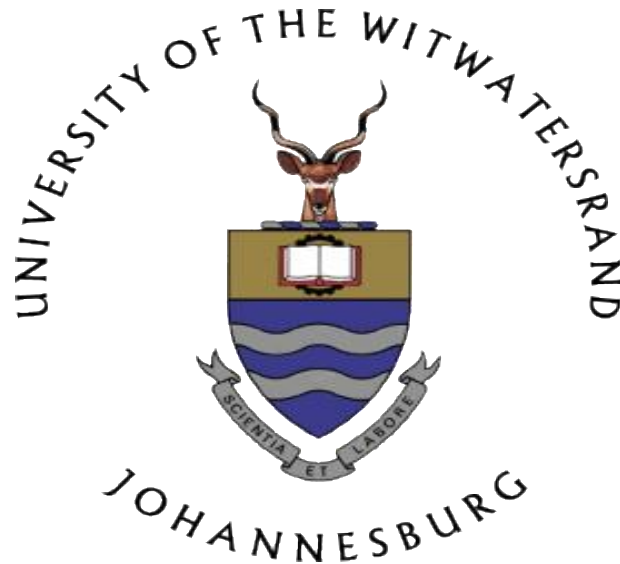




Masters Research Report

Title: Black Female Managers Perceptions' of Integration into Informal Social Networks at Work

By

Kelebogile Motlhamme

Student No: 721866

Supervisor: Professor Fiona Donald

A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA
by coursework and Research Report in the field of Industrial Psychology in the Faculty of
Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 15 February 2018

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university

.....
SIGNATURE
Kelebogile Faith Motlhamme
Word count: 30 937

.....
DATE

Abstract

The objective of this research was to identify Black female Managers perceptions' of integration into informal social networks at work. Informal social networks have been identified as one of the ways of improving career success. Given the low representation of Black female managers in South African organisations, identifying their perceptions of informal social networks could assist in increasing the number of Black women in managerial roles. Two specific aims were established for this research, firstly to distinguish the participants' perceptions of informal social networks at work, and to identify the strategies that they use to manage their integration into these informal social networks. The study was carried out using a qualitative research design, where data was collected through face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured interview guide. The sample consisted of 9 Black female managers from various organisations in Johannesburg, ages between 24-55 years. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. The results showed that majority of the participants do not see themselves as being involved in informal social networks in the workplace although most participated in informal relationships with certain colleagues at work. Implications of the study include reviewing the concept of informal social networks, due to the complexity involved in distinguishing the relational properties of informal social networks at work and understanding the impact sense of agency has on the integration strategies used by Black female managers.

Keywords: Informal networking; women in management; career success

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank the Lord Almighty for giving me the strength and the will to complete my studies with a sound mind.

To my sisters and brother, I am the confident woman that I am today because of your unwavering trust in my ability to conquer my dreams. Kealeboga.

To my mother and pillar of strength, my deepest gratitude goes to you. Thank you for your undying support and faith in me throughout my studies, and for constantly reminding me that my mind is beautiful.

My utmost appreciation goes to my supervisor Prof. Fiona Donald. Thank you for your patience, guidance and kind words throughout the duration of my research report. I will carry your words of encouragement with me throughout the rest of my career.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the amazing women who were able to find time to participate in my study. This research report would not be possible without your assistance.

Amogelang, this is for you.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Rationale.....	4
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	7
2.1. Introduction.....	7
2.2. Historical Background.....	7
2.3. Theory of Intersectionality.....	10
2.4. Black Women and Informal Social Networks.....	11
2.5. Barriers to Informal Social networks.....	12
2.5.1. Patriarchal Organisational Culture.....	13
2.5.2. Gender Differences in Networking.....	15
2.5.3. Gender Bias and Stereotypes.....	17
2.6. Social Network Theory.....	19
2.6.1. Nature of the Links.....	20
2.6.1.1. The Strength of Weak Ties.....	20
2.6.2. Structural Properties.....	21

2.6.3. Content Shared.....	22
2.6.3.1. Types of Content Shared.....	22
2.7. Research Aims	23
2.8. Research Questions.....	23
Chapter 3: Methodology	25
3.1. Introduction.....	25
3.2. Research Design.....	25
3.3. Sample.....	26
3.4. Procedure	29
3.4.1. General Procedure.....	29
3.5. Instruments.....	29
3.6. Data Analysis	30
3.7. Ethical considerations	32
Chapter 4: Results	34
4.1. Introduction.....	34
4.2. Benefits of Informal Social Networks	37
4.3. Integration strategies.....	45
4.4. Factors which influence networking experiences as Black female managers	50
4.5. Experiences of networking as a Black female manager	55
4.6. Nature of the Informal Social Networks (closeness, diversity)	60
Conclusion	62

Chapter 5: Discussion	64
5.1. Introduction.....	64
5.2. Importance of integration.....	64
5.3. Instrumental purposes	64
5.4. Emotional purposes.....	67
5.5. Strategic integration	69
5.6. Professional boundaries	70
5.7. Integration based on minority status	72
5.8. Networking as a Black female manager	73
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	76
6.1. Limitations of the study	76
6.2. Reflexive comments.....	76
6.3. Implications for organisational practise.....	77
6.4. Implications for theoretical practise.....	77
6.5. Implications for future research	78
6.6. Conclusion	78
Reference list	79
Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet Wits Plus	85
Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet.....	86
Appendix C: Participation Consent Form	87
Appendix D: Consent for Recording Form	88

Appendix E: Interview Schedule	89
Appendix F: Biographical Questionnaire- (<i>for sample description</i>)	92
Appendix G – Ethics Clearance Certificate	93

List of Figures

Figure 1. Constructs used in the study	2
Figure 2. Management Census Pyramid by BWASA (2015)	4
Figure 3. Distribution of top management positions by gender.....	9
Figure 4. Thematic Summary of Results	63

List of Tables

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Participants	28
--	----