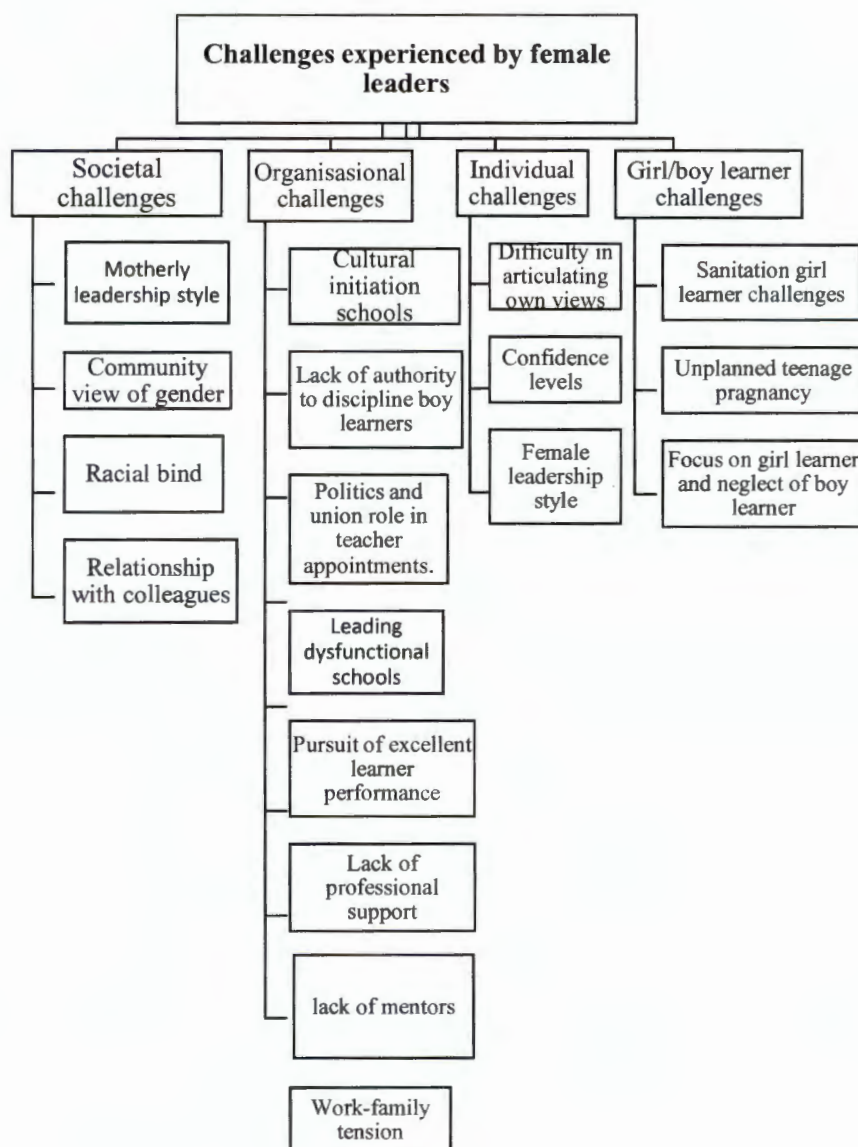
implementation and a gender diversified leadership. About four of the participants revealed lack of understanding of gender policy. Significantly, one school did not have a gender equality policy. Therefore, the school did not emphasize gender equality in its operations. On the contrary the other school produced a gender policy and there was evidence of an attempt at implementing it.

The study therefore found that schools that have and implement gender equality policies are slowly transforming gender relations. Transformed gender relations reduce discriminatory gender practices which are a challenge to women who are leaders in secondary schools. In schools where gender policies are not implemented, females who lead in these schools continue to experience challenges. Some of the challenges are discussed in the section below.

4.4 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY FEMALE LEADERS

The second research question asked was: *what are the challenges that are experienced by females who are leaders in secondary schools?* In response to the questions that were asked through face to face interviews, the sub-themes represented in the graphic design below emerged.

Figure: C. Conceptual framework for challenges experienced by female leaders in Bojanala secondary schools.



4.5.1 Society related challenges

These are factors that emanate from perceived traditional cultural historical beliefs, attitudes and stereotypes about the gendered role of leaders. Most participants mentioned the challenge of cultural gender stereotypes that associate's masculinity with leadership and consequently dissociates femininity with leadership.

4.5.1.1 Motherly leadership style

Some participants felt that the feminine qualities such as nurturing and motherliness of females is not a good quality for leadership and therefore should not be used for effective leadership. One participant dissociated mothering with leadership because he perceived it as a challenge for women, he said:

One of the challenges with female leaders is that they would also come and want to be motherly, but sometimes they even become motherly to their employees or their subordinates.... sometimes like I said they become too motherly (P4M).

The next participant's experience with cultural gender attitudes and stereotypes was blunt. She was openly told by some members of the local community of her school that she could not be the principal because she was a woman. She reported:

When I appear, they will say no, they said the principal is Mr. so and so. I will say but I am the principal, we have never seen a woman principal. They would continue to ask, why are you a principal, I don't talk to women (P8F).

4.5.1.2 Community views on gender

The attitude of the community towards the gender of females who are appointed into leadership positions is first reflected in the processes of shortlisting and interviews that led to the appointment and reception of the principal. Analysis of the SBG minutes on the interview process that led to the appointment of the principal of school B revealed that the school was willing and ready to have a female leader. The shortlisting process indicated that three of the five candidates selected for interviews were women. The minutes also revealed that a gender discussion ensued during the interview process. Reference was made that the overrepresentation of women in the staff should not inhibit the meeting from appointing a

female leader. It appears as though there was no gender bias in this case. This extract from the minutes read:

Mr X, the chairperson, was saying that there were seventeen females and six male teachers in the school... the deputy principal is a male and is suspended, he may come back. Mrs X said its ok, they want Mrs Y to be their principal because we know her. She has helped our school... our children are passing... The meeting agreed that Mrs Y be recommended to be the principal (SGB minutes of school B).

In responding to the question, one participant who is currently a circuit manager supervising the two principals indicated how they were positively viewed by the community when they became principals of schools. One said:

I can remember when I was appointed, the children were very happy and educators, the old educators, old staff but you must remember that when I was appointed, the new deputy was already in the office acting (P7F).

The community also positively received her regardless of her gender. She continued;

From the parent community I never had a negative response... Yes, no, the community was very supportive. I got nice flowers and cards and whatever when I was appointed. (P7F)

Two heads of departments who are her colleagues confirmed her claim that there were no gender discriminatory attitudes expressed towards her. Participant one who is a resident of the local community said:

They are also proud if they come across females that are in leadership positions... and they are quite supportive as well (P1F). The second colleague added:

to be honest I haven't heard such views at present, safe to say the one that people hold very close, would be a race one you know, you'd hear people express opinions based on the fact that she's white and all that you see that... but as for the fact that she is feminine, they don't express that kind of leadership (P2M).

All leaders from school A seem not to have experienced gender discrimination except the

deputy principal who reported that the only male HOD in the school management and leadership team defies at times defies the principal. She attributes the defiance to what she considers to be a display of gender attitude by the male leader. These are expressed experiences that reflect gender bias from the way communities and participants themselves view females who lead in secondary schools. (P9F) stated:

Challenges that I have experienced personally were coming from the parent side especially who are traditionalist, many folks didn't accept me as a principal... we have never seen a woman principal. They would continue to ask, why are you a principal, I don't talk to women (P9F).

The deputy principal of school A reports a similar experience with community reception of her appointment. She added that her situation was aggravated by the fact that, the principal of the school was already a woman, and the community could not take the appointment of a second female leader in their school. She indicated that they were brought up to believe that a woman cannot positively and meaningfully contribute to leadership. She reflected:

Most of the members from the community were not so happy because they wanted a male figure because remember I said the principal then was a woman. She added, according to the society, there's nothing good that will come out of a woman that is why when the community looks at me as a woman in leadership of the school, they still question this, and this how we were brought up (P6F).

The male HOD, participant 4 expressed similar view and said:

Well, when you meet people, they actually don't view female leaders very well, they don't respect them as much as they would respect male leader (P4M).

The gender bias is further reflected on the views of both male and female leaders regarding the cultural perceptions about female leadership. The female circuit manager noted,

Teachers will always undermine you because you're a woman.... the community under general will always undermine you because you're a woman (P9F).

The female HOD from school B added that because of this perceived inability of women to

lead, that they have to work more than their male counterparts do for them to be accepted as being capable of leading. She pointed that:

As a woman, you want to prove that you are able to do this, you work double than a man who would have the advantage, for examples with these learners (P5F).

While there was a mixed view regarding societal attitudes towards female principals, racial discriminatory tones regarding the principal of school A, who is white, were expressed by all four participants from the school.

4.5.1.3 Gender and racial oppression on female leaders

Most participants held a view that racial discrimination was apparent in one case school. They asserted that the discrimination was largely because the majority of learners in the school were black and the female leader was white. The principal of school A who was the first white woman to lead a then combined school (primary and secondary) in the area provided a picture of how her race impacted her when she first joined the school at a lower teaching level. She pointed out that:

it was basically the issue of trust because I was white, I was not trusted for anything, even if I do playground duty.... I was under a magnifying glass all the time (P7F).

Right from the beginning, the local teachers did not trust her because of her race. The entrenched racial segregation practiced by the then white racist South African government through the apartheid system played itself out even on the school playgrounds. People of color (Blacks, Indians and Coloureds) did not trust white people and white people did not trust black people. The participant felt she was treated differently from other staff members as she was put 'under a magnifying glass all the time' because of the colour of her skin. The racial attitudes continued when she finally was appointed as the school manager. She was told that not only her race but her gender was not acceptable to be in a leadership position in the school. Patriarchal attitudes became apparent when, according to the principal's report, she was told that she belongs in a white woman's kitchen. This implied that her leadership capabilities were questioned by the male Indian teachers in the school. She reported:

And then there was a big thing, a big racial issue because at that stage I was told by Indian males that I don't belong here, I belong in a white woman's kitchen (P7F).

The racial attitude challenged the principal greatly. She described this as a big thing. It appears that gender discrimination was not a serious matter here compared to racial oppression that the principal was subjected to. She indicated that

That was a big challenge that I had (P7F).

The HODs and the deputy principal of the school also supported the principal about her being racially discriminated against by other teachers. The male head of department confirmed the principal's views about her challenge, he also was of the view that it was more a race challenge than a gender one that she was faced with. He reported that:

It was going to be a question of race, because the principal is white and ninety-nine percent of learners in the school are black Safe to say the one that people hold very close to would be a race one you know, you'd hear people express opinions based on the fact that she's white and all that you see that... but as for the fact that she is feminine, they don't express that kind of thoughts on her leadership (P2M).

The principal added that the seriousness of the challenge manifested itself through threatening gender and racial stereotypical behaviour from some of her male colleagues. The patriarchal attitudes and beliefs held by some male Indian teachers degenerated into threats of extreme gender violence as the principal indicated that her daughters were threatened with rape. For example, she remarked:

I had this person who sent me text messages, threatening that they will come and rape my daughters, that they will burn my house, but that was always sort of dealt with within the school and dismissed as a small thing (P7F).

When the gendered racial treatment that she received as a teacher at a lower rank failed to inhibit her from occupying the top school leadership position, the personal attacks extended beyond the school environment and invaded her family private life in that her children were dragged into her professional life. This is indicative of how some males are prepared to defend the privileges that are associated with patriarchy. The intimidating behavior continued and at times set the tone for the principal's day as it unfolded on this particular day. She reported:

I would walk into the staff room in the morning and can remember, we had a short Indian teacher here, I don't know if I'm allowed to call his name, he was very emotional and very... one morning he walked in and he kicked a chair from the door to the other side of the staff room saying to me, that's what I want to do to you (P7F).

The other participants expressed no discriminatory practices or attitudes towards them. It is the white principal only who admitted to what she considered an insignificant amount of gender discrimination on her part. She concluded her response on the question of the challenges she faced as a female leader as follows:

The only time I had a gender issue was where the Muslim factor came in, because in the Muslim culture, the male is the dominant figure and they expected everything in the school to continue with that a male is a priority. When it came to any form of dividing our jobs or whatever, they expected the male to be in a better position because they deserve it (P7F).

This is indicative of the cultural stereotypes that puts males in a position of superiority. In this case, the stereotype is reported to emanate from gendered religious beliefs that places a male in a position of “priority” and implied, a woman in a position of insignificance. Insignificant even when she occupies a position of significance, power and influence. The participant reported that immediately upon her appointment as principal, all the Indian teachers except one in that school resigned and joined a religious school elsewhere. She pointed out:

You know I had to get to know the Indian culture the Muslim culture, the Hindu culture because this school originated as a Muslim school and over those years it transformed to become a Christian school where it is now. Then we heard that they were appointing people from outside the school after 94. Many teachers were redeployed from our staff. Many other Indian educators' especially male ones made way and they went to Pretoria in the Muslim schools (P7F).

The views expressed by most participants from school B were that the principal of the school was mostly racially discriminated against by the school community. That gender discrimination was not a major issue in this case. Participant (7) herself expressed a similar view. However, she also reported that many Muslim teachers left the school after her appointment as the

principal. Arguably, if the departure from the school of the many Muslim male teachers was motivated by religious reasons, females of the same religious belief would have left as well. This was not the case. The school staff still constituted a multi-religious beliefs team, albeit it has transformed into a Christian school, as per the report by (P7F). She expressed earlier the view that the Muslim religion prioritized males and that males are considered a dominant gender. This then could imply that the male Muslim male teachers who left the school in a significant number could have been motivated largely by patriarchal reasons that are embedded in their religion.

When participants were asked a follow up question as to what their own views were regarding the notion that says that females do not have the capacity and ability to lead, most of them indicated that the idea of women being unable to lead was an unfounded perception based on patriarchal gender stereotypical cultural beliefs. However, their responses were mostly qualified. The circuit manager, both principals and six HODs expressed a view that women can lead. However, their responses were mostly qualified. One HOD remarked:

I would think there's like a general misconception that women cannot lead. There are possibilities that woman can lead..., but then again I think it should also be linked with where the department has that strong support structure for female principals (P1F).

The other one added, "There is a stigma that we are not competent to lead, but women need to be supported, they have to be capacitated, then they can lead, yes, women can lead (P7F).

Participants feel that the capacity of females to lead requires support that the agency of women alone may not enable women to lead. This is an acknowledgement of the challenge of gendered perceptions and attitudes that still exist in the school leadership area about women's abilities to lead. Women therefore need support because they lead in a gender biased environment. Agreeing with some of participants above, and attributing the challenge that females face to women's own self- perception, the participant reported that:

I think women like to take the back seat. They do not want to be hands on (P6).

The next participant expressed what she considered an emotion by women emanating from the tendency by male teachers to undermine female leaders. She commented:

Our female principals think and feel that they will be looked down upon by male teachers (P4M).

On the basis of the views expressed by participants, the study found that most participants are of the view that women are capable and able to lead secondary schools, however, they suggest that the leadership of women should be supported because of the unequal gender environment in which they lead.

4.5.1.4 Working together with colleagues

Most participants reported that their work relationships with colleagues are good. They suggested that they did not have relational challenges with their male teachers, but reported the existence of some negative relationship with female teachers. The principal of school B reflected on her relationship with her teachers as follows:

I have a very good relationship with my male educators except that maybe with female educators, I have this little problem with female educators (P8F).

She reported that women sometimes find it difficult to take instructions from another female, they say:

It is a woman; I cannot take what a woman says (P8F).

This reflects the deep patriarchal views that makes it difficult for women to view another woman as capable of providing effective leadership and whose instructions should be carried out. This gendered perception about the leadership capabilities of women is revealed in this defiant behaviour of female subordinates.

Both male HODs in her school confirmed her claim of problematic relationship with female staff members when one of them said:

My observation is that most of their challenges come from female teachers even from female SMT members. I'm not sure why, but they tend to pull down female leaders (P4M). The second male HOD supported the views of his colleague as reflected in the extract below:

So that's the challenge that they are dealing with, so they have pull her down syndrome, actually more of that doesn't specifically come from the male educators, it is from the female educators, so I feel that females do not support each other (P3M).

The principal indicated that competition and pride make them to be attention seekers. The

females feel that as another female, principals should understand their gender unique issues better than they understand the male teachers. One of the female HODs in school A reflected on this view as follows:

Because you are females you both understand each other's problems, issues, sometimes you have you know family issues and things like that and you are able to understand each other, so with regards to the stresses that you go through with the job as well as family issues (P1).

From the analysis of the information collected from HODs, deputy principals, principals and circuit managers on the factors that challenge them, it can be concluded that challenges emanating from societal cultural gender stereotypes and attitudes still exist in schools leadership spaces, such as the lack of cooperation and support by female teachers who feel they cannot take instructions from a female leader, racial discrimination, the influence of traditional initiation schools, the perceived inability of women to lead, even though this view was expressed by few participants. However, most participants were of the view that women can lead, but, they need support. This study found that cultural gender stereotyping still exists in schools, however, participants reported that most of those were prevalent in the early years of their leadership. The latter suggested that years of experience assist women to manage their work challenges better. The study also found that most relational leadership challenges are those among females themselves.

4.5.1 Organisational related challenges

Other factors related to the persistence of patriarchy and gender inequality in secondary school leadership are related to the gendered nature of organisations and structures and practices within those organisations. Schools are social structures that are influenced by the communities that they serve and the context of their environments. They are characterised by gendered norms, beliefs, stereotypes, procedures and systems that are influenced by the community. The effects of the cultural initiation schools that some boy learners attend is an example as it indicates this influence.

4.5.2.1 Cultural initiation schools

The behaviour of learners in school B is an example of a reflection of community gendered

stereotypes that filters into the schools. Boy learners leave the school at a particular time of the year to attend a traditional school where they are taught to be men. One HOD commented:

When some boys come from traditional initiation school, from the mountain, they start behaving differently. They would come here at school for status, but we clamp them down (P4M).

The boy learners return from initiation school with a cultural perception and understanding that places them in a position superior to that of women, including their female school leaders. As a result of their perceived newly gained status of transition from boyhood to manhood, they subsequently refuse to participate in school activities that they culturally associate with the role of girls or women. They blatantly said:

I no longer clean because I'm a man (P4M).

The HOD who expressed these views attributes this behaviour, partly to what he viewed as: *Misconceptions from whoever was taking them through the initiation process (P4M).*

It is evident from the participant's experience that this was not a challenge for female leaders only, that this conduct affected them as male leaders as in his report, they had to clamp down on the learners' behaviour which was influenced by traditional cultural gendered attitudes and practices.

The cultural education that the boy learner receives from the initiation schools creates tension between them and their teachers and it is a different type of learner misbehaviour that a female leader has to deal with. This participant stated that cultural practices such as initiation schools are not considerate of the general rights of people. Same sentiments were expressed by the following participant:

Those are some of the challenges that we are encountering here. I think maybe the initiation process must take into account the human rights in totality, that even if you are circumcised or you're a man in their culture, you still remain a child if you're at school (P5F).

This implies that teachers still perceive learners from initiation schools as children and treat them as such. Teachers expect certain responsibilities and conduct from these learners,

responsibilities that are linked to the rights of learners because these learners are still perceived as children when they are at school. This is a contradiction of the reported self-perception of the boy learners who now perceive themselves as adults. This is a tension brought about by culture that female leaders in secondary schools have to deal with.

4.5.2.2 Lack of authority to discipline boy learners

An important factor that was expressed by participants as they responded to the question on factors that they consider to be challenging the leadership of females in secondary schools was the issue of the conduct of boy learners. Participants reported that this was a challenge for female leadership. They reported various reasons as driving forces behind the negative behaviour of bigger boys and girls in secondary schools. The principal of school B observed,

Being a principal at a high school is a challenge especially during this time when we have to deal with learners from different socio-economic backgrounds (P8F).

For this participant, the learner's background was the determining factor of his behaviour. As described in chapter three (section 3.5 on site selection) the school is located in a rural area. While the residential buildings around the school are of good quality and reflect reasonable economic viability/standing, some of the learners' commute to this school from surrounding informal settlements. The informal settlements cater for the migrant mine workers. One HOD cited his successful organisation of transport for these learners as one of his leadership achievements when he remarked:

We had learners from...shared a bus with learners from ... with my association with some people at the mine, we managed to secure a bus free of charge and that is one of the biggest achievement that I have registered (P3M).

Other participants attributed learner misbehaviour which is a challenge to the developmental stage and age of learners. She reflected:

It easy to control learners when they are still very small, but when they reach the adolescent stage, they give a lot headache (P5F).

While the issue of the conduct of male learners being influenced by traditional gender discriminatory influences from the traditional/ mountain school mentioned above appear to be

similar to this one, the difference here is that participants differ in their analysis of what motivates the male learner's misbehaviour.

One participant attributed the learner misconduct to the learner's developmental stage as she remarked as follows:

it easy to control learners when they are still very small, but when they reach the adolescent stage, they give a lot headache (P1F).

The HOD was explicit in her attribution of the misconduct, not to the age or stage of the learners, but to the gender of the learners. She reported: *I think one of the challenges is that in many instances it is disciplining the boys, especially the big boys (P5F).*

The extracts from participants confirm that the behaviour of male learners are considered to be challenges for female leaders. This confirms Mbepera's study, (2015:210) that found that female principals she was studying had discipline issues. Crossby- Hiller, (2012:97) also found that there was what she called "gender politics" between the female leaders and boys in her study. One of the study participants remarked that they had realised that older boys would not take them seriously and that the boys did not respect their mothers. Contrary to this study, the female principals were not able to discipline male teachers who were involved in professional malpractice. However, similar to this study is that female leaders were challenged by discipline issues.

4.5.2.3 Politics: The role of teacher unions in appointments of teachers

In trying to understand the challenges faced by women in leadership practice, this study identified the influence of politics and the union's role in human resources recruitment and selection processes of the department and schools as a factor affecting the leadership of females.

In responding to the question on the factors that contribute to female underrepresentation in secondary school leadership, most participants referred to the influence of politics in the schools and departmental human resource recruitment and selection processes. These are processes that facilitate the appointment of school leaders in promotional leadership positions. One participant said:

I think the politics in education is too much, and that is where the male appointments are made and there are so many capable females that are left out (P7F).

A corroborating view was that:

Sometimes people would say there's a lot of union interference you know, sometimes people get promoted because they have connections with people who are in top positions (P8F).

The remark by the circuit manager who is based at the area office within the district expressed similar sentiments and cited the corrupt practices that marginalises women during the hiring processes. She remarked that:

Sometimes things become money driven you know. SGBs can be owned can be captured, if I may put it that way (P9F).

Her report was that the alleged corrupt behavior extended beyond the school (with SGBs). That it also affected people constituting interview panels. This suggested that SGB members may influence panel members to favour their preferred candidate. Often the preferred candidate would be a male because the interview results prove preference to a male, because women would not be there. Her comment was:

Panelists if they are known can be. Once the SGBs are "captured", they are able to place the people who will drive their mission home. When we look at the interview results, women are not there. As I said earlier, women would be beaten at the table (P9F).

The results of this political influence is noted by one of the participants in her remark as follows:

I'm sitting here with examples of females that are quality material for leadership, but they are overlooking them, they cannot move further because the system doesn't allow it (P9F). According to the participant, the system allows the appointment of males in the main.

Political interference in the appointment of teachers in promotional posts increases female underrepresentation in secondary school leadership. Gaetane & Martinez *et al.* (2007:43) corroborate this finding when asserting that the challenge of underrepresentation of females in

secondary school leadership roles could be addressed by increasing the effort to recruit females.

4.5.2.4 Leading dysfunctional schools

The participants' view is that when females are appointed at times, they are placed in schools that have problems and sometimes are completely dysfunctional, the extract below provides that perspective:

I came to this school when it had problems, it was a dysfunctional school. I was deployed here ...the principal post was vacant, interviews were conducted but number one and two declined to take the post. They went to other schools; the school had no principal, the deputy principal was suspended, there was a problem with learner discipline and with learner performance, the school was trapped (P8F).

A "trapped school" is a concept used by the North West education department to describe a school that consistently obtained a matric performance standard that is below 70%). The participants had to do more than a male principal would ordinarily do to get the school out of a crisis situation. The participant was deployed to the school before she was permanently appointed as a principal. This means that the participant was transferred to a school that was without full complement of the management team as the principal was not yet appointed. The deputy principal was suspended, as such the school operated without its top executive management layer. Additional to the low performance of the school was the reported challenge of poor learner discipline.

4.5.2.5 Working harder in pursuit of excellent learner performance

Principals of schools reported that they were challenged by the poor performance of their schools when they were appointed into leadership positions. As indicated above, they were appointed in schools with problems, such as poor learner discipline. They therefore had to work harder to achieve excellent learner academic performance. Both principals explained how industrious they had to be to achieve their goals. The need for school success even disturbed their sleep. The extract below describes the leader's focus and hard work:

When I started, I can tell you that I never slept, I woke up every night from 3 o'clock because I was focused on making the school a success, suggesting that the school was not doing well,

that it was not successful (P7F).

The other principal had a similar challenge of ensuring that learners were doing well and reported a number of strategies that she employed to ensure improved learner results. She reported:

I started organising, I started communicating with the parents, fortunately I have a very good school governing body and I worked very well with the SGB. We started making meetings with the parents and I realised that most of the learners do not perform well not because they are not capable. The problem that I observed was that learners didn't have enough time to study. We then organised that learners stay at school. We incubated the learners during exam times and that was the year we got good results, even learners you didn't anticipate that they could have bachelors did so, that was the year we had the best results and the quality was good (P8F).

Participants were of the view that female leaders were not provided with adequate support targeted to them as women to enable them to deal with leadership challenges that are unique to them. While the above challenge may be a general problem that applies to most secondary school leaders irrespective of gender, this challenge becomes worse for female leaders as they deal with it in a toxic environment where they simultaneously have to deal with other gender related problems that their male counterparts do not have to face. For example, in section 4.5.2.1 above, female leaders had to deal with misbehaving boy learners from traditional initiation schools. Male leaders do not have this challenge of being undermined by boy learners from initiation schools.

Therefore, they may have to use less energy or work less hard than their female counterparts to produce similar results in terms of learner excellence in schools. This study therefore found that at times, female leaders may have to work harder than their male counterparts in order to get similar results especially with regard to success and excellence in learner performance. This hard work is necessitated by the work environment which is not gender neutral and gender relations that need to transform.

4.5.2.6 Lack of professional support

Participants were of the opinion that female leaders were not provided with adequate support targeted to them as women to enable them to deal with leadership challenges that are unique to them. Some referred to the lack of professional support, especially from the department of education offices as a challenge. However, some of the reports revealed that women do get some form of generalised support as leaders, but not as female leaders. This extract illustrates that:

Yes, as a female principal I do get support from home but, professionally I can't say I am not getting support (P8F). She then clarified the kind of support she gets:

I am getting the support from the department but not necessarily as women principal but like any other principal (P8F).

The other participant commented on the support that they get as HODs but lamented that the support was not enough when she reported:

I don't think so, I don't know. Here at school the principal gets support from the office, it's just subject advisors, we go to workshop, all HODs, even from other schools. The support is not enough. (P5F).

Supporting the claims from other participants about the lack of professional support from the employer, participant 9 acknowledged the existence of a programme that is intended to provide targeted support to women called Women In and Into Management and Leadership (WIIML), but admitted as an official from the area office that:

When we have to have WIIML activities and events, women will have to pay for those all the time, but we can only have it once a year, events in other periods of the year, schools will have to pay depending on the caliber of the principal and the SGB, so it is a hiccup in one way or the other. I wish that it can be funded so we can be able to put in more programs and more empowerment. It is delivering the goods at a very slow pace, because we do not have the budget for that (P9F).

The participant reported that women fund the WIIML program from their personal resources. Clearly, lack of funding for programs that support women hinders sustainability of gender equality. It results in a smaller pool of potential women leaders as fewer women are able to

make it into school leadership without support from their employer. The other challenge with the program was that it was treated as an annual event. This occasional event is seen as a hiccup by the participant. The lack of regular women supports and empowerment programs could be interpreted as a lack of interest and poor attitude by the NWED towards gender issues and women issues in particular.

The other challenge reported by participants was lack of support from parents. It appears that the lack of parental support to schools is a general problem to secondary school leaders. One participant captured this when she reported that:

I wish on top of that we could find support of the parents because you end up doing this parenting thing, it becomes difficult (P8F).

This study found that participants are of the view that generally they do get support from their families, however, the same cannot be said of support provisioning from the department of education. Participants acknowledged that they were professionally supported as leaders and not necessarily as female leaders.

4.5.2.7 Work- family tension

The researcher asked a related sub-question that required participants to explain how they balance their work-family responsibilities. Most participants remarked that their work responsibilities are carried over to their homes. One participant responded:

Yah, there is a lot of work here at school, sometimes I take it home, actually I'm compromising my family... because especially during exam times when the learners have to sleep at school, there are days when I have to sleep at school (P6F).

The other participant's response indicated societal expectation for female leaders to participate in community activities that compete with their professional responsibilities for time. The extract below reveals this expectation:

There are some sporting activities where as a principal you have to support the educators, but sometimes as a family you know we go to this funeral and all those other things where you are not able to oversee the sporting activities (P8F).

Similar sentiments were echoed by another participant when she said: *society expects us to do certain duties, especially black women during weekends. We have death cases over the weekends, weddings those kinds of things (P9F).*

The interplay between work and family and how it creates tension for leaders in secondary schools is well articulated by this participant who reported:

Personal things are to be a mother and a leader in the secondary school, because in the secondary school work is actually 24 hours. You need to be there all the time... At times we are too tired to do that, but because you're a mother, your husband will need your attention, your kids will need your attention, and if you ignore them, your conscious will tell you that, by the way, this family depends on you. So, they are always torn apart (P8F).

The male participants expressed his views as follows:

Let me say I have women who are in a leadership position and she brings work home. That can take a lot of our personal time (P3M).

This participant summed up the views of the others when she stated:

My work duties encroach much on my family life...I plan beforehand for the family, so that I can accommodate the job (P1F).

This study found that female leaders are challenged by a number of gender related factors that manifest in the workplace. The influence of cultural practices and beliefs that result in learners defying female leadership authority, being appointed in dysfunctional schools, having to work harder (such as monitoring of extra classes for matric learners) to achieve excellent learner performance due to competing family and community responsibilities, lack of professional support and the tension resulting in balancing work and family responsibilities are some of the factors identified as challenges to females who lead secondary schools.

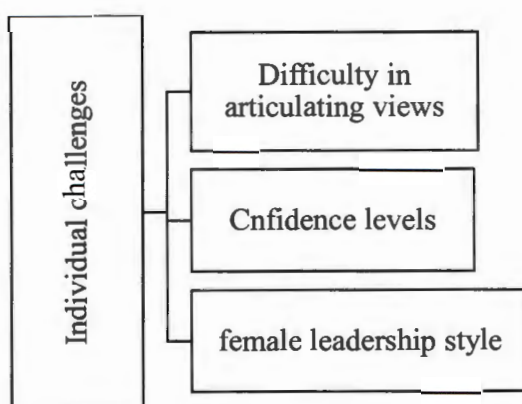
The study therefore found that work-family tensions were experienced by participants with work responsibilities encroaching into female leaders' personal time. However, participants

enjoyed the support of their families. Additional to societal and organisational challenges that females who lead secondary schools faced, challenges emanating from individual women themselves contributed to their leadership challenges are discussed in the next section.

4.5.3 Individual personal related challenges

The third sub-theme emerging from the analysis of the transcripts of the qualitative interview semi-structured questions is that female secondary school leaders experience challenges that emanate from the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of leaders themselves.

Figure: D The figure represents a summary of challenges that female leaders create for themselves.



4.5.3.1 Difficulty in articulating their views

Responding to the second research question and in particular addressing the question of the ability of women to lead, one participant said that,

Women can work but cannot talk that well. But at some point, men can talk but the work is limited (P9F).

The other participant argued differently about the issue of the agency of women and commented that:

sometimes women do undermine themselves, at times they do not trust that they can do things, they do not defend themselves, sometimes they keep quiet in a meeting, and talk outside the meeting, that's not good (P3M).

(P7) agreed with the views above and said:

It is here and there where you get that a female gets a chance but the impression that I have is that if you are not loud, you are not seen (7F).

This is an expression of concern about the ability of female leaders to articulate their views and ensure that their ideas influence the course of events. Participant 9 suggested that the female defence may be not in their verbal communication prowess, but in working and delivering results. Nevertheless, these participants state what they view as secondary female leader's inability to express themselves as a challenge to their leadership. Their opinion was that at times a women's voice is silent where it is supposed to be heard.

4.5.3.2 Confidence levels

The other participants expressed a similar but different view. One remarked as follows:

I think generally women are not self-confident more because of over the years how women have been looked down upon as not being capable in the corporate world, or in leadership roles, so we are getting there, but it's a long process (P1F).

A different view is expressed by this participant comment, *if you are a confident female you don't see your gender as something that keeps you back... but I think they (women leaders) have enough confidence to move (9F).*

A suggestion that female leader's confidence levels could be boosted by the attainment of higher qualifications such as degrees was suggested by participant 7. He said:

If a woman achieves more degrees, they gain that confidence to come out and go for leadership positions (P3M). He felt that, *so the more qualifications they have, the more they become better leaders.* Another participant confirmed the notion of better qualifications as a confidence booster for leadership. She remarked:

If you can pack your bags and come with a better weapon or a better qualification, it is then that you can be somebody your weight will count (P6F).

While there was consensus from most participants about the significance of qualifications in improving the confidence levels of female secondary school leaders, one participant cautioned that qualifications should not be equated to leadership. She said:

Many people are sitting with degree after degree and when it comes to making a decision or using common sense, they are not capable (P7F).

She argues that it is confidence, motivation for participation in leadership and hard work and not necessarily qualifications that help leaders navigate their way around the challenging secondary school's leadership environment. She said:

It is just your motivation and your willingness to work because confidence carries you all the way (P7F).

The general assessment in the participants' perspectives is that, experience counts in the management of workplace challenges for females. It appears that female leaders who have been in the education system and had gathered enough leadership knowledge, competencies and skills, are able to overcome some challenges. For instance, this participant reported that she overcame the stereotypical perception that viewed her as being inferior because of her gender. She created work systems that made people perceive her as a human being and not as a female. She said:

I'd say at this moment I have overcome them. I would say I have overcome the challenges of people looking at me as a woman because I have put systems in place that indicates that I'm a human being. I think these challenges I have dealt with them at the level of a principal (P9F).

The other one concurred:

At this stage nothing. I'm fine you know, I've been through a process of 20 years and if you asked me that question when I started, I can tell you that I never slept (P7).

The significance of experience as an enabler in terms of female leaders handling gender related challenges was further expressed by two other participants. One said, *well... at the moment, I don't have any personal issues that I think it's... they were in the past, there with extended family and so on (P1F)*.

4.5.3.3 Female leadership style

Another view articulated by participants as a challenge alleged to be created by female leaders themselves is their use of the nurturing leadership style that at times involves emotions in dealing with leadership matters. This issue was however perceived in different ways by participants. The comment below reflects on the participant's positive view of how emotions work to her leadership advantage. For her, emotions allow her to be empathic and to patiently work with learners who need assistance that requires time. She said:

As a woman, sometimes your emotions come up, but to me in a way, that is to my advantage (P8F). She then proceeded to give an example of how emotions work to her leadership advantage in that they allow her patience to work with learners who need assistance that requires time. She commented:

For example, there are learners who are from disadvantaged families and some of these learners are on drugs, some of them are in all these things, as a woman, when you get a learner in that situation you don't just dismiss the learner (P8F).

It appears as though participants link their emotional mothering, nurturing leadership style to learners with social problems. These learner challenges are dealt with in the way they could be addressed at home. The participant exercised this leadership style when she dealt with learner drug problems. The next participant utilised the same style when she dealt with learners who had lost their parents, an experience that she could identify with because she reported having lost her husband. The participants perform *in loco parentis* role by instinctively switching to the mothering parenting role, treating school learners as their own biological children. The extract below explicates this.

Remember I'm a mother and some of the school kids are going through the same thing, they have lost their parents, they come back to me as a parent I have my own biological kids and when I look at these learners, it affects me emotionally (P7F).

What is expressed as a challenge by some participants is that, some female leaders are afraid to use their leadership style of caring and nurturing. Participant (P9F) reported that:

Some of them (female leaders) are afraid to show their feminist side, to be mothers while they are leaders. They lose their touch with that feminine side of caring and of motherhood (P9F).

This study observes that, in the two cases referred to above, where the mothering style was used, it was when learners had social problems. Contrary to the reported advantages of the nurturing leadership style as stated by the participants above, very few participants, especially males, viewed this style negatively. They opine that it is an unacceptable style to some people, as this participant reflected:

As I said, some people feel that female principals want to mother them when they are actually mothers or fathers somewhere... and sometimes like I said they become too motherly (P4M).

The other one supported this view on the leadership style of women. He suggested that leaders who use the motherly nurturing style are unable to discipline learners. That empathy and “feeling for learners” hinders female leaders from exercising discipline. He said:

They (community) think that the principal doesn't discipline the learners more than a male would; they think that at times if she has to discipline the learners, she feels for them, that she has that motherly feeling for them (P3M).

Two sub-themes emerged from the participants' views about factors that are considered as challenges to females who lead secondary schools. Most participants expressed confidence in their abilities to lead. Only three of the ten participants reported not on their own opinions, but indicated that communities around the schools expressed reservations about the confidence levels of females to lead. Participants attributed the under-representation of females in the leadership of secondary schools to what they view as female leaders' inability to express their views during interviews for promotional posts. Thereby, leading to the selection and appointment of males who are viewed as being better in articulating themselves than women.

Also reported by participants is the leadership style that was viewed by most participants as

being advantageous to their leadership and yet perceived by a few especially male participants as being too motherly in an environment that requires the opposite. The study found that the nurturing leadership style was used and supported by most participants. It also revealed that most participants demonstrated confidence and reported being confident of their leadership skills, abilities and competencies. Interestingly, male participants expressed what they perceived as too much focus on girl learners and not on boy learners. The next section discusses those views.

4.5.4 Female versus male learner's challenges

In response to the question of what factors challenge secondary school leaders, an unexpected issue relating to female and male learners came up. Participants passionately expressed views regarding challenges that female learners face in schools. On the contrary, male participants seemed to complain that a lot of focus is on the welfare of female learners to the neglect of male learners, when female participants raised challenges that concern them such as sanitation issues and unplanned pregnancy.

4.5.4.1 Sanitation issues for female learners

Female leaders expressed concern about the female learner's sanitary conditions in relation to sanitary infrastructure at the school. They maintain that the toilet buildings for females do not meet the female learner's needs. That younger female learners are exposed to hygiene and health issues such as menstrual cycles which they do not understand because of their age. This is because the buildings do not provide privacy for older female learners to be discreet about their condition. This is a school that was initially a combined comprehensive school starting from grade 1 to 12. Even though the school is now divided into two separate distinct schools, learners from the primary and secondary schools still jointly use the same toilet facilities.

The other concern of female leaders was the inability of girl learners to afford sanitary towels because of their low socio-economic background. Notably, though the school is in town, learners come from rural villages and townships with low socio- economic conditions. Some come from informal settlements near the town. When girl learners cannot afford to buy the towels, they absent themselves from school. This absenteeism affects the girl learner's academic performance and ultimately their education. One participant articulated her worry as follows:

I am worried about the facilities, the girl's toilets, when they have the menstrual periods, the big girls have to change in front of the small ones, she further commented:

As a deputy I am worried about this mam, we are belittling our girls. These girls come from poor backgrounds. Additionally, they cannot afford sanitary towels, I wish we could buy them for them, when they don't have, they don't come to school, and they stay at home. Also, the unplanned pregnancies are a problem (P6F).

4.5.4.2 Unplanned teenage pregnancy

The second dimension of the female learner issue raised was teenage pregnancy. Another participant expressed similar views about what she viewed as the plight and suffering of girl learners which is the consequence of a female learner falling pregnant. The participant was concerned about the break in the schooling of the girls. This is a challenge that does not affect boys. Male learners continue to stay at school and continue with their studies, while female learners miss out on their education. She posited:

Yes, the girls suffer more than boys, they fall pregnant and leave school. The boys stay at school, especially those without parents, mam, we were talking to them last term (P6F).

This concern was more worrying to female leaders, because, the participant indicated that *I called four other lady teachers, we talked to them as their mothers (P6F).*

It seems that the female teachers and leaders are more concerned about issues affecting girl learners in the schools than male teachers and leaders are. The female deputy principal organised other female teachers to talk to learners. No mention of male teacher participation was reported. When the male participants were asked to comment on the female learner issue raised by the female participant, one participant responded as below:

I think if I am a male principal and this child has a problem of sexual abuse at home, in our culture and in our community, it becomes very questionable when a girl child goes to a male teacher to discuss such things (P4M).

The participant response above provided what could be an explanation for the fact indicated earlier that only female leaders seem to be challenged by the issues affecting female learners in the school. His view was that in their culture it was questionable for a girl learner to approach

a male teacher about issues related to sexual abuse. This reflects on the stereotypical gendered allocation of roles. In this instance, only female teachers or leaders can deal with female learner sexual problems. The assigning of roles to leaders in terms of their gender was corroborated by the participant, who as a female, reflected on how they avoided dealing with male learners for fear of being accused of not treating the male learners properly. She remarked:

We involve the male educators so that we are not accused of mishandling the boys, because the story can change you know one can say this is not about my wellbeing, I am obedient or something, so we try to avoid such things (P5F).

The other factor that seems to challenge female leaders is what some view as inappropriate attitudes of female learners towards their male teachers. According to this participant,

The girl learners will look at the educator neither as an educator, nor as a father figure, but somebody with whom she can be very intimate. She thinks she can have a love relationship with the teacher (P5F).

Additional to the relational challenges between male leaders and female learners, the following participant was of the opinion that the challenge was not about the female learner. He said:

Actually, we were talking as men that these days a lot of programmes are directed more towards girls than to boys and as such, we are creating an angry male child. We have a programme called GLIP, its one programme that mentors girl learners in mathematics and science (P3M).

The participant provided a different perspective to the girl learner issue, the focus shifted to the male learner. The other participant supported the emergent view that suggested that there is too much focus on the girl learner when he reported that:

Even bursaries are given more to females (girls) than males (boys), so it is no longer about gender balance, it is more like people are paying revenge (P4M).

Participants expressed parallel views regarding the issues affecting the girl and boy learners in secondary schools, which issues concern and challenge mostly female leaders, but are also a concern to some male leaders. The study found that the focus on improving the status of female learners with the intention of realising gender equity is viewed by some participants as gender discrimination in reverse. The study also realised that female leaders seem to be more

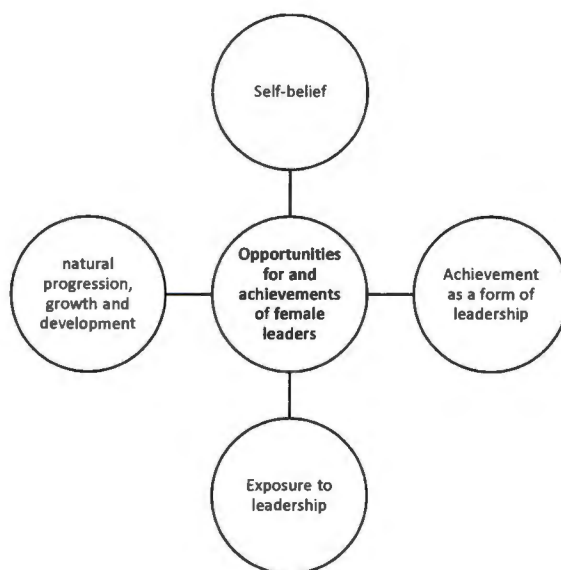
challenged by the negative conditions that affect girl learners in schools. In the construction of the reality of factors that challenge females who lead secondary schools, the participants identified issues in the education and school systems.

Procedures and practices appear to be influenced by and are directly linked to traditional cultural societal gender stereotyping. Most factors identified by participants are associated with the gender roles of male and female as perceived by the traditional society. For example, reported influence of traditional initiation schools on male learners, perceived lack of authority by females to discipline male learners, pursuit of excellence with the purpose of proving that women are capable, communities lack of trust in the ability of women to lead, tension resulting from work-family balance and the claim of seeming attention paid to the female learner at the expense of the male learner. Additional to gendered challenges that are related to the school or department of education, participants reported on other factors that are associated with individual female leaders themselves. While the focus of this study was on the challenges that females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district experience, participants expressed a number of positive leadership experiences which they viewed as opportunities and achievements in their leadership. These are discussed in the next section of this report.

4.6 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The preceding two themes focussed on the challenging experiences of females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala education district. This included the effects of gender inequality on those experiences. Interestingly, while the study mainly focussed on challenges experienced by the female leaders, a theme on positive experiences that are viewed by the female leaders as opportunities for leadership emerged. These positive leadership experiences perceived as opportunities by female leaders include among others; self-belief, a process of naturally progressing from one leadership position to the next, achievement of operational and personal goals such as improved learner achievement and gaining leadership experience by being exposed to the school leadership environment. The opportunities are summarised in the graphic design that follows.

Figure: B Opportunities and support for participation in school leadership.



Participants were asked to explain what they viewed as opportunities and achievements for them in their leadership career. The question was: *What are the opportunities available for females who are leaders in secondary schools?* In the context of this study, opportunity refers to any chance that presents itself to female leaders which could help them demonstrate their ability to lead or help them strengthen their leadership.

4.6.1 Female leaders' self-belief

It appears various factors motivated participants to participate in school leadership. Leaders at top management level such as principals seems to be driven by confidence and self-belief in their ability to lead. Some reported that they enjoyed leadership challenges. They believed that there was an opportunity for them to make a positive contribution to the quality of education offering in their schools. The participant commented:

I have always believed that I am a leader, and in order to prove my leadership skills, I am one person who likes challenges and in facing a challenge, it shows that I can make a difference (P8F).

The other principal, also felt that she was destined to lead, she remarked,

I think it (leadership) came naturally to me (P7F). By the time female leaders were gearing themselves to join the top leadership arena, the conviction that they were ready and equipped

to participate in those positions already existed in them. This also indicates the importance of experience for females to confidently crack the “glass ceiling” and venture into top secondary school leadership positions.

The circuit manager who had gained the necessary leadership experience at HOD, deputy principal and principal level demonstrated even greater confidence and self-belief. She had more than ten years of leadership experience. For her, participation in leadership was an opportunity to share gained leadership knowledge skills and competencies at a much higher level than the one she was operating at then. She indicated that she already possessed the ability to influence others, as Christie (2010:695) explains leadership as an influence emanating from relationship that may be informal or formal. The circuit manager stated:

What motivated me to become a circuit manager is that as a principal, there were certain issues that I felt I had a clue on, and I felt that if I become a circuit manager, I would be in a position to influence at a much higher ran (P9F).

4.6.2 Natural progression, growth and development

While participants in top school management of the case study schools seem to be driven by experience gained at the lower levels of school leadership to advance to higher, more challenging positions, the participation of those at lower levels of school leadership (deputy principal and HOD) seem to have been encouraged by different reasons. For three of the five HODs, participation was an opportunity for them to learn, to grow and contribute to the development of the school, for example the one participant indicated:

I wanted to grow personally, and to learn more. (P3M) Expressing a similar view, the other concurred, *I think I wanted to know more. I wanted to be a leader (P5F).* Their colleague had this to say as reasons that led him to be in the school leadership team.

I think you start with this desire to say as an incumbent 'akere mo o kgatlegang, (where you have interest) do I see myself as somebody who could assist in the position? Be able to say to others, ok how about we do it this way, and not that way, and to take that position of responsibility of how you actually shaping up and moving on (P2M).

Participant 2 above felt that he was ready to take a position where he could assist others while

at the same time positioning himself in shaping his career path. To him, the HOD position allowed him to advance and “move on”.

4.6.3 Experience and exposure

The last two HODs were driven by slightly different reasons. One was in a teacher post level which is not a leadership designated post, but had an opportunity to engage with principals. He explained:

I have always worked in technical school as a PL1 teacher, but always in management. I found it challenging that you have to challenge people and address misconceptions around education management and how we should behave towards each other and as a result, I knew after my interaction with all principals that I would make a very good leader, that is why I applied for this post (P4M).

(P4) found the discussions he had with school principals about management issues challenging as they often involved having to address what he referred to as “misconceptions” around education and relationship matters. It is evident that these discussions exposed him to management and leadership skills such as interpersonal relations as they discussed how they should behave towards each other, how to address conflict management, communication and others. The participant gained experience that ensured him that he would be a good leader.

The fifth HOD, also found that having had an opportunity to act in a leadership position prepared her. She indicated that she carried out management and leadership tasks of moderation and monitoring of her colleagues’ work while she was still occupying a lower position. This preparatory experience made her eager to get involved in management because as soon as an opportunity to officially lead presented itself, she leaped in. Her comment was:

I was already moderating and monitoring for new teachers that came in because at that stage there was no head of department for commercial subjects. As soon as there was a post available and it was advertised, and I applied for it (PIF).

This study therefore found that, availing themselves for volunteer management or leadership work, or being asked to perform management and leadership tasks and functions is a good preparatory exercise for advancement to leadership positions for teachers in lower positions. Doing management and leadership work provides requisite experience for next level leadership position.

It seems that the level of leadership position occupied has an influence on how participants viewed reasons for entry into leadership. The circuit manager and principals were confident of their ability to venture into their challenging positions. They viewed themselves as possessing qualities for top leadership. On the other hand, HODs were encouraged to participate in leadership by experience gained from acting in the leadership positions. Some were motivated by their desire for professional growth. The deputy principal was differently motivated. She attributed her motivation for participation in leadership as having been propelled by a case of gender, age discrimination and male domination, she indicated:

When we talk about management it was all men, three of them, as a woman I felt like I was a bit discriminated against and continued to declare: so, we didn't have anything to say even if we were not for that idea (P6F).

The participant commented that she did not have anything to say. She felt that her voice was silenced by male domination because they did not have anything to say as female leaders. There were three males and only one female in the school. The participant viewed that as a violation of her right to express her views. This participant also felt that her constitutional rights were violated and that she was discriminated against not only because of her gender, but because of her age and marital status as well. The school leadership is reported to have been constituted of elderly married people. On the basis of that, the participant was of the view that she was also discriminated against because of her marital status and age as well. Therefore, for this participant, the bind was tripled (gender, age, and marital status). She maintains that she was viewed inferior in three areas.

It was those days when our rights were violated, because I was a woman, I was young, I was single and the management was made of top guys, married and with families. I was treated like a child so I felt so bad (P6F).

She further reported that it was the treatment she received as a young single female teacher that motivated her to go back to school and further her studies. She believed that obtaining a degree qualification would be a better weapon to defend herself against patriarchal attitudes displayed by her male managers. Interestingly, all participants have a degree qualification. This treatment made her feel bad especially when she was overlooked when a leadership post she felt she deserved was given to someone else. The following extract succinctly reflects on her views and emotions.

I stayed in that school for three years with a diploma qualification, and after that I made up my mind that I can no longer take this, I can no longer take this treatment from this man, one time there was a post for a HOD, I felt deep inside that I'm doing enough and I deserve this, but someone was brought in from outside, it really felt so bad, they could have just said X if you can pack your bags and come with a better weapon or a better qualification, it is then that you can be somebody, your weight will count. (P6F)

Table 2 above shows that most participants had extensive teaching experience. Experience plays a significant role in leadership and is a requirement for entry and participation in school leadership. Participant's experience ranged between ten and twenty years of leadership. *I have more than 15 years as head of department (P5)* the other one said, *this is my seventh year (P1F)*. Only one male participant had a lower experience of between three and five. This experience counted in the participants favour in their entry to leadership.

4.6.3.1 Achievements as a form of leadership

Participants were also asked to indicate their achievements as leaders. In this regard, participants reported various achievements. Most of them were of the view that they made significant contributions in the improvement of learner academic performance in their schools, especially matric results. They therefore had a different interpretation of what leadership means. Their understanding of the concept was not confined to one form. They viewed their achievements as a form of leadership. For instance, participant 8 regarded her achievement of improving matric learner performance as leadership. Her influence on her subordinates and the manner in which she practiced her leadership enabled her to reach her curriculum goals. She one commented:

Because I made a difference in the results of the school. To me that is an achievement because ever since I came to the school, the results have improved tremendously. I have evidence to that. When I came here, I recorded the achievement of the school since 2005 so that I can see the impact that I am making. The last good results that we had at the school were that in 2005 and the results where down the year I started being the principal. I took the results from 56 percent to 90 percent (P8F).

The HOD from school A echoed the same sentiments of contributing to producing excellent

results in her school. She reported deriving satisfaction from her achievements. Participant appeared not to be concerned about the position of leadership, but the difference that she could make in the lives of her learners. Her satisfaction came from their success. For her, achievement in leadership is doing ones' job well, and well for her was seeing her learners occupying top positions in their various jobs, she said:

Achievements, we've had learners that have excelled over the years. I've had many learners that come back, that are in top positions in the corporate world, obviously it gives you the satisfaction that you've done your job well. (P1F). The other concurred and remarked:

Since I came to school B high school, it has been performing, both academically and in sports.... there are number of things that I have improved, number one, learner attendance improvement (P3M).

Some participants perceived supporting learners to succeed as a form of leadership and hence achievements were reported in different areas. While some reported paying attention to helping learners improve their performance, others claimed to have concentrated on the general welfare of those learners who could not perform academically. The following extract from participant (4) illustrates that notion:

One of my highlights that I usually talk about is that, when I noticed this was a learner who could not perform academically, we decided to look for other things for him to do and we took him to a technical school where he was trained as a carpenter.... That boy is currently a carpenter and a designer at Sun City (P4M).

The participants commented about their agency which enabled them to achieve their dreams or goals. This one referred to the financial assistance she managed to obtain for her school which was in a form of sponsorships. In this instance, fund raising was a form of leadership. Participant 8 said:

I was able to have some business proposals in my school and through that I started moving around looking for sponsorship to make sure that my school is well resourced. Even in my department I had my own way out of having things done prior to others.

Conclusively, both male and female participants were of the view that their achievements were largely reflected in the performance of learners. Their achievements may be viewed as a form

of leadership, because, leaders had to influence those they work with in order to achieve.

I have about more than 15 years as head of department (P5F) the other one said, this is my seventh year (P1F).

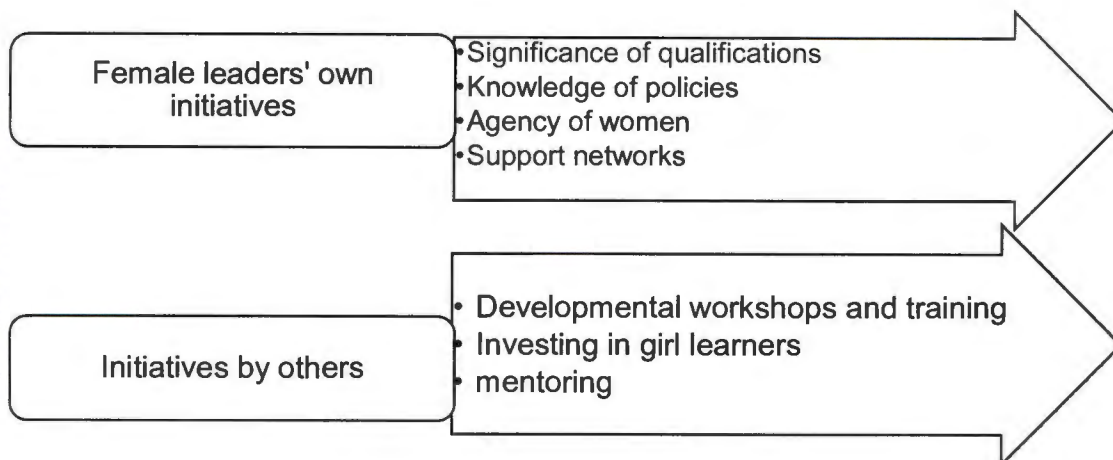
In line with the first study objective mentioned in chapter one, participants advanced different views of what they considered as opportunities and factors that motivated their participation in education leadership. The opportunity to develop, to grow, to share gained expertise, to utilize leadership experience gained in lower positions and general contribution to schools were some of the views expressed by participants. Some mentioned the improvement of learner performance as their main achievement as well as the general welfare of the learners itself to them to lead. Derived from these expressed opinions, the study found that most participants, regardless of their gender, regarded their participation in leadership as an opportunity for professional growth and development. They were also of the view that utilizing experience gained in previous promotion posts, or during performance of delegated leadership functions is an opportunity to lead. The study therefore found that female leaders use their achievements and any opportunity that presents itself to them to lead.

On the basis of this finding, the study concluded that exposure to leadership practice prepares female leaders. The more women are represented in leadership positions, the bigger the pool for mentoring and role modeling for those who are in lower positions. Seemingly, experience may help female leaders navigate their way to leadership positions better and manage leadership challenges.

4.7 STRATEGIES OF ADDRESSING CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE LEADERS

The above theme emerged from participant's responses to the fourth study sub-question that asked: How can challenges for females who are leaders in secondary schools be minimized? Two sub-themes reflected in the figure below were deduced from the analysis of participants' data. The strategies were categorized into actions that are within the capability of women themselves, and actions that could be taken by other people, structures and organizations in order to address the leadership challenges of females.

Figure: E. It represents a summary of strategies recommended for addressing female leadership challenges



The study objective was to establish mechanisms and strategies that could be put in place to minimize or address the challenges experienced by females who are in positions of leadership in secondary schools.

The analysis found that the strategies could be categorized into two broad sub-themes, i.e. those that can and should be executed by secondary school leaders themselves, and those that could be carried out by other people, structures or the education department itself. Their comments also covered how the current gender equity status can be addressed so that its negative impact on female leadership is minimized. The following sub-themes emerged: provision of support, empowerment and capacitation to leaders, creation of platforms for idea sharing, the nurturing of the female learner for sustainable gender equity, the need to adhere to policy implementation, and the recognition of female agency as a powerful tool to address leadership challenges.

4.7.1 The significance of qualifications

Participants recommended a number of steps that could be taken by female leaders themselves in order to address challenges they face. One participant raised the issue of qualifications. He was of the view that the attainment of degrees would help minimize challenges because that would increase the confidence level of female leaders. The participant associated degree qualifications with intellect and reported:

If a woman achieves more degrees, they gain that confidence to come out and go for leadership positions. An intelligent woman makes intelligent decisions. I know it sounds more like a cliché, but once they know something they act confidently (P3M). The other participants agreed and commented:

if you can pack your bags and come with a better weapon or a better qualification, it is then that you can be somebody, your weight will count (P6F).

The importance of knowledge of policies was also raised. This participant reported that when female leaders are knowledgeable about documents that guide them on how to operate their schools, such as policies they are able better to handle their work challenges.

4.7.2 Knowledge of policies

Female leaders in secondary schools should also try to ensure that they know all the policies. One of the participants said:

In most instances when women are given positions, let me say through the affirmative action policy, they forget that when they are occupying leadership positions (P3M).

The other suggestion was that of avoiding the motherly approach to issues and just sticking to policy will help alleviate leadership challenges for female leaders in the secondary school. The participant said:

If we can just stick to policy. For example, when you have to charge a person you put yourself in that person's shoes and say policy says this and this, you allow emotions to influence you. If we could just be policy orientated (P8F).

The question of the agency of women was also raised. Participants suggested that it was to the advantage of female leaders themselves to be awake to their power through self-knowledge and self-awareness. This report suggested the need for female leaders to audit their capabilities and abilities, package that and create a powerful brand and use that to mitigate against challenges especially gender related ones.

4.7.3 Agency of women

Participant's responses also revealed how they recognise their power. *Women should also note that they have power in themselves, must know their strengths and weaknesses (P9F)*, remarked this participant. This implied that women should not act as victims in the situation, but rise up to utilise whatever strength they possess to address their challenges. One participant agreed that women have gained experience and knowledge derived from the raising of children that should be utilised in future, she reported that knowledge is an investment and said:

Now the emphasis has changed, women are now capable and that is an investment for the future because they raise children with a different perception, they raise children with the know-how and the strength to rise (P7F).

Additional to participant's suggestions of what female leaders themselves can do to minimise the challenges that they experience, some recommended external support as a resource, provisioning workshops as possible solutions to the challenges that female leaders go through. This comment explains participant's view on possible solutions to problems,

We need to give them the necessary support that they require in terms of the resources that they might need (P3M). A corroborating view was that women need to be assertive, challenging cultural stereotypes norms and beliefs, she reported:

Assertiveness, I am thinking about culture you know ... Sometimes when you are assertive people think that you are becoming a man (P8F). Other strategies were provided in a form of personal advice to leaders. The participants view was that issues emanating from work should be carefully shared with partners at home as they may strain home personal relationships. The following was said:

They should not share what's happening at work with their spouse that is one; secondly, they should just come to work and work and thereafter forget about work, ...If she wants to share her frustrations, she can do so, but at the same time, she should be careful not to give them information that might destroy their relationship (P4M). [Referring to the husband and wife relationship]. The significance of support for women to be able to handle their leadership challenges was emphasised in the next section

4.7.4 Support networks

Some participants felt the need to establish female support networks as platforms that would create an opportunity for them freely to share their ideas and discuss their challenges. The participant suggested as follows:

If we can unite and have a platform where we can exchange our ideas, there must be a platform where we can exchange our views, discuss the challenges that we are facing, but unfortunately those platforms are not there, with those platforms we can end up minimising those challenges because my challenge here is that we have structures at the top, but when it comes to policy making, we don't have representatives., we must have representatives (P6F). Over and above initiatives that women who lead secondary schools could themselves take to reduce the challenges, other measures that could be provided externally to women were identified, e.g. capacity building workshops.

4.7.5 Workshops and training

Additional to what female who leads in secondary schools can do to address their challenges, participants view was that provision of workshops that are earmarked for female leadership development and growth. Emphasis was on development that is ongoing and guides the female leader throughout their leadership career.

(P1F) remarked:

I think they need to go through some kind of developmental workshops or they need to have some sort of continuous support so that when they come across or encounter certain situations, they know who to turn to for guidance and, you know, for intervention so that they are able to grow (P1F).

Both male and female participants expressed the need for the empowerment of female leaders. They indicated that the lack of women empowerment will lead to some kind of failure in the education system. This extract clarified that view.

Other things that can be done is to empower women, if we can't empower our women somewhere somehow, we are going to fail (P3M). The other participant added:

I think when we empower them. It should not just be talk shows, maybe we should have programs that are implementable, where will see progress in what we are doing (P9F).

The participant suggested that women empowerment initiatives should be practical and that schools should be able to participate meaningfully in them. The initiatives should be able to address issues of succession planning and increase the pool from which women leaders can be obtained. Succession planning for female leadership ensures gender equality sustainability. An example of the kind of development programs that are implementable and are preparatory in nature was suggested:

We need a program with succession planning to create a legacy to say when this one leaves you know, who comes in. Women must be in that plan, they must be trained and prepared to take up serious positions like CFO. I should think that the department should be serious with the AA policy you know. This will help increase the number of women in leadership. The more the women are in our secondary schools, the bigger the team, and I think maybe ... the less the challenges (P9F).

4.7.6 Investing in girl learners

Other participant suggested that teachers who like him, are aware of gender discrimination and its impact on education should take the responsibility to invest in learners by preparing them for leadership. Such teachers are to be proactive and help girl learners. This should be by way of affirming them positively and making them conscious of their greatness and responsibility to become future leaders. This participant remarked:

I think it is just to go into it [gender equality] and dig our heels in, I think it takes for us now as educators who hold this view [gender equality] to ensure that we take these girl children on board and perhaps it is that we are not doing enough to make them aware that in fact you know that you are the greatest, you can lead this world not just this country, you see that? Have we impressed it on them? (P2M) This last rhetorical question by the participant suggested that secondary school leaders might not have done enough to impress on the girl learners that they are potential leaders. The same view of investing in female learners was raised by (P7F). She reported:

I think the way that I was raised, I had a single parent my mother never gave me an opportunity to say I don't know, or I can't, and I think that is a very important thing that we need to teach our girls (P7F). The importance of a role model or a mentor was directly raised by one participant.

4.7.7 Mentoring

Participants maintained that mentoring is significant for female leaders. They view it as a leadership tool that would help them address their challenges. Some participants believed that mentoring would assist them improve their performance. One remarked:

We should also try to mentor them where they are we should try not to dwell much on the mistake but on how that mistake can be avoided in future. The need for mentoring was supported by this participant who said, What I think is that I need to get a mentor who would assist me with the challenges that I am having, that is the one thing that I want to have. With a mentor, I would be able to get to a certain level of my work performance (P8F).

One of the objectives of the study was to identify possible strategies that could address and thereby minimize the challenges that are experienced by females who are leaders in secondary schools. The above exposition derived from the participants' responses to the fourth study questions revealed two categories of activities and steps that are said to be able to address female challenges.

Among those strategies that could be employed by female leaders themselves are the following: improvement of qualifications, being knowledgeable about policies, the awareness of the agency of women to transform their work environment, and the creation of female support networks. Other support mentioned was the provision of training and empowerment through workshops, mentoring and investing in the girl learner. Based on the participants' views as expressed in the report above, this study found that females who lead secondary schools can navigate their challenging leadership environment by executing strategies that are within their power in order to address some of their challenges. It found that women have the agency to transform their leadership environment.

The study further found that the department could provide support to women through empowerment and development training that is geared towards capacitating them to lead their departments and schools better. The study found that the claim of policy availability and implementation in interview data is corroborated by document analysis. It also found that where there is a policy that clearly articulates guidelines in respect of gender equality and is implemented, the status of women in such schools is advanced.

The analysis and interpretation of data obtained from the participant' views and the content from documents on challenges that are experienced by females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district revealed the emergence of four themes and a number of sub-themes. From those themes, the following findings of the study are mentioned:

- Most participants perceived participation in secondary school leadership as an opportunity for professional growth and development.
- Achievements are a form of leadership.
- Exposure to leadership practice at teaching level, or through delegated leadership functions may prepare females for higher leadership positions.
- Seemingly, leadership experience may help female leaders to navigate their leadership and to manage their leadership challenges better.
- In instances where the school has and implements a gender equality policy, gender relations are improved and the status of women is advanced, leading to better female representation in school leadership.
- Female leaders suffer from both racial and gender discrimination.
- Challenges experienced by female secondary school leaders emanate from societal, organisational and personal gender related factors.
- Cultural gender stereotypes still exist in schools.
- Politics and union role may negatively influence the appointment of females in promotional posts in schools.
- Female leaders lack targeted professional support from the department of education.
- Work-family tension is experienced by female leaders in secondary schools, with work responsibilities encroaching on leader's personal time.
- Lack of mentors.
- Insufficient networking platforms.
- There is a growing concern from female leaders about the plight of the girl learner in schools, while male leaders are also concerned about the seeming focus and over attention given to the girl learner at the expense of what appears to be neglect of the boy learner.
- Women struggle to negotiate and clearly articulate their ideas especially during promotional posts interview processes.
- Female leaders have self-belief and are confident of their leadership skills, abilities and capabilities.

- Females leadership style of mothering and nurturing was valued and is believed to provide added advantage in enabling female leaders to gain better understanding of learners' social problems.
- Investing in girl learners will increase the pool of potential women leaders and thereby sustain gender equality in secondary schools.
- Good qualifications, knowledge of policies, utilisation of women's agency, provision of support and mentoring would help minimise female leadership challenges.

4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter reported on the data presentation, analysis, interpretation and findings of the study. The presentation outlined and explained how the main study questions, questions from the interview guides and emergent themes and sub-themes relates. The graphic designs and some tables presented a summary of some important study information for ease of reading. Data analysis emerged with the following four main themes which are, the effects of gender on female leaders, challenges experienced by female leaders, opportunities available for female leaders, and strategies of addressing challenges that are faced by female leaders. Themes are evidenced with extracts from transcripts of both interview and documents data. The emergence of each theme is reported on, with detailed descriptions, conclusions drawn and findings stated. The next chapter discusses the main study findings and links the findings to those in other studies as discussed in the literature that is reviewed in chapter two of the study.

CHAPTER: 5 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented, analysed and interpreted the data that was qualitatively obtained from participants through interviews and documents analysis. The purpose was to achieve the study main aim which is the exploration the leadership experiences that are considered as challenges by females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district of South Africa. This chapter will critically discuss study findings and relate them to the findings of the literature reviewed in chapter two of the study. The findings are discussed within the four main themes and sub themes that emerged during the analysis process: Gender equality and its effects on female leaders, opportunities for achievements of females who lead secondary schools, challenges experienced by female leaders and suggested strategies for addressing them. The analysis revealed that, study question two induced richer findings than the other questions. This could be attributed to the direct nature of the question. Its wording is directly linked to the wording of the study, main question and the topic. From the first theme, the following was found:

5.2 THE EFFECTS OF GENDER INEQUALITY ON FEMALES WHO LEAD SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE BOJANALA DISTRICT

This is the theme resulting from responses to the third research question of the study which asked: How does gender inequality in the district affects females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala? The study found that more women in the education system and in the Bojanala secondary schools are gradually making their way into school leadership positions. However, they remain underrepresented in leadership positions. It also found that while policy implementation was intended to help improve the realisation of gender equality and the advancement of female leader's status in the workplace, ineffective implementation of the policy by the authorities allowed patriarchy to persist. Patriarchy creates challenges for women who are leaders.

5.2.1 Underrepresentation of females in school leadership

The study found that there are more females than males in the education system and in the case study. The schools SMT and SGB constitute 56 females and 49 males. On the contrary, females are underrepresented in the leadership of secondary schools. Of the 54 leadership positions considered in the study, females are not even half of the number. Only 23 of them are in leadership positions. Some researchers found the same underrepresentation in their studies for example (Mautle, 2014:90 & Msila, 2013).

The finding is consistent with South Africa (2017:1) that indicated that, of the 258 secondary school principals in the Bojanala District, only 56 of those are women. It is also consistent with the view of South Africa's Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) that focussed on gender issues. Its observation on gender equality and equity in the national education department was that women occupied lower ranks in education and men are in the top leadership positions. The group further suggested that it would take more aggressive action to move forward and reach the desired 50% gender representation. The minutes of the group indicated that in the education department, most women taught at lower grades, their roles are restricted or confined to nurturing responsibilities. Higher administration positions such as HODs and principals seem to be the preserve of men (South Africa: PMG, 2016).

The SGB structure is male-dominated. This also reveals that females are still underrepresented in decision-making positions. Patriarchy puts males at the centre of decision-making in a number of areas. This finding confirms the study of Akala and Divala's assertions (2016:4) who contend that patriarchy puts males at the centre of decision making, headship and allows them to occupy political and production spaces. The finding is also consistent with the study by Diko (2014:830) which found that SGB committees were largely chaired by males, and that even in instances where committees were led by a female, the locus of decision-making power was still with males. For instance, the male junior to the HOD in that study, defied instructions given by female HOD. This practice was condoned by the male principal who allowed the male teacher to undermine the female HOD.

This situation throttles them. Underrepresentation of women in school leadership contradicts one of the objectives of South Africa (2007:2) that directs that the voice of women in civil

society should be strengthened. While females are participating in secondary school leadership as the numbers indicate, they are doing so at a very slow pace. The slow pace of advancements of women into leadership positions confirms Msila's (2013:464) assertions that whilst some scholars maintain that the status of women in the workplace is gradually changing, it is happening so at a sluggish pace, and that it is still male-dominated.

5.2.2 Ineffective policy implementation

The study also observed that some schools do not have nor effectively implement gender equality policies. In such instances, gender imbalance results in the appointment of school leaders such as the case in school A where there is only one male leader in a leadership team of four. Clearly, gender balance is ignored in this case. This finding is consistent with Rarieya *et al.* (2014:4) study that stated at times policy implementation ignores the fact that sometimes officials who are tasked with policy implementation responsibility are at times themselves conservative and have moral attitudes that prevent them from implementing the policy effectively. They argue that these officials are often uncomfortable discussing the policy because in doing so, they threaten their own positions.

In agreement with Rarieya *et al.* (2014), the report emanating from the hearings on gender transformation in the education department, North West province also pointed to the existence of patriarchal attitude within the department. It refers to the remarks of the head of department who concluded that *there is also a mind-set problem that lies with male functionaries- the more women advance themselves, the more it upsets functionaries who feel entitled to the positions* (South Africa, 2014:14).

Finally, on policy implementation, the study found that when schools have a gender equality policy and the policy is understood and implemented, opportunity for the realisation of gender equality increases and gender relations may improve. On the other hand, where there is no policy implementation, patriarchal practices are perpetuated and neither gender equality nor equity may be achieved. It was noted that schools that have policies are aware of gender issues, and when they attempt to implement policies, gender equality and the status of women in leadership may be advanced. Participants from the schools with a gender policy were all

conscious of gender issues and indicated that gender is a topic that they discuss in their meetings.

It should however be noted that the realisation of equality as in the case school with a balance in the number of males and females in the leadership team does not necessarily mean that gender equity is realised. Having women occupying positions of power does not necessarily mean that they are actually in possession of power. In her study, Diko found that the way in which the school implemented gender equality prescripts inhibits the transformation of school leadership and gender equality as espoused in the Constitution (Diko, 2014:832).

Chapter two of the Constitution refers to the promotion of human rights for both women and men. Women should be allowed to exercise the power embedded in the leadership positions they occupy the same way as men do. South Africa (2006:13) argues that the participation of women in decision-making processes is a human rights issue because women constitute about a third of the workforce. It further states that equality of opportunity and treatment in employment is their right. Arguably as Moorosi (2010:2) posited, the deeply entrenched societal stereotypes may not be eliminated by policy efforts alone. Indeed, the law alone does not guarantee gender equality. However, such efforts are a worthy as a starting point. While it may be argued that the policy frameworks that were intended to create conducive gender neutral work environment for female leaders in schools did not completely achieve the desired goal, there were opportunities where women overcame their challenges and registered success and achievement of some their leadership goals. These opportunities are discussed below.

5.3 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY FEMALE SCHOOL LEADERS

This theme emerged from responses to the second question of the study. The question asked: What are the challenges experienced by females who lead in secondary schools? The study found that factors that are considered to be challenges for females who are leaders in secondary schools originate basically from three areas, society, organisations, and individuals. This finding corroborates Mbepera's (2015:185) study that explored the factors that influenced female underrepresentation in central secondary schools in rural Tanzania. The study found that the underrepresentation of females was the result of personal and organisational factors. Shin and Bang (2013: 1) investigated the top factors that prohibited women from advancing

into positions of leadership and utilised the ecological model that considered factors that are societal, organisational and those emanating from individual female leaders. The finding also agrees with Schwanke (2014:17) who concluded in her study that women are challenged by structural issues that are generally found in society and those that are found in corporate settings.

5.3.1 Societal challenges affecting female school leaders

Societal factors, such as the community's view of their female leadership, racial discrimination and female leader's relationships with colleagues are some of the factors that challenge females who are leaders in secondary schools.

5.3.1.1 Motherly and agentic leadership style

This study found that female leaders largely use motherly, a caring, leadership style, combined with agentic leadership depending on circumstances. The motherly style is mostly used in the interaction with learners. Female leaders found that this type of style allows them to get closer to learners and probe into factors that mainly affect learner misbehaviour in school. It is a style that encourages patience when leaders have to address behaviour change issues that require patience with learners. Indications are that female leaders in this study are comfortable exhibiting their feminine leadership traits. They are proud to use leadership traits such as nurturing and caring which are not conventionally and culturally associated with leadership.

Women in the Lumby and Azaola (2014:36) study concurred that the motherly leadership style enables female leaders to respond better to the needs of learners than men do. They further found an overlap between the male and female leadership style. Female leaders do not feel pressured by using the agentic leadership style only to conform to societal cultural expectations. Schwanke (2013:21) posits that when women enter positions of leadership, they are challenged by society's expectation that expects them to exhibit feminine traits everywhere and then switch to exhibit agentic traits in leadership. Either way, women then end up being accused of being either too masculine or too feminine. This creates tension for women to balance the two. The study finding also confirms Naidoo and Perumal (2014:822) who found that women in their study demonstrated positive qualities that promote social empowerment such as nurturing, child rearing, compassion and spirituality. However, they also concluded

that women in their study used a combination of relational and autocratic leadership style. This study finding is contrary to the finding of Mbepera, (2015:187) who observed that women in her study used autocratic leadership style only. She attributed their preference for this style to their lack of confidence and support from communities and colleagues. Her argument is that the agentic leadership style was adopted as a defence mechanism against patriarchal attitudes, tendencies and practices from the school community. Understandably, women in that study led schools that were in deep rural areas, while the one school in this study was located in a rural area that was only fifteen kilometres from the nearby town. The community in the latter school is traditional and yet modernised and better developed compared to the villages and communities in Mbepera' (2015) study. Female leaders in this study challenged the traditional stereotypical perception that paints the motherly leadership style as weak. The next section explains how slightly gender transformed the community in this study is. Nevertheless, the community remains traditional, and patriarchal attitudes still exist.

5.3.1.2 Community view of leadership by females

While participants in the study were asked how their appointments into leadership positions as females were received by the school community, including the external community, only one participant reported a negative reception. Most commented that they were well received by especially the learner population as well as the external community. The principal of school A stated that she was given flowers and learners were particularly welcoming of her appointment as principal. Similar sentiments were expressed by the principal of school B who explained that she had already proved her competence by improving learner performance. She was transferred to the school in an acting capacity before she was permanently appointed. Her reception by the community was therefore positive as she already had a record as a performer. The one serious incident of gender discrimination was reported to be with one particular teacher in school A.

On the contrary, the study by Naidoo and Perumal (2014:819) found no cooperation and support from the school community. The community expected a male to have been appointed in the school. It was a rural community with deep societal cultural stereotypes. Teachers in the study especially male ones were also not cooperative with both female principals in the study. The principals believed that the teachers had the "pull-her down syndrome". They were not well received by their community.

5.3.1.3 The double bind: race and gender discrimination

One of the findings of this study is that, in addition to gender discrimination as a challenge to female leaders who lead in secondary schools, racial discrimination frustrates some of the leaders. This is often the case in schools that are multiracial in staff composition or learner population. This finding is consistent with researchers such as Gardiner, Emato and Grogan in Naidoo and Perumal (2014:810) who claim that one of the factors that contributed to underrepresentation of women in Nigeria and South Africa was race coupled with gender. Racial prejudice was experienced by the principal of school B who was white and led a school with a majority of black learners and teachers. She was told that she belonged in a white woman's kitchen. Reference to the colour white signalled racial attitudes and reference to a "kitchen" is indicative of gender bias. This implied that the principal does not belong to leadership as a woman and in that community as a white woman.

Chisholm 2001 cited in the same study also suggested that lack of confidence which is associated with gender, was the result of race and gender. The impact of race as a challenge is also accentuated by Lumby (2014:41) in a study that found that race coupled with other factors such as gender, ethnicity, religion, age etc., were part of what is called "a discriminatory web of identities" that either creates or sustains the gender status of male domination. The exploration of the three oppressive factors, gender, race and class presents a better understanding of the complexities of female leadership challenges. Schmidt and Mestry (2015:819) correctly argue that in order to understand the obstacles of women leaders they studied, they had to put the women's experiences of their oppression within the context of politics (race), economics (class) and culture (gender). They did so because these are key in South African legislation and to women's experiences.

Kanjere (2010) posits that women in South Africa faced oppression from two fronts, referring to political oppression from Apartheid and a psychological oppression emanating from communities. Concurring to the interface of gender and racial oppression of female leadership is Moorosi (2010:548) who acknowledged that while gender discrimination is not the direct result of apartheid, it cannot be divorced from the traditional race and ethnicity prejudices. Gaetane and Martinez (2013:46) also found that race was of equal significance to gender in its effect on women's accession to power. The oppression of both gender and race to female leaders are relevant to the feminist perspectives because feminist researchers suggest that the

feminist perspective is able to understand oppression and offer solution to the phenomenon of oppression. Purnell 2007 in Kallie (2015:30) concurs and argues that academic feminists tend to explore and have understanding of the theory that underpins oppression, but, significantly, offer knowledge on the source of this oppression, and solutions to its eradication. Further emphasising the existence not only of a double but triple bind on women is the (South Africa, 2014:3). One of the guiding principles of the policy is its recognition of historical distinctions that were made based on gender, race and class. The policy correctly argues that these distinctions impair or nullify the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms by women.

Racial oppression needs to be addressed for the status of females to be advanced. Liberal feminism has assisted the researcher to explore possible measures that can address female challenges such as racial discrimination. The other finding is about the relationship of female leaders and their colleagues.

5.3.1.4 Female leaders' relationship with colleagues

The study found that while female leaders reported their relationships with their colleagues to be good, it also emerged that their relationships with female colleagues were a challenge. The empirical evidence suggested that females do not enjoy the support of their colleagues, especially from their subordinates. One male HOD reported that female teachers have what he called Pull her down syndrome. Female teachers are said to pull those in leadership down, they do not support them. One principal indicated that at times female teachers expect female principals to be more understanding of their female issues than males because the principal is also a female. This implied that, when female teachers have not met their teaching obligations due to problems that are unique to females, the principal should be understanding, empathic and sympathetic towards them. When the principal does not act in terms of this expectation, she is negatively viewed and consequently not supported by female teachers. This tension in the relationship between female principals and female staff members confirms the finding in Naidoo and Perumal (2014). They found that principals in their study experienced some resistance from their staff members and expressed a feeling of isolation. One of the principals in that study also referred to teachers having the “pull her down syndrome” (Naidoo and Perumal 2014:819).

Mpebera's (2015:199) study found a different scenario where female principals, and not teachers were not supportive of their subordinates. She found that female principals prevented fellow female teachers from working towards attaining leadership positions. They were not willing to share developmental information with their subordinates because they were jealous and they wanted to avoid competition. They scared their female subordinates by projecting leadership as a heavy loaded position which female may not cope with because of their family responsibilities. Arguably, this view perpetuates gender stereotypes that perceives females as weak and incapable of leadership. The study by Lumby (2014:41) found a similar practice by some of the women in the study. The study stated that *women were acting as guardians of patriarchal mores and values*, and that they perpetuated the limiting views of women's roles by believing that women would not make it in leadership because of the heavy load. Implied is the discriminatory cultural view that only men can carry the perceived masculine heavy leadership load. Such views may potentially entrench sexism in school leadership.

The practice or tendency of discouraging or inhibiting the advancement of other females may be associated with what is referred to as the *queen-bee syndrome*. This is the tendency of some women who have achieved some success to want to be the only women among men in top leadership positions. They are unwilling to share information or encourage other women to advance. Schwanke (2013: 21) suggests that women use this as a coping mechanism to keep their place at the men's table. This is a challenge because these are women who could be serving as role models and mentors for women occupying lower leadership positions or those aspiring to be leaders. Hamel (2009:247) in Schwanke (2013) explains that women maintain their positions at the men's table by aligning themselves with male interests and perceptions (Schwanke 2013: 21). This implies that the queen-bee syndrome perpetuates male domination and may work against the movement to advance female status and gender equality in the workplace.

5.3.2 Organisational challenges to female leaders

One of the study findings is that female leaders are challenged by factors they experience in the organisations that they work in. These organisations are in turn influenced by some societal facts discussed in the previous section. The study observed the following factors as affecting the work environment of females negatively: traditional initiation schools, politics in teacher appointments, appointment of females in dysfunctional schools and work-family tension.

5.3.2.1 Effects of traditional initiation schools on boy learner behaviour

One of the factors that emerged as challenges for females was the effect of traditional initiation schools on the behaviour of learners. In school B in particular, some learners leave the school at a particular time of the year to attend to the cultural initiation school. Or what are referred to at times as the mountain school. The purpose of traditional schools is to initiate boy learners from *boyhood* to *manhood*. The challenge for women leaders is that, when these boys return from the school, they no longer view themselves as boys but as men who are culturally considered to be superior to female leaders regardless of their positions as Principals, Deputy Principals or HOD's. Resultantly, the boys refuse to carry out instructions from female leaders resulting in them being viewed as defiant and misbehaving. Boys are further reported to refusing to carry out school tasks associated with girl roles such as cleaning their classrooms. This results in them violating the schools' gender policy that expects both girls and boys to clean their classrooms.

Naidoo and Perumal (2014:819) also found that attendance of cultural initiation schools by boys interfered with the education of the learners and that parents in the study were actually more supportive of the cultural school than the modern one as they were prepared to financially spend on the traditional school, and yet showed less interest in the education of their children.

The finding on the influence of traditional initiation schools was limited to the unbecoming behaviour of only those boys who attended the school. Additional to misbehaviour emanating from initiation school influence, the study observed that generally, female teachers seemed to be challenged by the behaviour of bigger boys in secondary schools. Three factors were reported as contributory factors to the bigger boys' behaviour, the adolescent stage, their socio-economic backgrounds and the female leader's own inability to deal with the bigger boy's discipline. This finding corroborated studies such as Crossby- Hiller (2012:97) and Mbepera (2015:210) who respectively found gender politics where boys did not take female leaders seriously, and that female leaders had problems disciplining boys. Kallie (2014:125) who found in her study that discipline in secondary schools was and continue to be a challenge to schools. Kallie (2014:125) concluded that discipline was a challenge affecting leadership personally and professionally. This study argues that female teachers are affected more than male teachers

by the misbehaviour of teenage boys. This is because of cultural societal influences on the perceived high status and position of boys and men in society, compared to the perceived lower position of girls and women.

5.3.2.2 Politics in the appointment of teachers in promotional posts

This study revealed that challenges that affect leadership of females are varied and complex. It is observed that one of the challenges in schools is the role played by politics in teacher appointments, specifically the role of some teacher unions and SGB's in the education system. Teacher unions are supposed to play an observer role in the HR processes of recruitment and selection of teachers. The study found that SGB's and panel members at times influence interview processes to favour their preferred candidate who in some cases are males. Chapter four section 4.5.3 and figure 3 revealed that the powerful position of chair, which position is critical in the interview processes for recruitment, are held by men.

Participants maintained that there are politics in education and that some male appointments are made at the expense of capable female leaders. Panel members are said to be "*captured*" representing the interests of inappropriate candidates. The word "*captured*" is a concept commonly used in South Africa to refer to undue influence exerted of on a person or a structure. It implies manipulation of circumstances to exercise control behind closed doors. SGBS are alleged to be vulnerable to bribery and corruption. The finding is consistent with that made by the Ministerial Task team that was set up by the South African parliament to investigate the alleged interference of teacher unions in the appointment of teachers in promotional posts. This report was aired in a number of radio and television stations in South Africa, one of which is the television station called News 24. The report found evidence of inconsistencies in the process of selection of candidates for appointment into promotional posts in the education sector of South Africa. Subsequent to the finding, the report recommended that the powers of the SGBs regarding the hiring of teachers in leadership positions be investigated (Tondwa, 2015). Manipulation of recruitment process as suggested by the report entrenches the domination of males in school leadership.

5.3.2.3 Appointment of females in dysfunctional, crisis schools

The researcher argues that women are at times appointed in schools that are dysfunctional and this stretches female leaders. The study observed that this was the case with one of the school principals. She was appointed in a school with multiple leadership challenges. The school was actually dysfunctional because it was without a head and a deputy principal. Someone who was appointed in the principal post declined the appointment and preferred to take it in another school which was not dysfunctional. The deputy principal was suspended. Learner discipline was a serious problem in the school. Appointment of females in such schools threatens the success of females who bravely accept appointments into them. The challenge is that these women have to work harder than their male counterparts to normalise their schools and turn them into functional organisations.

This finding confirms other findings such as Schwanke (2013:3) who argues that additional to women being placed in units that are in crisis, they are also given work with higher standards than men. Crisis units and dysfunctional schools create a situation where women are at a high risk of fatigue and burnout. Schwanke further posits that such hostile working environments lead to women leaving their jobs. Additionally, when women work standards are not equal to those of men, this demands of them to double their effort to reach their goals. When they do not perform as per expectations, Schwanke argues that they are accused of incompetence. These are deliberate patriarchal strategies that set women leaders up for failure. When such high workloads are combined with family responsibilities, they put immense pressure on women. This may compromise their leadership abilities (Schwanke 2013:3).

5.3.2.4 Work-family tensions

The challenge of women leaders having to balance work and family responsibilities is well documented in research South Africa (2016:2) reported a concern by members about the treatment meted out to women, particular reference was made of the long hours that women work, as these hours are not conducive to family life. Participants confirmed this concern as they strongly expressed how monitoring extra classes during school holidays and on Saturday's stretches them and interferes with their personal times.

Female leaders are challenged by the tensions that arise as their work and family responsibilities compete for their time and attention. Cultural stereotypes assign home chores to females. Men are culturally exempted from performance of those. This study established some tension that results from the competition of family and work responsibilities for the female leaders' time and attention. The study observed a concern from female leaders about work responsibilities that encroach on personal time. Leaders reported how some, especially principals and deputy principals have to monitor extra Matric classes that are conducted during school holidays and on Saturdays. With experience, women in this study have developed strategies to manage this conflict. Family support also eases the pressure, however the conflict still exists. The work-family tension is worsened by lack of professional support for women.

5.3.2.5 Inadequate professional support

A number of factors act as challenges for females to effectively lead their schools and advance in their leadership. From the empirical data, the study established inadequate professional support that is targeted at female leaders. Principals reported that they receive minimal support as principals, but not support as leaders who have been historically marginalised. They claimed that they did not receive support that is directed towards their empowerment so that equity is realised in their workplaces.

Arguably, a programme called Women In and Into Management and Leadership was conducted as an empowerment initiative by the Department of Education in the North West Province. However, leaders indicated that the programme did not help them much as it was conducted as a celebratory annual event. Mautle (2013:92) found that the secondary school female principals in his study did not receive training that assisted them to confidently enter the school leadership position. Professional support in a forum training helps improve leadership skills. Msila (2013:1) concurs with Mautle, (2013:92) that women's experience, skills and knowledge remain limited in comparison to that of men. Rarieya *et al.* (2014:5) supports him in the call for the development of teacher development programmes that are reflective in nature and deal with gender issues in education. The calls for support and training for women is to enable them to operate in an equitable environment with their male counterparts. Affirmative action should be applied to ensure gender equity. Arguably, until women are brought on par with males in relations to their leadership skills and knowledge base, they will continue to experience gender challenges as the plain field is not levelled for fair competition for leadership opportunities.

The study further observed that even the female support programme that is provided, is not adequately funded. Participants reported that women are at times expected to fund their empowerment activities from their private purse. South Africa (2015) confirmed the lack of budgets for programs that support women. A contradictory finding was established by the Mekonnin's (2014:74) study that found a small number of females (1.7%) whose leadership was affected by family responsibilities.

5.3.2.6 Working harder to achieve school goals

The findings discussed above are indicative of the challenging hostile work environment that female leaders work in. It was also indicated in the discussion above that some leaders were appointed in dysfunctional schools, where cultural stereotypes influence and shape organisational culture and practice. Additional to this challenge, this study observed that female leaders have to work harder than their male counterparts in order to produce the same results, especially improved learner performance. One principal explained how she never slept worrying about how she was going to achieve the school goal of improved learner performance.

The other principal expressed the same concern about her dysfunctional school and how she also had to employ several learner performance improvement strategies such as organising learners to stay at school. She was happy that the goal was achieved, the school produced the best results that year. While the improvement of learner performance is a goal expected from every principal irrespective of gender, the two female principals worked harder in an environment that was not friendly to their efforts as they had to grapple with other challenges that only females are confronted with Heilman, (2006) cited in Shin and Bang (2013:1) also found that when women are promoted to leadership positions, they are expected to meet standards of performance that are higher than those held for men. Arguably, this is more so when they are appointed in schools that are dysfunctional. The situation may be worsened by the lack of a mentor who can guide the female leaders in going through such challenges.

5.3.3 Individual challenges to female leaders

This study found that additional to societal and organisational challenges female leaders in secondary schools experienced, three factors that specifically challenged female leaders. These are the difficulty in articulating their own views, perceived low confidence levels and the

leadership style of women. It should be noted that the alleged low confidence levels in women leaders were observed by mostly by male participants, and they were few.

5.3.3.1 Difficulty in articulating views

The study found that women at times are said to be unable to articulate their views especially during interviews for promotional posts. This is one of the concerns of feminism as it propagates that the voice of women needs to be heard. This is also one of the motivations of this study, that the study serves as a platform for secondary school women leaders to express what they consider to be challenging their leadership. When women are not comfortable articulating their thoughts in interviews and in other situations, men would take the centre stage and air their views. This results in their appointment in leadership positions. In this way, females continue to be underrepresented and male domination continues in school leadership.

This finding corroborates other studies such as Shin and Bang (2013) who pointed out if that women are less likely to negotiate for what they want. The reason for this is that when women assert themselves, they are labelled as demanding and unreasonable. Whereas men are applauded for being assertive, and being tough negotiators for doing so. The study argues that when women's progress in terms of negotiating for themselves is limited, there is no evidence that they are all silent. Some are beginning to express their views and thereby influence the course of their leadership. For instance, one of the participants who is an official of the Department of Education elaborated on how she successfully went out and sourced sponsors to support her school. This kind of success demands that the principal articulates and motivates for her request. She has to convince sponsors that investing in the school by way of sponsoring is a good investment for them. This exercise demands good negotiation skills.

5.3.3.2 Low confidence levels

Most participants were confident of their leadership skills and a few explained the low confidence of female leaders as a factor that challenges them especially with regard to participation in secondary schools where learners are bigger and their behaviour more challenging. This finding confirms Mekonnin's finding (2014:81) who contends that, because the school community considers a woman not to be capable of leading, women tend to underestimate their own worth, and perceive themselves as not worthy of leading schools.

This implies that women's self-perceptions are not solely the creation of women themselves. Msila (2013:469) attributes those perceptions to societal creation. This assertion about the perception about women's confidence and ability to lead is also captured by De Beauvoir in Msila (2013:464) when stating that, *successful women in history have demonstrated that it is not women's inferiority that has determined their historical insignificance, but their historical insignificance that has doomed them to inferiority*. Contrary to this view that attributes the self-belief and confidence of women largely to societal influences, Smith (2011:1) found that women in her study did not allow themselves to be at the mercy of cultural stereotypes about women. Those women used their agency to make decisions regarding their careers. She correctly argued that women are not helpless creatures whose lives are completely and absolutely shaped by societal factors and workplace discrimination (Smith 2011:12). Interestingly, the few participants who spoke about the low confidence of women were mostly males. Most women in this study expressed confidence in their leadership ability.

5.3.3.3 Female leadership style

Contrasting views were expressed in relation to the leadership style of women. Earlier on in section 5.4.2.1, mention was made that the motherly nurturing leadership style was favoured by most participants. However, the study also found that some participants, though few, perceive this leadership approach as creating challenges for female leaders. The study found that most participants preferred and supported the motherly approach to leadership, while others viewed it as a weak approach that is not capable of dealing with issues such as learner ill-discipline. Those in support of this leadership style, argued that it enables them to get closer to learners when leaders deal with learner's unbecoming behaviour resulting from social challenges. Those who are against this approach argue that, the approach encourages female leaders to get emotional and that, in their view, was not good for leadership. The view is gender bias and is aligned to the belief that associates leadership with toughness, assertiveness. Feminine traits such as relational and emotional are dissociated from leadership.

5.4 FEMALE LEADERS' CONCERNS ABOUT THE GIRL LEARNER ISSUES

The girl learner issues refer to any difficulty that a girl experiences in a school because of her gender, and is mainly the concern of female leader more than anyone else in the school. The difficulty may be experienced from a home or school that affects the education of a girl learner.

5.4.1 Girl learner sanitation concerns

Female leaders are concerned by the condition of sanitation that girl learners have to deal with. The study found that female more than male leaders, are concerned about the school sanitary infrastructure that does not respect the privacy of older girls and the vulnerability of younger girls from exposure to the menstrual cycle of teenage older girls. Participants reported that traditionally, males may not discuss such issues with girls. They are women only challenges. The younger girls e.g. grade 1-3 may not understand what is happening and may be scared by the process of menstruation. Female leaders are also concerned about the fact that girls from poor socio-economic backgrounds are not able to afford sanitary towels. This results in a high absenteeism of girls in schools. Absenteeism negatively affects their academic performance. This is an experience that the boy learner is exempted from. The poor academic performance of girls is reported at times leading to girls dropping out of school. This affects the number of future potential female leaders, and may contribute to underrepresentation of females in positions of leadership in secondary schools. Additional to the sanitation issues of girls is teenage pregnancy.

5.4.2 Concern about teenage pregnancy

The study found that female leaders are also concerned about the rate of teenage pregnancy in their schools, especially school B which is located near mines. Some HOD's expressed concern about teenage girls who have relationships with male mineworkers for economic reasons. The study observed that female more than male leaders are challenged by the rate of teenage pregnancy in their school. These leaders indicated that as female leaders and mothers, they regularly hold what they call "girl talk" with girls to educate them about sex and health issues. The challenge is that teenage pregnancy increases the dropout rate of girls. Even when girls come back to continue, they have already lost valuable time that set them behind their boy learner counterparts. In the same way as the sanitary issue discussed in the previous paragraph

affects the potential future leadership opportunities for girls, teenage pregnancy may have the same impact.

The research conducted by Sherfer, Bhana & Morrel (2013:1) found a contradictory attitude of the interpretation of policy regarding learners who become pregnant and are mothers while they are at school. They realised that policy interpretation was not always sympathetic and supportive towards pregnant learners. They attribute this policy stance to gender bias in the dominant cultural systems of the society. This study and others cited herein confirmed that patriarchal practices are still there in the schools and societies that host the schools. However, the study found that even though patriarchy creates challenges for female leaders, the leadership environment has opportunities that allows women to register some achievements that strengthen their leadership.

5.5 THE EFFECTS OF OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY THE EDUCATION SYSTEM ON FEMALE SCHOOL LEADERS

5.5.1 Opportunities that are available to females who are leaders in Bojanala secondary schools

The study found that despite the challenges that women experience as discussed in chapter 4, section 4.3.7 of this report, females related positive experiences of their leadership. They indicated that they utilise their participation in school leadership as an opportunity to develop, grow and share their knowledge and expertise and make a significant contribution to education. Female leaders in this study re-defined the concept of leadership. To them, any opportunity they have or achievement they register, is viewed as leadership because the two enable them to make a difference in their schools. In this way, female leaders in this study have re-defined the concept of leadership. This finding is consistent with the South African nation building vision as stipulated in the National Development Plan (NDP) that states, *therefore, in 2030, we experience daily how: we participate fully in the efforts to liberate ourselves from conditions that hinder the flowering of our talents* (National Development Plan 2011:3). Arguably, by taking advantage of existing legal frameworks such as The Constitution of South Africa, act 108 of 1996 that seeks to advance the status of females and redress imbalances such as those created by gender discrimination in education leadership, females may advance gender equality

in education and thereby improve their work environment to achieve more of their leadership goals. An example of such a goal is improvement of learner performance.

5.5.2 Achievements as a form of leadership

The study also found while female leaders in secondary schools experience challenges most of the female leaders were successful in improving learner academic performance especially at matric level. They viewed their achievements as a form of leadership. Their participation in school leadership was an opportunity for them to transform their underperforming dysfunctional schools into successful institutions with regard to learner achievements. One principal reported how she improved matric results of her school from 56% to 90%. The study also found that female leaders were learner focussed and oriented in their leadership. This study argues that while females still face numerous stereotypical gender challenges in the workplace, equally so, a number of opportunities are there for them to take advantage of and transform their hostile work environments into spaces that allow them to make significant contributions to education and to the nation. The policies discussed in the theme on the status of gender and its impact on female leadership are examples of powerful tools that can be utilised by women to advance their status.

Admittedly, as Moorosi (2010:2) argues, good transformational policies alone do not guarantee gender equality. There has to be willingness on the part of those tasked with policy implementation to drive it effectively. Focus should be on the implementation of equity so that women compete fairly for leadership opportunities that are there with men. The needs of Women need to be assessed and responded to through equity. However, women need to take the lead in accessing available opportunities that will help their leadership development and their status in general. In this instance, Diko's (2007:1) suggestion that women themselves need to stand up and exercise their democratic rights is appropriate. Msila (2013:465) concurs that women need to set the agendas for their meetings. Arguably, Women leaders need to determine how their work places should be and avoid acting as victims in an environment with a potential for transformation of gender relations in the workplace. However, leadership experience may be an advantage for female leaders to deal better with gender based workplace challenges.

5.5.3 Advantages of leadership experiences

Another finding on the opportunities that are there in school leadership for female leaders was that, leadership experience has an added advantage. Some leaders, particularly HODs had an opportunity to gain valuable leadership experience by performing delegated leadership functions. Others were given an opportunity to temporarily act in vacant leadership posts. Some gained their experience through long periods of leadership practice. Most females' leadership experience ranged between ten and thirty years. In fact, most indicated that they have overcome most of their challenges over the years. These opportunities provided the female leaders with leadership's skills, knowledge and competencies that boosted their confidence to participate in leadership position when an opportunity arose. By seizing the opportunities given to them, the leaders demonstrated willingness and ambition to participate in the challenging secondary school leadership environment.

The study therefore observed that, exposure to leadership experience serves as a positive preparatory exercise for entry and participation in secondary school leadership. This finding adds to the findings in other studies such as Moorosi (2010:14) who stated that as women become experienced and understand what is going on in management of schools, which was the case of the women whose career paths she explored, their lack of self-confidence disappears. She argued that women felt more comfortable to venture into positions of principal after they had performed some leadership functions and had overcome the fear of the unknown.

Finally, on the first study question that enquired about the opportunities that are there in school leadership for women, the study found that additional to leadership experience serves as a good preparatory tool for leadership. It also enables leaders to manage the leadership challenges better. Those with extensive leadership experience (such as those with ten to 20 years) maintained that they experienced gender-related challenges in the early years of their leadership careers. And they said that most of those challenges had been solved as they gained experience and put in place work systems and processes that enabled them to address some of the challenges. This finding is also a confirmation of Moorosi's (2010) view stated in the preceding paragraph, that experience removes fear of the unknown from female leaders. Arguably, when leaders are fearless, they are in a better position to confront and address some of their challenges.

5.6 STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY FEMALE SCHOOL LEADERS

This study found a number of ways suggested by both literature and participants that can be employed to address the challenges that are experienced by females who are in positions of leadership in secondary schools. On the other hand, other studies caution about the potential of some of these strategies to yield opposing unintended results. For example, Lumby argued that in an attempt to address the disadvantages of discrimination, women themselves may embed structural disadvantages. She concluded that those principals were caught in what is referred to as “discriminatory web” Lumby, (2014:29). In response to the fourth study question that enquired on ways in which female leadership challenges can be addressed the study found two categories of strategies identified by leaders; what women themselves, utilising their agency can do. Secondly, what others can do in support of female leaders. Women leaders themselves could improve their qualifications.

5.6.1 Attainment of higher qualifications

The study observed that attainment of higher qualifications may boost female leaders’ confidence and consequently encourage their participation in school leadership. It also found that knowledge of policies is regarded as significant in enabling female leaders to deal better with challenges at school. Significantly, participants acknowledged that women have an agency that can help them address their challenges if it is effectively utilised. Participants urged women to audit both their personal and professional lives so that they are knowledgeable about their strengths and weaknesses, and thereby note that they have power. This suggests that women should not act as victims in the situation but rise up to participate in finding solutions for their challenges.

5.6.2 Setting up support networks

Provision of support is important for the success of female leadership. This is because equity is not yet attained in school leadership. Participants noted that support networks where they could share best practices and share their challenges are necessary for them. Schmidt and Mestry (2015: 820) recommend that support networks be formed to raise awareness of female challenges in the workplace, create opportunities for professional exposure, and explore women’s aspirations and to raise female leadership profiles within organisations. Shin and

Bang (2013) also recommended that such networks could be platforms where women engage in succession leadership planning that is cognisant of (gender) diversity goals.

5.6.3 Mentoring

Female leaders reported mentoring as an essential tool for their support and professional development. The study found that mentoring is important in helping female leaders address their challenges. Kelsey *et al.*, (2014:8) and Desvaunx and Dellard (2015:17) recommended mentoring, coaching and motivation as tools that help women facilitate, retain and expand the female talent pool as these help the development of confidence especially in young female leadership aspirants. The researchers suggest that mentoring can increase income and promotion possibilities for individuals who are involved in the mentoring relationship. Arguably, such support could help female leaders navigate their leadership in secondary schools better, and manage the leadership pressures associated with gender stereotypes better.

5.6.4 Female leader's use of own agency

Agency is defined in the context of this study as the ability of women to utilise whatever resource they have, be they internal or external (such as skill, knowledge, competencies, material things and networks) in order to deal with any factor that challenges their leadership. This study found that though women are challenged as leaders, they are able to use their agency to manage their work environments. Some used their fund-raising skills, some their qualifications, while others used their motherly leadership styles and their experience. All these are capabilities that women use to transform their work environment. The women did not succumb to the patriarchal pressure of their work environment. They dug deep within to make sure that the challenges do not prevent them from achieving some of their goals, especially the goal to improve learner performance. This finding corroborates Smiths' (2011:12) study that argued that women exercise their personal agency to resist any factor that may limit their freedom to lead or any freedom they have.

5.7 SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

The main study question explored challenges that are participants by females in secondary school leadership in the Bojanala district. Participant's responses to this question were analysed and interpreted in chapter four of this study. The discussion also included findings made on the basis of participant's views in response to four other study sub-questions. These covered the emergent themes and sub-themes that are further aligned to the four research sub-questions.

The main finding is that females who are in positions of leadership in secondary schools in the Bojanala district of the North-West province of South Africa still experience challenges that are categorised as: societal, organisational, personal and girl learner related. This study argues that while female leaders are still faced with numerous gender-related challenges, there is a small shift in relation to gender related transformation in schools. This change is reflected by, among others, in the way communities of the case study welcomed female leaders, the strong belief of female leaders in their ability to lead, albeit there is a small number of participants with a descending view, participant's confidence in promoting the motherly leadership approach, of course with a few opposing the leadership style and their comfort in the utilisation of a combination of both motherly and agentic traits in their leadership. The study also argued that, because of the legislative framework that was put in place by the South African government, females should not act as victims in the situation because these policy guidelines serve as opportunities for females to advance their status in school leadership. Nevertheless, the study acknowledges that a lot still needs to be done to address the challenges that female leaders face.

CHAPTER: 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STUDY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter the recommendations for this and further studies are provided.

6.1.1 Key study conclusions

In exploring the main question of the study which enquired: What are the experiences of females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district, the study confirms the existence of patriarchy which leads to many challenges for females who are in leadership positions in the district secondary schools. It revealed that the challenges can be categorised into; those emanating from historical cultural society, from schools as organisations shaped and influenced by societal cultural stereotypes, attitudes and practices, as well as from individual leaders themselves.

The need for authorities to ensure the accessibility and implementation of gender policies became apparent in this study, and so did the importance of support provision to women. The study further revealed a number of strategies that can be employed to address the gender inequalities that still plague the school leadership environment. Nevertheless, the study found that women perceive their leadership and achievements as opportunities to make significant contributions to the education sector. Like other women who led before them, they use their agency to continue the fight against patriarchy and gender inequalities in education. It should be noted that, though painfully slow, there is progress in the realisation of gender equality in secondary schools, and that the communities showed a slight attitudinal shift in the positive way the appointment of women leaders in this study were received. On the basis of these conclusions that are informed by the study findings, some recommendations are discussed in the next section.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON FINDINGS

The recommendations made in this study are informed by the researcher's findings from both the literature reviewed and empirical data obtained from participants. They are steps and measures believed to have the potential of enabling both the women themselves and other interested parties in school leadership and education in general to address and or minimise challenges that females who lead in schools experience. The first recommendation relates to the effects of gender inequality on female leaders.

6.2.1 The effects of gender inequality on female leaders

On the finding of the underrepresentation of females in school leadership positions, it is recommended that the NWED ensures that all schools and departmental offices at various levels have, understand and implement gender equality policies. And that advocacy and campaigns for gender equality be embarked upon to create more awareness about the significance of gender equity and equality. This calls for budgeting and funding to be made available by the provincial department. Additionally, provincial statistical data on gender equality and equity should be availed to local education offices and to schools so that plans developed for the realisation of gender equality are informed by concrete data and can therefore meet the needs of females in their different contexts. The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of policy and plans should be prioritised by the department. On the finding about schools not having and not implementing gender equality policies, it is suggested that the NWED should avail the National Gender Framework and the provincial gender document to districts and schools so that understanding and implementation thereof takes place especially at those levels. Schools are encouraged to develop their own policy guidelines. It is also recommended that, even though the National gender policy has been in place for some years now, advocacy and training or re-training on the document is necessary. Advocacy should be directed at all teachers in schools, while training could target people and structures who participate in human resource selection and recruitment processes of the department of education such as SGBs and labour union representatives.

It should also consider managers and leaders at all levels in the provincial structure to ensure that key people tasked with policy implementation are knowledgeable about gender issues. It is important that female leaders in top leadership positions drive the process because they have influence and could insist on and push for accountability of policy non-implementation from

top down. That is one reason why Desvaunx and Dellard (2015:18) emphasised the significance of top management buying into the significance of women participation management. This is in addition to the work of the Commission on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women which is responsible for holding top provincial leaders accountable for policy implementation.

6.2.2 Challenges experienced by females who are leaders in secondary schools

On the basis of the societal, organisational and individual challenges found to be experienced by female leaders, it is recommended that women themselves form networks that will serve as platforms for sharing of information and good practices. The networks should include males who are in leadership positions so that their cultural perception of women is transformed and they are able to help advance the status not only of schools, but of women. Women should network with influential powerful women who can help with creation of opportunities for their advancement. It should be women with influence who will help open doors of opportunities that women themselves would otherwise, not be able to open on their own. It is significant for the networks to be initiated by women because women are better placed to identify and articulate their needs.

Furthermore, on the findings of organisational challenges such as the effects of initiation schools, and inadequate professional support, lack of mentorship appointment in dysfunctional schools and women having to work harder, women need to be empowered and capacitated to deal with these gender-related challenges. The department should strengthen women empowerment and development programmes, such as the existing one called Women In and Into Management and Leadership WIIML programme so that they become effective. Such programmes should be continuous especially for newly appointed female leaders. More training should be provided on specific female needs. For instance, training programmes could address the challenge of how female leaders could manage the female learner problem. The impact of the programmes should be determined and adjustments made accordingly.

With regard to the finding on the role of politics in teacher appointment, the study recommends that SGBs be trained so as to capacitate them on their role in recruitment so that they may not be easily influenced to act inappropriately in those processes. Arguably, when the chairperson of the interview panel is an SGB member who understands her/his responsibility in the process,

he/she would be able to ensure that all stakeholders in the recruitment process play their roles according to the policies of the department of education. Additionally, a quality assurance committee could be set up at district level to ensure the credibility of the process. This will strengthen the role of the district Review panel that deals with disputed school recruitment processes.

In addition to the recommendations made on challenges found to affect the leadership of secondary school leaders, mentoring was found to be lacking. Mentoring is identified as important in support provisioning to female leaders. Mentoring programmes should be developed at district and circuit levels. The programmes should be made accessible not only to identified potential female leaders, but to those who are aspiring to be leaders as well. The support and guidance of mentors will enable females to challenge the current gender status in female underrepresentation in the leadership of secondary schools. The support will help boost their confidence and enable them to bravely confront their challenges and agitate for transformation of gender relations in their work environments. Change in gender relations will encourage more females to venture into the male dominated leadership arena and begin as feminism suggests, to reconstruct and redefine the cultural concept of leadership from what is historically known. Feminists argue that because patriarchy is created by cultures, it can be overturned by a new culture. This makes the redefinition of leadership by females necessary (Lewis, 2016:1).

The study found concern and worry by females about the effects of teenage pregnancy in schools. It is therefore recommended that teachers, both male and female should be encouraged to talk openly, but sensitively and speak about sexuality issues such as teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. In agreement with Shefer *et. al.* (2013:8), schools and female leaders in particular need to be supported to find ways of providing constructive meaningful guidance to teenagers, both boys and girls.

6.2.3 Opportunities for and achievements of females who are leaders in secondary schools

Based on the findings about the existence of opportunities in school leadership such as legal frameworks and policy guidelines on gender equality, it is recommended that the department

of education make these significant gender transformation tools available to all schools including departmental offices at different levels. Equally important is it for female leaders themselves to ensure that they access, understand and implement the policies.

Female leaders should be encouraged through special female leadership developmental designated programmes to take advantage of leadership opportunities available by applying for leadership positions in larger numbers. They should also share information on identified available opportunities with other females especially those in lower position of leadership. Successful leadership stories should be reported and the “queen-bee” syndrome be discouraged. Females should be cognisant of the fact that gender inequality is a historical, global, systemic structured entrenched patriarchal notion that cannot be fought individually only, but requires cooperation and collaboration among female leaders. Specifically, attention needs to be given to the finding about individual female leadership challenges such as their inability to articulate their views and negotiate, low confidence levels and leadership styles.

6.2.4 Strategies to address challenges experienced by females who are leaders in secondary schools

The study found a number of strategies that could be employed to address the challenges that female leaders experience. This includes the attainment of higher qualifications, knowledge of policies, utilisation of the agency of women, establishment of support networks, and provision of training, investing in the girl learner, and mentoring female leaders. It is recommended that policy makers and programme developers focus on strategies that are identified as key in addressing the challenges of women leaders. Women leaders themselves should make an effort to implement the strategies. These strategies need to be explored further in research.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Literature reviewed revealed that a reasonable amount of research is conducted on the experiences and challenges of female principals, but very little is written on the experiences of HODs and especially on deputy principals. It is important to note that the role of principals as accounting officers and top school leaders has attracted the attention of researchers. HODs have also received some research attention due to their role as curriculum managers and middle managers. Arguably, deputy principals may not have attracted the same attention due to the

fact that, their responsibility is almost the same as that of the principals, especially in South Africa as per the SASA act 108 of 1996. It appears as though research interest on school principals overshadows that on deputy principals and HODs.

Additionally, it seems more studies focussed on the factors contributing to underrepresentation of females in leadership positions and the challenges they experience. Therefore, more investigation on how female leaders are coping and could cope with their challenges need to be conducted. It is important that the achievements and success stories of women such as those found in this study and other related studies continue to be told, highlighted and used as motivation for those who are still writing their own success stories and those aspiring to be in leadership. More research on how women successfully utilise their agency in their leadership is necessary. The need to assess the impact of gender policy implementation on the leadership of women in education requires further exploration.

6.4 THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study on the challenges that are experienced by females who are in leadership positions in secondary schools in Bojanala education district of South Africa is a case study and therefore, its findings cannot be generalised on to the experiences of all female leaders. The selection of participants was limited to nine participants in two schools only. A bigger sample might provide a diversity of views and better understanding of the topic. For example, only one deputy principal participated in the study as the other school did not qualify for a deputy principal in terms of the norms and standards of resource allocation in the education system.

6.5 SUMMARY

In this final study chapter, key study conclusions and recommendations based on study findings are presented. The key study conclusion is that females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala education district of South Africa continue to experience challenges that results from gender inequalities because patriarchy is still prevalent in society and in schools as organisations. Therefore, female leaders themselves and those who are involved in education should continue to transform gender relations in education and in society in general

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Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee

Tel: +27 18 299 4849

Email: Ethics@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF PROJECT

Based on approval by the **Human Resource Research Ethics Committee (HRREC)** on **02/08/2017**, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby **approves** your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Project title: Challenges experienced by females in Bojanala secondary schools in the North West province in South Africa																																						
Project Leader/Supervisor: Prof N Diko																																						
Student: GC Moremi																																						
Ethics number:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>6</td><td>4</td><td>7</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>7</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Institution</td> <td colspan="5">Project Number</td> <td colspan="3">Year</td> <td colspan="3">Status</td> </tr> </table>									N	W	U	-	0	0	6	4	7	-	1	7	-	A	9	Institution			Project Number					Year			Status		
N	W	U	-	0	0	6	4	7	-	1	7	-	A	9																								
Institution			Project Number					Year			Status																											
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation																																						
Application Type: Single Study																																						
Commencement date: 2017-08-02					Expiry date: 2020-08-02					Risk: NA																												

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- x Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the HRREC (if applicable).
- x Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the HRREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- x The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC via HRREC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
 - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- x The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the HRREC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- x The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IRERC via HRREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- x In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC and HRREC retains the right to:
 - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project;
 - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the HRREC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
 - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- x HRREC can be contacted for further information via Estie.Emtoch@nwu.ac.za or 018 289 2873.

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or HRREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

**Prof LA
Du Plessis**

Digitally signed by
Prof LA Du Plessis
Date: 2017.09.01
13:03:44 +02'00'

Prof Linda du Plessis

Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)

APPENDIX: B REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN BOJANALADISTRICT.



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
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MAFIKENG CAMPUS

Private Bag X2046, Mmabatho
South Africa. 2735

Tel: 018 389-2111

Fax: 018 382-5775

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

District Official

Education Leadership Development

Tel: 018 3892500 (Secretary)

Email: eliza.senne@nwu.ac.za

Date: 10 July 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This is to confirm that Ms G.C. Moremi (Student number: 26936852) is a Masters student registered at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. The title of the dissertation is: The impact of gender equality on females in leadership positions in secondary schools in the North West province in South Africa.

Permission is hereby kindly requested to enter Bojanala district to collect data from the heads of departments, deputy principals and principals. Data collection will be by way of interviews.

Collection of data will occur outside school contact time so as not to interfere with teaching and assessment processes or office duties. The dates and times of the collections are to be agreed upon by the principal and all other participants.

Participants will participate voluntarily in the data collection. The identity of the participants and the school and district will be kept confidential and anonymous. The information collected therefore cannot and will not be used to evaluate the school in terms of its performance in comparison with others, because the information collected will not be about academic results or teachers' teaching performance in specific schools.

Should you enquire more information about the project, kindly contact the supervisor for this project: Professor Diko N. at (018-389 2889)

Herewith permission is kindly requested to perform this research in your district. It would be appreciated if you would kindly grant **written** permission to this student. Any assistance given to the student to perform the research will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Prof P N. Diko (Director)

School for Education Leadership Development

North-West University (Mafikeng Campus)

Mmabatho

PAGES 175 NOT IN BOUNDED COPY

APPENDIX: C PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN DISTRICT SCHOOL



Education and Sport Development
Department of Education and Sport Development
Departement van Onderwys en Sport Ontwikkeling
Letepha le Thuto le Tšhabolelo ya Molekaneke
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

cnr Kock and Houtek Street
Rustenburg 0259
Private Bag 762110
Rustenburg 0300
Tel : (014) 560-4800
FAX : (014) 562-3247
e-mail: pmokhulle@nw.gov.za

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: BOJANALA DISTRICT

Enq. Dr. ET Matshidiso

To : Prof. P. N. Diko
Director – School of Education Leadership and Management - NWU

Attention: Ms. G. C. Moremi
NWU Student no. 2693 6852

From : Mrs. M.K.Z. Mosala
Acting District Director – Bojanala District

Date : 01 August 2017

Subject: Permission to conduct Research in Bojanala Platinum District

Reference is made to your letter dated the 26 July 2017 regarding the above matter. The content is noted and accordingly, approval is granted to your kind self to conduct research as per your request, subject to the following provisions:-

- That you notify relevant Sub-District and Circuit Managers about your request and this subsequent letter of approval;
- That the onus to notify principals of your target schools about your intended visit and the purpose thereof rests with your good self;
- That participation in your research project will be voluntary;
- That as far as possible the general academic programme of the schools should not be interfered with;
- That the principle of confidentiality will be observed in the strictest terms in relation to information sourced from such schools; and
- That upon completion of your research, a report is avail to my Office detailing the major findings and recommendations of your research.

With my best wishes

Thanking you

M. K. Z. Mosala – Acting District Director

cc All Sub-District Managers

APPENDIX: D REQUEST TO ENTER THE SITE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

TO: The principal
 Central Secondary School

FROM: Master's student: North-West University
 Moremi Gadifele Cleopatra

DATE: 3 August 2017

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO ENTER THE SCHOOL AND
 CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Moremi Gadifele Cleopatra. I am a registered Masters student at the University of North-West Mafikeng campus. I am conducting research on the topic: Challenges experienced by females in positions of leadership in secondary schools in the Bojanala district of South Africa. I therefore request permission to enter the school and talk to potential participants for the study.

Kindly note that the Department of Education, Bojanala District office has granted me permission to conduct research in the Bojanala secondary schools. The letter is attached.

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of gender experienced by females who occupy positions of leadership in a school. Please note that participation in the study is voluntary and that participants may withdraw from the study at any time they wish to do so. Their confidentiality would be respected. The school's name would also be kept anonymous in the study report. Research would be conducted at times that do not disturb the activities of the school, and would be agreed to with consenting participants.

If you would like to get more information about the study, please feel free to contact me at: 072 823 4014 or gadifele.moremi@bafokeng.com

I appreciate having taken time to read this letter. Your acceptance and approval of this request will greatly assist the project. If you grant permission for me to conduct this research at your school, please respond in writing.

Kind regard

.....

Moremi Gadifele Cleopatra (Student number: 26936852)

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2017-08-11

ATT : MRS MOREMI GC

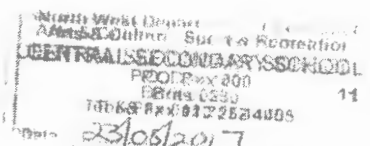
Dear Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO ACCESS THE SITE

In response to your request for permission to access the site and SMT of Central Secondary School, we hereby authorize you to go ahead for research purposes.

Yours in education

MRS C. VILJOEN
PRINCIPAL



APPENDIX: F REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

APPENDIX A: PRINCIPALS/ DEPUTY PRINCIPALS/ HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS PARTICIPATION INVITATION

Dear Principal/Deputy principal/Head of Department.

My name is Moremi Gadifele Cleopatra. I am a registered Masters student at the University of North-West Mafikeng campus. I am conducting research on the topic: Challenges experienced by females in positions of leadership in secondary schools in the Northwest South Africa.

I invite you to participate in this study. You have been purposefully identified as a possible participant because of your experience and expertise in secondary school leadership. I also believe that your participation in the study will make significant contribution to the project. The University of the North-West Ethics Committee, the North West Department of Education, and the school granted me permission to undertake this research in your school

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of gender experienced by females who occupy positions of leadership in a school. Please note that your participation in the study is voluntary and that you may withdraw from the study at any time you wish to do so. Should you consent to participation in this study, you will have to answer audio recorded interview questions that may take between 30 to 45 minutes so that accurate information is collected. The transcribed data will be shared with you to confirm the accuracy of our conversation. The interview will take place at a place agreed between us but convenient to you

Any information you share or disclose is confidential. Your name or any reference to a name will not appear in any report or publication emanating from this research. However, if quotations are used, they will be anonymously recorded. Data recorded for this study will be safely retained, kept and protected with a computer password for a period of twelve months in a locked office. The study does not contain any known or anticipated risks to you as a participant.

Data obtained from this study will enhance awareness of the challenges that females in position of leadership in secondary schools experience and how those challenges, if addressed and minimised ,could improve the leadership experiences and practice of female leaders and the performance of the school

If you would like to get more information about the study, please feel free to contact me at:
072 823 4014 or gadifele.moremi@bafokeng.com

I appreciate having taken time to read this letter. Your acceptance of this invitation will greatly assist the project. If you accept my invitation, I request that you sign the consent form in the next page.

Regards

.....

Moremi Gadifele Cleopatra

APPENDIX: G CONSENT LETTER

I have read and understood the information contained in a letter addressed to me regarding the study: Challenges experienced by females in secondary schools leadership positions in the North West province in South Africa.

I have had an opportunity to ask any question related to the study so that I fully understand the contents of the letter and add information if I felt necessary. I am aware that my participation is voluntary, that I can withdraw from the study anytime I decide to by just informing the researcher, and also that the interview discussion with the researcher will be audio recorded for accurate recording of my responses. I am also aware that quotations from the interviews may be anonymously included in the report or publication of the research study

I declare that I have full knowledge and understanding of the above information, and I freely give consent of my participation in this study

Participant's name: (please print).....

Participant's signature:Date.....

Researchers' name: (please print)

Researcher's signature:Date.....

APPENDIX: H CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING.

Certificate of Language Editing

This is to certify that I have carried out the language editing

Of the Dissertation

**For the Degree: Master of education in Educational Management and Leadership
(EDMA 871 (H) in the School of Education and Social and Government Studies at the
North-West University (Mafikeng Campus)**

By

G.C. Mompei Student number: 26936852

Title

**Challenges experienced by females who lead
Secondary schools in the Bojanala district of South Africa**

Sylvia Williams (012 344 2768)

MBibl (Unisa)

Postgraduate certificate in English language editing (UP 2010)

Member of the 'Professional Editors' Group

16 November 2018

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE CIRCUIT MANAGER

1. What motivated you to become a Circuit manager?
2. What challenges did you encounter as a woman in your previous school based positions of leadership?
3. What would you consider to have been your achievements and opportunities then?
4. What challenges do female principals, deputy principals and heads of Department experience in their leadership role?
5. What factors challenges your leadership role as a female circuit manager?
6. Please describe the personal challenges that may impact the leadership role of female school based leaders.
7. How are gender equality policies practised in respect of appointments and promotions of leadership in the school, area office and the district?
8. Research indicates that there are fewer female principals than male principals in secondary schools. What is your opinion on this situation?
9. How can the challenges that females who are in secondary school leadership be reduced?

Thank you for sharing your time with me. I do not have any more questions for , do you have any question you want to ask me?

APPENDIX: J INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

1. Tell me what motivated you to become a principal?
2. What opportunities and achievements are there to help improve your leader role?
- 3 What personal challenges do you encounter that affect your professional life?
4. Can you tell me about the challenges you encounter in your professional life?
5. Please explain, how the professional challenges stated above can be reduced or eliminated?
- 6 How is your school's gender policy applied?
7. How do you relate with female and male teachers in your leadership role?
8. What kind of support do you get professionally and personally and how do you support your school management team?
9. Research indicates that there are fewer female principals than male principals in secondary schools. What is your opinion on this situation?
10. How are gender equality policies practised in respect of appointments and promotions of leadership in the school, area office and the district?
11. What can be done by the school, community, the area office and the district to improve the number of female leaders in secondary schools?
12. What is it that female principals themselves can do to improve their leadership role?

I do not have any more questions; do you have a question you want to ask me?

APPENDIX: K INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

1. Tell me what motivated you to become a deputy principal?
2. What kind of opportunities were you or are you given by the school or department to participate in as a deputy principal?
3. Please describe your relationship with your female supervisor (principal)
4. Please describe your relationship with your female and male supervisees (HODs.
5. What personal challenges do you encounter that affect your professional life?
6. Can you tell me about challenges that you encounter in your professional life?
7. Tell me, how the professional challenges stated above can be reduced or eliminated?
8. Explain any gender act or policy that you are aware of.
9. What kind of support do you get professionally and personally?
10. Research indicates that there are fewer female deputy principals than male principals in secondary schools. What is your opinion on this situation?
11. How are gender equality policies practised in respect of appointments and promotion of female leaders?
12. What is it that female deputy principals themselves can do to improve their leadership role?

Thank you. I do not have any more questions for you, do you have any question you want to ask me?

APPENDIX: L INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

1. Tell me how did you become a head of department?
2. What kind of opportunities were you or are you given to participate in as a female head of department?
3. Please describe your relationship with your supervisor (deputy principal)
4. Please describe your relationship with your female and male supervisees (teachers)
5. What personal challenges do you encounter that affect your professional life?
6. Can you tell me about challenges that you encounter in your professional life?
7. Tell me, how the professional challenges stated above can be reduced or eliminated?
8. Explain any gender act or policy that you are aware of.
9. How do you relate with female and male teachers in your leadership role?
10. What kind of support do you get as an HOD professionally and personally?
11. How are gender equality policies practised in respect of appointments and promotions of female leaders (principals, heads of departments and deputy principals?
12. What is it that female heads of department themselves can do to improve their leadership role?

I do not have any more question; do you have a question you want to ask?

APPENDICE: M INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP

1. How does male domination affect the leadership of women who lead in secondary schools?
2. How does the process of recruitment and selection in the district secondary schools affect the promotion of women HODs, Deputy Principals and principals?
3. What is your comment on the small numbers of women who occupy leadership positions in the district secondary schools?

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Challenges experienced by females who lead secondary schools in the Bojanala district of South Africa

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