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Breaking the Twenty-Percent Barrier for Women in Leadership Positions in the Shipping and Logistics Industry in Johannesburg

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Breaking the Twenty-Percent Barrier for Women in Leadership Positions in the Shipping and Logistics Industry in Johannesburg

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Abstract

Breaking the twenty percent barrier for women in leadership positions refers to the current status quo within the Shipping and logistics industry. According to Elias (2018) who is an expert in this space suggest that females occupying leadership positions comprise less than twenty percent throughout all levels which is local, national, regional, and global. In this regard, the researcher aims to discover techniques that will elevate this rate towards reaching approximately thirty percent (30%) by 2030 and exceeding fifty percent (50%) by 2050.

The aim of this research is to examine the factors behind the low percentage (20%) of women leaders in this sector. The research seeks to explore obstacles, limitations and contributory causes while also gauging perspectives from industry stakeholders through interviews. Additionally, there will be an examination into how different companies are addressing these challenges with strategies that prepare ambitious female employees for leadership roles effectively, including positioning them more prominently within organizations and creating empowering promotion opportunities so they can succeed when chances arise.

Qualitative research and interpretivist approach were applied in selecting diverse participants. The selection criteria encompassed both men and women, where 67 percent were females and 33 percent were males, these individuals are occupying various positions such as executives, middle managers, entry, and non-managers. Furthermore, the researcher also interviewed participants from other sectors to determine if the under representation of women in leadership roles exist only within shipping and logistics sector or other sectors experience similar situations.

The findings, which were conducted using thematic analysis reflected various yet similar trends, and the trend that occupied the most indicated that this sector is male dominated. It further revealed that men have more experience as they have been in this sector the longest, and automatically becoming the first choice when positions are open, though women are being considered for first entry and middle management positions and a slight percentage in leadership roles.

The conclusion was that most companies do not have their strategies readily available however they briefly touch on the plans they have in place to increase women's representation to leadership roles without providing supporting information or firm strategies, nor timelines. This research offers recommendations that can be applied, aiming at boosting female participation in senior positions.

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Chapter 1 Research Problem

1.1 Introduction

The research is conducted by a logistics expert with more than 16 years of experience in the shipping and logistics industry. She works for a global transportation and logistics company, possessing extensive knowledge across various roles such as operations, sales, key account management, business development management while being an expert at budgeting and formulating strategies. Presently she heads the high technology vertical focusing on handling importation and exportation of valuable products like computing devices and accessories, cell phones and communication equipment, consumer electronics products and network infrastructure.

Through this exposure and working for different companies, business units and occupying different roles, this sparked some interest to understand further the barriers and limitations that have resulted to a slow take-off and growth of women obtaining leadership roles within this sector. This resulted to the desire to investigate further and choosing to conduct the research aiming particularly at understanding the possibilities of breaking the current twenty percent barrier for women in leadership positions within the shipping and logistics sector. The relevance of the topic was selected and triggered by the slow-paced changes around gender imbalance within this sector.

1.2 Statement of purpose

Throughout history, women have possessed the capability and inclination to assume leadership positions (Elias, 2018). However, societal limitations stemming from political and economic factors caused them to progress at a slower pace in attaining such roles. Recently though, there has been a notable shift towards more inclusive perspectives on gender representation which reveals that despite this change we see today, it appears as if certain industries still suffer from an underrepresentation of females in leadership (Elias, 2018).

This research aims to uncover the underlying causes for women's lack of representation in leadership positions within the shipping and logistics industry. Additionally, it seeks to identify effective strategies that companies can adopt as references or put into practice to improve this situation by implementing short-term solutions by 2030 and long-term ones by 2050 resulting in a more favourable outlook.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The notable gender gap that hinders the accomplishment of women's leadership transformation targets is an urgent issue confronting the entire Freight Logistics industry profoundly. The industry's prospects for development and innovation are overshadowed by a lack of progress despite initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and dismantling gender barriers (Sastre, 2015). This study focuses on the under representation of women in leadership roles within the Shipping and Logistics industry. The research design that will be applied is qualitative study, using in person interviews. It includes participants who are in top management, middle management, and non-managers (Bruni, 2019).

The research targets mainly women and few males as participants based in Johannesburg South Africa. The selection criteria was constructed with accessibility and ease of information in mind around exploring barriers for entry and advancements in this industry and most importantly to understand the future strategies for improvement. The limitations to the study are the availability and accessibility of information from private organizations (Olzmann, 2020).

The geographical location of the study will be conducted in Johannesburg Gauteng and the researcher will further explore global, continental, regional, and south Africa's insights to understand if the twenty percent barrier is only in South Africa or the other regions are faced with the same challenge. The research design to be explored focuses on the exploratory nature specifically crafted to reveal the research philosophy and obtain a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles and prospects associated with attaining gender diversity in the shipping industry by utilizing qualitative techniques (Walle, 2015).

1.4 Background of the Study

The Shipping and logistics industry is affected by the persisting gender gap better known as organisational culture. The persistent lack of representation of women in leadership positions not only hampers the industry's progress towards diversity but also inhibits the potential for innovative problem-solving, fresh ideas and overall creativity that can be brought by gender inclusive leadership (Fuentes and Fuentes, 2016). These barriers and symptoms are intricate and multifaceted encompassing

institutionalized restrictions, traditional gender biases and a prevailing culture that unconsciously perpetuates an environment where women are less likely to attain leadership roles. Consequently, this sector is less equipped to innovation to compete on a scale and adapt to changing trends (Shillcut & Silver, 2019).

The research on gender diversity is lacking transformation goals in the Freight industry in South Africa (Fihlo*,* 2023)*.* Ferdman *(*2020) states that although previous studies have primarily focused on the connection between gender diversity and workplace creativity, the specific context of gender diversity within South Africa has mostly been approached as a matter of legislation and compliance.

While some scholars have explored how gender diversity influences company performance through its impact on creativity across all employee levels, this research takes a different approach. It aims to understand the existing problems that organizations face with the under representation of women, and what benefits are there for companies to explore when dealing with this. The absence of research, in this area highlights the importance of exploring into the factors that contribute to the progress in achieving gender diversity goals, within South Africa's Freight sector (Alonso, 2018).

The existing literature has specific challenges and gaps that prevent women from attaining leadership positions within this industry. Various factors, such as common patterns, industry norms and cultural dynamics in South Africa greatly influence the leadership landscape within this sector. The lack of research makes it challenging to identify the underlying issues, barriers, and potential catalysts unique to the industry (Ryals, 2023).

1.5 Problem statement

The research aims to uncover the underlying causes for women's lack of representation in leadership positions within the shipping and logistics industry with the high focus in Johannesburg,and to note the unique experiments and complexities prevalent in this sector, that may not have been fully captured by general studies (Bruni, 2019). The industry operates within its dynamics, shaped by cultural and industry specific factors. While generalized literature can provide some assistance, it falls short in offering background perspectives that are crucial for understanding the

under representation of women and gender inequality in driving change in South Africa's freight environment (Bruni, 2019).

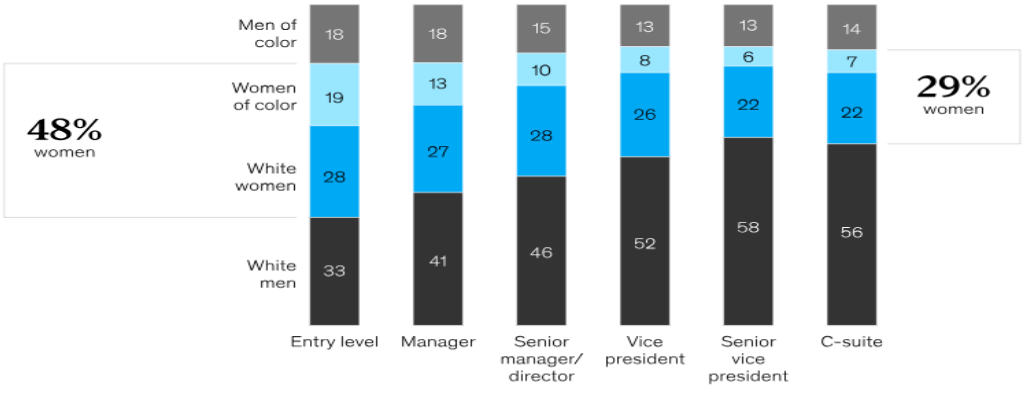
The scarcity of studies further complicates the sectors' ability to develop targeted solutions that address its issues. This highlights the need for research activities aimed at bridging the knowledge gap between South Africa's freight industry and existing literature on organizational diversity, as a whole (Maldonado, 2015).

The key deliverables for the reader are to help create a comprehensive understanding of the problem statement by describing challenges and barriers faced by women in this sector and ways to enhance women's representation in leadership roles and promote gender diversity. It is further important that the reader understands the key societal concerns, theoretical frameworks and educational strategies that have been put together for organizations and policy makers, to understand the research suggestions.

Table 1 highlights the gender imbalance in the workforce including the symptoms of the problem. Even though women hold a higher workforce population it is however evident that a lot of transformation needs to be applied to have a balanced scale.

Women remain underrepresented at every stage of the corporate pipeline, regardless of race and ethnicity.

Representation in corporate role, by gender and race, % of employees



	Entry level	Manager	Senior manager/ director	Vice president	Senior vice president	C-suite
Total women, 2024	48	39	37	34	29	29
Total women, 2020	47	38	33	29	28	21
Total women, 2015	45	37	32	27	23	17

Table 1 – Women in the Workplace, Source-(McKinsey & Company and Leanin.Org, 2024, p.11).

From Table 1 it is evident that there is still a huge gap that require leaders' attention. Table 1 illustrates the following:

1.5.1 Symptoms of the Problem

- Under- representation of women in leadership roles
- Slow progress in achieving gender diversity goals.
- Overall slow progress of careers generally resulting to gender imbalances.

1.5.2 Possible causes of the problem

- Deep-seated gender biases- which are assumptions, attitudes, and ingrained ideas (Banks, 2019).
- Insufficient organisational commitment to diversity (Bruni, 2019).
- Cultural resistance to change within the shipping sector (Olzmann, 2020).

To gain an understanding of obstacles that hinder women's advancement into leadership roles, conducting thorough research is crucial. This research problem does not only create a void, but it also hampers the development of evidence-based strategies aimed at bringing about transformative change in this field. In depth investigation into the challenges faced by women leaders in this industry is essential for policy making, decision making processes and achieving substantial goals related to gender diversity (Alonso, 2018).

1.6 Objectives of the research

The objective of this research is to gain a deep understanding of the barriers that women encounter in attaining leadership roles within South Africa's Shipping industry. Based on findings, thoughtful suggestions will be made for expanding growth and development opportunities with emphasis on freight industry perspectives. Additionally, this research aims to provide leaders, policymakers, and decision-makers with valuable insights into devising effective strategies spanning both short-term (1-5 years) and long-term (5-10 years+) approaches towards elevating the status quo concerning female leaders. Furthermore, it aims to provide insights for readers on the relevance of the topic, pointers that they can apply in their own research or field, understanding proposal's implications and anticipated outcomes.

1.7 Business need for the research

The advantages of conducting research on women in freight leadership positions extend beyond mere data collection. Rather, such research can offer valuable insights into the challenges faced by female leaders and inform organizations' strategic thinking about gender diversity. By promoting a deeper understanding of these issues within organizational culture, this knowledge may foster more inclusive discussions around topics like women's leadership styles, transformational strategies for overcoming obstacles to success among female professionals in traditionally male-dominated fields such as logistics or transportation management, ultimately leading toward greater benefits both professionally and culturally (Angelidaki 2023).

A detailed and comprehensive strategy is required by companies that aim to address gender diversity and leadership reform (Akala, 2018). Inclusivity must be acknowledged as a vital factor in driving innovation and competitiveness not just as a moral obligation. To promote gender equality across South Africa, and the African continent at large necessitates an all-encompassing tactical approach which includes legal compliance, educational reforms alongside concerted efforts aimed at challenging cultural norms (Friedman, 2014). The collaborative involvement of academic institutions, policymakers alongside business leaders can facilitate industry direction towards enhanced inclusivity through informed research practices (Friedman, 2014).

1.8 Theoretical need for the research

To enhance the research framework, it is essential to explore the cultural contexts that have shaped the logistics sector. It is crucial to examine how gender norms, cultural expectations, and unwritten rules influence women’s career paths, within this industry (Welzel, 2019).

The researcher addresses this need by zooming on the issues that provides insights, for informed decision making to benefit various industries. Theoretical contributions serve as a roadmap to develop targeted measures, regulations and protocols that align with the characteristics of the industry in South Africa (Kibsgaard, 2017).

1.8.1 What will be the perceived Benefits?

- Increased diversity fostering innovation and resilience.

- Improved appeal and repute of the organization.
- A more diverse workplace that enhances worker performance and satisfaction.

Looking beyond the context; conducting this research brings academic advantages. It is crucial to address the theoretical needs in the understanding of gender diversity. This research contributes to a foundation for discussions on workplace diversity by providing insights specific to this industry. In doing so, it. makes the existing academic discourse more relevant offering a better perspective on gender representation, cultural dynamics, and organizational commitment, within the shipping and logistics sector (Ketchen, 2016).

1.9 Delimitations of the research

Although the shipping and logistics sector plays a crucial role in contributing 33 percent to GDP through international trade, there are limited studies that explicitly tackle gender diversity, which makes it challenging to understand the unique opportunities and challenges within this industry (Grimmet 2024).

Grimmet (2024) notes that this insufficient attention highlights a gap in knowledge which calls for scholarly investigation. Delving into the complexities of South Africa's industry, which involves a convergence of gender relations with trade, logistics and organizational systems that are vital for traversing unfamiliar territory. The scarcity of information regarding women's involvement within this sector indicates an inadequate comprehension pertaining to such matters in the country. This delays actions aimed at implementing targeted interventions and initiatives designed to tackle gender disparities (Ryals, 2023).

In addition, the lack of transparent information from companies regarding their intentions and timelines for enhancing gender diversity, cultivating female talent, and enabling them to assume leadership positions proves to be problematic (Ryals, 2023). This hinders the research efforts as it favours subjectivity in interviews conducted which may not accurately portray reality.

1.10 Research Gaps and Sub-Problem Statements

The purpose of these sub-problem statements is to unpack and uncover the underlying gaps which have resulted to the under twenty percent of women representation in leadership roles in the shipping and logistics industry. These statements will support

in structuring suitable recommendations that companies within this sector can explore and implement, by focusing on the following:

- Exploratory statements which will help to understand the root causes of under representation of women in leadership position in the shipping sector.
- Descriptive statements will be used to analyse the current state of gender diversity in the shipping sector.
- Prescriptive statements, to recommend strategies for improvement within the shipping sector.

Research Gaps	**Sub-problem statements**
Women face several barriers to promotions or career development opportunities compared to their male counterparts, resulting from implicit bias including unconscious attitudes and stereotypes which affects decisions and behaviours in ways that disadvantages women in leadership roles.	The percentage of women's representation in leadership roles is minimal, what are the economic, social factors and trends that are influencing the slow take off including barriers to career advancement?
Gender diversity requires a combined and pooled effort across various sectors and levels of society by addressing challenges and implementing effective strategies that organizations can work towards in achieving greater gender equality.	Why is it important for organizations to have a balanced gender workforce, and how should managers go about being intentional with investing in gender diversity?
The deficiency of policy and structural changes in addressing gender inequality in the workplace can perpetuate disparities in career advancement,	What are organizational policies and structural changes supporting women career advancement and which policies are inadvertently

salary gaps and overall workplace experience for women.	disadvantaging women in attaining and pursuing leadership roles?

Table 2 - Research Gaps & Sub-problem Statements: Source (Author's compilation, 2024,p15).

1.11 Definition of terms

Freight management can be defined as a broad industry terminology, with broader specification and technicalities per segment and requires full knowledge and understanding of what each segment entails. It involves different movements by air, sea, road, and rail freight. However, the end goal is to move a consignment from place of origin to destination by optimizing the transportation of these goods to ensure they arrive at their destination efficiently and cost-effectively (Yin, 2018).

Freight- focuses on various movement types, from break bulk freight, containerized freight, refrigerated freight, and oversized freight consignments (Copacino, 2019).

Logistics- is a commercial movement of transporting goods on behalf of clients with an effective and efficient reverse flow of goods. It refers to a much greater network that offers clients different services like, courier, warehousing, distribution, and transportation depending on the preferred mode and size of fleet required (Christopher, 2018).

Shipping- is the physical movement and transportation of goods via sea freight, air freight, land freight and intermodal shipping. It involves handling and compliance, customs clearance and tracking and monitoring of cargo from point A to point B.

Ernest and Fayle (2016) add that a portion of the movement of goods is carried by trucks and bakkies via road freight mode at local and regional level and can be regarded as harmful to human health through carbon emissions and accidents. It involves route planning, safety and security plus tracking and monitoring (Schreyer, 2014).

Breaking the barrier - refers to the desire to break the glass cylinders and foster equality in the workplace on challenges faced by women in corporate and in leadership roles that hinder their career growth and progression (Breaking barriers, 2023).

Under representation of women leaders- refers to the minimal representation of women in leadership roles, even though there are intentional efforts to change and increase the number which is affected by power, traditional stereotypes, and politics (Pick, 2024).

Traditional stereotypes in the workplace- refers to leadership biases impacting on women's advancement in the workplace and particularly in leadership roles and forces them to navigate these roles and with hardship and masculinity. (Chikwe, 2023; Eneh, 2022; & Akpuokwe, 2024).

Gender diversity at workplace- describes a variety of mixed genders in the workplace, who equally bring in ideas and perspectives and work towards one goal. Research has indicated that organizations that are diverse have a potential to perform better financially, which lead to productive and motivated personnel (Pulusumamidi, Betgeri & Chekuri, 2024).

Leadership roles- are regarded as senior positions whereby individuals holding these positions are expected to lead, guide, manage, motivate, inspire individuals, and drive organisational growth through strategic thinking, problem solving, decision making and guided by policies to ensure that all personnel understand the organizational goals and focus areas (Lasarati, Fernando, Darus, Iribaram & Jubba, 2024).

1.12 Assumptions

The hindering factor could be the shortage of research that specifically focuses on the relationship between management commitment, cultural dynamics, and gender diversity in increasing women's representation in leadership roles (Inegbedion, 2020). This sector operates as a microcosm of society due to its deeply rooted customs and traditions. Therefore, the workplace dynamics within this sector are heavily shaped by norms and expectations, moreover within the private companies. To fully comprehend how gender diversity, cultural restraints and organizational commitment intersect with each other in this context, might require a framework that clarifies the underlying mechanisms influencing women's leadership progression (Pike, 2021).

1.13 Chapter outline

Previous studies on gender diversity within the logistics sector have employed various methodologies, to understand the challenges and opportunities women face in this industry. It's important to note that methodologies can vary, and each approach comes with its own set of strengths, limitations, and potential biases which will be discussed further in chapter 2 and the composition of the research will be broken down as follows:

The research is divided into six chapters and each chapter brings an exclusive and apparent aspect of the research. Chapter one introduces the reader on the topic at hand, further presents the background of the research, problem statement including the objectives of the research, along with the research problem, limitations and assumptions that may impact the research.

The second chapter focuses on an in-depth literature review, whereby the researcher breaks down the research topic, by bringing in supporting statements and research gaps.

The third chapter outlines the research methodology including techniques which were used to test and support the research around breaking the twenty percent barrier for women in leadership roles within the shipping and logistics sector.

The fourth chapter involves data collection through qualitative research approach using interview methods, which aim at supporting this research and bringing different perspectives from the research participants. Participants will vary from executives, middle managers, entry level managers and non-managers of which 67 percent are females and 33 percent are males. It further focuses on data interpretation and analysis of results, through more visualised outputs from graphs and clarification of results.

The fifth chapter will finalise the findings of the research and present recommendations that companies and leaders can adopt, implement, use as reference to bring about change in breaking the twenty percent barrier for women in leadership roles in organizations both public and private sectors. The recommendations are not only limited to the shipping and logistics industry but can be used across other industries. The sixth chapter is the conclusion which summarises the whole research document, followed by references.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The main goals of this chapter delve into the examination and exploration of literature related to eliminating barriers for women in leadership positions within the Shipping and Logistics industry. Additionally, it seeks to identify research gaps that align with the sub problem statements presented in chapter One. The objective behind this review is to assist organizations understand the impact of the under representation of women in leadership roles, equip and enable them to work on those challenges and most importantly focuses on the benefits of having a diverse workforce.

2.2 What is literature review?

Literature review is a method of reviewing and analysing an article related to a particular topic, theme, or theory with the aim of fully unpacking and boosting the researcher's knowledge around the theory or subject matter (Justin and Paul, 2020).

This literature review is around the role of diversity management and the lack of women representation in leadership roles, specifically in the Shipping and Logistics sector. It focuses on theoretical framework, as it is based on findings of previous studies that an author will be leveraging on (Kumar & Unnithan, 2019).

Additionally, Palmatier, Houston, & Hulland (2018) purports that literature review is based on previous studies that have been long published, however aimed at providing the author with different views of the current gaps around the topic or problem statement.

2.3 Background of the research (synopsis)

The South African Shipping and Logistics industry stands as a crucial component of the nation's economic landscape, contributing significantly to international trade, logistics, and economic growth. Despite its strategic importance, the industry grapples with a persistent issue of the glaring gender gap in leadership positions. Understanding the historical and cultural context of this sector is important to unravel the complexities that underlie the stagnancy in achieving gender diversity transformation targets (Bhirugnath et al., 2017).

Historically**,** the industry has been male dominated, a reflection of broader societal trends. Exploring into this historical context provides insights into the rooted gender norms that have shaped the industry's workforce and leadership over time (Lorber, 2001). The historical trajectory of the South African shipping industry provides critical insights into the origins of gender disparities historically perceived as a male-dominated domain, the industry's foundations were laid during periods when traditional gender roles were deeply entrenched (MacNeil & Ghosh, 2017). Exploration of historical records reveals how early practices, policies, and societal attitudes shaped the initial landscape of the shipping workforce. For instance, during times of maritime expansion and trade, the workforce composition was predominantly male, establishing a precedent that has persisted over the years.

Economically, the shipping and logistics sector plays a pivotal role in South Africa's trade relations, it contributes 9% to GDP and the annual global logistics spent is USD 3.5 Trillion, facilitating the import and export of goods and raw materials. The industry encompasses diverse sub-sectors, including shipping, logistics, and port operations, each contributing uniquely to the nation's economic prosperity. Examining the economic significance of the maritime industry provides insights into the stakeholders involved, their roles, and the broader implications of gender imbalance (Olzmann, 2020).

Operationally, the freight landscape in South Africa involves intricate processes and systems that demand diverse skills and competencies (Cicek et al., 2019). From seafaring activities to onshore operations, trucking, logistics, warehousing, and understanding the operational peculiarities of the shipping sector is essential for contextualizing gender diversity challenges. This includes an exploration of the different roles within the industry, the distribution of tasks, and the hierarchical structures that influence career progression.

Societal, attitudes towards gender roles evolved globally, so did the recognition of the need for diversity within industries, including maritime. This section delves into the evolution of gender diversity policies in the South African maritime context. From the early recognition of gender imbalances to the implementation of affirmative action and transformation charters, tracing the policy trajectory provides insights into the industry's response to gender disparities (Altuzarra et al., 2021).

The South African logistics industry is typically delineated into six subsectors, encompassing ocean and coastal shipping, air freight, port operations, associated land-based activities, warehousing and supply chain, and marine tourism and leisure. This categorization provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the diverse facets and operational dimensions within the domain (Gutiérrez-Martínez et al., 2021).

Cultural Norms

The influence of cultural norms on gender dynamics cannot be overstated. Cultural expectations and societal beliefs play a substantial role in modelling the perceptions of gender roles within this industry. Investigating these cultural aspects involves an examination of societal attitudes towards women's participation in traditionally male-dominated professions. It also involves understanding how cultural norms influence hiring practices, career progression, and leadership appointments within shipping organizations (MacNeil et la., 2017).

2.4 Research Objectives

The following research objectives are key to guiding the research, helping ensure that the planning and execution are clear, organized, and meaningful. The objectives are:

i) A comprehensive analysis of the career trajectories and lived experiences of women employed in various capacities within the shipping and logistics industry, investigating into degrees of intersectionality to capture diverse perspectives.

ii) Identify and critically evaluate the common gender biases, discriminatory practices, and structural impediments that inhibit women's progress and contribute to the continuation of gender disparities across different segments of the shipping and logistics workforce.

iii) Explore the intricate interplay between organizational norms, policies, and leadership behaviours, examining how these factors either foster or inhibit gender diversity, inclusivity, and equitable treatment within shipping and logistics companies.

iv) Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of existing initiatives aimed at promoting gender diversity and inclusion, innovative collaborations, programs, and

advocacy efforts to drive sustained progress towards gender equity in the industry.

2.5 The shipping and Logistics Industry Theoretical foundation and Outlook

The logistics industry accounts for 9 percent of the GDP and spends an annual expenditure worth USD 3.5 trillion globally, involving various modes such as shipping (import/export), road freight, rail transport, port operations and courier services. This sector plays a significant role in transporting diverse consignments across all verticals including High-tech products, Pharmaceuticals, Mining supplies, Oil and Gas, Automotive, Agricultural goods, Consumer, Perishables, and general cargo (Dragomir 2018).

The researcher has selected the top four global leading Shipping and Logistics firms with a footprint in South Africa to demonstrate and compare the outlook of women representation per organization. Additionally, comparisons were drawn from global, continent, regional, and local perspectives to investigate viewpoints, future plans and strategies pertaining to women leadership and gender equality. After scrutinizing gender dynamics within this industry segment thoroughly, a comprehensive analysis revealed several measures undertaken at fostering diversity among employees.

2.5.1 The top four global leading companies

2.5.1.1 DHL (Germany)

Leading clearing and forwarding company and ranked number one in the world, with over 470 000 employees in over 200 countries and headquarters in Germany (DHL, 2021). Only 19% of women hold positions in management roles worldwide, and only 36% of women are employed in this company. DHL strategy aims at increasing women representation by 2.6% yearly including homophobia, transphobia, and disability (Olejniczak, 2014).

2.5.1.2 Kuehne & Nagel (Switzerland)

Kuehne and Nagel's headquarters are in Switzerland with a footprint in South Africa and ranked number two in the world. It acknowledges the significance of encouraging diversity and inclusion, currently women constitute 16% of management workforce among their 79 000 employees worldwide, however, they aim to raise this number to

32% by year 2030. To demonstrate their commitment, they have introduced the "Balanced & Belonging" program which empowers employees to actively contribute towards shaping a workplace culture by removing biases and barriers. This initiative strives to ensure recognition and advancement opportunities for all employees (KN Management Board, 2020).

2.5.1.3 DSV Global Transport & Logistics (Denmark)

DSV, a Denmark based company and ranked third globally, with over 75 000 employees in over 100 countries and full operation and footprint in South Africa. It is facing the challenge of underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Currently their board of directors consists of 62% men and 38% women worldwide. To address this issue, DSV planned to implement an initiative in 2023 with the objective of expanding the proportion of women to 40% by 2030. In a milestone for the company, DSV South Africa appointed its very first female Managing Director in 2022 highlighting their commitment to bridging the gender gap (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

2.5.1.4 DB Schenker Logistics (Germany)

DB Schenker Logistics, the recognized largest corporation based in Germany with a footprint in South Africa, ranked number four in the world with more than 76 000 employees. They have a dedicated initiative called the "Women's Network" program. This program focuses on empowering women within the organization and shaping their future. Although specific details, about the representation of women, within the company are not publicly disclosed, DB Schenker Logistics have plans to empower women (DB Schenker, 2021).

2.5.1.5 Cross-Company Observations

All four organizations have a massive employment scale. The challenge lies in understanding workplace dynamics when women make up only around 16% to 19% of the workforce from over a minimum of 75 000 employees per organization. All four companies emphasized the importance of diversity and inclusion, and the significance of having women in leadership roles. These prominent figures in the industry each share a characteristic which is embraced through long term objectives and focusing on achieving their targets between 2030-2040. While this shift in approach signifies a change in strategy, it can't be overlooked that over the years it posed challenges, more

especially when evaluating the present methods and outcomes. While some companies have a 40% representation approach, it might not be possible considering uncertainties and unclear picture about implementing these strategies,

2.5.1.6 Global Perspective

International organizations highlight gender equality as both an imperative and a wise economic choice with 19% of women's representation in leadership positions globally within this sector (Chen, 2004). Gender diversity and promoting women leaders in the sector are pressing concerns in today's landscape, as nations struggle for inclusivity, diversity, and equal representation. The shipping industry is undergoing increased scrutiny, however numerous challenges persist, including rooted stereotypes, historical biases, against women and institutional barriers hindering their progress. Given the context of the industry it is crucial to try to transform leadership structures and embrace diverse perspectives. An estimated global total of 125 million people work in Logistics sector, male graduates are up to 65% and 35% are women graduates, over and above that only 20% positions are occupied by women and 5% are in Management positions.

2.5.1.7 Continental Perspective (Africa)

The shipping and logistics sector in Africa encounters challenges, with 17 percent women representation in leadership roles within shipping. While progress has been slower than anticipated, the importance of gender diversity is now being acknowledged as a catalyst for transformation. The African shipping industry confronts hurdles due to its nations and cultural traditions. According to Gutiérrez-Martínez (2021), these challenges include existing gender roles training opportunities for women and inadequate inclusive laws. Continental efforts emphasize the necessity of gender equality and call for targeted strategies to eliminate barriers and drive change (Gutiérrez-Martínez et al., 2021). A noteworthy example of such an initiative is the African Unions Agenda 2063 which focuses on transformed gender and economies including promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization.

2.5.1.8 Regional Perspective (Southern Africa)

The gender diversity in the industry in the African region, including South Africa is influenced by various factors such as economic dynamics, legal frameworks, and historical settings. To promote equality and inclusion South Africa has implemented

action programs like the Affirmative Action Charter Acts transformation targets. However, progress has been relatively slow despite these efforts with 16% of women representation in leadership positions within shipping sector. Overcoming challenges requires efforts, across the industry specialized approaches and comprehensive training initiatives to tackle deeply rooted gender biases and achieve leadership transformation goals effectively (Altuzarra, 2021).

2.5.1.9 National Perspective (South Africa)

The Affirmative Action Charter Act governs the shipping industry in South Africa and aims to achieve transformation targets. However, achieving gender balance in leadership positions is still a challenge despite these efforts (Olzmann, 2020). Industry stakeholders must work together towards developing programs that not only reach their goals but also promote empowering environments for women leaders. As far as statistics go, imports and exports contribute 92% of shipping trade while Durban port alone brings about 62% of total shipping revenue in South Africa (Saurabh & Sinha, 2021).

2.5.1.10 Researcher's views

The Shipping and Logistics industry is confronted by significant problems of diversity and gender inequality. Breaking the twenty percent barrier for women in leadership roles will take some time and actionable strategies, as well as effective strategy implementation through policy enforcement. Policies serve to uncover realities; they encourage companies to confront their problematic practices while also providing guidance towards future initiatives with specific timelines to facilitate progress aimed at achieving greater gender equality (Fernandes, 2018; Uyar, 2020 & Karaman, 2023).

2.6 Views by transformation corporate activist

The following female leaders offer insightful quotes on gender transformation and representing various industries furthermore holding diverse positions. With a shared passion for promoting gender equality, they're all committed to making progress in their fields while recognizing deserving women and uplifting others alongside them.

2.6.1 Dr Judy Dlamini – Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand

“I believe overcoming societal gender stereotypes is important for the success of the nation. Better still, a society that sees differences across race, gender, sexual orientation, and social class as a strength is what every nation should strive for”.

2.6.2 Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka – United Nations Under Secretary-General and Executive Director

“Stereotype and culture are central areas in the barriers to establish gender equality. Intersectionality, the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to be given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent system of discrimination or disadvantage is also an important factor.”

2.6.3 Maria Ramos -Corporate Executive and chairperson of AngloGold Ashanti

“We have a great deal of commitment, and we talk about it a lot, however we are behind the curve. We still have a long way to go in the financial services. Women have a role to play in gender transformation, therefore raise your hand for leadership positions, even if you are not ready, seize the opportunity and ask for help”.

2.6.4 Cora Fernandez- Strategist & Investor, Non-Executive Director: Group Five

“I don’t believe in legislation to enforce policies, but companies should set internal quotas and monitor them internally. Women should push themselves to get involved in high-impact divisions, be visible by interacting with different stakeholders across all races, gender, and age”.

2.6.5 Nolitha Fakude- Chairperson of Anglo American

“There has been some progress in the necessary drive to transform the mining industry in terms of gender parity. However, much work remains to be done. Collaborations, support programmes and mentorship can be a catalyst to enabling an environment for women to thrive in a meaningful way. We all know that gender equality is a human right, and it is a business imperative, there is no longer any debate about the need to transform”.

2.7 Various sector Assessments

The author examined the activities and possible barriers around women leadership in other sectors compared to the logistics sector and the following was discovered.

2.7.1 Logistics Sector

Research has proven that only about twenty to thirty (20-30) percent of women are contributing to this sector, furthermore only ten percent of women are in Management positions (Saurabh & Sinha, 2021).

Statistics of the Transport Sector

WORKFORCE PROFILE FOR ALL EMPLOYEES	Male				Female				Foreign National		Total
	A	C	I	W	A	C	I	W	Male	Female	
Top Management	334	112	399	1534	212	83	181	408	91	10	3364
	9,9%	3,3%	11,9%	45,6%	6,3%	2,5%	5,4%	12,1%	2,7%	0,3%	100,0%
Senior Management	1224	384	828	2502	645	201	449	1166	101	29	7529
	16,3%	5,1%	11,0%	33,2%	8,6%	2,7%	6,0%	15,5%	1,3%	0,4%	100,0%
Professionally qualified	6705	1542	1777	5633	3777	843	1017	3043	343	102	24782
	27,1%	6,2%	7,2%	22,7%	15,2%	3,4%	4,1%	12,3%	1,4%	0,4%	100,0%
Skilled	43021	7595	4412	11796	19521	4016	2400	6580	1952	208	101501
	42,4%	7,5%	4,3%	11,6%	19,2%	4,0%	2,4%	6,5%	1,9%	0,2%	100,0%
Semi-skilled	83466	10184	3004	4619	24959	4414	1523	4007	1995	159	138330
	60,3%	7,4%	2,2%	3,3%	18,0%	3,2%	1,1%	2,9%	1,4%	0,1%	100,0%
Unskilled	27354	3010	291	426	9669	832	67	134	564	91	42438
	64,5%	7,1%	0,7%	1,0%	22,8%	2,0%	0,2%	0,3%	1,3%	0,2%	100,0%
TOTAL PERMANENT	162104	22827	10711	26510	58783	10389	5637	15338	5046	599	317944
	51,0%	7,2%	3,4%	8,3%	18,5%	3,3%	1,8%	4,8%	1,6%	0,2%	100,0%

Table 3 - Statistics of transport sector: Source: (DSV global transport and Logistics , 2021, p27)

Table 3 demonstrates the reality, and the milestones women still need to achieve to reach and come closer to men's statistics and representation in the logistics sector. At this point women's representation is under a 20% mark, and research proves that this problem is not only in the Shipping and Logistics sector but across other sectors.

2.7.2 Mining

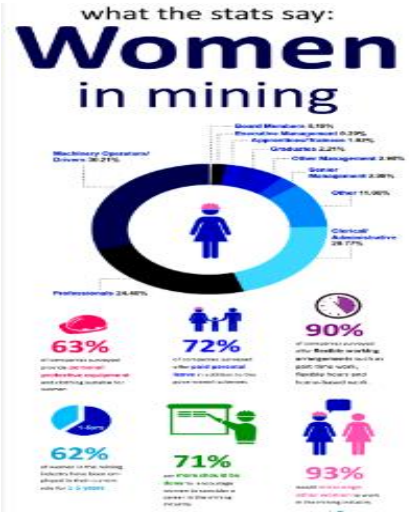


Figure 1 - Mining review - Source (WIMSA, 2024, p.28)

The analysis of Figure 1 is as follows:

- women occupy nineteen (19) percent of corporate board seats and fourteen percent (14) in senior executive roles, and only four (4%) of women from 600 global mining firms are or have been in CEO positions.
- in the Middle East and Africa women working in mining companies hold 30.9% of executive positions which is more than double of any other region or the global average (Asian Development Bank, 2019).
- Thirty percent (30) of women are hired to do machinery operators job including drivers. The statistics highlight that mining companies mainly retain female employees and that is because most mining companies offer flexible solutions.

2.7.3 Automotive

Although women are almost half of the labour force, they however have a representation of one quarter in this sector. Black women account to 5.6%, Asian women 1.8% and Latina women 3% from the total of eleven automotive well-known and established companies worldwide (Katelyn & Krisrin, 2021).

2.7.4 Researcher's view

Figure 2 demonstrates that the below statistics existed back in 2015 and female representation in logistics (transportation) then was 19% and to date in 2024 (nine years later) it is still under twenty percent worldwide; this means that the transformation process is slow or the initiatives and strategies that have been implemented by various companies are either unfollowed or not taken seriously.

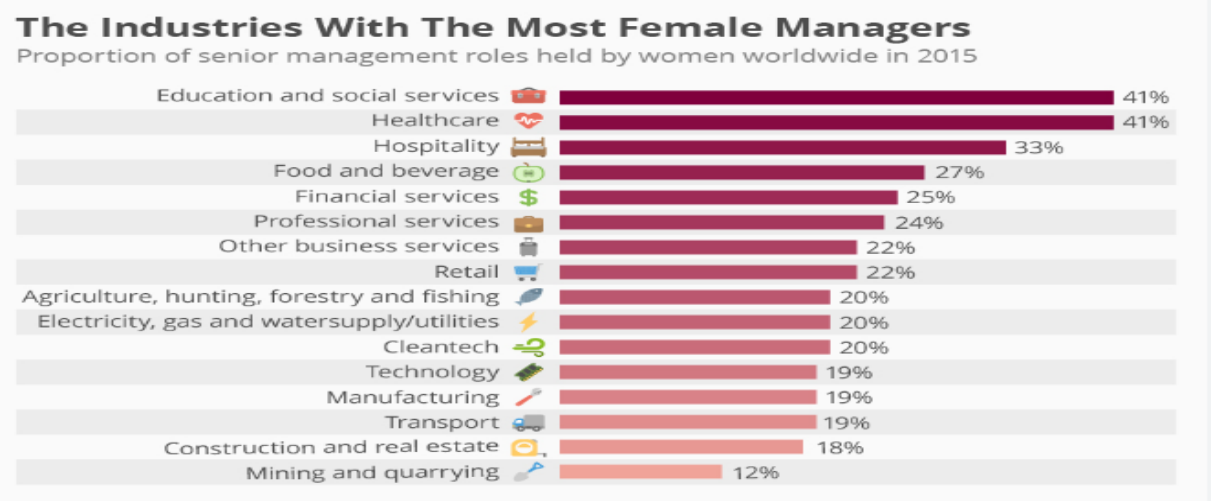


Figure 2 - Various industry outlook on Women leadership (2015-2019), p.29)

2.8 Research Themes, Gaps, Sub-problems, and Research Analysis

The author will be using the theoretical framework as she will be leveraging on literature that has already been tested, authenticated, and published by others (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). In addition, the author identified pertinent themes which complement the research gaps and focuses on areas where knowledge is incomplete and outdated. Addressing these gaps is crucial and cannot be overstated as it contributes towards improving practices and driving innovation.

The identification of the research gaps helps in providing organizations with tools that they can use in decision making, enhancing the performance of individuals, and reflecting on the past organizational mistakes, with the hope that when each theme is implemented correctly the organization will reap great rewards. These themes are supported by organizational development which is about people (personnel), their behaviour, the organizational systems, business processes, and culture by ways of

modifying organizational performance and acclimatize to market changes, aiming at creating an organizational productive workforce and high profits (Newton & Raia, 2007). Organizational development does not operate in isolation it works together with organizational design which fast tracks the high performance in organizations (Smith, 2016).

The following themes have been chosen to promote a clear structure, increase organizational performance, organizational change and promote positive engagements.

Themes	References	Research Gaps	Research Sub-Problem Statements
Economic & Social Impacts	Karin and Hyon (2023).	Women face several barriers to promotions or career development opportunities compared to their male counterparts, resulting from implicit bias including unconscious attitudes and stereotypes which affects decisions and behaviours in ways that disadvantages women in leadership roles.	The percentage of women's representation in leadership roles is minimal, what are the economic, social factors and trends that are influencing the slow take off including barriers to career advancement?
Gender Equality	Katharina and Raters; (2023)	Gender diversity requires a concerted effort across various sectors and levels of society. by addressing challenges and implementing effective strategies that organizations can work towards in achieving greater gender equality.	Why is it important for organizations to have a balanced gender workforce, and how should managers go about being intentional with investing in gender diversity?
Policy & Structural changes	Scott and Sramek, (2023).	The deficiency of policy and structural changes in addressing gender inequality in the workplace can perpetuate disparities in career advancement, salary gaps and overall workplace experience for women.	What are organizational policies and structural changes supporting women career advancement and which policies are inadvertently disadvantaging women in attaining and pursuing leadership roles?

Table 4 - Research Themes: Author's compilation (2024, p.32)

2.8.1 Theme 1: Economic and Social Impacts:

The underrepresentation of women in organizations has significant economic and social impacts and it is important to keep visiting and addressing this issue, to foster more equitable and productive organizations (Karin & Chi-Hyon, 2023). Exploring the unique challenges faced by women in the shipping and logistics context involves recognizing industry-specific hurdles that may not be present in other sectors. Factors such as the physical demands of certain roles and the prevalence of a male-dominated culture onboard can create additional barriers for women (Kitada et al., 2019). Although in the context of this research leans more to professional leadership roles and not the traditional artisanry roles associated with men. Senbursa (2020) argues that in technical work environments, field experience is necessary to grow up the ranks of leadership. This could be a root of the problem suggests MacNeil and Ghosh (2019) whose research states that entry level jobs in technical firms are like the frontline with no room for women due to the physical nature of the job.

2.8.1.1 Economic Impacts

The underrepresentation of women in organizations leads to a missed opportunity for the full utilization of talent, innovation, and productivity. This results in an economic potential that remains unrealized as studies have demonstrated that gender diversity promotes growth within economies. Teams with diverse members tend to achieve higher financial success rates while also gaining unique perspectives which inevitably make team efforts more valuable (Fairman, Voak, Abdullah & Indarjo, 2020).

According to Dong-Guo and Wang (2020), an unequal gender ratio in the workplace can elevate women's turnover rates, necessitating increased expenses for recruiting and training. Furthermore, they suggest that businesses failing to address this issue may be confronted with legal challenges resulting in non-compliance costs or litigation.

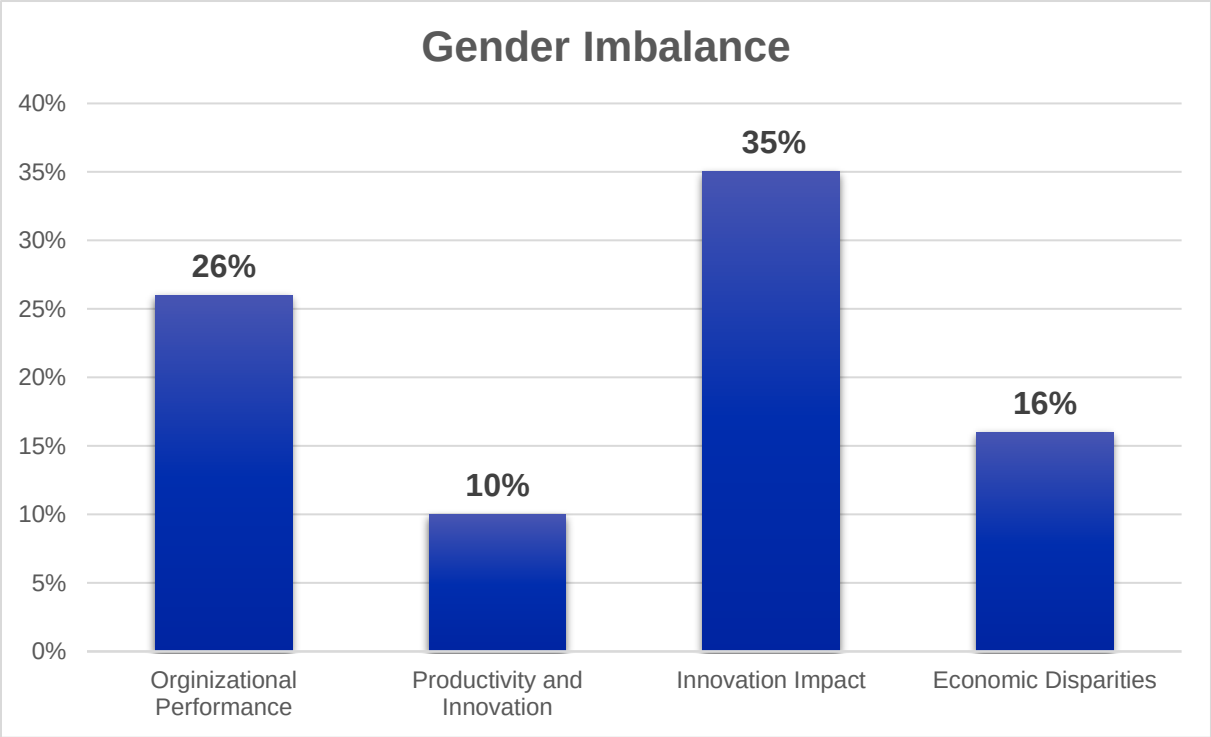


Figure 3: Gender Imbalance, source: (McKinsey and Company's report, 2024, p33)

McKinsey and Company's report (2024) (on figure 3) estimated that the global GDP impact is likely to add 12 trillion dollars to global GDP by 2025 from advancing gender equality, they added that companies with at least one woman on the board saw a 26% higher return on equity and organizational performance compared to those with no women in senior roles. Productivity and performance suggested that advancing gender equality could result in a 10% increase in global productivity by 2025 due to better utilization of talent pool.

According to the World Economic Forum (2024) stated that the global gender pay gap stands at 16 percent meaning women earn 84 cents USD for every dollar earned by men. The economic impacts of the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles are substantial, from hindering potential GDP growth to affecting organizational profitability and productivity, the lack of gender diversity in leadership has far-reaching consequences. Addressing these disparities by promoting gender equality in leadership can lead to significant economic and societal benefits, including enhanced innovation, better financial performance, and a more equitable distribution of resources (Hao, Yang, Kou, Yu-Zhang, Congbin & Guo, 2023).

2.8.1.2 Social Impacts

Unconscious biases and stereotypes hinder the progression of women in their workplaces, the "glass ceiling" metaphor describes an invisible barrier that prevents women from rising to leadership positions, despite their qualifications and achievements. The following are some of the examples of social impacts:

- **Unequal compensation**- women in leadership roles often earn less than men even though they perform the same tasks, hold similar roles, and perform similar duties. A research by Women's Policy Research (2023) states that women are overrepresented in lower paying jobs and underrepresented in higher paying roles and fields. Guerrero et la. (2023) states that research found that men are 2.5 times more likely to negotiate their salaries than women which then puts them at a higher bracket, yet women often accept what they are given.
- **Inequality and discrimination-** Both are interconnected subjects that deeply impact women at all levels in the shipping and logistics sector. Buxton and Whiting (2020) purports that inequality can be evident in the workplace when you note uneven distribution of resources and opportunities. Discrimination on the other hand is evident when you come across unfair treatment of individuals, discriminated unfairly based on their gender, race, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status.
- **Social and cultural norms-**McKinsey and Company "Women in the Workplace" report (2023) highlights that societal expectations about leadership styles and gender can affect women's advancement. Women often face challenges when they exhibit leadership behaviours that defy traditional feminine norms, such as assertiveness.

2.8.1.3 Opinions on Women Leadership Styles

There are various perceptions around women leadership styles which often reflect a mix of societal expectations, cultural norms, and organizational biases. Here's an overview of how women's leadership styles are perceived:

A total of 90 percent of workers have experienced being part of a team led by a female manager, and among them, 59 percent currently work under the leadership of another

woman. The majority (70%) perceived female managers to be effective while almost half (49%) considered them highly effective (Mittal, Singh, Debendra & Nath, 2024).

Out of those surveyed, 38% expressed a preference for a female boss while only 26% preferred male bosses. Furthermore, the majority (67%) held overall positive views towards women and their capabilities in leadership positions with almost as many (62%) possessing favourable attitudes specifically towards women leaders.

According to Gupta, Mittal, Singh, Debendra and Nath (2024), 38% of individuals believe that women excel more in leadership roles as compared to men by a margin of 35%. Additionally, around 55% strongly agree with the notion that women holding managerial positions are subject to stricter performance standards than their male counterparts.

2.8.1.4 Author's views

Although the feedback towards women leaders is generally positive, social norms display mixed feelings. This may be due to the perception that female leaders are more focused on collaborative and participative in their leadership style. They prioritize team building, fostering inclusion and nurturing relationships within their teams. Moreover, they are recognized for effective communication skills such as active listening and constructive feedback which makes them approachable and open. However, this communicative approach might not appeal to those who prefer a traditional leadership model that places value on boldness or risk-taking behaviour traditionally associated with men's leadership styles. Such preference tends to undervalue women`s innovative approaches even though it leads to sustainable solutions (Guerrero & Geiss 2023).

2.8.2 Theme 2: Gender Equality

The concept of gender equality pertains to granting equal rights to all genders and the freedom to pursue life choices, careers, opportunities, and responsibilities without discrimination. It addresses imbalances and discrimination in societies and workplace, so that equality becomes a reality. It includes creating conditions whereby everybody can pursue their goals without being restricted by gender-based discrimination and traditional stereotypes. This includes equal pay for equal work, access to training and education and healthcare (Seliverstova & Pierog, 2019).

Fernandes et al. (2023) believes that companies must spend money to make money, as Human capital incorporates not just formal education and professional training but encompasses job experience and soft skills. Organizations and governments often focus on developing human capital to improve economic growth, innovation, and social outcomes. Katherine and Miller (2022) add that, there are several laws and systems that can be used to fuel up gender inequality which addresses issues of discrimination, and organizations are encouraged to revisit policies and legislations and implement accordingly.

2.8.2.1 Benefits of gender diversity

Organizations can benefit multiple advantages from gender diverse workforce, as teams with diverse backgrounds offer varying viewpoints, expertise, talents, and imaginative outlooks that facilitate in generating creative solutions for complex problems. Additionally, research has validated the notion that diversified groups are more effective at completing tasks which often manifest into enhanced outcomes resulting in better workplace efficiency (Coombs 2022).

According to Naumann, Raters and Reinhardt (2023) believes that embracing diversity allows organizations to leverage on a wider pool of talent, which results to a conducive environment, happy and productive personnel, which leads to staff retention, acquired skills, knowledge, and quality. Organizations that prioritise gender equality are more progressive and enhances their brand appearance, and great appeal to customers, suppliers, investors, and competitors.

Gender diversity contributes to greater societal equity and justice through challenging traditional gender roles and promoting equal opportunities, this leads to an inclusive, equal, fair, and diverse team in the workplace (Naumann et la., 2023).

2.8.2.2 Latest trends and statistics

The shipping sector has always been known to be a male-dominated, however there are on-going efforts to improve gender equality. The adoption of gender-neutral job practices is gaining momentum in this industry as it plays an essential role in promoting equal opportunities and dismantling stereotypes that could hinder diversity and inclusivity among its workforce (Coombs, 2022). Presented below are the latest trends and statistics.

Organizational Culture's Resistance to Gender Diversity- In pursuit of gender diversity transformation within the South African Maritime industry, an in-depth examination of stagnation trends reveals multifaceted challenges that hinder the realization of set objectives. This section examines key trends contributing to the persistent gap in achieving gender diversity transformation targets, shedding light on the details that demand scholarly attention and strategic interventions (Spencer, 2021).

Implementation Gaps in Diversity Initiatives- Despite commendable efforts to introduce diversity initiatives, evidence suggests persistent implementation gaps within the maritime industry (Medeiros, 2019). The effectiveness of past programs and policies is questionable, with notable shortcomings in execution. This trend invites scrutiny into the adequacy of commitment and resource allocation, necessitating a comprehensive evaluation of the operational aspects of diversity initiatives (Buxton & Whiting, 2020).

Leadership Commitment and Accountability- Leadership commitment to gender diversity goals emerges as a pivotal factor influencing the trajectory of transformation targets. An analysis of leadership attitudes and actions uncovers varying degrees of commitment, with an attendant lack of accountability for achieving diversity objectives. This stagnation trend underscores the urgency of understanding the intricate interplay between leadership dynamics and the advancement of women in maritime leadership roles (South African Maritime Safety Authority, 2019).

Insufficient Focus on Gender Inclusivity in Recruitment and Promotion- Stagnation in gender diversity transformation is further aggravated by insufficient attention to gender inclusivity in recruitment and promotion processes (Gissi, 2018). Biases and barriers persist, hindering the equitable progression of women within organizational hierarchies. An exploration of recruitment and promotion practices unveils systemic challenges that demand targeted interventions to dismantle existing barriers.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance- While legislative frameworks exist to promote gender diversity, loopholes and challenges in enforcement persist. This stagnation trend necessitates an exploration of the legal landscape, examining existing measures and advocating for reforms where necessary to fortify legal mechanisms that drive gender inclusivity within the maritime sector (Samantha & Noll, 2020).

2.8.2.3 Analysis

Several issues need to be addressed to enhance gender equality in the shipping sector. The industry's statistics reveal a significant disparity, urging organizations to act. A retrospective examination reveals key diversity programs and policies that aimed to enhance gender diversity within the industry. These initiatives encompassed affirmative action measures, mentorship programs, leadership training, and various strategies targeting the improved representation of women in different roles within the sector (Seliverstova et al., 2019).

To effectively evaluate these initiatives, it is essential to conduct a thorough assessment by examining both quantitative and qualitative data. This evaluative analysis aims to measure the impact of previous programs on female representation through statistical trends as well as participant experiences, stakeholder feedback and organizational shifts that can be attributed to specific interventions (Merin-Joe, 2021). These may include effective mentorship, support from leadership, cultural awareness training, or the implementation of flexible work policies. Identifying these success factors is pivotal for informing the design of future interventions (Rush & Sulman, 2018).

An exploration of the shortcomings and challenges faced by previous diversity initiatives is imperative. Identifying factors contributing to limited success or failure, such as resistance to change, inadequate implementation, or failure to address industry-specific obstacles, provides insights into the dynamics of the maritime sector (Sulman, Button & Kapend, 2022).

Lessons to failure derived from initiatives that fell short of expectations are valuable for understanding why certain interventions did not achieve the desired impact. Recognizing gaps in understanding, misalignment with industry dynamics, or inadequate consideration of unique challenges faced by women in maritime leadership roles is crucial for informed decision-making (Naumann et al., 2023).

2.8.3 Theme 3: Policy and Structural changes

Addressing gender equality involves policy and structural changes within the organizations to create a more equitable workforce and work environment. The democratic government of South Africa's legislative actions have been essential in influencing the development of workable policies and initiatives in the shipping and logistics industries (Beth & Davis-Sramek, 2023). The following are instances of how these legislative actions have been implemented in the shipping sector.

2.8.3.1 South Africa's legislative actions

Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998- Companies have established equity committees to ensure fair representation and advancement opportunities for women in leadership positions. This includes targeted recruitment initiatives, mentorship programs, and regular diversity assessments. Shipping and logistics companies are required to implement employment equity plans to address workplace discrimination and promote diversity.

Skills Development Act No 97 of 1998 and Skills Development Levies Act No. 9 of 1999- Shipping and logistics companies have embraced these acts by investing in training programs that focus on leadership development for women. This includes sponsoring educational courses, workshops, and seminars to enhance the skills of female employees, preparing them for leadership roles. Mandating skills development initiatives and levies to fund training programs.

Promotion of Equality and the Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000- Shipping and logistics companies have developed comprehensive anti-discrimination policies that explicitly address gender disparities. Training programs are conducted to raise awareness about unfair discrimination, fostering a culture of inclusivity and equality. Addressing and prohibiting unfair discrimination and promoting equality.

White Paper on Human Resource Management (HRM) in the Public Service, 2000- Companies in the shipping sector have adopted principles from this white paper, focusing on strategic human resource management. This includes succession planning that actively involves and promotes women in leadership roles within the public service aspects of the shipping industry. Outlining strategic guidelines for HRM in the public service (Sastre, 2023).

Even though these policies have been introduced as far back as 1998, several companies have not fully actioned them, which means policy enforcement needs to apply in certain organizations and industries and mainly focusing on reducing gender disparities and fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment. By focusing on the following, organizations can reap positive benefits and create a conducive environment for their employees.

2.8.3.2 Benefits of enforcing and re-introducing policies and structural changes

Legal and policy frameworks- focus on anti-discrimination laws which prohibit discrimination against employment, education, and training. It further focuses on equal pay legislation which ensures equal pay for equal work and promote transparency in pay scales (Kele & Cassell, 2023).

Education and training- educates leaders about gender sensitivity training, and bias unconscious training in the workplace. It promotes and supports participation of all genders through scholarships, mentorships, and targeted programs (Priola & Chaudhry, 2021).

Workplace practices-focuses on diversity and inclusion initiatives, with the aim to develop and implement strategies to foster a diverse and inclusive work environment, including diversity trainings and recruitment practices. It also offers flexible working arrangement such as flexible working hours and remote work options to accommodate and reduce gender-based work life balance (Kele et al., 2023). It creates mentorship and sponsorship programs to support underrepresentation of women into leadership roles.

2.9 Rationale of the Theories

This was conducted to identify and analyse the organizational, social, and cultural obstacles that hinder the advancement of women to leadership positions including contributors to cultural barriers within the shipping context. This examination involved exploration of the internal dynamics as well as the broader structural factors shaping the industry.

According to Karin and Chi-Hyon (2023), companies must be intentional at eliminating bottlenecks in their organizations. Furthermore, they need to constantly revisit their organizational structure, systems, update policies, empower personnel, focus on human capital, organizational communication and diversity management.

2.9.1 Organizational Impediments

Identifying organizational obstructions requires a thorough examination of internal structures, policies, and practices that may inadvertently perpetuate gender disparities (Ganter & Hacker, 2018). This includes scrutinizing recruitment processes, performance evaluation criteria, and leadership development programs. Organizational cultures that are resistant to diversity or exhibit unconscious biases can act as significant barriers to women's advancement. Investigating the representation of women in different hierarchical levels and departments within shipping organizations is essential to pinpointing specific areas where barriers may be most graphic.

2.9.2 Diversity Initiatives

A retrospective examination reveals key diversity programs and policies that aimed to enhance gender diversity within the industry. These initiatives encompassed affirmative action measures, mentorship programs, leadership training, and various strategies targeting the improved representation of women in different roles within this sector (Ritter & Hayashi, 2019).

2.9.3 Assessment of Effectiveness

A comprehensive evaluation of these initiatives is crucial, involving the scrutiny of both quantitative and qualitative data. This assessment seeks to measure the impact of past programs on the representation of women, considering statistical trends and qualitative insights such as participant experiences, stakeholder feedback, and organizational changes attributed to these initiatives (MacNeil & Ghosh, 2017).

2.9.4 Identifying Success Factors

Successful initiatives must be identified to understand the factors contributing to positive outcomes. These may include effective mentorship, support from leadership, cultural awareness training, or the implementation of flexible work policies. Identifying these success factors is pivotal for informing the design of future interventions (Senbursa, 2020).

2.10 Discussion pertaining to findings emerging during the study.

The following propositions provide a comprehensive view on the objectives of the research as follows:

2.10.1 Organizational Culture's Resistance to Gender Diversity

Within the South African shipping industry, there are stagnation trends that are contributing to the persistent gap in achieving gender diversity, transformation targets, shedding light on the details that demand scholarly attention and strategic interventions (Ahmad, 2020).

Discussion pertaining to proposition no 1:

The similarities in literature all point to the limited representation of women in leadership roles, supported by inadequate work life balance policies, lack of diversity and inclusion training in the workplace and the traditional stereotype that the shipping industry is male dominated. The difference is that even in 2024 with all the technology that has been provided the industry is still viewed as a physical and demanding job and that is no longer the case Ganter & Hacker, 2018).

Conclusion: There is a need to change the status quo by turning the negatives into positives through various techniques. Companies need to be intentional about developing logistics related education programs, which will empower and equip women to perform with confidence and speedily. Women are home makers therefore providing that support of creating flexible work arrangements with an option of working from home would be beneficial.

2.10.2 Implementation Gaps in Diversity Initiatives

Despite commendable efforts to introduce diversity initiatives, evidence suggests persistent implementation gaps within the shipping industry, the effectiveness of past programs and policies is questionable, with notable shortcomings in execution (Medeiros et al., 2019).

Discussion pertaining to proposition no 2: As it stands there are no solid plans nor clear objectives and commitment from companies around the efforts to close the gaps around hiring, promotion, and retention strategy. However, the differences are Bureaucratic barriers scalability and policies from one company to the next (Katelyn & Krisrin, 2021).

Conclusion: A proper strategy and plan is required, to discuss and close the gap through defining goals and objectives of the company and sharing them with their personnel, that forces management team to be accountable and transparent enhancing flow of communication and opening room for continuous improvement.

2.10.3 Leadership Commitment and Accountability

The commitment by leadership to women's advancement and top representation is low and occurs as a pivotal factor influencing the curve of transformation targets (South African Maritime Safety Authority, 2019).

Discussion pertaining to proposition no 3: The leadership commitment is crucial and sets the tone for organizational culture through demonstrating and prioritization of diversity and inclusion, in return employees feel inspired and committed and fosters accountability from their side when they understand that the future plans of the organization include them. Therefore, visible advocacy and clear communication bring about clear expectations (Ayoko, 2017).

2.10.4 Economic and social impacts

Stagnation in gender diversity transformation is intensified by insufficient attention to gender inclusivity in recruitment and promotion processes, hindering the equitable progression of women within organizational hierarchies (Gissi et al., 2018).

Discussion pertaining to proposition no 4:

The social impact has improved workplace culture and inclusivity incorporated with increased performance which results to higher revenue and profitability. However, the differences are related to the industry specific benefits like supporting women into leadership roles as the scale does not balance (Gissi et al., 2018).

Conclusion: Despite the similarities and differences, there are challenges to gender diversity and the largest gender to date is in political empowerment. Unconscious bias and stereotype are also amongst common challenges, it is however suggested that companies look at the following initiatives:

On social impact work on an improved workplace culture and inclusivity through employee engagements and open communication, and on economic initiatives focus on increased revenue and profitability by creating and being innovative around risk management and increased competitiveness (World Economic Forum, 2024).

2.10.5 Policy & structural changes

Legal and regulatory compliance including legislative frameworks exist to promote gender diversity. However, loopholes and challenges in enforcement persist. This necessitates an exploration of the legal landscape, examining the effectiveness of existing measures and advocating for reforms where necessary to reinforce legal mechanisms that drive gender inclusivity within the maritime sector (Canning & Found, **2015).**

Discussion pertaining to proposition no 5: The logistics sector is constantly evolving due to various factors, such as advancements in technology, economic shifts, environmental concerns, and regulatory changes. Both policy and structural changes

often involve changes in regulations. Policies can introduce new rules and regulations, while structural changes may involve adapting logistics operations to comply with those new rules, such as implementing new safety standards or following updated customs protocols. Both policy and structural changes are designed to improve the performance, efficiency, and sustainability of the logistics sector (Ahmad, 2020).

Conclusion: Priola & Chaudhry, (2021) state that while policy changes typically reflect governmental and regulatory shifts that influence the overall logistics landscape**,** structural changes involve the operational and organizational shifts made by shipping companies in adapting to new challenges and opportunities. Both are interconnected in their goal to modernize and improve this sector, but they differ in their scope, implementation, and speed. Effective policy changes often create the conditions that enable or drive structural changes, and vice versa, as the industry adapts to new regulations and market demands.

2.10.6 Discussion pertaining to findings emerging during the study.

The logistics sector is constantly evolving due to various factors, such as advancements in technology, economic shifts, environmental concerns, and regulatory changes. The aim is to improve the efficiencies, sustainability, and competitiveness of the logistics industry (Raters & Reinhardt, 2023). However, they are distinct in nature and impact recognizing gaps in understanding misalignment with industry dynamics, inadequate consideration of unique challenges faced by women in leadership roles is crucial for informed decision-making, as the logistics sector is a critical driver of employment and economic growth. It supports millions of jobs globally, both directly and indirectly, including in transportation, warehousing, and supply chain management. The expansion of logistics networks and the rise of e-commerce have further fuelled job creation in areas such as last-mile delivery, technology support, and logistics analytics (Coombs,2022).

Effective logistics operations rely heavily on collaboration among employees, vendors, and clients. Companies are placing more emphasis on creating a collaborative organizational culture that encourages communication, teamwork, and shared goals. Additionally, employee engagement has become a focal point, with companies

investing in training, development programs, and transparent communication to retain talent and improve productivity (Raters & Reinhardt, 2023)

2.11 Summary of the literature

It appears that women in the logistics industry are hindered by a twenty percent barrier, which seems to be prevalent across various sectors. The solution commonly employed is aimed at boosting female representation within management and leadership roles however, there are both advantages and disadvantages associated with diversity when it comes to organizational dynamics, on the other hand, studies show that the diversity around organizational performance are hardly consistent (Organizations are capitalizing on positive outcomes of diverse employee design yet slow with initiatives and implementations, as a result they are coming up with ways to better address the need for heterogeneous employees concentrating on an interface of diverse working teams (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2019).

Therefore, the aim of this research was to discover answers related to the research topic around breaking the twenty-percent barrier for women in leadership positions in the Shipping and Logistics industry, by applying different scientific procedures and unpacking the hidden, ignored, undiscovered yet uncomfortable truth, and most importantly test the hypothesis. It also aimed to serve as a guide if organizations are open minded, specifically around the imbalanced diverse workforce, inequality, and inclusion.

The literature has a good potential to reveal solutions that various companies may adopt, through exploration and interviews. The next chapter on research methodology will be using qualitative technique to get the views of women across different corporate levels to ascertain the challenges, gaps and barriers within this sector and other nominated sectors.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher focuses and uncovers the research methodology that supports the research. Furthermore, it also describes the research approach applied, paradigm, design, size, and nature of sample size used, data collection methods, ethical considerations and lastly, how the data will be coded and analysed.

Qualitative methodology and thematic analysis techniques were used to explore the complex web of gender diversity transformation targets in the South African shipping and logistics sector, as the research aimed to understand the viewpoints of participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The reasoning behind qualitative approach was to engage and get more clarity directly from the industry leaders and experts to test their knowledge in their respective industries, understand and determine the common trends, attitude towards the research, behaviour, thoughts, knowledge, and human experience.

Qualitative research allowed the author time, space, tools to describe, analyse and interpret the experiences around the under researched areas (Walcott, 2019). Considering the above information, the qualitative methodology helped in understanding ways to break the twenty-percent barrier for women in leadership positions in the Shipping and Logistics industry, specifically.

3.2 Purpose of research

The purpose of the research was aimed at gaining a thorough understanding of the social dynamics, subjective experiences, and attitudes that impact the transformation targets for gender diversity in the South African shipping and logistics sector (Charmaz, 2014).

Furthermore, it aimed to investigate the views, lived experiences, and contextual specifics related to gender diversity in this sector. By using inductive reasoning, the research avoided preconceived conceptions that can restrict the examination of experienced elements and instead allowed ideas and insights spontaneously arise from the data gathered (Zalaghi, 2016).

3.3 Research Paradigm

This research will adopt an interpretive qualitative paradigm as it involves human phenomena and is ideal for this research to explore the barriers that women are faced with which makes it hard to have a considerable percentage in the leadership roles and it aims to discover the uncomfortable truth around gender bias, traditional stereotypes, capabilities, work-life balance, and remuneration imbalance (Fernandes, 2023).

3.4 Research Approach

The interpretivist theory formed the foundation of the research, whereby a sociological method of the research was analysed through different beliefs, values, and cultures (Pius, 2020). Interpretivism is a research paradigm that emphasizes the significance of individual experiences, perceptions, and the intricate social context in shaping occurrences, according to (Ryan, 2018). As a result, an interpretivist philosophy in conjunction with qualitative research enables a thorough investigation of the subjective aspects of gender diversity, adding to a comprehensive and contextually rich knowledge (Denzin, 2018; Lincoln, 2018; & Dodgson, 2017).

3.5 Research Design & Philosophy

Finding the obstacles that led to the stagnation of gender diversity transformation was the main objective of the research design. In person interviews were conducted with the chosen participants in a private boardroom and online via TEAMS. The questionnaires included open ended and closed- ended questions. The whole purpose of the interviews was to understand the views of the participants on the chosen topic, attitude, and experience. Each participant has been requested to spare a minimum of an hour of their time to go through the questions. The questions have been segmented and positioned differently for different levels. There were questions designed specifically for top management, then different questions for middle management, and non-managers. The chosen participants consisted of man and women and are mainly industry experts, and some are from pharmaceutical, insurance, and mining sectors. It was important for the researcher to get views from the experts outside shipping and logistics, to gauge if the under representation of women leaders is something that other sectors are experiencing or it’s only the sector in question. Open ended questions

allowed participants to express themselves more and the researcher had a better viewpoint of what they were explaining.

The research design allowed for the possibility of theory development and theory creation by letting patterns and themes naturally arise from the data. This helped to provide a clear understanding of the factors impacting gender diversity in the shipping and logistics sector (Saunders, 2017).

3.6 Data collection

The significance of thoroughness and richness in data collecting was emphasized by the qualitative case research methodology, to ensure that the research conclusions appropriately reflect the complexity of gender diversity. The research used techniques like member checking and triangulation to strengthen the reliability and validity of findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Participants were carefully selected and the request to participate was done telephonically and they had a choice to decline or accept. They were taken through the research topic and what it entailed to be a participant. They were requested to freely discuss their viewpoints and experiences throughout the interviews and express themselves openly and if by any chance there were questions, they did not feel comfortable to answer. This was done to yield rich qualitative data for analysis purposes. The participants comprised of executives, middle managers, and non-managers. The researcher was aiming at interviewing twenty-five participants and ended up at 15, due to similar trends and responses.

3.6.1 What did the participants bring to the research?

The executives and decision-makers oversee businesses, and their roles are crucial in defining the rules, procedures, and general culture of the company. Therefore, incorporating this demographic into the target audience brought about valuable insights into high-level viewpoints regarding gender diversity transformation objectives (Raworth et al., 2012).

Mid-level professionals are the essential link between executive decisions and daily operations. Examining the viewpoints of managers and mid-level professionals illuminated the difficulties encountered in operationalizing gender diversity plans and

provided insights into how these strategies could be translated into reality (Woody, 2000).

Entry level managers and non-managers gender dynamics at all organizational levels ensures diverse representation of employees in various jobs. This covers positions in entry level managerial positions, administration, business development and other functional domains. A bottom-up viewpoint on gender diversity programs and their effects on the workforce is offered by their experience (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022).

3.7 Data Gathering Process

Included selection of participants using a purposive sampling which aimed to guarantee a positive and quality interview from all participants from different industries, positions, and organizational levels. The selection criteria considered various variables, including the length of time the participants have been in the sector, their roles, and their involvement in gender diversity programs. This guaranteed that perspectives are obtained from people with a wide range of experiences and a deep comprehension of the dynamics of the sector (Oppong, 2013).

3.7.1 Interview Structure

Interview Design - semi-structured interviews offered a targeted and adaptable method for gathering data. The conversations were structured by an interview guide that allowed for an in-depth examination of participant responses.

Open-ended questions - the questions were thoughtfully designed to entice participants to share their thoughts, perspectives, and difficulties on the goals of gender diversity development and they were given options to share insights in their own words.

Interview Settings - interviews were performed remotely and in person. The objective of this flexibility was to cater to the many work situations seen in the maritime industry.

3.8 Sampling Method and Size

Collecting data for this qualitative case research, deliberate sampling was used. It made it possible to choose volunteers within Johannesburg Gauteng with a wide range of rich experiences related to the research's subject, to ensure that a thorough grasp of gender diversity transformation targets was accomplished without needless repetition in responses (Patton, 2014). Working with industry associations, levering on networking platforms, and logistics groups made it a bit easier to reach the target market.

It was easy to have in person interviews as well as online interviews as all the participants are Johannesburg based and time zones are in sync. It was also easy to relate as most participants are from the shipping industry and we did not experience language barriers on issues with the industry acronyms, trends and industry markets.The sample was made as diverse as possible, considering variables like gender, length of employment in the field, and organizational responsibilities (Gammelgaard, 2017). According to Aldiabat and Le-Navenec (2018) the data saturation concept served as a guide in determining the sample size and when there was no longer new themes or insights surfacing from data collection, the sample size was deemed sufficient to represent the complexity of the research topics, which moved from twenty-five to fifteen participants, yet the sample size continued to be dependent on achieving data saturation. Analysis approach.

Thematic analysis was employed to uncover themes, patterns, and portrayed behaviour associated with gender diversity transformation targets in qualitative data (MacQueen & Namey, 2011). Thematic approach intended to examine and categorize themes from written data in a manner that was distinct and dependable.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical Consideration was all about maintaining participant’s confidentiality and respecting diverse perspectives, adhering to ethical standards and responsible handling of sensitive information. (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). It also included requesting permission to record the sessions and getting consent from companies to utilize data.

Participants were taken through the goals, methods, and possible consequences of the research prior to the interviews. Informed consent forms were issued to all participants to reiterate that their participation was voluntarily and that their answers and identity would be kept private (Starman, 2013).

3.10 Reliability & Validity

The consistency reliability method was applied to executives and senior management, to test alignment and consistency. For non-managers an inter-rater reliability was applied which measured correlation coefficient, and pilot research was conducted which aimed to identify potential ambiguities, validity of the answers and improve question wording (Saunders, 2017).

3.11 Limitations

Gender equality may be regarded as sensitive subject, as a result even internal employees except for managers do not have access to the company strategy around diversity. The participants may fear opening-up as they may not trust that the researcher will keep the conversation confidential, therefore their inner thoughts could be exposed. This may further cause tension between the researcher and leadership as the research will be tapping into a space that the researcher is not hired for and asking sensitive questions and coming across as questioning their leadership style.

Access to sensitive information may not be easy to obtain including historical data due to privacy restrictions on confidentiality agreements. Changing laws and regulations may also limit the accuracy and reliability of data due to unique industry characteristics.

3.12 Summary of the chapter

The adopted interpretivism research methodology seamlessly integrated with the interpretivist philosophy. This approach allowed theories and insights to organically emerge from the rich qualitative data collected, facilitating a portrayed understanding of gender diversity transformation targets. The alignment of philosophy and theory development was crucial, as it ensured that the research design is coherent and consistent in its pursuit of uncovering the complexities surrounding gender diversity in the shipping sector (Rehman et al., 2016).

The qualitative methodological choice and exploratory research design further enhanced the relevance of the framework deemed for exploring gender diversity transformation targets. The exploratory design acknowledges the promising understanding of the phenomena under investigation, providing the flexibility needed to delve into uncharted territories within the South African shipping sector, as a result, the adoption of a qualitative research proved that the time horizon on the current state of gender diversity transformation targets, ensured that the research remains contextually relevant and captures the contemporary dynamics of the industry (Opoku et al., 2016).

The next chapter focuses on analysis and interpretation of data and presentation of results. The themes and common trends are highlighted. The analysis was done in a form of data visualization such as graphical presentation using charts, graphs, tables, and numerical information.

Chapter 4 Presentation of results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter details the data analysis outcomes of this research. The outcomes are presented in a manner that enhances perception of the verbal information that was gathered. The most noteworthy themes that arose from the analysis were carefully chosen and then compared with the existing literature and quotes from the research participants to answer the research questions posed at the start of the research. The following were the research questions of this research-

i) The percentage of women's representation in leadership roles is minimal, what are the economic, social factors and trends that are influencing the slow take off including barriers to career advancement?

ii) Why is it important for organizations to have a balanced gender workforce, and how should managers go about being intentional with investing in gender diversity?

iii) What are organizational policies and structural changes supporting women career advancement and which policies are inadvertently disadvantaging women in attaining and pursuing leadership roles?

4.2 Background information of the research participants

There were fifteen research participants. Table 5 presents the background information of the research participants. Figure 4 shows the age of the research participants. As shown in Table 5 and Figure 4, the youngest research participant was 29 years old while the oldest was 54 years old.

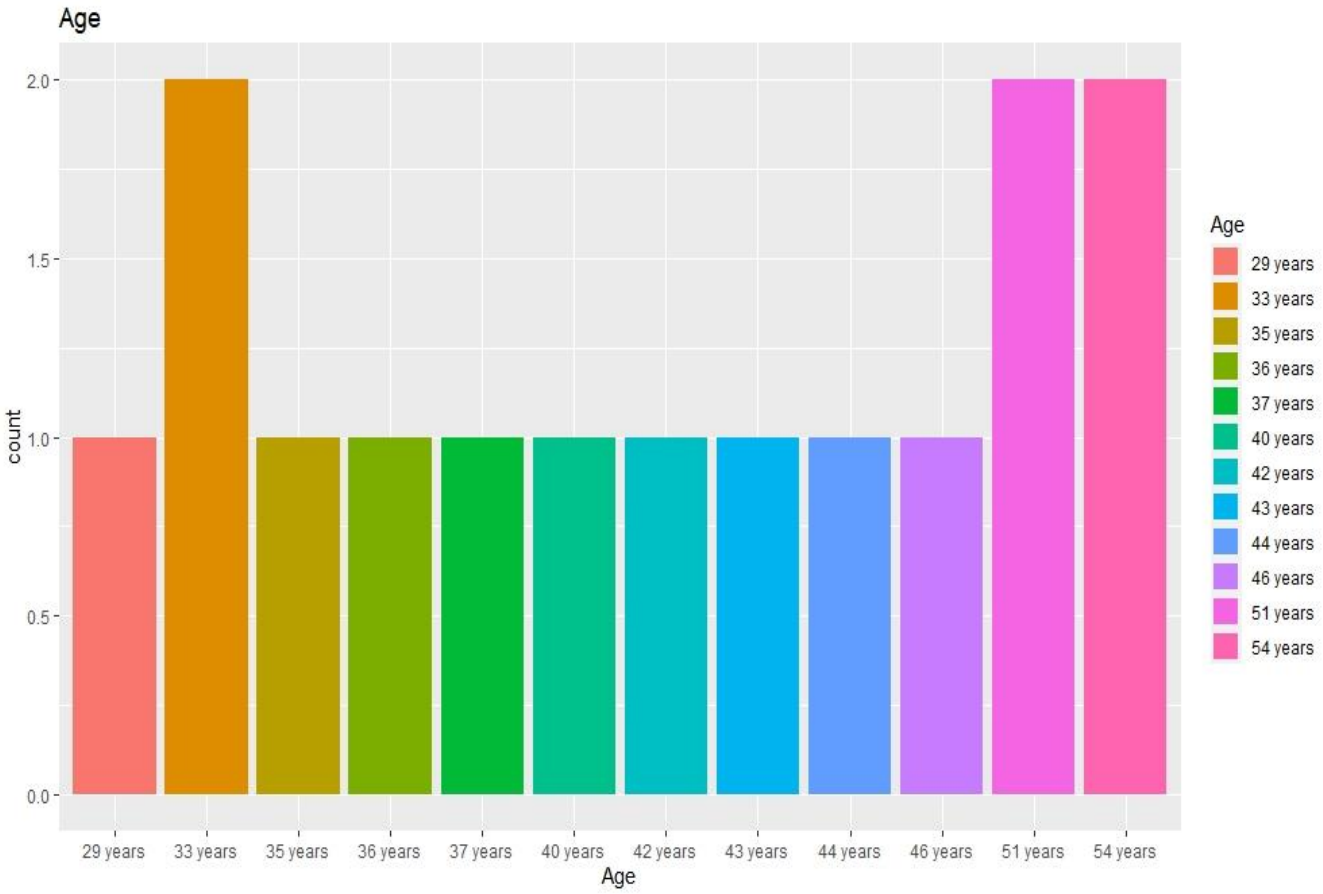


Figure 4 - Age of the research participants. Source- R (R-project.org, 2024,p52)

Participants	Age	Gender	Race	Occupation	Industry	Years in Industry
P01	33 years	Female	Black	Senior Ocean Manager	Shipping & Logistics	12 years
P02	42 years	Female	Black	Client Account Lead	Mining	12 years
P03	33 years	Female	Black	Chief Executive Officer	Risk & Insurance	15 years
P04	54 years	Male	White	Commercial Director	Shipping & Logistics	28 years
P05	54 years	Male	Black	Diversity, Equity &	Shipping & Logistics	23 years

				Inclusion Director		
P06	35 years	Male	Black	Senior Sales Manager	Shipping & Logistics	13 years
P07	51 years	Female	White	Managing Director	Shipping & Logistics	22 years
P08	44 years	Female	White	General Manager	Shipping & Logistics	23 years
P09	46 years	Female	Indian	Pharmacist within the Logistics Industry	Pharmaceutical	20 years
P10	36 years	Female	Black	Regional Credit Risk Management	Shipping & Logistics	13 years
P11	51 years	Female	White	General Manager	Pharmaceutical with the Shipping & Logistics Industry	25 years
P12	43 years	Male	Black	Senior Air Freight Manager	Shipping & Logistics	18 years
P13	29 years	Male	Black	Sales (non-manager)	Shipping & Logistics	5 years
P14	37 years	Female	Black	Implementation (non-manager)	Shipping & Logistics	15 years
P15	40 years	Female	Indian	Analyst (non-manager)	Shipping & Logistics	8 years

Table 5 - Background information of the research participants source (Author's compilation, 2024, p.55)

In addition, table 5 and Figure 5 show that most of the research participants were females occupying 67 percent and 33 percent were males.

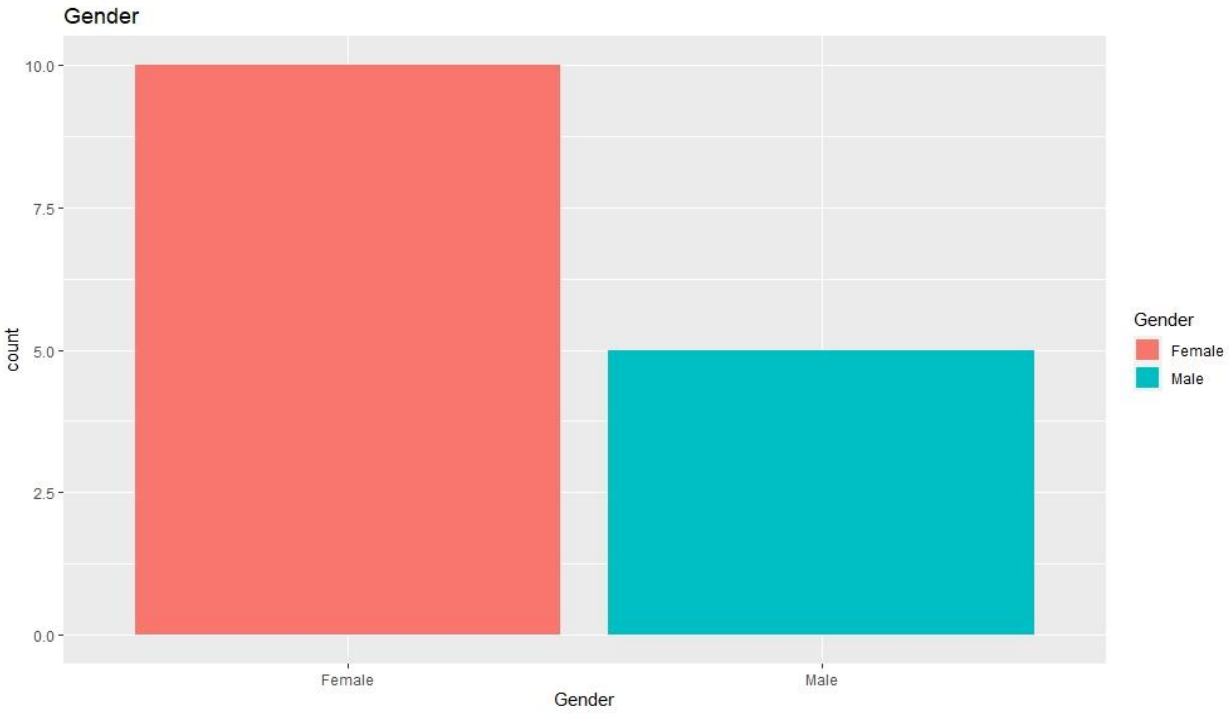


Figure 5 - Gender of the research participants. Source- R (R-project.org, 2024,p.55)

Furthermore, Table *5* and Figure 6 show that the research participants comprised of nine blacks, four whites, and two Indians.

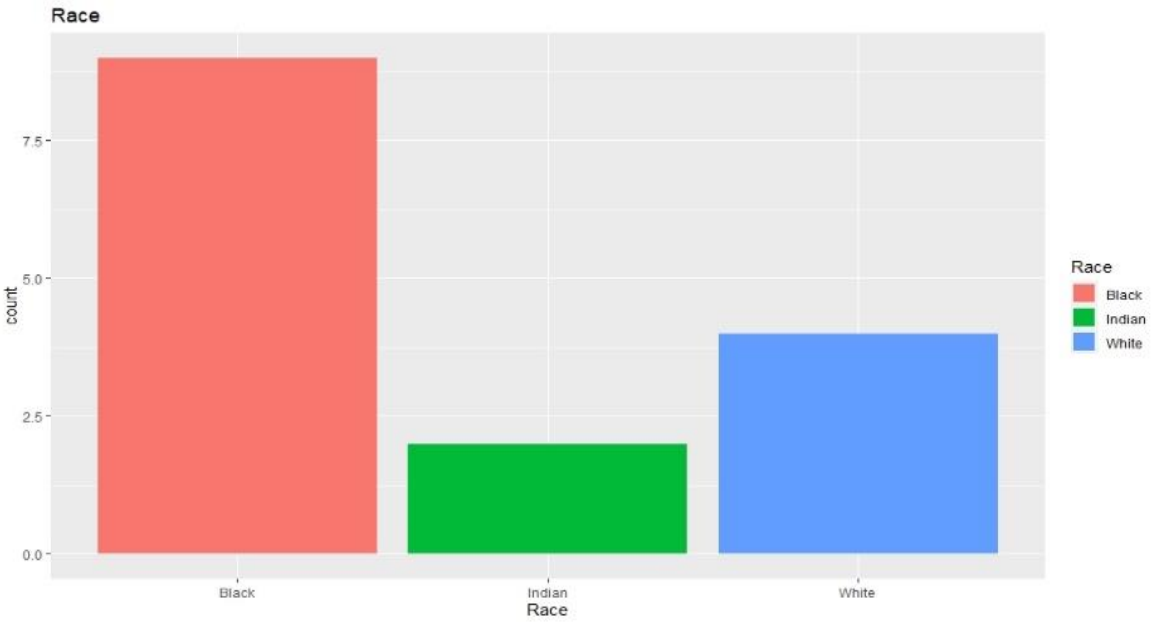


Figure 6 - Race of the research participants. Source- R (R-project.org, 2024, p.56)

Additionally, Table 5 and Figure 7 show that the research participants comprised of senior managers, executives, two pharmacists, and a couple of non-management staff.

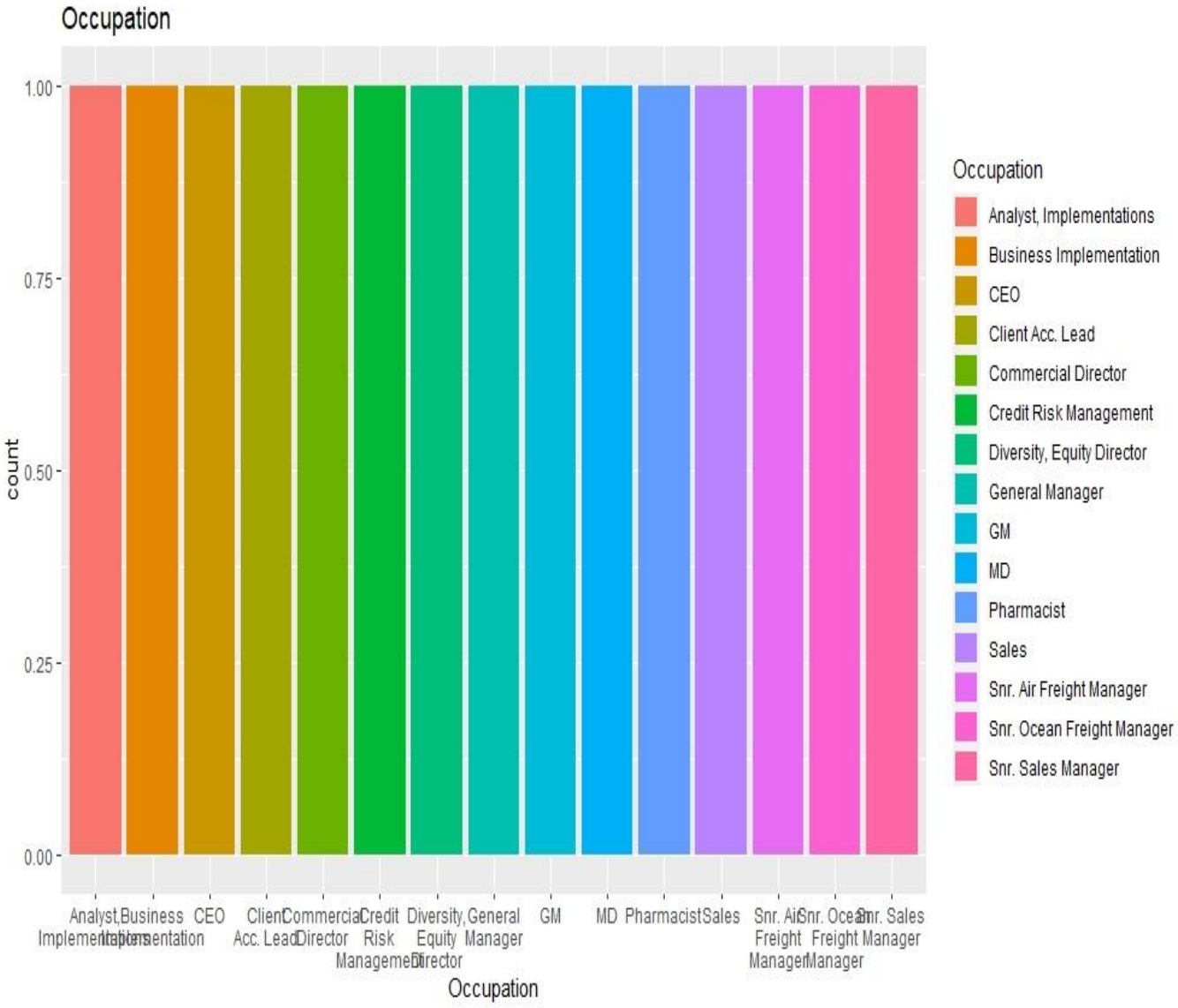


Figure 7 - Occupation of the research participants. Source- R (R-project.org, 2024,p.57)

Table 5 and Figure 8 show that the research participants were mainly from the shipping and logistics industry except three from the mining, risk and insurance, and pharmaceutical industries respectively.

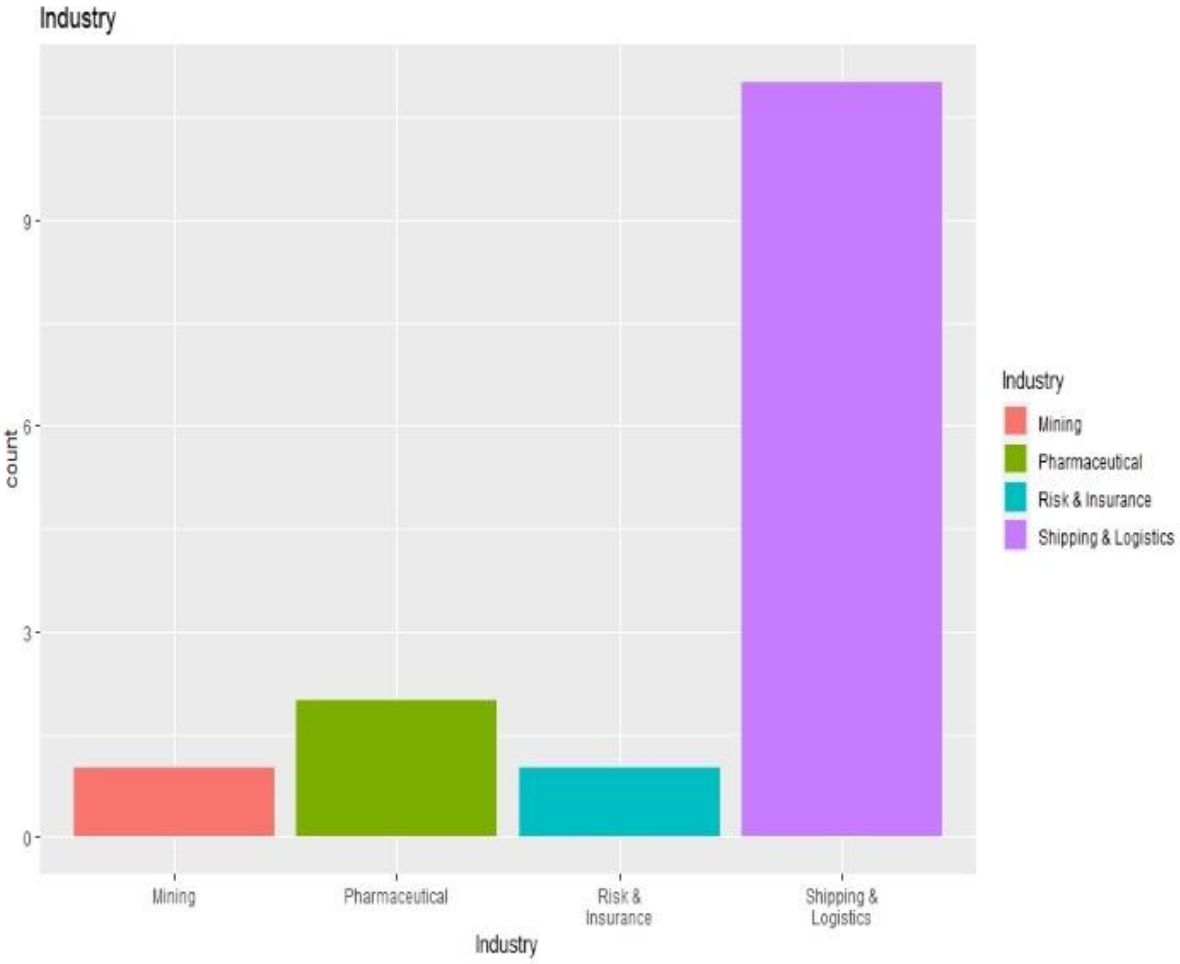


Figure 8 - Industry of the research participants. Source- R (R-project.org, 2024,p.58)

And lastly, Table *5* and Figure 9 show that the research participants have been in the industry for as long as 28 years and as short as 5 years.

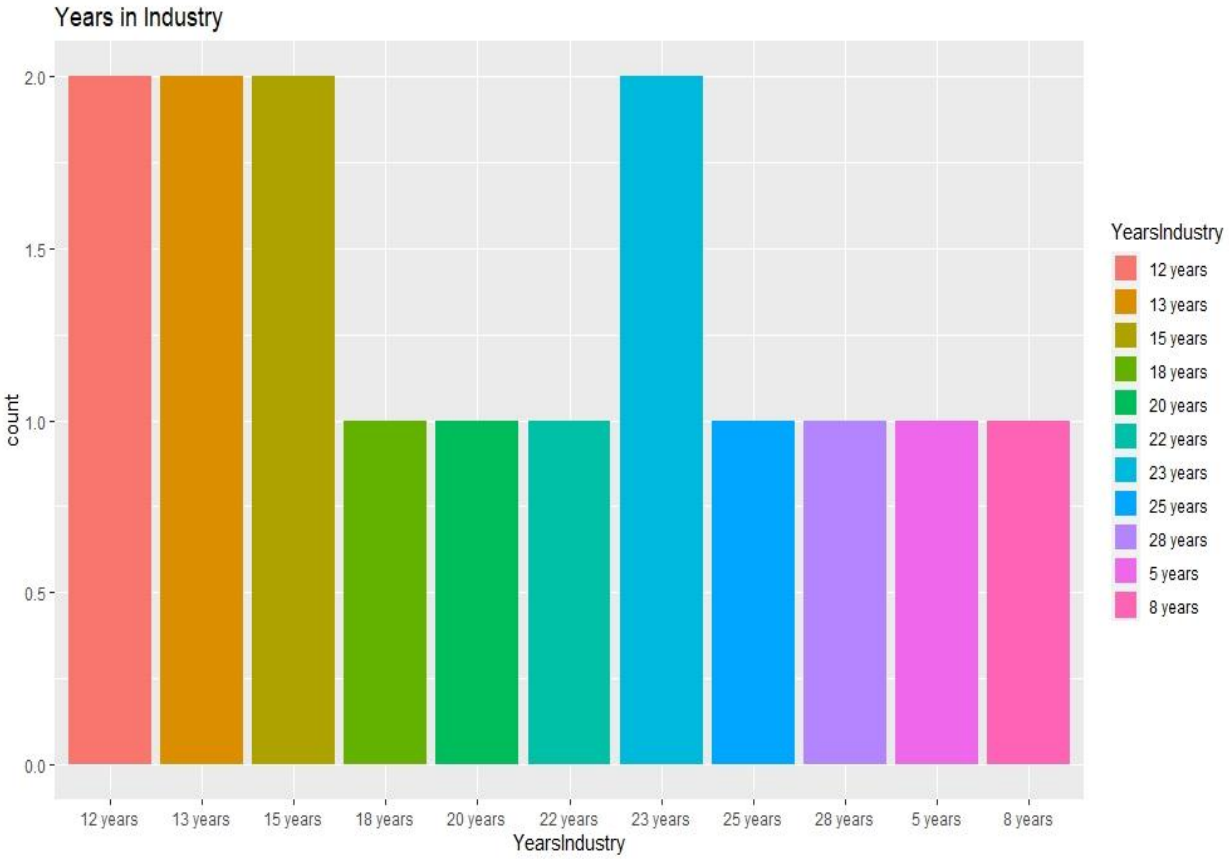


Figure 9 - Number of years the research participants have been in industry. Source- R (R-project.org, 2024, p.59)

4.3 Presentation of results

Federay and Muir-Cochrone (2006) provided rationality on thematic analysis, an effective method for recognizing noticeable themes and essential concepts within unstructured qualitative data. In essence, this approach revolves around the recognition of patterns existing from interview data, nonetheless, it is important to realize several limitations in their methodology.

According to Federay and Muir-Cochrane (2006), thematic analysis has the tendency of complicating information when interpreting the detail found in qualitative data. Furthermore, it could be argued that converting recognized themes into categories for qualitative analysis imposes a predefined structure on the data, limiting the scope and depth of the participant experiences. As a result, even though their contribution clarifies

some thematic analysis issues, it's important to view their methodology critically and consider other viewpoints that highlight how dynamic and context-dependent qualitative data analysis is.

In the context of this research, the application of thematic analysis is showcased through the lens of participants views, complimented by sub-problem questions in chapter 1 and themes that developed in chapter 2, and seamlessly intertwining interview questions. This consolidative presentation acted as a bridge, connecting theoretical keystones, investigative inquiries, and the themes that surfaced organically from the qualitative data.

Interpreting the qualitative data gathered, key themes served as the foundation which transformed into digital nodes within the framework of NVivo 12 (QSR International, 2024). This analytical tool acted as an instrument facilitating an exploration of patterns and insights captured within the qualitative landscape.

The subsequent coding process unfolded as an investigative journey, where associated data was compiled beneath the identified nodes. This systematic organization allowed for the discernment of emerging patterns, providing a systematic approach to separating the complexities captured within the qualitative data.

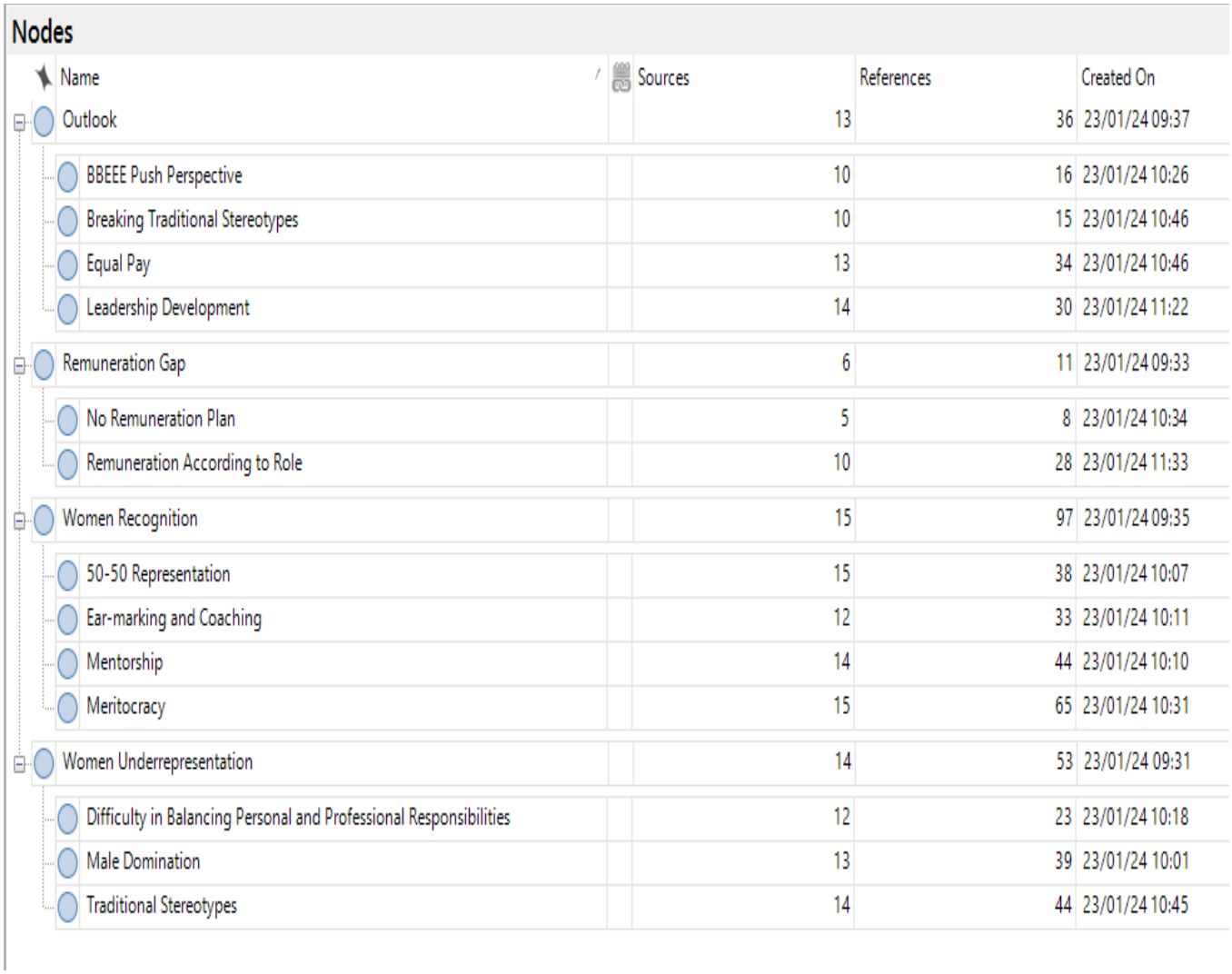
Table 6 further presented the coded nodes that transformed into themes. Each node captured a distinct component of the qualitative data, offering a structured and comprehensive overview of the emergent themes determined through the NVivo 12 analysis on Figure 10. This coding procedure aimed at providing a comprehensive viewpoint that allowed the research data to be methodically examined and understood.

Name	Description	Sources	References
Outlook	Outlook for women representation in shipping and logistics sector.	13	36
BBEEE Push Perspective	Outlook for women representation in shipping and logistics sector.	10	16
Breaking Traditional Stereotypes	Outlook for women representation in shipping and logistics sector.	10	15

Name	Description	Sources	References
Equal Pay	Outlook for women representation in shipping and logistics sector.	13	34
Leadership Development	Outlook for women representation in shipping and logistics sector.	14	30
Remuneration Gap	Reasons for remuneration gap between men and women.	6	11
No Remuneration Plan	Reasons for remuneration gap between men and women.	5	8
Remuneration According to Role	Reasons for remuneration gap between men and women.	10	28
Women Recognition	How to ensure that women are recognised and given positions.	15	97
50-50 Representation	A way of recognising women in the shipping and logistics sector.	15	38
Earmarking and Coaching	A way of recognising women in the shipping and logistics sector.	12	33
Mentorship	A way of recognising women in the shipping and logistics sector.	14	44
Meritocracy	How to ensure that women are recognised and given positions.	15	65
Women Underrepresentation	Contributing factors of women underrepresentation.	14	53
Difficulty in Balancing Personal and Professional Responsibilities	A cause of women underrepresentation.	12	23
Male Domination	A cause of women underrepresentation.	13	39

Name	Description	Sources	References
Traditional Stereotypes	A cause of women underrepresentation.	14	44

Table 6 - Code book showing the emergent themes (2024,p.62)



Nodes

Name	Sources	References	Created On
Outlook	13	36	23/01/24 09:37
BBEEE Push Perspective	10	16	23/01/24 10:26
Breaking Traditional Stereotypes	10	15	23/01/24 10:46
Equal Pay	13	34	23/01/24 10:46
Leadership Development	14	30	23/01/24 11:22
Remuneration Gap	6	11	23/01/24 09:33
No Remuneration Plan	5	8	23/01/24 10:34
Remuneration According to Role	10	28	23/01/24 11:33
Women Recognition	15	97	23/01/24 09:35
50-50 Representation	15	38	23/01/24 10:07
Ear-marking and Coaching	12	33	23/01/24 10:11
Mentorship	14	44	23/01/24 10:10
Meritocracy	15	65	23/01/24 10:31
Women Underrepresentation	14	53	23/01/24 09:31
Difficulty in Balancing Personal and Professional Responsibilities	12	23	23/01/24 10:18
Male Domination	13	39	23/01/24 10:01
Traditional Stereotypes	14	44	23/01/24 10:45

Figure 10 - The nodes of the coding process.

Source- NVivo 12 (QSR International, 2024)

4.4 Thematic Analysis

Focused on participant's views on women recognition in the shipping and logistics industry and explored various dimensions of gender equality and representation supported by themes from Table 6 and themes from chapter 2 including sub-problems statements from chapter 1.

Theme 1: Economic & Social Impacts

Emerging theme- Women recognition and 50/50 representation.

Interview questions: What can be done to have more women occupy leadership positions within the shipping and logistics sector?

Sub-problem statement- The percentage of women's representation in leadership roles is minimal, what are the economic, social factors and trends that are influencing the slow take off including barriers to career advancement?

Supporting statement- Women face several barriers to promotions or career development opportunities compared to their male counterparts, the social trends are resulting from unspoken bias including unconscious attitudes and stereotypes which affects decisions and behaviours in ways that disadvantages women in leadership roles.

Implications- When organizations do not offer various opportunities to women to build on existing skills and increase their confidence it may result to low productivity and stagnation, it is important to assist career advancement by offering and prioritizing educational programs which will help achieve organizations objective's (Fernandes & Kuzey 2023).

Propositions- According to Fernandes (2023), investing money is essential for companies' growth through human capital that goes beyond academic and professional qualifications, encompassing job expertise and personal attributes which enhance economic progress, creativity, and societal benefits. According to Ritter and Hayashi (2019), the absence of purposeful training programs, coupled with a lack of women's empowerment as an organizational priority, may also contribute significantly. Examining how these obstacles intersect with company policies reveals the intricate complexity of barriers that hinder women from reaching leadership positions.

Women's empowerment and achievement of gender equality in the workplace depend heavily on human capital. Human capital addresses disparities such as salary gaps, underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, unequal distribution of job responsibilities while ensuring that progress is continuously made (James et al., 2015).

Theme 2: Gender Equality

Interview question: How do you ensure that your team is diverse and inclusive and how do you cultivate a strong and supportive team culture?

Emerging theme- Workforce Diversity, organizational development, and Diversity management

Sub-problem statement- Why is it important for organizations to have a balanced gender workforce, and how should managers go about being intentional with investing in gender diversity?

Supporting statement- Gender Equality requires a combined and pooled effort across various sectors and levels of society by addressing challenges and implementing effective strategies that organizations can work towards in achieving greater gender equality.

Implications- Even though Human capital assists in bridging the gender gap in workforce participation and job tasks, to date we see positive changes in statistics. For an example, women truck drivers used to make up 3.2 percent between 2010-2019 as it was believed that driving trucks with high value goods can be harmful to them and their families, but a positive change has grown from 3.2 percent to 23.1 percent between 2019 and 2023, however with the flexibility that they must be excused in long or overnight distance driving so they can still spend time at home with their families, which then allows men to work longer hours and earn more money (Scott & Davis-Sramek, 2023).

Propositions- Managers are required to evaluate individual skills, experience, and education when determining salaries, they must not base their decisions on gender specific factors. However, certain job tasks may require distinct approaches, for instance the differences in working hours can lead to disparities in compensation amongst male and female truck drivers who spend nights away from home. Typically considered homemakers or caregivers by society, women tend to be assigned daytime

driving schedules which allows men's longer work shifts during nighttime drives thus causing variances in wages since females undertake fewer trips resulting into lower earnings. It remains unclear if these determinations result directly from company policies or whether employees were offered options regarding assignments with varied timescales (Scott et al., 2023). Nonetheless it seems that companies endorse nurturing this gender even though it might present differently depending upon an individual perspective among genders involved.

Theme 3: Policy & structural changes

Interview question: What are the organizational and societal factors that support or hinder women's advancement to leadership roles?

Emerging Theme: Traditional stereotypes and Male domination

Sub-problem statement- What are organizational policies and structural changes supporting women career advancement and which policies are inadvertently disadvantaging women in attaining and pursuing leadership roles.

Supporting statement- The deficiency of policy and structural changes in addressing gender inequality in the workplace can perpetuate disparities in career advancement, salary gaps and overall workplace experience for women.

Implications- Some of the challenges women face due to policy and structural changes is “unconscious bias” as leaders have their own favourites in the workplace and need to understand that policies are designed to mitigate bias and provide equitable opportunities for all employees (Sharma, 2019).

Propositions- Policies need to be revisited and updated yearly. Programmes like mentorship and sponsorship must form part of the organization’s documented policies between men and women, as the mentor is selected for their extensive knowledge in the field of the mentee's career development plans while considering personality traits and cultural background compatibility to ensure mutual benefit (Achkar 2023).

The above themes are connected to the research and support the fact that while women are making strides in entering the industry, they often face barriers to

advancing to higher leadership positions. Initiatives aimed at closing these gaps are seen as crucial for improving the status quo (Dong -Guo & Wang, 2020).

4.4 (b) Additional propositions in thematic discussion

Additional themes that emerged from participant's responses based on patterns and trends that dominated the most are discussed below which are linked to themes in Table six (6).

4.4.1 Industry outlook

"I would like to see women taking space and leading."

"I am not 100% aware of the strategy and timelines however I am aware that there are programs in place to position women into leadership roles."

According to Okoro and Washington (2012), organizations are putting great effort to ensure that the workplaces are multicultural. This research outlined the impact of workforce diversity and the communication effects in the workplace.

4.4.2 BBEEE Push Perspective

"Big hope for South Africa as there is a push from the BBEEE perspective."

"We need special programs for employment equity, and we must stick to that.".

Leaders are responsible to formulate a strategy for the organization, focusing on various models that require to be implemented for the organization to be fully functional, that is hiring the perfect fit, different age groups, relevant skills and experience, cultural workforce, and systems to be used (Lee, 2019).

4.4.3 Breaking Traditional Stereotypes

"Logistics is a "male" dominated industry; however, women are slowly taking up space".

"The traditional roles that the men used to occupy were roles of being drivers, & warehouse workers." (P12)

Companies are pushing the agenda of men and women doing the same tasks to ensure that every employee belongs and most importantly they can bring their

authentic self to work and still be accepted for who they are (Aleazar & Fenandez, 2013).

4.4.4 Equal Pay

“Pay people according to what they are worth regardless of their gender.”

“We want to see fair and equal opportunities for all.”

Men and women performing the same task with the same qualifications and experience should get equal pay (Buxton & Whiting, 2020).

4.4.5 Leadership development

“The best thing that you can do is to educate yourself as much as you can”.

“I have identified certain individuals whom I want to help grow, motivate, and steer them into the right direction.”

Human capital development ensures that there is a steady growth by implementing policies that will focus in addressing problems and change the status quo to benefit all parties involved equally (Heckman & Krueger, 2005).

4.4.6 Remuneration gap

“There is no remuneration plan, however there is a big imbalance, and I would like to see a plan being communicated.”

“No, we don’t have a remuneration plan; we just do salary benchmarks”.

Companies do not have formalized plan on how to remunerate, they however remunerate based on the last salary and not according to the role and responsibilities (Buxton et la.,2020).

4.4.7 Traditional stereotypes

“In boardrooms we are being intimidated by men”.

“Men can make you feel you are the only woman in the room, however that is changing.”

Various sectors are facing the same challenges, women feel they need to raise their voices to be recognised or have a chance to speak (Fakude, 2019).

4.4.8 Remuneration according to Role

“We do not remunerate according to gender but according to the role”.

“I don’t deal with salaries however, I recommend an hourly rate for contractors be it male or female, as the rate is based on the project and job specifications”.

It is important that the focus shifts and people should be remunerated according to their responsibilities and tasks they are given, and the level of their role also matters (Scott et la.,2023).

4.4.9 Women Recognition

“When I have a female resignation, my wish is to replace her with another woman, however it becomes difficult to find the same skill set from women”.

“In our space females are more on the supporting roles and not necessarily on the leadership roles”.

Companies are trying to acknowledge that a work environment consists of different multi-cultural groups with different interest, and opinions. Thus, they need to communicate, train, educate, and equip staff with the needed resources to drive performance and productivity. Therefore, organisations are encouraged to drive equal employment opportunities and workforce diversity management (Seliverstova & Pierog, 2021).

4.4.10 Fifty-Fifty Representation

“A good balance in the workplace should be 50/50” of men and women.

“If we can get a fair balance of 50-60%, that would be a healthy progression”.

Men and women in this sector are calling out for 50/50 balance of men and women in leadership roles, at least by 2030.

4.4.11 Earmarking and Coaching

“In terms of support, we have a nice mixed team, that allows good discussion and support”.

“Where I find an opportunity to work with young women, I invest time to upskill them and share knowledge”.

Managers must always have a pool of talent that they advocate for through training, positioning, education, and support so when there is an opening it is easy to fill the role (silver, 2023).

4.4.12 Mentorship

“Most importantly women must support each other by lifting others as they rise”.

“Firstly, individuals should have their own plans and aspirations, determine where they want to go and voice it out, where do you stand and be actively involved and prove that you are an asset”.

Mentor and mentee pairing is vital in any organization, to upskill and develop the upcoming leaders (Zhou et al., 2023)

4.4.13 Meritocracy

“Opportunities must be provided through merit which will contribute into developing the company”.

“I am realistic, opportunities must be based on merit and achievements”.

Men and women deserve equal opportunities, based on merit (Coombs, 2022).

4.4.14 Women Underrepresentation

“The industry is male dominated, because there are not many females in the industry, therefore, there is an imbalance”.

“We are struggling to make progress to bring in women, even though there are plans in place”.

Gender inequality also involves compensations and shortcomings of diversity related to an organisational reality. There is a focus area of interest to have more women leaders which is a positive organisational outcome, which is linked to the benefits of the value in diversity known as net-added value (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2015).

4.4.15 Difficulty in Balancing Personal and Professional Responsibilities

“I struggle, because my life revolves around work”.

“It varies, some days are overwhelming with family responsibilities and workload.”

Studies show that women mostly struggle to balance work and personal life due to other responsibilities like family life, which can lead to under performance and inconsistency (Ayoko, 2007). Organisations are coming up with ways to support women for positive outcomes through diverse employee work design.

Overall, the research indicates a growing recognition of the need for gender diversity in the shipping and logistics industry and efforts to address these issues are evolving, with many organizations making strides towards creating a more inclusive environment for women (Dong -Guo and Wang, 2020).

4.5 Analysis and Interpretation summary

This chapter served as a pivotal juncture where extensive data analysis was presented, offering a profound insight into the multifaceted issues surrounding gender dynamics within the shipping and logistics sector. To support the analytical exploration, this section initiates a comprehensive demonstration of the background information pertaining to the fifteen research participants, strategically chosen to represent a diverse cross-section of industry professionals (Morse, 2008).

In essence, this part of the research operated as a tool for synthesizing the intricate interplay of factors affecting women's participation in the industry. It navigated through the network of data, employing a thematic analysis framework to gather the essence of participants' perspectives, aligning them with the primary research sub-problems and pre-existing literature. As the chapter unfolded, it not only examined the clear trends but also transformed the raw data into a rich insight that paved the way for a comprehensive discussion in the subsequent chapters.

The age spectrum of the research participants, spanning from 29 to 54 years, unveiled a versatile view of experiences and perspectives. The strength of participants between 33 and 54 years reflected a cohort that encompassed both mid-career professionals and seasoned individuals who have witnessed the industry's evolution over an

extended period. From a scholarly standpoint, this age diversity serves as a valuable resource for understanding the dimensions of gender dynamics within the shipping and logistics sector.

The age range also displayed the contemplation on the potential influence of generational differences on perceptions of gender roles and workplace dynamics. Scholars in organizational studies have extensively explored how generational cohorts may bring distinct attitudes and expectations to the workplace, and this age variance among participants presented an opportunity to explore such detail within the specific context of the shipping and logistics industry (Clausing, 2003).

Chapter 5 Recommendations

In the peak of this scholarly exploration into the gender dynamics within the shipping and logistics sector, Chapter 5 presents a set of robust recommendations. These recommendations are methodically derived from the analysis of the research findings, participant insights, themes, and existing literature. The aim is to provide actionable and forward-thinking guidance for stakeholders within the Shipping and Logistics industry and can be implemented at company level, moreover they are intended to specifically share actionable guidance for the organizations that participated in the research to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment, as follows:

5.1 Recommendations Encompassing Economic and Social Impacts

Organizations that take part in industry collaborations, trainings, workshops, and projects that particularly focus on improving gender diversity, economic growth, diverse trainings, financial successes, and social impacts is a crucial component of this advice. This could be done through becoming a member of associations for the industry, taking part in working groups, or funding initiatives that try to solve issues pertaining to women in the shipping and logistics industry. Collaboration initiatives give organizations a forum to exchange knowledge, difficulties, and effective tactics.

Collaboration within industries depends critically on the sharing of best practices. When it comes to advancing gender diversity, organizations should be willing to share their insights, activities that have been effective, and lessons discovered. This information sharing might be a great help to other businesses who want to apply successful tactics and procedures inside their own enterprises. In addition to providing benefits to individuals and firms, involvement in industry-wide gender equality programs advances the sector. To advance women in the shipping and logistics sector, companies should actively support and participate in initiatives that transcend internal company borders by focusing on the below:

5.1.1 Institutionalize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Practices

Institutionalizing DEI techniques and making them a core component of the business's identity is advised to instil a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) inside the firm. To promote a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, this entails not only

incorporating DEI principles into policies and programs but also routinely expressing the organization's dedication to diversity and inclusion.

5.1.2 Integration into Organizational Culture

Take the organization's mission statement, fundamental values and strategic objectives DEI practices into account. From the top down, this conveys a resolute commitment to diversity and inclusion. Make sure that DEI factors are considered when making decisions about recruiting, promotions, project assignments, and resource allocation. Create structures that give equity and diversity top priority in every component of the organization's activities.

5.1.3 Leadership Commitment and Accountability

Executives that actively participate and support diversity and inclusion programs will show a leadership commitment to DEI. In addition, being responsible for encouraging diversity at all organizational levels, leadership should serve as an example of inclusive behaviour. Reinforce that encouraging diversity and inclusion is a shared duty by tying DEI goals to leadership assessments and including them into performance evaluations.

5.1.4 Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Establish and support Employee Resource Groups that provide a platform for employees with shared identities or interests to come together, share experiences, and contribute to the organization's DEI efforts. Encourage ERGs to actively engage in shaping DEI policies, providing feedback, and contributing to initiatives that promote a more inclusive workplace.

5.2 Recommendations Encompassing Human Capital

It is recommended that organizations develop and execute gender-neutral recognition initiatives and programs to further advance gender equality and foster an inclusive work environment.

Organizations may want to use internal events, company newsletters, intranet platforms, or other outlets to showcase the acknowledged accomplishments to amplify the impact of gender-neutral recognition programs. Showcasing a wide range of

achievements conveys a strong statement about the organization's dedication to appreciating each worker's contributions, regardless of gender.

Furthermore, other forms of training and education are leadership programs specifically designed for women, to foster diversity and inclusivity in leadership roles. These initiatives aim to give women specific chances for networking, skill development, and exposure to other leadership philosophies, with the goal of fostering an inclusive and equitable workplace culture.

The first part is to create leadership development programs that are especially suited for challenges that women in the shipping and logistics industry encounter. These courses should cover topics like developing a strategic mentality, industry-specific knowledge, and leadership abilities. By adapting the course material to the specific industry, participants are guaranteed to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills needed.

Women are more prepared to succeed in leadership roles when they have access to training and development opportunities in strategic decision-making, communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution. By offering individualized direction and assistance, mentorship and coaching as part of these programs can further promote individual growth.

Lasty, organizations should also look at closing the Gender Remuneration Gap by focusing on yearly remuneration audits which addresses gender-based salary inequalities, compensation information, and bonuses and modification of remuneration policies.

5.3 Recommendations Encompassing Gender Equality

Developing an inclusive culture in the workplace is essential to fostering a diverse environment. The goal of this advice is to create a work environment that respects individual diversity, aggressively dismisses gender stereotypes, and makes sure that all employees, male or female have a sense of community. To do this, companies should offer thorough training programs for leadership, and raise awareness of unconscious biases and promote a gender-sensitive workplace through applying the following:

5.3.1 Leadership Training and Accountability

Leadership Workshops - Give leadership teams quarterly specialized training so they can support diversity and inclusion efforts with the information and abilities they need. The culture of the workplace is mostly determined by leaders and providing them with specialized training makes it possible for them to effectively advocate for change.

Accountability Measures - Put in place procedures to make leaders answerable for cultivating an inclusive culture. This can entail adding measures for diversity and inclusion to performance reviews and routinely evaluating the leadership's initiatives to encourage gender sensitivity within their staff.

5.3.2 Unconscious Bias Training

Structured unconscious bias workshops must be organized yearly with a specific focus. Employees and managers alike can benefit from these sessions by learning how biases might affect hiring procedures, decision-making procedures, and general workplace interactions. Incorporate case studies and real-world examples into training materials to illustrate the concrete effects of unconscious prejudices. This method pushes individuals to examine their own actions and make a conscious effort to lessen bias in their professional lives.

5.4 Recommendations Encompassing Policy and Structural Changes

Yearly plan to reviewing current policies within the organization is advised to ensure the continued relevance and effectiveness of gender equity programs. To maintain alignment with the changing landscape of gender equity policies and organizational structural changes and these reviews should be conducted, accounting for external advancements, societal shifts, and industry trends.

Reviewing gender equity policies at least once to twice a year is a proactive way to evaluate their effectiveness and pinpoint opportunities for development. Policies should be modified to reflect changing public attitudes, legislative frameworks, and industry dynamics to maintain an inclusive and equal workplace.

During policy reviews, external developments such as modifications to laws, cultural norms, and best practices in gender equity should be carefully considered. Companies should keep up with new developments and trends in diversity and inclusion.

A thorough analysis of current policies, including but not limited to hiring and recruitment procedures, promotions, pay, work-life balance, gender diversity, and chances for professional growth, should be part of the periodic review process.

Organizations should also be willing to look beyond the company for outside expertise when reviewing policies. Working with specialists in gender equity, diversity, and inclusion helps guarantee that policies are based on the most recent findings and recommended practices while also bringing new perspectives to the table.

Companies should actively encourage and hire legislators and industry bodies to support the development and implementation of equal pay by evaluating the current structure and recommending the ideal structure, to advance gender parity and fair compensation in the shipping and logistics companies.

5.5 Recommendations Encompassing Mentoring and Sponsorship

One of the important ways to promote a culture of empowerment and support in the shipping and logistics industry is to establish mentorship programs. Organizations can help with knowledge transfer, offer career guidance, and support the overall professional growth of women in the business by matching seasoned female workers with recent graduates. Increasing the exposure of accomplished women leaders also acts as an incentive for inspirational initiatives as follows:

5.5.1 Structured Mentorship Initiatives

Tailored Pairing Process - Establish a deliberate and considerate matching process that pairs seasoned female workers with recently hired employees. This guarantees that mentors provide advice that is specifically pertinent to each mentee's goals within the shipping and logistics industry. The mentor-mentee pairing will be for a period of one year followed by rotation, so they can be exposed to different levels of engagement and business units.

Defined Program - For mentorship programs, organizations should provide a precise schedule that specifies the structure of the mentor-mentee connection and the clear end goals. Both parties can define objectives, work towards specified goals, and evaluate the success of the mentorship within a well-structured timeline.

5.5.2 Knowledge Transfer and Skill Enhancement

Focused Skill Development Plans – Create quarterly skill development plans with mentees in collaboration that targets growth areas. These could include leadership qualities, industry-relevant technical skills, and skilled communication in a formal setting.

Regular Check-ins and Progress Reviews - Plan monthly check-ins for mentors and mentees to go over progress, this can be via online platform or in person, talk about obstacles, and improve the mentorship plan. This procedure guarantees that mentoring stays flexible and adaptable to mentees' changing requirements and needs.

5.5.3 Career Guidance and Goal Setting

Individualized Career Path Planning - Collaborate with mentorship pairs to create customized career path plans that consider the distinct goals and prospective career paths of mentees. This program will be implemented by the organization’s talent team, working together with the mentors from different business units, which is designed to help mentees navigate the intricacies of the shipping and logistics sector and create realistic goals.

Guidance on Overcoming Challenges - Give mentors the resources they need to help mentees overcome any difficulties and hurdles particular to the industry. It is ensured that mentees receive thorough support when concerns like work-life balance, career growth hurdles, and gender biases are addressed. The mentors will report progress to the HR team and Talent team every quarter.

5.5.4 Measuring Impact and Continuous Improvement

Feedback Mechanisms - Implement monthly feedback mechanisms between the mentor and mentee to gather insights from both parties. The mentor will provide feedback to the organization quarterly regarding the effectiveness of the mentorship programs. This continuous feedback activity allows organizations to refine and improve the programs based on real-time input.

Quantitative and Qualitative Metrics - Develop a measurable set of quantitative and qualitative mechanism through surveys, online feedback, interviews, and discussions mechanisms to assess the impact of mentorship on career progression, job

satisfaction, and skill development. Utilize these metrics to measure the success of the program and identify areas for enhancement.

5.6 Future Recommendations

The recommendations based on the research limitations was accessibility of organizational information around diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies, as companies design their own strategies which are not for public knowledge and display, therefore companies have a right to share or not share their strategies. This is because several shipping companies are still undergoing internal changes around gender equality (Harcourt, 2010).

Future researchers conducting research on this topic should consider exploring both qualitative and quantitative research methods to gain more insights. They should incorporate innovative methodologies and approaches that may inspire their own work or thinking. Must further recommend new trends from the research gaps that require further research exploration.

5.7 Author’s views

Drawing from the assessment of past diversity initiatives, this literature reviewed and offered recommendations for future interventions. These proposed strategies leverage successful elements while addressing identified shortcomings. Tailored to the specific needs and challenges of the South African Maritime industry, these recommendations aim to guide future initiatives towards meaningful and sustainable transformations in achieving gender diversity targets.

The findings aimed at proposing evidence-based strategies for overcoming stagnancy in gender diversity transformation targets, considering the industry's specific challenges and opportunities. The dynamics of gender diversity transformation in the maritime sector are complicatedly tied to the organizational cultures that penetrate maritime entities (Canning & Found, 2015).

Essentially, Chapter 5 provided a road map for anyone involved in the shipping and logistics industry to successfully negotiate the degrees of gender relations and actively participate in the development of a healthy, inclusive sector. These suggestions aimed

to spark constructive change and move the industry closer to a future marked by gender parity, diversity, and steady expansion.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The objective of this research was to explore the intricacies surrounding gender dynamics within the shipping and logistics sector. The research aimed to understand the reasons behind female underrepresentation, distinguish complexities related to pay disparity between genders, as well as propose effective methods for improving women's presence in key leadership roles through greater visibility and participation. By means of academic research and analysis of data collected, crucial insights were gained that shed light on how a multitude of factors interacted with one another within this industry's professional landscape.

To bring clarity to the research, a group of industry experts with differing ages, genders, races, and years of experience were gathered to analyse and scrutinize the research questions and objectives. The aim was to acquire varied views from participants who possess different knowledge as well as exposure levels towards internal information. This demographic summary served as a crucial foundation offering insights into understanding complex narratives that surfaced through data analysis.

The use of thematic analysis as a methodological tool has proven to be effective in identifying key themes and concepts. This was achieved through the implementation of NVivo, a data analysis software that produced nodes, text search queries, and word frequency queries. By using this analytical lens to compare emerging themes with previous research findings and published works within the shipping industry domain. The combination of empirical data and theoretical frameworks allowed for deep insights into gender representation potentialities in logistics while also highlighting associated difficulties. Improvements could be made through integrating quantitative methods alongside qualitative ones; an approach that would lead to greater understanding when assessing diversity transformation targets comprehensively. Quantitative approaches offer insights into demographic patterns whilst capturing individual experiences (Creswell & Creswell 2017). Maintaining rigorous methodology require continuous refinement even though chosen frameworks may appeared robust initially. Effective practice should include ongoing reflection on personal bias during research processes which ultimately enhance reliability by increasing transparency around researcher positionality.

A broad spectrum of challenges encountered by women within their field were revealed during the investigation, ranging from gender bias and lack of representation to persisting differences in pay. However, despite these hurdles, promising avenues towards progress and change have been identified. Practical strategies for cultivating diversity and inclusion in organizational contexts are outlined among the study's proposals (Finlay, 2002).

To attain gender equality in the shipping and logistics industry, important measures like establishing an inclusive workplace culture, employing specific recruitment strategies, and initiating mentorship programs have surfaced. Organisations can ensure women's progress to leadership roles by collaboratively working with educational institutions, highlighting accomplished female leaders as role models for others whilst fostering a multifarious environment.

Taking a forward-looking perspective, it is imperative for stakeholders in the shipping and logistics industry to adopt an active stance towards gender diversity and inclusion. Through measures such as mentorship programs, diverse hiring practices, and cultural shifts within organizations and more sustainable outcomes can be achieved. With unwavering commitment and concerted effort from all involved parties, attaining proportional representation of talent across the sector remains attaina (Kuar & Arora, 2020).

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