



An investigation of challenges faced by women in a male dominated heavy metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng

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DECLARATION

I, Dalton Phumlani Khoza, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation entitled 'An investigation of challenges faced by women in a male dominated heavy metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng' is my own work and that all the material contained in the study is duly acknowledged. I declare that the content of this research project has never been submitted to any other institution for any qualification or other purposes.

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Khoza, DP (25434977)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
BWASA	Businesswomen's Association of South Africa
DMR	South African Government Department of Mineral Resources
DTI	South African Government Department of Trade and Industry
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ABSTRACT

In South Africa, women comprise more than half of the population, but only 44,3% are employed in the workforce and they mostly occupy lower-level positions.

The main objective of this study was to investigate the challenges that women face in a male-dominated heavy-metal manufacturing company in the south of Gauteng. This study used a qualitative method with a phenomenological design, situated in the interpretivist paradigm in order to describe, understand and interpret multiple realities. A purposive sample of 20 women ($N = 20$) was selected and in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the lived experienced of women who are supervisors and managers. The data was analysed using thematic analysis, which in turn used open coding.

The results revealed that women still face a challenge with regards to tension between their work and home roles; that gender bias in the appointment of men still exists; that, while the majority of women are assigned to meaningful roles, workplace safety remains a concern for women, and that more legislation and family-friendly workplace policies are required to make the workplace a welcoming environment for women.

Keywords: challenges, gender discrimination, meaningful work, women, work-life balance, workplace safety

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Changes in South Africa's political landscape necessitate an increased representation of previously disadvantaged people, including women, in the sectors of business and academia. Increased global emphasis on diversity and its evident benefits have also resulted in the need to promote and encourage diversity in the workplace. With this context in mind, this study concerns the perceptions of challenges that women face in the workplace in a heavy metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng, as well as factors that lead to success for women in a male-dominated work environment.

Discrimination based on race and gender has a long history in South Africa, and discrimination against women and discrimination against black people have meant that black women have received a double dose of discrimination (Vettori, 2014:476). Because gender discrimination was the norm, women and girls were excluded from the mainstream socio-political and economic activities and consequently denied leadership opportunities in both the domestic and public domains (Mudau & Ncube, 2017:10595).

The aim of the study is to understand the challenges faced by women in skilled and senior positions in the heavy metal manufacturing industry.

1.2. Problem statement

The heavy metal manufacturing industry has more men than women under its employment and in addition to this; the number of women occupying skilled and senior positions is low compared to that of men. More men are employed and continue to become employed in engineering and related industries such as manufacturing and utilities (Cropley & Cropley, 2017:405). The heavy-metal manufacturing industry contributes 1,5% of South Africa's gross domestic product (South African Government Department of Trade and Industry, 2018). As shown in Figure 1-1 below, women make up about 12% of the workforce employed in a metal manufacturing industry, according to Tips.org.za (2017).

Although women are generally disadvantaged by patriarchy, there are modest tangible changes starting to occur because of the incessant struggle women continue to wage for equity and equality (Thobejane & Thobejane, 2017:8860). In the past 30 years, there has been a global increase in women's participation in the labour force, mainly due to

expanding economic opportunities and equal employment opportunity legislation. This has drawn many women into the labour market (Botha & Cronjé, 2015:10).

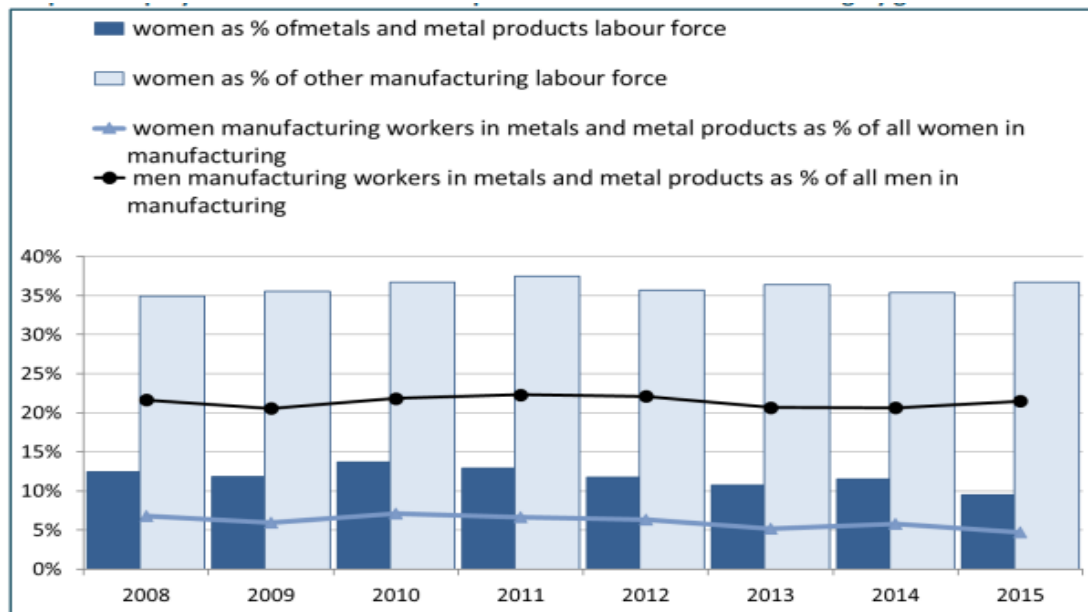


Figure 1-1: Employment in metal, metal products and other manufacturing industries (source: Tips.org.za).

The heavy-metal manufacturing industry is an important part of the South African economy. There are 960 women employed in a heavy metal manufacturing organisation in South Gauteng, of these 413 women occupy skilled positions and only 18 occupy senior management positions. Legislation that requires gender representation has not been in place since the lapse of Women Empowerment and Equality Bill. Given the above, the problem under investigation is thus the challenges faced by women in skilled and senior positions in a heavy metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng.

1.3. Significance of the study

First, this study will help managers understand the specific issues women in skilled and senior positions face in a heavy metal manufacturing industry, which will in turn better prepare managers to manage these challenges as well as enable them to create a work climate that is comfortable for both women and men. Second, this study will also increase awareness for policymakers and will assist them to design policies that will address gender imbalances in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry. Finally, this study will also provide useful insights to men, civic organisations and human rights groups who advocate for equal opportunities for women and men in the workplace.

1.4. Aims and objectives of the study

This study has a more general aim and specific objectives that will allow the researcher to achieve this aim. The aims and objectives are as follows:

General objective

The general objective of this study was to identify and understand the challenges that women in skilled and senior positions must navigate in a male-dominated workplace. Only 413 women occupy skilled and senior positions in a heavy metal manufacturing company in South Gauteng.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- determine the capabilities of women employed in skilled and senior positions in a heavy metal manufacturing company in South Gauteng to balance their work and personal lives.
- determine the effect of gender on women's career progress to senior positions in a heavy metal manufacturing company in South Gauteng.
- establish whether women employed in skilled and senior positions in a heavy metal manufacturing company in South Gauteng are assigned meaningful work and whether their present jobs have any growth prospects to progress to senior positions.
- determine whether the workplace is safe for women employed in skilled and senior positions in a heavy metal manufacturing company in South Gauteng.
- ascertain the level of support women employed in skilled and senior positions receive in a heavy metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng.
- explore the effectiveness of legislation in uplifting and supporting women in a heavy metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng to increase women representation.

1.5. Research questions

The main research question of this study was: What are the challenges that affect the 413 women in skilled and senior positions in a male-dominated heavy metal manufacturing

company in South Gauteng? In addition, the following specific research questions were asked:

- What determines the capabilities of women employed in skilled and senior positions in a heavy metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng to balance their work and personal lives?
- What are the challenges that women employed in skilled and senior positions face in a heavy metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng?
- What is the level of support women employed in skilled and senior positions receive in a heavy metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng?
- How effective is legislation in uplifting and supporting women in a heavy metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng?

1.6. Research methodology

This section covers the research paradigm, research design and research approach utilised to conduct this study.

1.6.1. Research paradigm

This study followed an interpretivist research paradigm which recognises that the subject matter of social sciences is fundamentally different from that of natural sciences; therefore this approach requires an understanding of subjective meaning of social action (Bryman et al., 2016:14). The interpretivist approach seeks to describe, understand and interpret multiple realities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:12). The interpretivist approach does allow limited prior structure so that researchers could see through the eyes of the people being studied. (Bryman et al., 2016:47). This approach was the one best suited to this study because it facilitated an understanding of the multiple realities and various issues that women face in the workplace.

1.6.2. Research design

The researcher employed a phenomenological research design. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016:24), a phenomenological study seeks to understand the essence and the underlying structure of the phenomena under study. Phenomenology is an approach that

is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them (Bryman et al., 2016:15).

1.6.3. Research approach

This study was qualitative in nature. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:15) posit that qualitative researchers have an interest in understanding how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. This approach entails understanding the respondents' perspectives in order to gain access to the way they attribute meaning to what goes on around them and thereafter interpreting the data that is obtained (Bryman et al., 2016:42). In-depth semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. This type of interviewing allowed the researcher to vary the sequence of questions from the interview schedule and also ask follow-up questions from the respondents' initial replies (Bryman et al., 2016:216).

1.7. Research procedure

This section covers the research population, sample method and size as well as data collection methods, data coding and data analysis methods employed in the study.

1.7.1. Population

A target population is a universe of units from which a sample will be drawn for qualitative, quantitative and mixed research (Bryman et al., 2016:170). The target population of this study comprised women who are employed in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry in south Gauteng and who occupy skilled positions or more senior positions.

1.7.2. Sample method and sample size

Merriam and Tisdell (2016:96) explain that the non-probability sampling method is the method of choice for most qualitative research. In this study, the researcher aimed to understand and gain insight and to this end, purposive sampling was used to select a sample which had adequate experience which was useful to the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:96). A purposive network sampling method was used to ensure a strong focus on respondents of certain career levels with at least five years' experience within the same company. Supervisors and more senior positions were considered as these respondents offered enriched information about what is needed to reach those positions.

1.7.3. Data collection

Interviews were used as a method of data collection. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016:108), interviewing can be used to collect data from a large number of people representing a broad range of ideas, and it is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings or how people interpret the world around them. The interviews were individual and face to face, and a semi-structured interview format with open-ended questions was followed. Informed consent was obtained from respondents beforehand. Field notes of the responses were taken question by question.

1.7.4. Data coding and analysis

The data was transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. According to Myers (2013:167), coding is one of the easiest ways in which qualitative data can be analysed. Codes were used to describe or summarise the interview responses. The open coding process of Tesh (as cited by Creswell, 2014) was followed to generate *in vivo* and descriptive codes. The researcher read the full text to obtain a holistic sense of the data, and then developed codes and coded the text. The themes that emerged during the analysis were documented. An independent co-coder also analysed the data to ensure reliability and consistency. Consensus conversations confirmed the findings. Lincoln and Guba's model (as cited by Botma et al. 2010:234–235) was applied by the researcher to ensure trustworthiness in the study. Lincoln and Guba's model ensures trustworthiness by using credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability as criteria.

The researcher reflected on what was being said by writing field notes during and after the interviews. Replication of the study to demonstrate validity of the findings is possible because of a highly detailed description of the procedures employed in this study. Verbatim quotations were used to demonstrate authenticity of the responses and to support the findings.

1.8. Ethical considerations

This study followed the standard guidelines of the North-West University's Research Ethics Committee. Bryman et al. (2016:121) maintain that it is good practice to consider potential ethical issues during the design stage rather than when one is confronted with an issue. The following ethical clearance process was followed: first, ethical clearance to conduct the study was sought and obtained from the university's Economic and

Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-01412-19-A4). Second, written permission to conduct the study was obtained from company management, and third, informed consent was requested and obtained from respondents. The purpose of the informed consent was to inform the respondents that participation would be voluntary, that all data would be treated as anonymous and confidential and that data would be used for academic purposes only.

1.9. Structure of the study

This study is presented in an article format. The introduction, problem statement, significance of the study and a research methodology are contained in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 entails the article, literature review and a detailed research methodology. Chapter 3 contains the discussion, findings and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN INVESTIGATION OF CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN A MALE DOMINATED HEAVY METAL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY IN SOUTH GAUTENG

ABSTRACT

In South Africa, women comprise more than half of the population, but only 44,3% are employed in the workforce and they mostly occupy lower-level positions.

The main objective of this study was to investigate the challenges that women in skilled and senior positions face in a male-dominated heavy metal manufacturing company in the south of Gauteng. This study used a qualitative method with a phenomenological design, situated in the interpretivist paradigm in order to describe, understand and interpret multiple realities. A purposive sample of 20 women ($N = 20$) was selected and in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the lived experienced of women who are supervisors and managers. The data was analysed using thematic analysis, which in turn used open coding.

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KEYWORDS: gender discrimination, male dominated, meaningful work, work–life balance, workplace safety

2.1. Introduction

South Africa is the only sub-Saharan country with primary steel-making capability. The South African primary and secondary heavy-metal industries are important in the beneficiation of the country's minerals such as iron ore, manganese and coal, and it is an employment creator in the downstream industries in the manufacturing sector (Department of Mineral Resources, 2011:1).

The heavy metal manufacturing industry is a key strategic industry in the South African economy that contributes significantly to the country's gross domestic product and employs 190 000 people directly, including those who are employed through the supply chain in the sector (Whoownswhom.co.za, 2015). Steel is a key enabler of every part of the economy and is critical to the automotive, mining and construction industries, which contribute 17% to the country's GDP and employ eight million people (Whoownswhom.co.za, 2015). Primary steel products and semi-finished products include blooms, billets, slabs, plates, seamless tubes, forgings, wire rods and reinforcing bars (South African Department of Mineral Resources, 2011:2)

In South Africa, as shown in figure 1-2 below, women comprise more than 51% of the population, yet only 44,3% are in the workforce, and they mostly occupy lower-level positions. In terms of higher-level positions in companies listed on the Johannesburg Securities Exchange and state-owned entities (SOEs), 20,7% of directors are women, 29,4% are executive managers and 11,9% are chairpersons (BWASA, 2017:5).

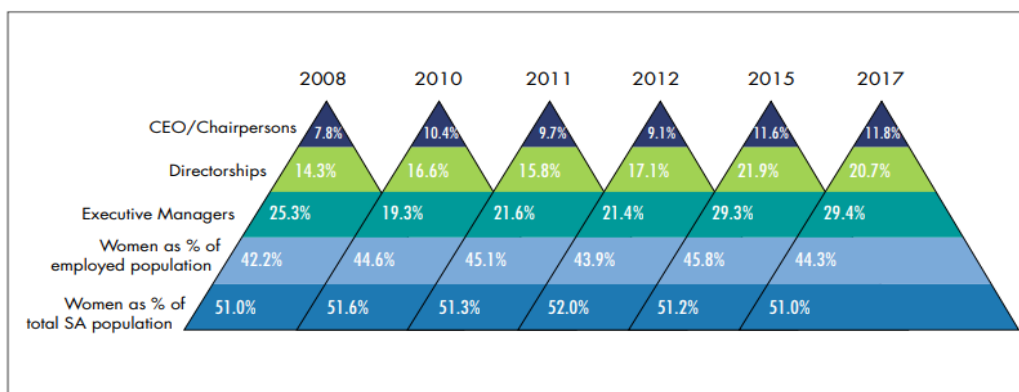


Figure 1-2: Representation of women in JSE listed entities and SOEs. (Source: BWASA Leadership Census 2017.)

Legislation that requires gender representation has not been in place in South Africa since the Women Empowerment and Equality Bill lapsed. The bill was introduced on 6th

November 2013 and it aimed to establish a legislative framework for women empowerment. The bill sought to promote the representation of women in decision-making structures to 50% (BWASA, 2017:5).

South Africa is one of the most diverse societies, and this diversity must be utilised and managed well in order to maximise the impact of the advantages of the diversity of individuals. Progress made in pursuit of gender equality could be seen as a barometer for growth and development in South Africa (Masango & Mfene, 2015:623)

In the labour market, women compete for the same jobs and opportunities as men. In addition, women play an important role as nurturers and caregivers in raising children. They also play a role in the development of the economy as decision makers who influence purchasing decisions on the buyers' side of the market. Their role is equal to that of men, yet women still face inequality and harassment in the workplace.

The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 aims to promote equity in the workplace by promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination and implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce. This places an obligation on employers to comply the Employment Equity Act. The representation of women in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry is low. According to Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies Report (2017), women make up about 12% of the workforce employed in the metal manufacturing industry. Since there are so few women in the metal industry, this study focuses on the challenges faced by women in skilled and senior positions in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry

2.2. Women in male-dominated industries

Jobs in the heavy metal manufacturing industry were previously labour intensive and historically men were considered for these types of jobs. Today, the jobs in this industry are done using machines and skilled labour and women have a role to play in the male-dominated industries, therefore women leaders are required to fill these roles.

One of society's most critical tasks is to develop its leaders; this has an effect on the societal and organisational productivity, sustainability and well-being (Emmerling, Canboy, Serlavos Serra & Manuel Batista-Fouget, 2018:655). "Early trait theories of leadership

assumed effective leaders can be defined by a set of traits and abilities that they possess that other non-leaders or ineffective leaders do not” (Emmerling et al., 2018:655). According to Bhattacharyya and Jha (2018:97) the traits, leadership competence and motives of the leader are emphasised by the Trait Theory of Leadership, adding that the leader should balance short term and long term goals to meet organisational objectives. Schock, Grier, Scherndl and Ortner (2018:6) say that women have to overcome the incongruity that exists between leadership role prescriptions of masculinity and feminine stereotypes associated with gender, as per Role Congruency Theory, which suggests that blending agency with communion enhances women’s reputation as leaders. Participatory leaders are preferred over authoritarian leaders, irrespective of gender (Rhee & Sigler, 2015:123).

The organisational culture that emerges from a male-dominated environment may actively drive women away from these organisations, thereby creating a vicious cycle of gender-induced under-performance with respect to innovation (Cropley & Cropley, 2017:496). Women’s chances of being selected for leadership roles are negatively affected by women’s strong counter-stereotypical characteristics (Schock et al., 2019:191). Agendas of gender equality have been widely viewed as a concern of women and not men; after all, gender issues were placed on the public agenda by women themselves (Flood & Howson, 2015:4). The call for men, particularly male CEOs, to engage in bringing about organisational change has been met with both scepticism and approval (De Vries, 2015:22). Public recognition of the continuing failure of organisations to create workplaces with more gender equity is important (De Vries, 2015:22). Not only do men and women view gender inequality at work differently, they usually do not agree on how company resources could be utilised to close the achievement gap (Alter, 2018:24–25). Gender imbalance and consequently power imbalance at the level of top management reduces the ability of women at the top to identify unacceptable behaviour without the fear of retributions in terms of job security, damage to reputation or financial standing (Jordan, 2018:9).

De Lange and Naidoo (2018:52) argue that women experience constant tension between their work and home roles, with the result that they have to choose where to invest their time. Some organisations fail to accommodate women’s need for flexible work schedules to balance work and family needs, which causes many women to consider resigning (Yaghi, 2016:481).

Dashper (2018:1) states that mentoring is widely acknowledged to be an important contributor to women's career success and progress, but women often struggle to access mentoring networks that can help sponsor and develop their careers.

2.3. Challenges women in skilled and senior positions face

2.3.1. Gender stereotypes and role prescriptions

Gender stereotypes portray women as less competent than men and unable to make tough decisions that affect stakeholders (Sanchez & Lehnert, 2019:184). Gender stereotypes are generalisations about characteristics and roles whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender (Hentschel, Heilman & Peus, 2019). According to Hoyt and Murphy (2016:388), gender stereotyping can result in reduced performance, disengagement, demotivation and decreased leadership aspirations. The managerial competency required in male-dominated professions is the same as that required in female-dominated professions such as nursing, teaching, hospitality and healthcare (Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017:61).

'Cultures that equate success with inherent skill can be threatening for women' (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016:390). Female leaders attempting to enter industries and organisations with few women can experience an increased threat of gender stereotyping (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016:390). In their study of perceptions in a conglomerate whose operating activities included engineering, rail freight, logistics and port operations, Samuel and Mokoaleli (2017:61) found that men are seen to be more effective leaders because these industries are male-dominated and the jobs are traditionally and socially associated with men. Expectations of inferiority based on gender can lead to under-performance of important tasks such as negotiation and decision-making (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016:390).

2.3.2. Gender inequality and gender discrimination

The imbalance of gendered power grew exponentially when men attributed to themselves not only the monopoly of legitimate violence (control of the military and police forces) but also of political and economic life (Zoja, 2016:118). Zoja (2016:118) notes that in principle, neither the rule of law nor the management of the economy is linked to gender; however, in practice men have used custom, law, religion and tradition to bar women from equal participation in these spheres. Associating men with high authority and women with low authority (coupled with negative attitudes toward female authority) indicates the prejudice

against female authority may be due to associations linking men to power and influence instead of role or trait expectations (Rhee & Sigler, 2015:113). Gender role expectations are defined by culture and reinforced throughout non-work spaces. Leadership has traditionally been associated with masculine features; thus, women who exhibit more feminine features may not be seen as legitimate leaders (Rhee & Sigler, 2015:114).

The working population is more diverse than in the past, and female employees are an important part of it (Bellou et al., 2015:614). The emergence and presence of women in leadership roles has increased in the recent past, yet women are still under-represented in leadership positions (Liu, 2018:13).

Feminists and women's movements have mounted a sustained campaign against local and global gender inequality, with important successes in undermining the pervasiveness and acceptability of the subordination of women (Flood & Howson, 2015:1). There has been an amplified focus on what can be done to increase women's share in senior positions (Mensi-Klarbach et al., 2017:1–2). Even though men and women may occupy the same position, men earn more than women in that position (Mensi-Klarbach et al., 2017:1–2). Women who progress in corporate structures are accused of buying favours from their male colleagues (Thobejane & Thobejane, 2017:8862).

2.3.3. Lack of meaningful work

Women in skilled and senior positions need to be assigned to meaningful roles where they can make a difference and they should not be limited to roles in human resources and corporate communications. Meaningful work influences people's motivation in the workplace and allows people to undertake challenging tasks more positively (Ward & King, 2017:64). Our basic motivation is to derive meaning from events (Chen et al., 2018:696). Some people get little meaning from work other than the income it generates, but a growing body of research shows that many people want their work to have more meaning in a more existential sense, and that people who experience meaningful work experience other benefits as well (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016:535).

Meaningfulness is connected to the individuals' goals, values and beliefs as well as job aspects and work environment (Mayer et al., 2015:185). The dynamic interaction between these internal and external determinants suggests that meaningful work is created in the interplay between the individual and the system (Mayer et al., 2015:185). Service to others

is a key dimension of meaningful work, which refers to the meaning one draws from a sense of contribution to the common good or well-being of others (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016:538). People find meaning in their places of work; after all, they spend most of their time at their workplace (Ward & King, 2017:63). Allan (2017:175) posits that meaningful work contributes to productivity, greater well-being and a sense of responsibility amongst employees.

Workplaces and jobs that provide personal meaning from which people derive happiness will be desirable and may foster higher workplace commitment and motivation (Ward & King, 2017:63). Task significance contributes to meaningful work above and beyond personal and organisational factors (Allan, 2017:176). When work is seen as a source of achievement through rewards, position and power, a person can be deeply engaged with their work as a career (Mayer et al., 2015:185). The importance or meaning of work is necessary since individuals spend almost two-thirds of their day at work (Chen et al., 2018:694).

2.3.4. Lack of work–life balance

Women in skilled and senior positions have their roles to play at home as mothers and/or wives and require time and space to attend to these roles and also have time for themselves. According to Oyafunke-Omoniyi and Babatunde (2017:8191), couples where both spouses are formally employed are more likely to divorce than couples where one spouse is not formally employed, since employed couples spend more time in their jobs. This puts the family structure at risk and results in broken homes (Oyafunke-Omoniyi & Babatunde, 2017:8191).

People have many roles to play, such as employer, manager, caregiver, parent, partner and child (Fatoki, 2017:8370). When the role demands from one domain tend to interfere with demands arising from other domains, role conflict occurs, leading to work–life conflict (Fatoki, 2017:8370).

Job satisfaction is reduced when work interferes with family life and this could result in reduced work commitment and low productivity; however, satisfaction with work can be enhanced by effective implementation of a work–life balance strategy (Ganiyu et al., 2017:446). The world of work involves early morning alarms, daily commutes, sharing coffee and complaints with co-workers, meeting work expectations and dealing with emails

and voice messages; abandoning these commitments for a weekend or a holiday is often met with joy (Ward & King, 2017:60). Many people expect that work will provide financial rewards as well as happiness and contentment with life (Ward & King, 2017:60). Karkoulian et al. (2016:4918) state that almost all employees face the stress of having to balance work and family demands; both men and women face the need to balance work and family life as more women join the workforce.

2.3.5. Lack of mentors and role models

According to Yokwana et al. (2016:1400), there are two types of mentoring functions: psychosocial mentoring and career mentoring. Role modelling, acceptance and confirmation, as well as counselling and friendship represent psychosocial mentoring, while exposure, sponsoring, coaching, protection and challenging tasks are offered in career mentoring (Yokwana et al., 2016:1400-1401). Johnson and Smith (2018:4) stipulate that any mentoring programme for women must address organisational and cultural change and that strong mentorships may help women overcome individual challenges with regards to the existing organisational hierarchy and power dynamics. Formal mentoring programmes designed specifically for women can help overcome this challenge, but these schemes may at the same time reinforce masculine discourses which position women as deficient in relation to the invisible male norm that is implicit within contemporary working practices (Dashper, 2018:1).

Young women are inspired by female leaders who serve as role models and mentors for them (Mudau & Ncube, 2017:10598). According to Mudau and Ncube (2017:10599), the nurturing role of women means they are better placed than men to exercise these soft skills alongside the tougher skills expected of managers in a male-defined management world. The soft skills involve motivating staff, creating co-operation, re-defining organisational values and beliefs and re-aligning management focus (Mudau & Ncube, 2017:10599). Hoyt and Murphy (2016:392) maintain that female role models can assist women by providing an identity for their role and thereby protecting them from the threat of stereotyping. 'The effectiveness of these women comes, in part, because they demonstrate that success in the stereotyped domain is attainable' (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016:392).

Dashper (2018:5) explains that female mentors are expected to provide high levels of interpersonal support, as this is a supposedly 'natural' feminine trait, whereas male

mentors who do this are marked out as offering something special and unexpected. If women fail to provide both strong interpersonal and career support, they may be seen as poor mentors with weak leadership skills; by contrast, male mentors are judged on their career support and sponsorship, with any social and personal support seen as a bonus. Johnson and Smith (2018:3) argue that male mentors stand to learn more about the experiences of women in their organisations and will be able to enhance their interpersonal skills when they enter mentoring connections with real humility and curiosity.

2.3.6. Workplace safety

According to Srinivasan (2015:120), the present corporate environment is not entirely safe for women. Incidents such as abuse, threats and assault – which all lead to negative consequences for their health, safety and well-being – are regarded as workplace violence (Jafree, 2017:420). Workplace violence includes verbal, physical and sexual violence and bullying (Jafree, 2017:420). The harassed corporate woman is unlikely to complain because of workplace hierarchy. The victim is motivated to keep it a secret because the abuse is humiliating. Lee (2018:597) proposes that incidents of sexual harassment are likely to increase when employees experience hostile interactions among co-workers in the organisation.

The absence of an established structure in small firms may therefore (to some extent) leave victims of sexual harassment without protection (Ollo-Lopez & Nunez, 2018:177). Frequent observations of incidents of incivility at work will also make employees believe that everybody treats one another in a hostile manner and that it is acceptable to do so, which may provide opportunities for potential harassers to initiate or persist in sexual misconduct, believing they can escape consequences for this kind of behaviour. That is, the extent to which employees observe hostility within the organisation serves as a barometer of a social norm in the workplace about (in)appropriate behaviour (Lee, 2018:598). The likelihood of sexual harassment is higher in organisations with a high tolerance for negative behaviour (Ollo-Lopez & Nunez, 2018:176). Inadequate organisational policies and procedures, managerial rationalisation and inertia are the organisational problems that cause sexual harassment (Ollo-Lopez & Nunez, 2018:177).

Negative experiences lead to job dissatisfaction and one of the significant elements of experiencing job dissatisfaction on the part of employees is the perception of organisational justice (Bayarcelik & Findikli, 2016: 411). Negative experiences and/or

negative perceptions of the workplace culture in some industries with low female participation discourage young women's engagement in associated career paths (Simon & Clarke, 2016:579). Jordan (2018:9) argues that talented junior women miss out on opportunities because senior male executives are hesitant to invite them to meet important clients because they fear that their motives could be questioned.

According to Ollo-Lopez and Nunez (2018:178), companies could help women avoid the harasser by adjusting their working schedule or change tasks or jobs in order to reduce their exposure to the risk of being harassed. Jordan (2018:9) states that it is those in power who set the norms of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and that those norms have yet to change, because those in power have been, and are, men.

2.4. Research objectives

This study has a more general aim and specific objectives that will allow the researcher to achieve this aim. The aims and objectives are as follows:

2.4.1. General objective

To identify and understand the challenges that women in skilled and senior positions have to navigate in a male-dominated workplace in order to assist other women to be better equipped to face these challenges. Only 413 women occupy skilled and senior positions in the heavy metal manufacturing company in South Gauteng.

2.4.2. Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- determine the capabilities of women employed in skilled and senior positions in a heavy metal manufacturing company in South Gauteng to balance their work and personal lives.
- determine the effect of gender on career progress of women employed in skilled and senior positions in a heavy metal manufacturing company in South Gauteng.
- establish whether women employed in skilled and senior positions in a heavy metal manufacturing company in South Gauteng are assigned meaningful work and whether their present jobs have any growth prospects.

- determine whether the workplace is safe for women employed in skilled and senior positions in a heavy metal manufacturing company in South Gauteng.
- ascertain the level of support women employed in skilled and senior positions receive in a heavy-metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng.
- explore the effectiveness of legislation in uplifting and supporting women in skilled and senior positions in a heavy-metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng.

2.5. Research methods

2.5.1. Research paradigm and research method

This study followed an interpretivist paradigm and was conducted using a qualitative method to explore primary and secondary research questions. The study also reviewed the literature to provide the necessary context. The qualitative method entailed understanding the respondents' perspectives to gain access to the way they attribute meaning to what goes on around them and thereafter interpreting the data that was obtained (Bryman et al., 2016:42). Parry et al. (2014:136) argue that qualitative research methods have become increasingly used in leadership research. In this study, answers to the research questions described and clarified the experiences of women in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry.

The literature review examined previous research about challenges faced by women in skilled and senior positions. Issues relating to gender stereotypes, gender inequality and gender discrimination, lack of meaningful work and lack of work–life balance, lack of mentors and role models and workplace safety are explored. Information on the subject was sourced from online books available from the North-West University, journal articles and other online publications.

2.5.2. Research design

The research design of this study was phenomenological. This design was selected because describing and studying people's conscious experience is the essence of phenomenology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:26). The objective of this study was to identify and understand the challenges that women have to navigate in a male-dominated workplace. Tomkins and Eatough (2013: 268) posit that the phenomenological method is a way of tapping into embodied experiences that involves reaching inductively towards the

words that gel with the felt sense, as opposed to starting with a predetermined theory of what is being investigated. The article format was selected to focus on the understanding of a bounded situation and to help generate detailed examination of the phenomena (Bryman et al., 2016:110).

2.6. Research procedure

The elements and steps of the research procedure followed for this study are discussed below.

2.6.1. Population

Bryman et al. (2016:170) define a target population as a universe of units from which a sample will be drawn for qualitative, quantitative and mixed research. The population investigated in this study are women who are employed in a heavy-metal manufacturing company in the south of Gauteng, and who occupy skilled positions or more senior positions.

2.6.2. Sampling method and study sample

Merriam and Tisdell (2016:96) argue that non-probability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research. In this study, the researcher wanted to understand and gain insight; to this end, purposive sampling was used to select a sample from which the most can be learned about a given topic and also to focus on participants of certain position levels with at least five years' experience in a heavy-metal manufacturing company. Supervisors and more senior positions were considered, as these participants could offer information with regards to what is necessary to attain those positions as well as more senior positions. In total, 2089 men and women are employed in skilled positions or more senior positions in the company, but only 413 of these are women. Only 18 women are senior managers out of a total of 138.

The sample included managers, specialists, engineers, accountants and account managers. This sample of participants represents women in supervisory positions who were affected by the phenomenon. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:101) maintain that a point of saturation is reached when the same responses are heard, and that it is not possible to know the point of saturation ahead of time. The constitution of the sample population of 20 ($N = 20$) women is indicated below.

Table 1: Unit of analysis

Respondent number	Job title	Functional area
Respondent 1	Accountant	Finance department
Respondent 2	Senior consultant	Procurement department
Respondent 3	Senior accountant	Finance department
Respondent 4	Specialist	Contracts department
Respondent 5	Senior analyst	Credit department
Respondent 6	Manager	Finance department
Respondent 7	Senior manager	Logistics department
Respondent 8	Specialist	Procurement department
Respondent 9	Engineer	Operations
Respondent 10	Account manager	Sales department
Respondent 11	Senior manager	Operations
Respondent 12	Specialist	Production planning
Respondent 13	Engineer	Operations
Respondent 14	Senior consultant	Legal department
Respondent 15	Manager	Compliance department
Respondent 16	Engineer	Operations
Respondent 17	Manager	Finance department
Respondent 18	Senior engineer	Operations
Respondent 19	Accountant	Finance department
Respondent 20	Senior specialist	Logistics department

The demographic profile provides the social characteristics of the study participants. The target units of analysis are women.

(a) Participants' age

Figure 1-3 below depicts the age profile of participants. Of the participants, 40% were between the ages of 46 to 55 which have (the highest representation in this study). Further, 35% of the participants were between the age of 36 to 45, with the rest of the participants younger than 35. The data indicates that the majority participants were women over 35.

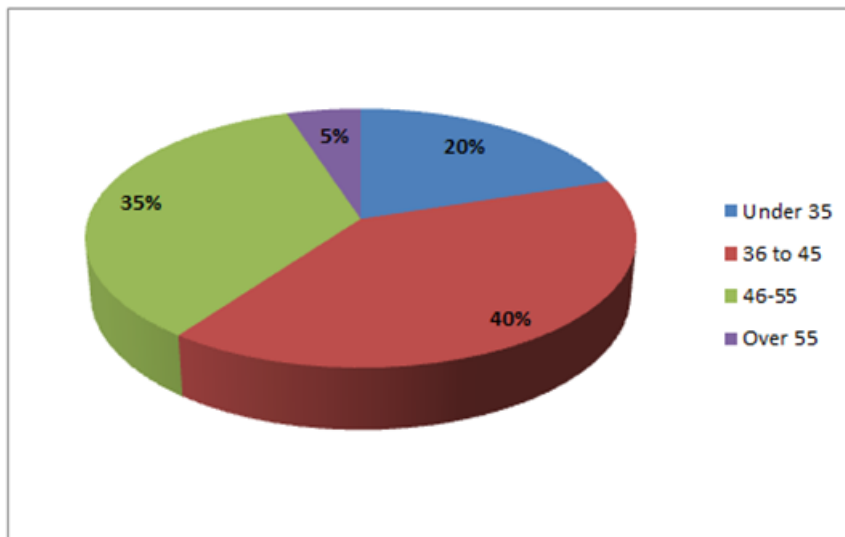


Figure 1-3 Participants' age

(b) Education

Figure 1-4 depicts the education of the participants of the study. Sixty per cent of the participants hold a university degree while 40% of the participants were post-graduates. No participants held qualifications lower than this. This data indicates the minimum job requirements for supervisory positions.

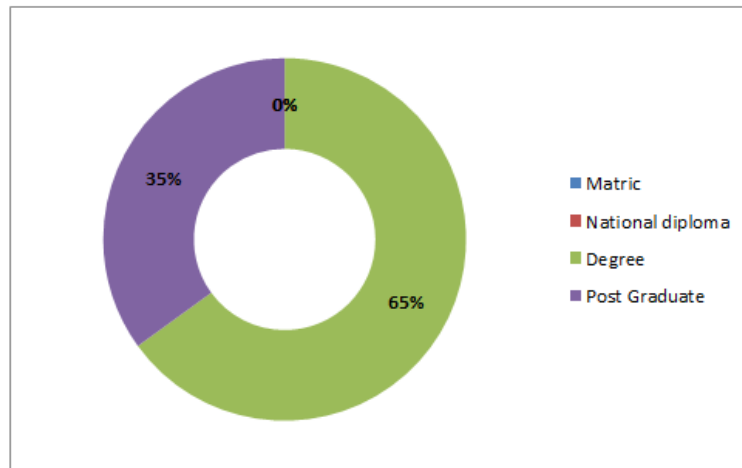


Figure 1-4: Educational qualifications

(c) Work experience

Figure 1-5 below depicts the work experience of participants. 40% of the participants had accumulated work experience of 6 to 10 years, while those with work experience of 16 to 25 years made up 35% of the sample. Women with work experience of 11 to 15 years made up 15% of the sample, while those with work experience of over 25 years made up 10% of the sample.

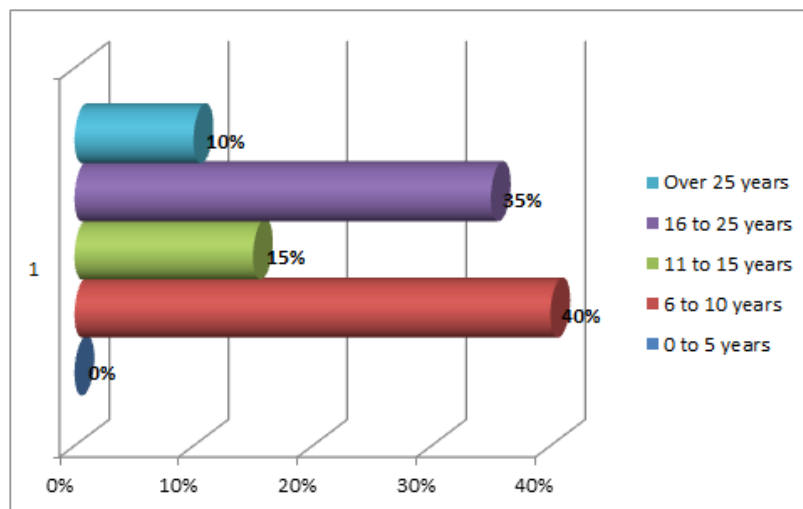


Figure 1-5: Work experience

(d) Marital status

Most (65%) of the participants in the study were married, while 35% were single.

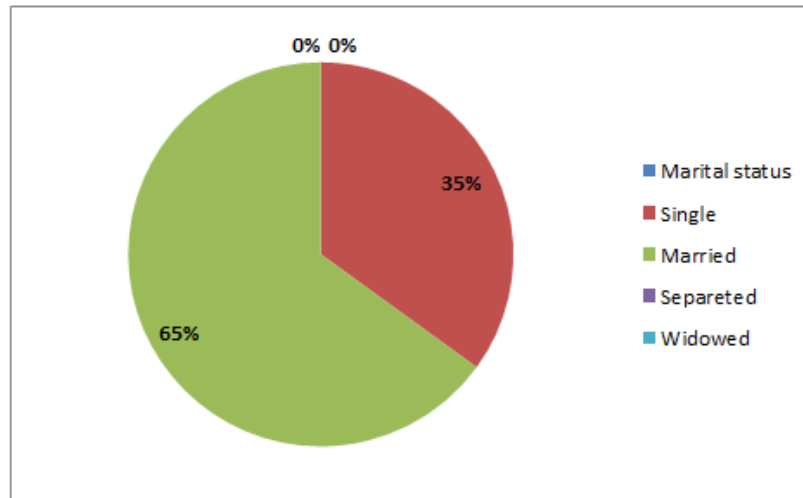


Figure 1-6: Marital status

(e) Number of years in current position

When asked about the number of years in their current position, 5% of the participants have been in their current positions for 11 to 15 years, as shown in Figure 1-7. Most (60%) of the participants have held their current positions for at least 6 to 10 years, while 30% have held their current positions for not more than five years. 5% of the participants have been in the same position for over 25 years. This data indicates that most women in supervisory positions have not held those positions for longer than ten years.

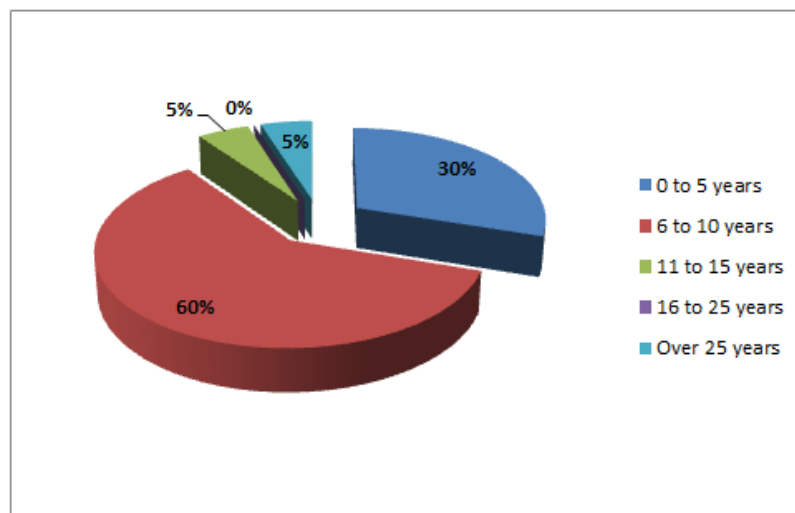


Figure 1-7: Number of years in current position

2.6.3. Data collection method and data analysis

2.6.3.1. In-depth interviews

Interviews are the most frequently used instrument to collect qualitative data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:108). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016:108), interviewing is used to collect data from a large number of people representing a broad range of ideas. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:108) further state that interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings or how people interpret the world around them. Primary data was collected using semi-structured one-to-one interviews with open-ended questions. Gauci (2019:53) explains that the use of the semi-structured interview format guides the researcher and allows for flexibility as the researcher asks open-ended questions in an attempt to answer the research question. The researcher used a semi-structured interview format which allowed the researcher to guide the course of the conversation with pre-set questions, to gather the information for the study, while still enabling an open conversation and allowing the interviewees to answer in their own words.

Requests for interviews and informed consent letters were sent to targeted participants by email to ensure a wider distribution and easy access to the target population. Participants were interviewed behind closed doors in their own offices or conference rooms to ensure that they were in a familiar space. Field notes of the responses were taken question by question.

The following questions were asked to the respondents:

- Does your work schedule allow you to attend to personal engagements? Can you elaborate?
- How often do you take your work home and how does it affect your personal life?
- Does your personal lifestyle determine your career choices? Can you elaborate?
- How do you ensure that you meet the demands of both your work and personal life?
- What career growth and progression prospects does your job offer?
- Does your gender have any effect on your career progression? Can you elaborate?
- How fulfilling is your work? Can you elaborate?
- How safe is your work environment to you as a woman? Can you elaborate?

- How important is the role of your mentors in your career thus far?
- Have role models played any part in your career and life choices? Can you elaborate?
- How do sick, maternity and family responsibility leave policies support your personal responsibilities outside of work?

2.6.3.2. Data analysis

The analysis of data is one step within the research process and it occurs after access to the population has been secured, decisions concerning sampling have been made, data collection has been conducted and the recordings of data have been transcribed (Flick, 2013:9). The data was transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The researcher read the full text of transcribed data to get a sense of the whole, after which they developed codes and coded the text. According to Myers (2013:167), coding is one of the easiest ways in which qualitative data can be analysed. Codes were used to describe the content of an interview. Sub-categories, categories and themes that emerged during the analysis were documented. The open coding process of Tesh (as cited by Creswell, 2014) was followed to identify *in vivo* and descriptive codes. An independent co-coder also analysed the data to ensure credibility and consensus conversations confirmed the codes. To ensure an additional layer of trustworthiness in this study, the researcher applied Lincoln and Guba's model (as cited in Botma et al., 2010:234–235). According to Lincoln and Guba's model, trustworthiness involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Prolonged engagement with the participants during the in-depth interviews ensured truth value. The researcher reflected by writing field notes during and after the interviews. Replicability was ensured through a thoroughly considered sample and a dense description of the research methodology. The possibility of an audit trail and the use of an independent co-coder during the data analysis ensured consistency. Authenticity of the quotes enriched the findings.

2.7. Results

This study sought to understand the challenges that women have to navigate in a male-dominated workplace. The following categories related to the research question emerged from coding the data: (1) work–life balance; (2) effect of gender on career progression; (3) meaningful work and career growth prospects; (4) workplace safety; (5) level of support, and (6) the effect of legislation on the empowerment of women.

2.7.1. Work–life balance

The first objective of the study was to determine the capabilities of women to balance work and life. Five themes that frequently re-emerged were identified, namely (1) working overtime, (2) prioritising important tasks, (3) planning ahead for work and home, (4) do work at work and life at home, and (5) dedicating weekends to family.

work overtime	35%	7
prioritise important tasks	25%	5
planned work and familiy schedule	20%	4
do work at work and family time during home time	10%	2
dedicating weekends to family time	10%	2
	100%	20

Figure 1-8 Work life balance

Working overtime

For the first theme, working overtime, 35% of the respondents indicated that they needed to work overtime to complete tasks at work. Some of the statements made by the respondents in this regard are as follows:

Respondent 1: *'I don't take work home at all, I will rather work overtime to meet deadlines.'*

Respondent 3: *'I work overtime during month ends and budget periods, resulting in me spending less time with my family.'*

Respondent 6: *'I do not take work home as a matter of principle, I finish my work in the office...'*

Respondent 8: *'I spend some time at work to finish what I have to do and also make time for personal things and my studies.'*

Respondent 12: *'Currently, work is very demanding. I don't take work home, so sometimes I am required to work overtime to catch up with work..'*

Respondent 16: *'I work a bit of overtime to finish work I could not finish during normal working hours.'*

Respondent 20: *'I work extra hours when so required. At my age personal life requires less time.'*

Prioritising important tasks

For the second theme, prioritising important tasks, 25% of the respondents indicated that prioritising important tasks helped them to achieve a work–life balance. The respondents mentioned the following things:

Respondent 4: *'I only focus on urgent important tasks after hours. I avoid working on things that I can perform during normal working hours. I try not to work over weekends.'*

Respondent 7: *'In quiet times at work I put in more effort and spend time at home with family and friends. At least once a year I take more than a two-week vacation and ensure that I exercise over weekends and holidays for personal health.'*

Respondent 10: *'...I prioritise important events.'*

Respondent 11: *'...prioritising urgent/non- urgent tasks vs. important/non-important.'*

Respondent 13: *'I prioritise what is critical and important. I will leave work and go home if something important comes up and I will spend some time at work if work needs to be done.'*

Planning ahead for work and home

For the third theme, planning ahead for work and home, 20% of the respondents indicated that planning ahead helped them to achieve a work–life balance. The following are some of the participant responses in this regard:

Respondent 2: *'I plan my schedule. Sometimes I have to prioritise whenever necessary.'*

Respondent 14: *'I make plans to catch up on work if I need to and I also take time to be with my family. I take leave during school holidays and December holidays.'*

Respondent 18: *'I prefer to plan ahead but sometimes things do not go as planned. So I prioritise what is urgent and import at the time.'*

Respondent 19: *'I do work at the workplace and do home activities at home. However, I need to be a home early enough to have time to cook for my husband and kids. I cannot rely on takeaways everyday.'*

Do work at work and life at home

In this theme, 10% of the respondents indicated that they focused on doing their work at work during normal working hours, and life at home. Respondents mentioned the following:

Respondent 5: *'I don't take work home; I try and finish all my work during working hours.'*

Respondent 9: *'I work at work and I do home work at home.'*

Dedicating weekends to family

Two (10%) of the respondents said that they use weekends as family time. The following statements were made by respondents:

Respondent 15: *'By the doing the best you can, limiting working after hours to week days only, and weekends belong to the family.'*

Respondent 17: *'I spend the most time that I can with my family when I am not overworked, especially on weekends to compensate for time lost.'*

2.7.2. Effect of gender on career progression

The second objective was to determine whether gender had any effect on women's career progress. Two themes were identified from the descriptions provided by the participants: (1) men and women have the same opportunities and (2) bias towards the appointment of men.

same opportunities for men and women	55%	11
bias towards appointment of men	45%	9
	100%	20

Figure 1-9 Effect of gender on career progression

Men and women have the same opportunities

Just more than half (55%) of the respondents indicated that gender had no effect on their career progress; both men and women have the same opportunities. Respondents made the following statements:

Respondent 1: *'No, men and women are treated almost equally..'*

Respondent 2: *'No, I don't think gender has any effect. Males and females have the same opportunities in my work area.'*

Respondent 3: *'Not really, I get the same chance as men in my department.'*

Respondent 5: *'No, not that I am aware of. Women get the same chances as men...'*

Respondent 6: *'No. We compete with men equally.'*

Respondent 7: *'No, never has. Women have just the same opportunities...'*

Respondent 11: *'No, gender has no effect.'*

Respondent 13: *'No, I don't think gender has any effect. Women have same opportunities as men.'*

Respondent 14: *'No. It depends on how you make of it. Opportunities are open to everyone who is capable and qualified.'*

Respondent 19: *'No. Men and women get the same chances. Appointments are made by men as men are in senior positions.'*

Respondent 20: *'No. Gender has no effect.'*

Bias towards the appointment of men

Just below half (45%) of the respondents indicated that there is bias towards the appointment of men to management and senior positions. Respondents made the following statements:

Respondent 4: *'...I find that women have to work twice as hard to be taken seriously.'*

Respondent 8: *'...Moving from junior positions to higher positions is open but getting to senior management positions is difficult. There are not many women there.'*

Respondent 9: *'...I think yes. Top management is mostly males.'*

Respondent 10: *'...males are considered to be best candidates for steel industry compared to females. Salary scales are also determined on gender (males and females in the same positions earning different salaries. Males normally earn more than females.'*

Respondent 12: *'Yes, there are few women in management positions. I think gender matters when appointments are made. Women need to act tough to get to management.'*

Respondent 15: *'Most certainly, not one of the executives in the current organisation is occupied by a female. Females have limited chances to progress upward in the organisational ladder.'*

Respondent 16: *'Yes. Females are hardly appointed to plant management positions. Men are favoured.'*

Respondent 17: *'There are few females here. I think progression is not easy for women. Men trust other men more.'*

Respondent 18: *'Yes. We do not have women plant managers. I think men do not believe we can do the job.'*

2.7.3. Meaningful work

The third objective was to establish whether women were assigned meaningful work and whether their present positions had any growth prospects. The following themes were observed with regards to meaningful work: (1) makes a difference in their life, (2) contributes to business, (3) gives exposure and opportunity for networking, and (4) no authority and decision-making power.

gives exposure and opportunity for networking	30%	6
makes a difference in own life	25%	5
contributes to business	25%	5
no authority and decision making power	20%	4
	100%	20

Figure 1-10 Meaningful work

Gives exposure and opportunity for networking

Just below a third (30%) of the respondents indicated that their jobs gave them exposure to the business and opportunities for networking. The following statements were recorded:

Respondent 7: *'Extremely fulfilling, I work with and get to know various people within the organisation.'*

Respondent 8: *'It is enjoyable I meet different suppliers.'*

Respondent 10: *'Very fulfilling. I travel and meet with customers.'*

Respondent 11: *'Very fulfilling as the scope cuts cross across functions and various levels includes stakeholder management both internal and external.'*

Respondent 14: *'It is very fulfilling. I interact with different people and I also get exposure to meet people outside our company.'*

Respondent 16: *'It is fulfilling. I get to manage different projects every year and also get experience in different plants.'*

Makes a difference in their life

Five respondents (25%) indicated that their jobs make a difference in their lives. The following statements were recorded:

Respondent 1: *'it is definitely fulfilling, my work is important to me.'*

Respondent 3: *'It is 90% fulfilling, busy schedules can be tiring sometimes.'*

Respondent 9: *'...sometimes it is repetitive but completing the work is satisfying and I am able to provide for my family.'*

Respondent 12: *'It makes a difference in my life so I value my job.'*

Respondent 18: *'...it is ok, it is worthwhile.'*

Contributes to business

A quarter of the respondents indicated that their jobs contributed to the success of the business. They mentioned the following:

Respondent 4: *'I enjoy my work because I feel entrusted with power to contribute to the company's bottom line.'*

Respondent 13: *'It is fulfilling. I am involved in critical operations and my work is important to the company.'*

Respondent 17: *'...it is very fulfilling. I am in charge of my team and our work is crucial to the business.'*

Respondent 19: *'It is fulfilling. I know how important my work is and what is the impact of my work on the company.'*

Respondent 20: *'I am involved in logistics operation and there is never a dull moment, always on my toes but it is fulfilling..'*

No authority and decision-making power

A fifth of the respondents indicated that their work is not fulfilling, since they lack authority and decision-making power. The following statements were made by respondents:

Respondent 2: *'Not fulfilling. The way the work is being done, the lack of trust and the company culture, the punitive culture.'*

Respondent 5: *'Not very fulfilling at this point in time, situation is made worse by uncertainty on the job.'*

Respondent 6: *'Not fulfilling, if I had a manager with a positive emotional intelligence this answer will be different.'*

Respondent 15: *'It isn't. Authority and decision making are limited.'*

2.7.4. Prospects for career growth

The following themes emerged regarding the prospects for career growth: (1) progression to executive or senior management or management positions, (2) limited growth prospects, and (3) no growth prospects.

progression to executive/senior management/management positions	65%	13
no growth prospects	25%	5
limited growth prospects	10%	2
	100%	20

Figure 1-11 Prospects for career growth

Progression to executive or senior management or management positions

Out of the sample, 65% of respondents indicated that prospects of moving to executive or senior management or management positions existed. Some of the comments made by respondents were as follows:

Respondent 3: *'...progression to be a senior specialist or manager however that is far-fetched right now due to section 189.'*

Respondent 4: *'Next level above my position is a management role.'*

Respondent 8: *'Opportunities for promotion exist and also opportunities to move within department.'*

Respondent 9: *'..management positions on higher level.'*

Respondent 10: *'...sales manager position and exposure to dynamic and different challenges.'*

Respondent 11: *'...opportunity to move to executive level positions.'*

Respondent 12: *'...there are opportunities for promotion to junior management positions with our department and also at Sales and Marketing.'*

Respondent 13: *'...progression to higher level positions.'*

Respondent 14: *'...opportunities to higher positions are open to everyone who is capable and qualified.'*

Respondent 16: *'...I can go on to be a senior engineer or plant manager.'*

Respondent 17: *'...it gives me experience and opportunity to interact at executive management level.'*

Respondent 18: *'...job offers growth to plant manager level and also offers opportunities in project management.'*

Respondent 19: *'...promotion to higher positions and also management positions.'*

No growth prospects

A quarter of the respondents indicated that their current job does not offer any growth prospects:

Respondent 1: *'I have not been successful a few times in my efforts to move to higher positions...'*

Respondent 5: *'I will have to move out of my current department to get growth and progression.'*

Respondent 6: *'Nothing. No prospects and opportunities at this moment.'*

Respondent 7: *'I work in a challenging environment and it gives a platform to grow in different areas of the business. It offers me opportunities to move lateral to any other departments within the business. Currently I do not feel the need to or have any aspiration for a higher position as I have a lot to learn in the current environment, I work in.'*

Respondent 15: *'Probably greater potential externally in big corporates, however, in the current organisation, with lack of transition and rigid organisational culture, not much.'*

Limited growth prospects

Two respondents (10%) indicated that there were limited prospects for growth in their present careers. The following are some of their comments:

Respondent 2: *'The next level of progression is a move into management level, the way my job is structured does not allow for me to grow into a senior-most specialist job.'*

Respondent 20: *'...to move to the next level the current incumbent will have to resign or go on pension, which will leave a career opportunity for me'*

2.7.5. Workplace safety

The fourth objective was to determine whether the workplace was a safe place for women. The following themes were noted: (1) safe and (2) unsafe.

safe	75%	15
unsafe	25%	5
	100%	20

Figure 1-12 Workplace safety

Safe

Fifteen respondents (75%) indicated that their place of work was safe and they did not experience any threatening behaviour, intimidation or bullying. Some of the remarks were as follows:

Respondent 1: *'It depends on the behavoiur of each one of us, but it is generally safe.'*

Respondent 2: *'It is reasonably safe. However, I would not prefer to be the only one left in the building. I just believe there is safety in numbers.'*

Respondent 3: *'It is safe 90% of the times, I feel unsafe if I have to knock off very late.'*

Respondent 5: *'Due to me working in the office in the admin building, I would say it is very safe.'*

Respondent 6: *'Very Safe as I work in the office and do not come across thing that may endanger my life.'*

Respondent 7: *'I think it is a safe environment.'*

Respondent 8: *'It is a closed and safe environment in the office.'*

Respondent 10: *'It is safe for women in the office.'*

Respondent 11: *'...fairly safe. It has to do more with compliance to health safety regulations which is not gender based.'*

Respondent 13: *'It is safe. I don't feel unsafe, area access is controlled and security guards are always present.'*

Respondent 14: *'Office environment is safe. I have not had or heard of any bad experience.'*

Respondent 15: *'Fairly safe. I do not feel intimidated and threatened in any way.'*

Respondent 17: *'It is sufficiently safe. I do not feel unsafe but I would not like to stay at work until late at night.'*

Respondent 19: *'Work environment is safe. I do not feel isolated or threatened.'*

Respondent 20: *'It is an office job, it is safe.'*

Unsafe

The remaining quarter of the respondents indicated that their work environment is sometimes unsafe, stating the following:

Respondent 4: *'I do mostly office work and the working hours are reasonable. However, when doing site visits at other plants and I have to travel alone; I do not feel quite safe.'*

Respondent 9: *'Plant is a dangerous place. You need to be aware all the time and follow work safe rules.'*

Respondent 12: *'I think it unsafe for woman to work late and alone.'*

Respondent 16: *'It is unsafe; the facilities need to be kept up to standard hygienically to be safe health-wise.'*

Respondent 18: *'Plant is a dangerous place for everyone not just women. Safety is important for everyone.'*

2.7.6. Level of support

The fifth objective of the study was to ascertain the level of support women receive in the workplace in terms of mentoring. The following themes were extracted: (1) a mentor

played important role in shaping their career, (2) role models were exemplary, (3) on-the-job training shaped their career, and (4) does not have a mentor.

does not have a mentor	45%	9
role models were exemplary	30%	6
mentor played important role in shaping career	20%	4
on the job training shaped career	5%	1
	100%	20

Figure 1-13 Level of support

Does not have a mentor

From the sample, 45% of the respondents indicated that they never had mentors. The following are some of their observations in this light:

Respondent 1: *'I have never felt a need to have a mentor.'*

Respondent 2: *'I have never had a mentor, I did not feel that their role is important.'*

Respondent 3: *'Mentors are useful but no I never had an opportunity to have one'*

Respondent 6: *'I don't have a mentor.'*

Respondent 8: *'I don't have a mentor but I believe that mentoring is important in terms of career path guidance.'*

Respondent 13: *'I have had no mentors.'*

Respondent 16: *'I don't have a mentor. I don't know if having a mentor would make a difference in my career.'*

Respondent 17: *'I don't have a mentor.'*

Respondent 19: *'I did not have mentor. Nowadays mentors are important because they act as guides.'*

Role models were exemplary

Thirty per cent of the respondents did not have mentors, but they did have role models to look up to. They had the following responses:

Respondent 5: *'Role models played a role. I do not have a mentor.'*

Respondent 9: *'I never had mentor, I had roles models to look up to. I think mentors are important for young people.'*

Respondent 10: *'I don't have a mentor. I have roles models but they are not in the steel industry.'*

Respondent 11: *'I actually do not have a mentor but would use a coach when required. I looked up to role models.'*

Respondent 12: *'I did not have a mentor, other than the people who have trained me at the start of each of my jobs. I had role models, there were women I admired while I was growing up and I looked up to them.'*

Respondent 15: *'No. Career guidance and advice from teachers was enough to show me the career direction.'*

A mentor played important role in shaping their career

A fifth of the respondents indicated that they had mentors who helped them through their careers. Some of remarks were as follows:

Respondent 4: *'My mentor is a lecturer at one of the universities. I met him from my previous job at another company. He has played a huge role in building my self-confidence'.*

Respondent 7: *'Mentors are very important and have influenced my career and growth significantly.'*

Respondent 14: *'I have had mentor in the early stages of my career. He helped me with career choices and how to improve my qualifications.'*

Respondent 18: *'My first manager was my mentor, but when I moved jobs I did not have a mentor. Workplace can be overwhelming and a mentor is teacher and guide.'*

On-the-job training shaped my career

One respondent mentioned that she did not have any mentors. Her career was shaped by on-the-job training:

Respondent 20: *'...no mentors, it was on the job training that showed me direction.'*

2.7.7. The effect of legislation on empowerment of women

The sixth objective was to explore the effectiveness of legislation and policies in uplifting and supporting women in the heavy-metal manufacturing sector. The following themes were extracted: (1) supports my personal life, (2) not applied to benefit women and (3) no laws aimed at uplifting women.

supports my personal life	75%	15
not applied to benefit women	20%	4
no laws aimed at uplifting women	5%	1
	100%	20

Figure 1-14 Effect of legislation on empowerment of women

Supports my personal life

Fifteen respondents (75%) indicated that work policies helped to support their lives. Some of the captured remarks were as follows:

Respondent 1: *'They are helpful to allow employees to attend to personal responsibilities and save leave days for holidays.'*

Respondent 2: *'It is a good thing that such policies exist, they are helpful. However, there are fewer people in the work area and this does not allow for complete hand-over of work, during ones' absence.'*

Respondent 5: *'They do help support my personal activities outside of work.'*

Respondent 6: *'...have supported my personal responsibilities in a positive way as I am able to take off whether sick or vocational leave as and when it's needed. I just wish the maternity leave can be longer than 4 months.'*

Respondent 7: *'I have not experienced situations where my personal responsibility was not accommodated by these policies.'*

Respondent 8: *'They are helpful to allow employees to attend to personal responsibilities and save leave days for holidays.'*

Respondent 9: *'..it gives time to do important things with family so it is very important.'*

Respondent 10: *'...they are useful.'*

Respondent 13: *'They are very useful is supporting personal life.'*

Respondent 14: *'Leave policies are very useful. One is obliged to tend to personal things and family responsibility leave for example comes in handy.'*

Respondent 16: *'...help by allowing me to take care of family responsibilities whenever required.'*

Respondent 17: *'They do help in times of need in particular when children are sick and need attention.'*

Respondent 18: *'It is a good thing that such policies exist. The fewer amount of people in the work area does not allow for complete hand-over of work, during ones' absence.'*

Respondent 19: *'Leave policies allow us to take time off work to attend to personal duties, so I find them to be very helpful.'*

Respondent 20: *'...allows one to attend to sometimes unplanned things at home.'*

Not applied to benefit women

Four respondents (20%) indicated that the policies were not applied to the benefit of women. Respondents made the following remarks:

Respondent 3: *'At times I feel they are just on paper when they have to be applied then that's a different case, i.e. I had to work while in hospital when my daughter was admitted because no one else could do the job.'*

Respondent 4: *'These are an essential part of a healthy working environment. Implementation of the policies can be an issue, I have seen women get victimised for using these benefits.'*

Respondent 11: *'Sometimes one has to sacrifice leave to attend to work, so does not always benefit us.'*

Respondent 12: *'...maternity leave comes at the cost of reduced salary, it is a compromise and it is not ideal.'*

No laws aimed at uplifting women

One respondent felt that there were no laws aimed at uplifting women in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry:

Respondent 15: *'I think there is no legislation directly aimed at uplifting women in the workplace.'*

2.8. Discussion

The main aim of this study was to investigate the challenges that women in skilled and senior positions face in the male-dominated heavy-metal manufacturing industry. The first objective was to determine the capabilities of women to balance their work and personal lives. All respondents who participated in this study provided descriptions of lived experiences, and five themes emerged from this, namely (1) working overtime, (2) prioritising important tasks, (3) planning ahead for work and home, (4) do work at work and life at home, and (5) dedicating weekends to family. Thirty per cent of the respondents

indicated that they have had to work overtime to complete their work tasks. This is in line with De Lange and Naidoo (2018:52), who claim that women experience constant tension between their work and home roles, with the result that they must choose where to invest their time. Gallagher and Morison (2019:48) say that carer roles still remain the domain of women despite the changing attitudes in society. Smith, Smith and Brower (2016:232) found that work-life balance issues are important in career decision making, job satisfaction and job performance.

The second objective was to determine whether gender had any effect on the career progression of women. Two themes emerged: (1) men and women have same opportunities, and (2) bias towards the appointment of men. Sixty per cent of the participants agreed that gender did not hinder their career progression as they have the same opportunities as men. In spite of this, women remain under-represented in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry, as indicated in the Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies Report (2017), which states that women make up about 12% of the workforce employed in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry. This supports the following claim made by Cropley and Cropley (2017:405): more men than women are employed and continue to become employed in engineering and related industries such as manufacturing and utilities.

The third objective was to establish whether women were assigned meaningful work and whether their present jobs had any growth prospects. The following themes were observed regarding meaningful work: (1) makes a difference in their life, (2) contributes to business, (3) gives exposure and opportunity for networking, and (4) no authority and decision-making power. Just over half (55%) of the respondents indicated that their work is fulfilling, since it contributes to the business and gives them exposure and an opportunity for networking. Allan (2017:175) posits that meaningful work contributes to productivity and a sense of responsibility amongst employees. Gadhi, Fernando and Caputi (2015:218) proposed that managers should make interventions that increase meaning of work by involving employees in decision making, by developing employee self-awareness and by inciting passion in the job.

The fourth objective of this study was to determine whether the workplace was a safe place for women, and 75% of the respondents expressed that their workplace was a safe environment. According to Jafree (2017:420), victims of workplace harassment are likely to

keep it a secret because abuse is humiliating. Women friendly policies such as equal pay policy and anti-sexual harassment policy and women focused initiatives such as counselling and mentoring help women in joining and continuing their careers (Singh & Pandey, 2019:865).

For the fifth objective of this study, the researcher aimed to ascertain the level of support women receive in the workplace in terms of mentoring. Most (80%) of the respondents indicated that they did not have mentors. Dashper (2018:4) argued that it may be more difficult for women to find a mentor in an informal context to support and champion them, so they have to rely more strongly on formal mentoring programmes than men do. Gallagher and Morison (2019:48) agree that women should use the support of mentors as it is vitally important.

The sixth objective of this study was to explore the effectiveness of legislation and policies in uplifting and supporting women in the heavy-metal manufacturing sector. Seventy-five per cent of the respondents mentioned that workplace policies supported by legislation supported women effectively. While policies such as maternity leave and family responsibility leave assist women in managing their duties as mothers, much must still be done to support women and promote the representation of women in leadership roles in business. Despite all the legislative measures and well-intentioned initiatives, the number of women in mining in South Africa is still relatively low and they are mainly employed in administrative and support positions in the industry (Botha & Cronjé, 2015:11).

2.9. Recommendations

Work–life balance

In the past, managing a balance between work and life was considered a women's issue, but economic strain and advancements in technology have made it an issue for both men and women (Akanni & Oduaran, 2017:10143). Managers should help promote a work–life balance by implementing flexible working hours and, where possible, allow working away from the office.

Meaningful work and career growth prospects

Experience and knowledge are important for women's success as leaders; therefore, the more experience women leaders acquire, the stronger their ability to acquire leadership skills quickly, which then leads to success (Mudau & Ncube: 2017:10600). Managers must

be comfortable to assign women to any kind of work and should not limit women's exposure. Managers need to implement mentoring programmes for women and reward successful mentors.

Workplace safety

Healy (2014:32) maintains that the organisations that will be able to attract and retain high performers and improved operational performance are organisations that respect and value diversity brought to the workplace by both men and women. Managers should create a work environment that is welcoming and safe for women by promoting gender diversity in the workforce and implementing security measures to ensure that women are not isolated and vulnerable while at work.

The effect of legislation on empowerment of women

Lawmakers should consider implementing laws aimed solely at encouraging employment and promotion of women to senior positions in the workplace. A greater number of women in senior management positions is critical for building a pool of potential candidates for the highest-level jobs such as chief executive officer or company president (International Labour Organisation, 2015:22). Workplace policymakers should ensure the implementation and enforcement of anti-bullying policies and create an environment that does not tolerate delinquent behaviour. Worker-friendly policies may protect women against harassers (Ollo-Lopez & Nunez, 2018:178).

2.10. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future studies

The generalisation of the findings and the replicability of this study are limited by the phenomenological nature of the study (Maxwell, 2013). A study incorporating perceptions and experiences of women in semi-skilled and non-skilled positions, as well as those of lesbian and gay women, could yield richer data and an additional perspective on the challenges that women face in the male-dominated heavy-metal manufacturing industry.

2.11. Conclusion

The representation of women in management positions in the corporate world, and particularly in male-dominated industries, remains insufficient. Women in skilled and senior positions in the heavy metal manufacturing industry still face gender inequality in appointments, salaries and benefits, while simultaneously having to endure bias and

stereotyping. Women continue in their role as homemakers and care-givers and they also continue their pursuit of meaningful work and growth into positions of power and influence in organisations. While workplace safety has been improved by introduction of anti-discrimination policies, women in skilled and senior positions remain exposed to toxic masculinity and subtle bullying. Formal mentoring programmes and mentors remain largely unavailable for women in skilled and senior positions.

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CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the concluding remarks, implications for management, limitations of the study and the recommendations for future studies. The recommendations and conclusions from this study relate to the general objective, namely identifying and understanding the challenges that women in skilled and senior positions face in a male-dominated workplace, as well as the following specific objectives, which were to:

- determine the capabilities of women to balance their work and personal lives.
- determine the effect of gender on women's career progress.
- establish whether women are assigned meaningful work and whether their present jobs have any growth prospects.
- determine whether the workplace is safe for women.
- ascertain the level of support women receive in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry.
- explore the effectiveness of legislation in uplifting and supporting women in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry.

3.2. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to identify and understand the barriers and challenges that women in skilled and senior positions face in the male-dominated heavy-metal manufacturing industry in the south of Gauteng. Data for this study was collected through the use of in-depth interviews using semi-structured questionnaire until the saturation point was reached. The conclusions that were drawn based on the objectives and the findings are discussed presently.

The results of this study indicated that women face the challenge of balancing their work and personal lives. The respondents of this study indicated that they have to work overtime and also prioritise important tasks to cope with the demands of their work and personal lives. A study by Oyafunke-Omoniyi and Babatunde (2017:8187) indicates that both society and the economic process have changed over time; that the simple society and its structures have become more complex, and the role of women (mainly domestic

labour) has changed to include more economic activity to support their families, since the economic reality and greater social pressure have made it difficult for men to be the sole providers for their families' needs. The acceptance of these activities has made working women a reality in our present society. The ability to achieve a work–life balance has become non-negotiable in today's fast-paced environment of science and engineering (Steenkamp, 2018:56).

This study also found that women faced a challenge in the form of bias towards men in terms of appointment to leadership positions. This hinders women's career progress. Gender stereotyping with regards to women's lack of certain characteristics, skills and aspirations that are deemed necessary for effective leadership affects women negatively (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016:388). Professional socialisation differences between men and women may further deter women's promotion to leadership roles, as fewer women play golf or go on hunting activities where networking occurs (Sanchez & Lehnert, 2019:184).

This study also revealed that women do not have the support of mentors in the workplace. Mentorship programmes empower women (Yokwana et al., 2016:1401). Promoting a mentoring culture where talented men and women engage in reciprocal developmental connections may lead to gender inclusion (Johnson & Smith, 2018:4).

Generally, respondents of this study indicated that legislation and workplace policies provided support for their personal lives; however, one respondent lamented the lack of laws aimed at uplifting and promoting women. Female leaders are rated less effective than male leaders, and people prefer to work with male leaders (Rhee & Sigler, 2015:123).

Change needs to be driven from the top echelons of the industry and men should be more willing to accept women in the boardrooms and be confident to appoint them to run the plant operations and lead production, maintenance and project management teams.

3.3. Implications for management

The study revealed that women in skilled and senior positions have unique needs in terms of their work–life balance which sometimes pose a challenge in their ability to work. Today's lean organisational structures mean that workers are required to put in additional effort, and they sometimes have to work outside the normal working hours or take work home. This poses a challenge to women who are raising young children and who also have other family responsibilities, since they have to sacrifice valuable family time and

manage a delicate balance between their work and personal lives. Ganiyu et al. (2017:442) suggest that the inability of employees to achieve the balance between work and family life presents a challenge to scholars and professionals in human resources management. Engaging in workplace practices that are beneficial to the workforce could help employees to maintain this balance. Achieving a balance between the competing demands of work and non-work is central to a good work–life balance (Adisa et al., 2019: 21)

Even though women believe that they have the same opportunities as men, there is still a lack of representation of women in certain levels of management in the organisation, with plant leadership positions being exclusively occupied by men. While there are efforts on the part of the organisation to employ more women in entry level, skilled and professional positions, women in this study indicated that much more must still be done to increase appointments of women in senior management and technical management positions. It is therefore important for organisations to take these challenges to heart and generate effective strategies to eradicate gender stereotyping, gender discrimination and bias to make the workplace a welcoming environment for women. Alter (2018:24–25) argues that by modelling the right behaviour, men could be part of the solution. Martin and Phillips (2017:41) argue that if qualities associated with women were valued highly at work, the efficacy of the gender-blind approach would be improved.

The study also found that there are no formal mentorship programmes to mentor both men and women and to offer them support and help them grow their careers. The majority of women who participated in the study indicated that they did not have mentors. Formal mentoring programmes provide a structure and clarity for mentoring relationships (Dashper, 2018:4). Mentoring offers support and insight to individuals with less experience to help them grow and develop their careers (Van Beek, 2018:28).

3.4. Limitations of the study

This study was aimed at women in skilled and senior positions; using purposive sampling women who have been employed in the heavy metal manufacturing industry for at least 5 years were selected. This sampling method resulted in exclusion of women with shorter employment service in the industry and women in lower level positions. A larger and more diverse sample would have provided this study with more validity and reliability.

3.5. Recommendations for future studies

This study focused on the challenges that women in skilled and senior positions face in a male-dominated workplace, and the general objective was to understand how women navigate these challenges. Future studies could investigate human resource strategies used to attract and retain female talent in the industry. Further, quantitative research methods could be used in combination with qualitative methods to investigate gender-related matters in the industry.

3.6. Concluding remarks

This article investigated the challenges that women in skilled and senior positions face in the male-dominated heavy-metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng. This study found that gender inequality, gender stereotypes and a lack of workplace support are challenges that women face in a male-dominated work environment. Heavy-metal manufacturing is to a certain extent still believed to be a man's field due to historical gender bias in society. As a result, women who wish to follow a career in the industry face stereotyping, gender discrimination, lack of support and a work–life imbalance; these are but some of the reasons why women are under-represented in the industry.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Dear Colleague,

I hereby invite you to take part in an academic study by answering the questions below. This academic study is part of my MBA studies. The objective of this study is to investigate challenges faced by women in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry.

Please note that permission to conduct this study was granted by General Manager of HR, however your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to participate.

This study has been approved by the NWU Business School and will be conducted according to the accepted and applicable national and international ethics guidelines and principles. The study is anonymous and response data will only be treated as confidential and will be used for academic purposes only. Transcripts of this study will be destroyed after the study is completed.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact me via email at dpkhoza@gmail.com or via telephone on 083 304 0486

Thank you in advance

Sincerely

Phumlani Khoza

APPENDIX B: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

An investigation of challenges faced by women in a male dominated heavy-metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng

Note: All information gathered in this interview will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for academic purposes.

Instructions:

1. The interview schedule consists of two sections. Kindly answer all questions in each section.

Section A – Biographical data

Please mark (x) the appropriate category:

1. Gender

☐

Female

☐

Male

2. Age (Years)

☐

Under 35

☐

36 – 45

☐

46 – 55

☐

Over 55

3. Educational Qualifications

☐

Matric

☐

National diploma

☐

Bachelor degree

☐

Post grad.

4. Overall Work Experience (Years)

☐

0 - 5

☐

6 – 10

☐

11 – 15 16 – 25

☐

Over 25

☐

5. Marital Status

☐

Unmarried

☐

Married

☐

Divorced

☐

Widowed

Section B

Research question: What determines the capabilities of women to balance work and personal life?

Interview question 1: Does your work schedule allow you to attend to personal engagements? Can you elaborate?

Interview question 2: How often do you take your work home and how does it affect your personal life?

Interview question 3: Does your personal lifestyle determine your career choices? Can you elaborate?

Interview question 4: How do you ensure that you meet the demands of both your work and personal life?

Research question: What are the challenges faced by women in heavy-metal manufacturing industry?

Interview question 5: What career growth and progression prospects does your job offer?

Interview question 6: Does your gender have any effect on your career progression? Can you elaborate?

Interview question 7: How fulfilling is your work? Can you elaborate?

Interview question 8: How safe is your work environment to you as a woman? Can you elaborate?

Research question: What is the level of support women obtain in the heavy-metal manufacturing industry?

Interview question 9: How important is the role of your mentors in your career thus far?

Interview question 10: Have role models played any part in your career and life choices? Can you elaborate?

Research question: How effective is legislation in uplifting and supporting women in the manufacturing sector?

Interview question 11: How do policies such as sick, maternity, family responsibility leave policies supporting your personal responsibilities outside of work? Can you elaborate?

APPENDIX C: LANGUAGE EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE

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Editing Certificate

I, Menitza Botha, hereby declare that the document entitled *'An investigation of challenges faced by women in a male dominated heavy metal manufacturing industry in South Gauteng'* has undergone a full and thorough language edit in accordance with the Professional Editors' Guild of South Africa's guidelines for academic editing.

Technical matters such as spelling, grammar and punctuation were attended to in addition to matters of style and clarity. As the editor may not misrepresent the author's abilities, no structural or substantive changes were made.

The style of the reference list and citations was corrected, but it remains the responsibility of the author to ensure the academic integrity of their work – in this regard, the editor may neither check for plagiarism nor rephrase any suspected instances of plagiarism.

The following comprise a list of stylistic changes made by the editor. In the case that they are contentious, it is a matter of preference and not a matter of negligence by either author or editor:

- *Serial comma is used in lists only*
- *Commas are used for lists, unless the lists are sub-divided by commas*
- *Common prefixes are hyphenated (non-, inter-, multi-, under-, co-)*
- *Work-life balance (en-dash)*
- *Phrases are given in full for ease of reading as they do not appear frequently enough to warrant abbreviation*
- *Capital after a colon only if the following matter constitutes a full sentence*
- *Bullets are punctuated with a full stop according to the Oxford Guide to Plain Language*
- *'Et al.' with a full stop and not italicised as per NWU reference guide*
- *'In vivo' in italics, as per the Oxford English Dictionary for Writers and Editors.*
- *'Steel-making' (hyphenated)*
- *'Decision-making' when attributive and 'decision making' when predicative*
- *'Decision maker' (not hyphenated)*
- *Data is treated as a singular mass noun, as per the Oxford English Dictionary for Writers and Editors*
- *No comma before 'because'*
- *'With regards' to and not 'with regard to'*
- *'Well-being' and not 'wellbeing'*
- *'Amongst' and not 'among'*

Yours faithfully

Menitza Botha

Translation, editing and proofreading. Say it like you mean it, the professional way.