

Sponsorship, executive coaching and the career progression of black women in the banking sector in Gauteng

Tebogo Legote

Supervisor name (Ayanda Magida)

**A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and
Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Business and
Executive Coaching**

Wits Business School

Johannesburg, 2023

ABSTRACT

The banking sector transformation journey is not vastly different from other industries that are male dominated. With the increasing number of women joining the workforce, there is great demand for institutions to diversify and improve upon the representation of women in senior, decision making roles. Not only is this a legislative requirement, transformation is enshrined in the charter. Black women continue to be a marginalised group, as evident in a number of studies that highlight the challenges experienced by black women. The study sought to understand how sponsorship and executive coaching alleviates such challenges, and the effect of the sponsorship in the coaching process.

Using an interpretive inductive approach to the study, a qualitative research methodology was applied to collect data from ten senior and executive managers, using semi-structured interviews as a tool. The phenomenological study enabled the collection of informative insights, shedding light on experiences of black women, of sponsorship and executive coaching. Information obtained from the interviews was analysed employing thematic analysis and fourteen themes and several sub-themes surfaced. The findings illustrated positively career advancement as a result of sponsorship, however, no evidence showed sponsorship influence on the coaching process.

The study concludes that sponsorship and executive coaching can enable career progression for black women in the banking sector. The study recommends that in order to understand the plight of women in the workplace, unconscious biases should be dispelled. The recommendation also draws attention to the significant role that sponsors can play in advocating for gender equity in general not limited to managing the careers of a few.

Keywords: Sponsorship, Career progression, Executive coaching

DECLARATION

I, Tebogo Paulette Legote, declare that this research report is my work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Business and Executive Coaching at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Name: Tebogo Paulette Legote Signature:

Signed atBUCCLEUCH.....

On the25th..... day ofApril..... 2023.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research report to my loved ones; thank you always for being my biggest cheer leaders.

To my children, for a while you had to grow your own wings, as I could not be as present as you have known me to be. The norm is that parents support their children, however, you guys flipped the script and showed up for me in the most amazing way. The endless cups of coffees, the aloe-gel rubs on my back when I broke out in hives and your cheerful words meant the world to me. You are magic.

To my mother and father, bagolo ba me, I dedicate this research report to you, for always engaging us in uncomfortable and deep conversations to prepare us for the real world and allowing us to grow up as black girls with ambition. Your years as educators showed us the value of education.

To my sister, Motlalepule.....where do I even begin. Ke a leboga gofejane.

Ngwanyana wa Mokolobeng, Setlogolo sa BaTshweneng, you did it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my supervisor, Ayanda Magida for your guidance and insights, I have learned a lot through our partnership.

I would like to thank the black women who participated in the interviews, your determination and stories of overcoming will inspire women to do more.

To my management team, the encouragement that I have received from yourselves has been remarkable. Thank you for allowing me to follow my passion and affording me time when needed, it made a huge difference.

My passion for the success black women has always been fuelled by my endless gratitude to women that took me under their wings from my first job in 2004 to date. The support I received, provided me with the type of safety I wish for everyone. It shatters me to know that women continue to be marginalised regardless of how industrious, brilliant and deserving we are. The world could really be a great place, if we took the blinkers off and realised how true transformation empowers nations.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: List of research questions and summary of themes

Table 4.2: Subthemes that contribute to challenges experienced in credibility and recognition

Table 4.3: Subthemes that contribute to work-life balance

Table 4.4: Subthemes that contribute to self-promotion and self-efficacy in career development

Table 4.5: Subthemes that contribute to leadership led visibility

Table 4.6: Coaching Profile of participants

Table 4.7: Expressed executive coaching needs

Table 4.8: Summary view of research objectives, propositions and themes related

TABLE OF CONTENT

Contents

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DECLARATION.....	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENT.....	vii
CHAPTER 1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	1
1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY.....	1
1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM	2
1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE.....	5
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	5
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	5
1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	6
1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS	7
1.9 ASSUMPTIONS	7
1.10 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT.....	8
CHAPTER 2. Literature Review	9
2.1 INTRODUCTION	9
2.2 BACKGROUND DISCUSSION	9
2.1 EXECUTIVE COACHING.....	11
2.1.1 SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY	15
2.2 CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE	18
2.2.1 PROPOSITION 1.....	22
2.3 THE ROLE OF SPONSORSHIP IN THE PROGRESSION OF BLACK WOMEN'S CAREERS.....	22
2.3.1 PROPOSITION 2.....	26
2.4 THE COMPETENCE EXECUTIVE COACHING MODEL	27

2.4.1	RAPPORT AND WORKING ALLIANCE	28
2.4.2	GOAL SETTING	30
2.4.3	ACTION PLANNING.....	31
2.4.4	PROPOSITION 3.....	32
2.5	CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW	33

CHAPTER 3. Research Methodology.....34

3.1	INTRODUCTION	34
3.2	RESEARCH APPROACH	34
3.3	RESEARCH DESIGN	35
3.4	POPULATION AND SAMPLE	36
3.4.1	POPULATION	36
3.4.2	SAMPLING.....	37
3.5	THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	38
3.6	PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION	39
3.7	DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	39
3.8	RIGOUR IN METHODOLOGY	41
3.8.1	TRANSFERABILITY	41
3.8.2	CREDIBILITY	41
3.8.3	DEPENDABILITY	42
3.8.4	CONFIRMABILITY	42
3.9	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	43

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY.....45

4.1	INTRODUCTION	45
4.2	DEMOGRAPHIC OF THE PARTICIPANTS	45
4.3	THEME DEVELOPMENT	46
4.4	THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY BLACK WOMEN IN WOMEN IN THE BANKING SECTOR IN GAUTENG	48
4.4.1	CREDIBILITY AND RECOGNITION	48
4.4.2	WORK LIFE BALANCE	54
4.4.3	SELF-PROMOTION AND SELF-EFFICACY IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT.....	57
4.5	EXPERIENCES OF SPONSORSHIP AND THE BENEFITS.....	61
4.5.1	PERCEPTIONS OF SPONSORSHIP	62
4.5.2	SPONSORSHIP BENEFITS	63
4.5.3	CAREER AGILITY	65
4.5.4	CAREER ACCELERATION.....	67
4.5.5	SOCIAL CAPITAL	69
4.5.6	PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT	70
4.6	EXPERIENCES OF EXECUTIVE COACHING AND THE INFLUENCE OF SPONSORSHIP ON COACHING PROCESS	71
4.6.1	LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	72
4.6.2	TRANSITION INTO NEW ROLE	73
4.6.3	GOAL ATTAINMENT	74
4.6.4	PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT	75
4.6.5	WORK LIFE BALANCE.....	75
4.7	CONSISTENCY MATRIX	77

4.8	CONCLUSIONS ON THE FINDINGS	78
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS.....		79
5.1	INTRODUCTION	79
5.2	DISCUSSION PERTAINING TO RESEARCH QUESTION 1	79
5.2.1	CREDIBILITY AND RECOGNITION.....	80
5.2.2	WORK-LIFE BALANCE	82
5.2.3	SELF-PROMOTION AND SELF-EFFICACY IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT.....	84
5.3	DISCUSSION PERTAINING TO PROPOSITION 2.....	86
5.4	DISCUSSION PERTAINING TO PROPOSITION 3.....	89
5.5	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	92
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS ..		94
6.1	INTRODUCTION	94
6.2	CONCLUSIONS REGARDING RESEARCH QUESTION 1	94
6.3	CONCLUSIONS REGARDING RESEARCH QUESTION 2	95
6.4	CONCLUSIONS REGARDING RESEARCH QUESTION 3	95
6.5	RECOMMENDATIONS	96
6.6	SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	100
6.7	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	100
REFERENCES		102
APPENDIX A - An introduction letter / cover page		128
APPENDIX B – Participant Consent Sheet.....		130
APPENDIX C – Research instrument.....		131
APPENDIX D – Ethics Clearance Certificate		133

CHAPTER 1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the study

This qualitative study explored the role of sponsorship and executive coaching as complementary tools to women's career progression in the banking sector in Gauteng. This study focused on black women, in middle management, senior management and executive level, in the banking sector, in Gauteng.

1.2 Context of the study

In South Africa, several laws were promulgated to protect women's constitutional rights, such as the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (RSA, Employment Equity Act [EEA], 1998), the Bill of Rights (RSA, Constitution, 1996), and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003. The intention was to create mechanisms to facilitate sustainable development, enabling access for women to economic activity, skills training, and eradicating poverty (Sadie, 2014). The Employment Equity legislation (EEA, 1998) was enacted into law in South Africa to facilitate and redress disparities in employment opportunities and income levels because of apartheid (Berry, 2003).

These changes included the establishment of the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE, 2000) which aimed to create a society free from gender discrimination, with equal opportunities for all regardless of race, gender, sex, disability, religion, and sexual orientation. The mandate included monitoring of charters that have a direct impact on gender equality and promotion of women empowerment. The strategic structures were set up to protect the rights of women and promote equality in line with the constitutional mandate (Sadie, 2014).

Organisations have a significant role to play in transforming society economically, culturally, and individually (Cloete et al., 2015). According to Hideg and Ferris (2014), an organisation's adoption and attitude towards employment equity policies impact the successful implementation thereof, further highlighting the role of organisational culture in transformation. Despite advancements in legislation

to address inequality, black women in South Africa face racial and gender discrimination in the professional space (Mpemba, 2018). The continued lack of representation of women in decision-making positions hampers the progression of transformation. Therefore, the effects of patriarchal norms should be addressed adequately to create more equality (Jayachandran, 2021; Sultana, 2010).

The 2017 Global Gender Gap Report sighted that men were underrepresented in the education, health, and social sectors, while women were under-represented in engineering, information and communication, and construction (World Economic Forum, 2017). The financial services sector was not immune to the lack of representation of women in leadership. As stated by Catalyst (2020), in a few countries, in 2019, women represented approximately half the working population in the Financial Services industry, however, the global percentage on executive committees in major financial services firms was only 20%, a 4% increase from 16% in 2016. The status continues to highlight that women get employed in lower managerial positions and remain excluded from positions at a higher level.

1.3 Research problem

Despite legislative framework being in place, histories of gender stereotypes afford men greater agency in management than women, exacerbating workplace gender inequity (Haines et al., 2016). This reality prompts a need for strategies that advocate for women intently. The prevalent challenges relate to male dominance in decision-making roles, breaking the glass ceiling, corporate culture, and organisational barriers. One other hindrance being women having lower self-esteem and competitive drive, in comparison to male counterparts (Allen et al., 2016), highlighting the significant impact of self-concept.

In research by Greguletz et al. (2019), it was found that women were limited in their ability to network due to gendered modesty, personal hesitation in capitalising on social networks and being seen as over-benefiting from networks. The researchers also highlight the women's inclination to undervalue themselves

professionally, hence self-advocacy has not been as effective. The lack of sponsorship hindered women's career progression, so without advocacy as a strategic intervention, inequality and discrimination in the workplace may continue to be a reality for women (Carr et al., 2019). A lot more research has been conducted regarding improving self-advocacy for persons with disabilities, and not as much into understanding tools to help black women gain confidence in creating visibility for themselves (Hagan & Medberry, 2016; Mittler, 2014; Tideman & Svensson, 2015). In the absence of self-advocacy, sponsorship can be used as a strategic transformational process that plays a role in accelerating the careers of women as leaders (Carr et al., 2019).

Mentoring and sponsorship are seen as contributors to professional development and career progression at different stages. These act as complementary processes that leaders undertake to improve performance or facilitate career success for others (De Vries & Binns, 2018). Mentoring gained wider acceptance with organisations adopting formal programs to address diversity challenges (Srivastava, 2015). Gandhi and Johnson (2016) note that the competency model for mentorship programs generally focuses on effective communication, alignment of expectations, fostering independence, and promoting the development of skills. These programs do not necessarily translate into tangible opportunities for senior roles, as the mentee is forced to seek these independently.

Sponsorship on the other hand has not gained equal traction for several reasons including hesitance to advocate for women, organisational processes and the existence of gender biases (Allen et al., 2016; Bligh & Ito, 2017). Sponsorship as described by Ibarra (2019) is a helping relationship, where powerful people use personal influence to advocate for and place high-performing junior staff into key roles. A significant benefit to sponsorship is the access to networks and opportunities for career advancement that the sponsor presents (Sharma et al., 2019). The lack of urgency given to black women leaders hampers sponsorship for black women, making visibility and career growth almost impossible (Johnson & Thomas, 2012). As a potential solution, women are encouraged to look for opportunities to advance themselves, show a willingness to be competitive, build

the right level of confidence to accomplish desired goals, however, these behaviours can be contrary to gendered conditioning that influence women's self-concept (Allen et al., 2016).

Matsa and Miller (2011) found that women helping women increases representation in organisations; without access to large pools, women are forced to look cross-gender and race for sponsorship. Women still experience challenges as they ascend the corporate ladder and have a lower likelihood of advancing than males, thereby limiting the pool of women role models and executives (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Cortland & Kinias, 2019). The access challenges have prompted talent focused organisations to rethink retention strategies of existing pools of black women. These include implementing processes such as enriching of jobs, increased autonomy and ringfencing specific roles to ensure candidacy of suited black women as a talent pipeline strategy.

Ariss (2014) suggests that executive coaching when utilised as a part of talent management approach, improves the succession pipeline of leaders, and supports organisational future growth. Hunt and Weintraub (2016) position executive coaching as a developmental intervention focusing on high potential managers with intentions of improving leadership skills. According to O'Neil et al. (2015), dealing with organisational contexts, career concerns, as well as balancing work-life priorities play a significant role in women's leadership development. The unique transference of behavioural knowledge adds to the success of executive coaching, and a strong component to this success is the opportunity to practice (Rekalde et al., (2017). The benefits of coaching would thus address perceived behavioural impediments that are detractors in the career advancement of women, into both leadership roles and others.

Black women are presented with a double minority existence, socio-culturally and in the workplace, impeding further the transcendence into senior leadership roles (Stanley, 2009). Probing was required to understand the experience and effectiveness of sponsorship and executive coaching for black women and the effect thereof on their career advancement. Without sponsorship and executive coaching, and exposure to impactful projects; career progression for black

women into leadership may continue to lag. It is against this backdrop that the study addresses the potential of sponsorship being used in the executive coaching process to facilitate the career progression of black women.

1.4 Research objective

The study explored the utilisation of sponsorship in the executive coaching process in facilitation of the career progression of black women.

1.5 Research questions

Based on the above objective, the study explored the following among black women:

1. How have career challenges experienced by black women changed their personal and professional development goals?
2. How have they experienced leader-led visibility in their careers and the contribution thereof to their goals?
3. What was the role of executive coaching in their careers?

1.6 Significance of the study

Research has been conducted into networking, coaching, and mentoring of African executives and managers as a strategic mechanism for talent development for women (De Klerk & Verreynne, 2017; Jackson & Bourne, 2020). As means to provide developmental support to black women, sponsorship in the Banking Sector can be positioned as a bespoke program to address the pipeline into higher levels of management without the strong reliance on the imposition of equity targets. Organisations with a higher representation of women at the helm are found to have stringent monitoring and oversight, fewer legal disputes, and improved performance measures (Adams & Ferreira, 2009). Improved women's representation have longer-term benefits for organisations.

The study findings can enable Human Resources practitioners and leadership to create best practices to improve the representation of black women in leadership,

by employing development programs with a long-term orientation. Anwar et. Al. (2014) recognise the need for effective talent management frameworks and mechanisms to better identify talent needs in aid of attracting, retaining and integrating employees. Women only programs are found to not create significant impact in integrating women as leaders, particularly in unsupportive environments (Brue & Brue, 2016). The development and application of wider inclusion programmes may assist black women and leaders in eradicating barriers that hinder integration to allow women wider visibility and recognition. These may include sponsorship as a meaning transformational tool for the benefit of black women.

The study presents an opportunity to add to the body of knowledge, of the role of sponsorship and how it provides psychosocial support in the executive coaching process, as opposed to mentorship, which is more commonly studied.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

The study was limited to black female managers in middle, senior and executive management in the banking sector in Gauteng. The participants in this study represent the specific group and were able to share their unique experiences of career advancement, sponsorship and executive coaching. The experiences shared helped reflect on the influence of sponsorship in the executive coaching process to facilitate career progression for black women. There are exclusions as listed below:

- The study excluded men, non-black women, and women who work in business areas that are generally over-represented by women.
- The study excludes work-life balance in its explicit definition.
- The study does not explore mentoring programs and executive development programs as management tools, as these are beyond the scope of the study.
- The study does not interrogate the experiences of sponsors, instead, it focused on the experiences of black women to understand the benefits derived.

1.8 Definition of terms

Career progression – career progression was evaluated with measures such as the number of promotions, movement upwards on the organisational hierarchy, and changes in salary (Melamed, 1996).

Executive Coaching – Defined by Blumberg (2016) as coaching designed to develop leadership capabilities and behaviours in an organisational setting.

Organisational culture - Hellriegel et al. (2007) define organisational culture as norms, values, and practices that characterise a particular organisation.

Sponsorship – advocacy for someone's career advancement (Hewlett, 2013).

Mentorship - A relationship between an experienced mentor and a protégé, aimed at personal development, learning and career success (Hunt and Michael, 1983; Ragins & Verbos, 2017)

1.9 Assumptions

The study explored lived experiences of black women and their career progression. The assumption drawn was that the women were truthful in responding to the interview questions due to the racial sensitivity of the topic. The women may view sponsorship as a form of demerit to their achievement; however, participation was positive through open dialogue and sharing technical meanings of the words.

The study assumed that the views expressed by the women on executive coaching, or any other form of coaching were based on personal experiences and perceptions. The line of questioning and facilitation was anchored in coaching competencies and methodologies to help create the appropriate climate for engagement.

1.10 Structure of the report

Chapter 1 introduced and contextualised the research purpose, research problem, research questions, the context and significance of the study, delimitations, definitions pertinent to the research and assumptions.

Chapter 2 focused on literature answering whether sponsorship impacted the executive coaching process to facilitate career growth for black women, considering the challenges faced by women as they move up the corporate ladder.

Chapter 3 outlined the appropriateness of a qualitative approach as a research methodology employed for the study. The study sought to understand individual experiences focusing on identified phenomena. The interpretative process of phenomenological analysis aided in making sense of the participants world and context.

Chapter 4 details the themes originating from each study proposition, and a summary of these findings.

Chapter 5 positions the discussion of the findings of each study proposition and the conclusion to these discussions.

Chapter 6 is the final chapter that articulates the conclusions from the research questions and provides recommendations for practical implications and suggestions of future research.

CHAPTER 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focused on the use of sponsorship in the executive coaching process to facilitate career progression of black women in the banking sector in Gauteng. The study synthesised literature and the perceived effect of sponsorship on the coaching process in the context of unique challenges experienced by black women in current roles and ascension into senior management and executive roles. Finally, the theoretical underpinning of the study is presented at the end of the chapter.

2.2 Background discussion

Legislation as published in the Government Gazette, the Employment Equity Act of 1998 (EEA, 1998), mandated employers to hire, develop and retain women employees and forced the adoption of transformation strategies using key policy instruments. Structural and systematic sexism exists for black South African women who continue to face exclusion from labour markets due to race, gender, social status, and ethnicity (Akala, 2018).

The sexism presents in various ways including fewer employment opportunities for women, the gender pay gap, women advancing in careers slower than males, lower socio-economic standing of women, and differential treatment in households (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Walkington, 2017; Homan, 2019). Women's representation in predominantly male industries bear the results of the historical exclusion and discrimination of women participating in the labour market, hence the importance of understanding gendered discrimination and the impact thereof on careers at a socio-cultural level (Pizam, 2017).

The significance of the banking sector in the context of this study, is due to the sector being a key player in transforming society economically, structurally, culturally, and politically (Cloete et al., 2015). As a subsection of the financial services sector of South Africa, the banking sector has a responsibility to

implement the Financial Sector Charter, which emphasised the need to promote a non-racial and non-sexist working environment, through specific transformation targets as envisaged in the Financial Sector Codes.

A study conducted by Rogish et al. (2022) for the Deloitte Centre for Financial Services, showed that globally women occupied 21% of board seats in the financial services sector. In the Transformation Report of 2020, by the Banking Association of South Africa, an increase from 38% to 44% was reported for black board members, (The Banking Association of South Africa [BASA], 2020). BASA also reported an increased representation of African black middle managers than white, because of skills development initiatives. The same report showed that the number of black women directors grew from 25 in 2016, to 40 in 2019, bringing representation to 47% of the black board member. However, the number of African women executive directors remains unchanged, whilst black male representation grew steadily between 2017 and 2019 (BASA, 2020). Similar trends of slow progression were highlighted by Cassells and Duncan (2021) in their contribution to the Gender Equity Insights Report of 2021, showing an underrepresentation of women in the financial and insurance sector of Australia, raising the question of whether equity targets work.

In the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013, a pronouncement was made for a 50% representation of women in decision-making roles (RSA, 2013). Despite growing numbers of women in the workforce, Statistics South Africa (2018) shared that in the second quarter of 2018, 32% of managers in South Africa were women and that women were predominantly in domestic and clerkship occupations. The slow pace of transformation continued to reflect in the number of appointments of black women into top and senior management. This slow growth repeats sentiments that the South African labour market has not reached an equitable distribution, as both black females and males are still underrepresented in significant occupations and better-paying roles (Landman & O'Clery, 2020).

2.1 Executive coaching

In defining executive coaching, Kilburg (1996) incorporates the relationship between the coach, coachee, and the organisation. It is a process in which varied tools are used to help the coachee meet their goals in improving professional outcomes and personal effectiveness, to the benefit of the organisation. Individuals find themselves in need of coaching for several reasons including being groomed into a senior position, integrating into a new role, developing competencies for key projects, or developing broad management competencies. Executive coaching as a leadership development tool supports emotional intelligence, effectiveness, goal setting, feedback, character strengths, and positive emotions (Perkins, 2009; Scoular and Linley, 2006; Smither et al., 2003). Regardless of the drivers behind the coaching intervention, the organisation's output are acknowledged. The definitions have not changed much over the years, as found in a study conducted in 2014 by Bartlett et al., which supports executive coaching as a collaborative relationship that supports goal identification and attainment, using a systematic process.

Theories specific to executive coaching borrow from varied principles including behavioral, cognitive, person-centered, humanistic, psychodynamic and gestalt (Peterson, 2011). Theories used to inform coaching practice and processes are reflective in four models that support the goals of coaching and the change process. These are differentiated as clinical, behavioral, systems and social constructionist models (Barner & Higgins, 2007). The clinical model focus on personality and self-image, and behavioral models seek to change problematic behaviors and thoughts. On the other hand, the systems model helps align personal objectives to that of the organisation, and social constructionism deal with social interactions that form social identity. These models continue to support an overarching goal of coaching, supported by various theories (Barner & Higgins, 2007). Across the varied theoretical frameworks, the coaching relationship, goal setting, and development of action plans remain fundamental to the success of the coaching (Grant, 2014).

As a change process, assumptions of the cognitive-behavioral theory are that leaders can change their current state by changing self-defeating beliefs (Wright, 2005). Self-esteem and self-defeating beliefs can be traced back to unhealthy experiences that individuals may have suffered (Bramante, 2015). In the context of this study, the inequality experienced by black women is culturally and historically originated, impacting women at a household level and in a professional capacity. Coaching premises that the focus on emotional and self-management has the potential to help clients tackle current and future challenges in a contextually appropriate fashion, thereby enhancing or developing constructive behaviors to tackle goals (Onyechi et al., 2016). Executive coaching provides safety to confront behavioral patterns, challenge cognitive distortions and discuss topics that can be seen as uncomfortable to ignite change (Kets de Vries & Rook, 2018). This change supports the perceived benefit of executive coaching, on a leader's self-awareness and performance (Kress, 2008; Bozer et al., 2014).

Performance orientation, leadership competencies, and skills are interwoven as part of development through coaching, hence it benefits the individual as well as the organisation (Bond & Naughton, 2011). The rapidly evolving world of business places demands on organisations to enhance knowledge and skills to manage change in response to globalisation and innovation advancements (Rosha & Lace, 2016). The same study found that executive coaching was an enabler that provided the additional capability for leadership to engage with the inconsistency of organisational change, leading to more sustainability. Notwithstanding the organisational benefits of coaching, performance conditions have significance on the success of black women, as they are faced with potential of being performance evaluated unfairly, particularly when organisational performance is low (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). The placement of women in positions of leadership in companies under distress or glass cliffing, casts a shadow on their true potential, further exposing women to unfavourable performance conditions (Sabharwal, 2015). Kuhl and Beckman (2012) support the notion of conducive performance conditions, in their views that an individual's relationship to an environment influences their behaviour and efficiency.

Coaching is thus purposed at enhancing wellbeing, improving performance, and facilitating change at an individual and organisational level (Cavanagh, 2005). Coaching assists managers to break through personal barriers to use feedback meaningfully, hence refuting the validity of the feedback may hinder coaching outcomes. Trust is central to the efficacy of coaching and feedback; thus it is important for coachees to have the support to implement feedback (Bickman et al., 2012). The transparency and honesty in feedback and dialogue about coaching needs or motivation are fundamental to the success of the development intervention. Accuracy in self-assessment of coachees sheds light on strengths and limitations, which plays a role in self-awareness and building of social skills for leaders to develop others (Goleman, 2017).

In showing up authentically, presence, attention, discretion, and flexibility are required (Roberts et al., 2009). Women are affected by two stereotypes, namely, prescriptive and proscriptive (Rosette et al., 2016), with prescriptive being a belief of how a person is supposed to behave, and proscriptive being how not to behave. These biases may dissuade women from presenting as their most authentic selves, thereby building inner conflict regarding behaviour in the work environment. Rewarding dominance, aggression, and competitiveness entrenched in male behaviours, also impacts how women show up in the workplace (Berdahl et al., 2018).

In a gendered environment, the implications of this are that standards of success are skewed, further undervaluing standards associated with feminine traits like developing others, managing conflict, building communities and maintaining relations. Executive coaching provides support and development towards authenticity and presence (Jackson, 2019). Cultivating authenticity means showing up whole as a strategic approach to self-inclusion to boost alignment of internal experiences and identity in the workplace. Whilst a sponsor can provide a protégé with actionable career advice (Ang, 2018), this may not increase an individual's leadership presence. Executive presence is seen as an amalgamation of qualities including confidence, emotional intelligence, competence, impressions of effectiveness, and an ability to show up authentically (Williamson, 2011; Hill, 2016).

The coaching process is a working partnership and a motivational triad, involving the individual leaders or high performer, a coach and the organisation to facilitate new learning. Liu (2015) suggests that an awareness to learning should reflect beyond a micro level into a broad context. With new learning gained from coaching, views on experiences become more inclusive, differentiating, and penetrable, through cognitive development (Bachkirova, 2010). The coaching environment affords leaders an opportunity to understand and transition blind spots into consciousness. The coaching journey explores the executive's environment, which is reflective of mental modes and structures within which action will be implemented, the behaviours, the attitude or unconscious beliefs and values, as well as the blind spot (Peltier, 2011). Executive coaching is aimed at developing motivation, cognitive complexity, knowledge and skills with consideration of organisation in which coachees are situated (Chapman, 2010).

There are working similarities in coaching theories, learning theories and approaches that support coaching processes, like the cognitive-learning theory, person-centred psychology, humanistic approach, behavioural coaching and transformative learning. A fundamental attribute to the learning and change process is the motivation of the coachee or learner, which has been found as a success determinant across theories (Mezirow, 2003; Peltier, 2011; Cox et al., 2014; Mbokota, 2019). The dynamics faced by black women require heightened resilience and determination. Women generally have many roles to fill in both their professional and personal life which influences their motivation. The invisibility of black women in gendered environments may force women to rely on their social identity as a source of motivation. This motivation dictates how thoughts and attitudes impact actions, developmental processes, and career success (Leath et al., 2021). Extrinsic motivation such as qualifications, role models, family support, feedback, and recognition play a role in how individuals view their success (Nakitende, 2012).

The Executive Coaching Process is anchored in several principles including understanding performance and potential, conscious awareness, degree of motivation or willingness to change, the extent to which real-world application is

possible, and action (Bluckert, 2006; Bozer et al., 2014; Grant, 2014). This process is typically represented by five critical phases, which in summation comprises of contracting and assessment, relationship and feedback, goal setting, actionable outcomes, and lastly evaluating and reflecting on the success in accordance with the competence executive coaching model (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). The supporting theory is expanded below:

2.1.1 Self-determination theory

Self-determination theory developed from a notion that humans have a natural proclivity to personal development, psychological growth and awarding meaning towards phenomena (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). This context determines rejection of, or progression towards acting towards an outcome. The theory is concerned with psychological factors that have impact on motivation and suits the study from a theoretical base. In evaluating self-determination theory, Ryan and Deci (2019) highlight the orientation it has towards exploring within an environment. The researchers also found that intrinsic motivation was a basis of processes linked to a sense of competence, self-determination and self-esteem. These are attributes that have been linked positively to executive coaching.

In the early stages of the theory, there was extended focus on intrinsic motivation, as a highlight to the importance of autonomy in acquisition of competence and outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The researcher introduced body of work done by scholars on self-esteem, self-consciousness, self-derogation and locus of control in an effort to understand internal consistency of motivation. The evolution of the self-determination theory later extended towards concern for the facilitation of sustained development and motivation; drawing from multiple fields including sports, psychotherapy and education (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The contributing theories according to the researchers are reflected upon as follows:

- Cognitive Evaluation Theory
- Organismic Integration Theory
- Basic Psychological Needs Theory
- Causality Orientation Theory

- Goal Content Theory; and
- Relationship Motivation Theory.

Earlier research on intrinsic motivation, supported Cognitive Evaluation Theory by exploring characters that made up individual's desire and curiosity to engage with the environment, for purposes of internal reward, completion of tasks, and attainment of sense of self (Dei & Ryan, 1985; Riley, 2016). In an organisations context, reward can be viewed as external stimulation, where these take form as deadlines, competition or performance as a result of the environment. These are indicators of extrinsic motivation; supporting the belief that internal reward acts as a driver for learning (Sansone & Harackiewicz, p.2). According to Reiss (2012), the effects of negative distractions erode intrinsic motivation, posing difficulty for individuals to pursue fulfilment when distracted. In relation to this study, the distractions may allude to how leadership hardships could deter women from fully pursuing management careers, drawing importance for organisations to support inclusive, autonomous environments.

Organismic Integration Theory places emphasis on how individuals carry out actions in the absence of intrinsic motivation, which can be indicative of what they perceive as socially important such as a controlled orientation (Moss, 2012; Reeve, 2012). The theory appreciates the existence of extrinsic motivation as a determinant of success; however it acknowledges the introduction of neglect of psychological well-being (Moss, 2012). In the context of the study, executive coaching is known as a tool to support well-being (Cavanagh, 2005).

Basic Psychological Needs Theory according to Ryan and Deci (2000) is concerned with the fulfilment of psychological needs and has a direct impact on the quality of engagement and functioning. Without this, intrinsic motivation may be compromised. Earlier research of the theory prioritised physiological drivers such as hunger, rest and intimacy, however it was later found that satisfaction of autonomy, kinship and attainment of competence are fundamental to psychological well-being (Ryan et al., 2011). Bamberger (2009) highlighted the importance of relational attributes in support of goal attainment; thus kinship

becomes an important consideration towards psychological safety. Without deliberate inclusion of black women, said safety may remain a challenge.

Causality orientation theory is concerned with how one motivates themselves, thus exercising autonomy in their manner of engagement and action orientation, without relying on environmental support (Vansteenkiste et al, 2010). The researchers argue that individuals with a high autonomy orientation generally are action driven in pursuit of attaining own outcomes and have greater capacity to self-regulate.

Goal Content Theory differentiates between intrinsic goals and extrinsic goals and determines the associated positive psychological results of intrinsic goals in contrast to the extrinsic goals (Reeve, 2012). Lindwall et. al. (2016) pegged goals such as financial success or social tributes as extrinsic goals and pose a potential of individuals deprioritising intrinsic goals. This can unintendedly impact psychological well-being negatively.

Relationship Motivation Theory is supported by processes that consider attachment, relationship forming, interdependence and communality (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Central to the theory is the importance of fulfilment of the need for relational partners, and how the relationship can encourage or deter the need for fulfilment (Guardia & Patrick, 2008). The researchers believe that the complex nature of relationality and motivational structures have effect on general well-being and functioning. Relatedness is seen as vital within a learning environment, as the connection has proven to increase intrinsic motivation (Riley, 2016).

In understanding self-determination; accounting for situational motivation, unique experiences and emotional development are important thus contributing to the makeup of self-determination theory. To facilitate behavioural change, motivation acts as a pre-requisite for change, and so does readiness (Ryan et al., 2011). According to the researchers, the motives of undergoing a change process play a role in the adoption of change, particularly aspects relating to regulation, which can be categorised as external regulation, introjected regulation and lastly

intrinsic and integrated. The external regulation is imposed by external pressure for the individual to confront their behaviour, introjected regulation is ego centric, where individuals place pressure on themselves to act, and the latter is where an individual sees the value of the change process and are interested in the pursuit (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

2.2 Challenges and barriers experienced by women in the workplace

History of oppression and sociocultural dynamics have played a role in career choices, experiences of inequality in the workplace as well as race and gender-related exclusion of black women (Hall et al., 2012). Joshi et al. (2015) have found that intentional exclusions and unintended barriers exist within organisations, adding to the hurdles black women must overcome. This highlights the need for organisations to understand the challenges faced by women to contribute meaningfully to advancing their careers (Moolman, 2013).

These challenges included amongst others work-life balance, discriminatory practices in the workplace, lack of mentorship or sponsorship, and organisational culture. Women have experienced discriminatory practices in the workplace such as segregation, which can occur vertically or horizontally. Vertical segregation is where there's a high concentration of women in lower-paying, junior positions, and a higher number of men in higher-paid, higher-level roles (González-Serrano et al., 2018). A prevalent practice of vertical segregation is the glass wall, which suggests that women are predominantly represented in certain areas of business (Bowling et al., 2006), such as administration or human resources management. Goldstein et al. (2019), found that horizontal segregation presented in a form of sectoral segregation, where sectors dominated by women have lesser earning capability than male-dominated sectors. Occupational segregation is prevalent, where women hold fewer paying jobs and fewer women make it into management (Hills, 2015).

Gender polarisation has seen paid labour being assigned to men, whilst unpaid work in households was apportioned to women (Singh & Pattanaik, 2020). These

gender roles influence women's education and career choices in a patriarchal society where household work is not a matter of choice but a norm. The burden of unpaid household labour and the lack of choice thereof disincentivises women to have ambitions of senior management, but rather move into the domain that affords them stable homes (Fletcher et al., 2017). Women hold the primary position of caregivers in households (Singh & Pattanaik, 2020) as they straddle between work and home. In addition, women are more likely to be impacted by career disruptions related to domestic care (Levendale, 2017). The ability for women to cope varies based on coping strategies and the availability of emotional or social support structures (McLellan & Uys, 2009). The interplay between cultural dynamics and social practices continue to entrench structural gender separation, heightening the negative effect on women.

The Queen Bee attitude pose impediments for women's advancement. Queen Bees are women who mimic male behavior, shying away from junior women, further entrenching inequality in the workplace (Derks et al., 2016). Exhibiting male behaviors is seen as contradictory to the authentic self and poses a challenge for women as it requires them to act in conflict with personal beliefs and values and some of the cultural norms they may be exposed to. One such cultural norm as per the study by Chisale (2018) is *Ubuntu*, which essentially represents a "care" attribute. Ubuntu suggests that social experiences have shaped women's self-definition to an orientation of serving others, meeting their needs, and developing them. This contrasts to a masculine style of leadership that has been found to rob leaders of a higher people-orientation and collaborative style of managing, therefore enforcing autocracy (Faizan et al., 2018).

It is not easy for women to obtain the same qualifications and compete without prejudice with men, when structural impediments exist (Taylor-Abdulai & Appiah-Kwapong, 2014). Black women in particular face diversity challenges in the workplace, which are compounded by the need to navigate general inequality which presents as a chronic stress factor (Hall et al., 2012). This need for resilience impacts how women juggle multiple dynamics, such as work and home life. To enhance work-life balance, organisations adopted the deployment of tools

such as technological support for remote working, flexible time, and working from home. The new ease of work found work and life intertwined (Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008), highlighting the importance of balance. The balance reflects one's ability to meet their own expectations and needs in line with their multiple roles (Potgieter & Barnard, 2010). The negative interference experienced by women between work and family is experienced largely due to high job demands, extended and irregular hours, and workload (Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008). In contrast, men under similar conditions benefit from emotional support without the domestic commitments (Eddleston & Powell, 2012).

Networking and mentorship have been found to have a positive impact on one's career, however, the career experience depend on how one responds to contextual factors such as gender stereotyping and discriminatory practices (Hancock & Hums, 2016, p.200). The ability to network was sighted as fundamental to building relationships in order to align oneself to persons with power or influence over one's career (Rowe & Crafford, 2003). In the absence of the ability to network effectively, the access to social capital from sponsorship continues to be important for career advancement (Choi, 2009). As defined, sponsorship is endorsement and support from an individual with influence and in a leadership position, who can serve as an advocate where networking is a barrier. Barriers that exist for women leaders include assumed lack of competence, gender stereotypes, and a limited pool of female mentors or networks (Taylor & Hardin, 2016). Having men as allies created room for wider integration as men have been found to work on large significant projects, whilst women get less critical experience (Burke & Major, 2014). This supports the notion that usage of social and organisational structures as a career mobility strategy that has worked for men to progress in their careers may not be feasible for women.

Other than mentoring and sponsorship, executive coaching has been seen as an enabler to personal and professional development at different life stages. Leadership and executive coaching increase self-awareness, confidence, assertiveness, improve interpersonal skills and levels of motivation. Elevated levels of self-awareness bring conscientiousness to leaders of their impact on

others and the enterprise (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2015). The benefits of coaching thus address perceived behavioural impediments that are detractors in the career advancement of women, into both leadership roles and others.

Desirable organisational culture serves as a competitive advantage, similarly to a greater representation of women in leadership. Attributes of inspirational leadership, collaborative and participative leadership are an easier orientation for women, affording any organisation an opportunity at greater engagement. Organisational leadership sets a tone for employees, therefore having a direct impact on organisational culture (Mohelska & Sololova, 2015). Learning and progressive environments can adapt depending on their appetite for curiosity, humility, unlearning old habits that no longer serve the present or future requirements (Senge et al., 2004). When organisational culture is not aligned to values of inclusivity, the social capital is lost. Dalakoura (2010) recognises leadership development as a social process to expand collective capacity to enable groups to collaborate within relational commitments and mutual respect.

Much of the challenges experienced in a South African context are experienced by black women globally. The legislative landscape was transformed to align to the agenda of protecting minorities, however these have not yielded much change. According to Johnson and Thomas (2012), in the United States of America, discrimination was reinforced in sociocultural standards black women endure. They are often voiceless due to various sectors' under-representation and have their experiences dismissed or deemed insignificant. In certain sectors, black women are employed in junior positions despite having similar qualifications to their counterparts (Charleston et al., 2014). Black women find themselves adopting strategies for leadership to manage conflict in self-identity, politics, and organisational culture (Henry & Glenn, 2009). Women's consciousness influences these approaches to social norms, gender roles, and race implications within which they exist.

The context of some of the challenges experienced by black women is essential to the transformation agenda, as black women are forced to navigate workplace dynamics differently. The importance of sponsorship and executive coaching in this study is based on the known impact on personal and career development,

the psychosocial aspects of dealing with diversity in the workplace, and the provision of access to untapped networks and resources.

2.2.1 Proposition 1

The challenges experienced by black women can be alleviated through sponsorship and executive coaching.

2.3 The role of Sponsorship in the progression of black women's careers

Sponsorship literature across varied platforms highlight the usage of sponsorship largely in sports and marketing, and to a small extent in the corporate career context. Earlier literature defined mentorship as having a trusted advisor who helps a less experienced individual with guided development and psychosocial support (Kram, 1983; Marshall-Triner, 1986). This definition has not evolved much over the years, as supported in other studies, that highly placed the importance of the psychological contracting in mentoring relations, willingness of a protégé to learn, loyalty and access to information (Rosenthal & Black, 2006; Haggard & Turban, 2012). The psychosocial support is seen as competence enhancing and effectively addresses the role and aspects of self-confidence (Smith, 2019), this is a quality found in sponsors.

Though the functions of sponsors surfaced earlier than mentors, mentorship gained a wider population as a supportive relationship in comparison to sponsorship (Bhide & Tootell, 2018). Whilst not mutually exclusive, there are differences between sponsorship and mentoring. In a study conducted by Ghosh et al. (2013), individuals who received mentoring were likely to experience career outcomes such as job satisfaction, longer tenure, job performance, and career success. Ibarra et al., (2010) noted that mentorship benefits women less, as mentors had less organisational influence, whereas sponsors were senior managers/leaders with influence and capacity to help beyond the provision of advice.

Sponsorship contrasts to mentorship in that a sponsor advocates for someone's career advancement (Hewlett, 2013), with further assumptions, that the relationship would prove beneficial for creating opportunities for upward hierarchical career mobility. The mobility theory as developed by Turner in 1960 viewed mobility as existing in two systems, contest mobility and sponsored mobility (Turner, 1960). The two types of mobility address upward movement in a form of promotions, suggesting that sponsor-mobility benefits those chosen by the powerful (Ishak, 2015) whereas contest mobility requires significant investment in human capital.

Literature on sponsorship has a focus on the perceived benefits of sponsorship to the protégé and attributes of sponsors (Rao, 2019). A similarity between sponsorship and social capital is anchored on access and the use of resources embedded in networks (Lin, 2017). Social capital serves as a competitive advantage, to persons with career creating relationships (Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2010). The sponsor's understanding of organisation-wide functions, powers, and gatekeeping politics allow them to remove barriers and use relationships as they have the clout to execute such.

Hewlett (2013) posits that sponsorship is a strategic alliance where a sponsor invests in a protégé's career, intending to develop leaders. Sponsorship as a form of relationship can be viewed from two spectrums of sponsorship (Ibarra, 2019). One in the form of a private relationship, which means the sponsor actively plays a role in providing advisory, sharing insider information, and making introductions of the protégé to key people (Baker et al., 2021). The second is the provision of external visibility to give opportunity and publicly advocate for the protégé's promotion. Sponsors typically gain knowledge of protégés through networks, personal encounters with talented staff members, structured sponsorship programs, or through a direct introduction from those seeking sponsorship (Hilsabeck, 2018). Bamberger (2009) suggests that people seek help from individuals who provide psychological safety or whom they can trust, so the relational attributes play a role in how potential sponsors and protégés develop a relationship.

The determination and involvement of the individual being sponsored is realised by way of promotions, introduction to key networks, and involvement in high stake projects. Appropriate use of these networks strengthens organisational capacity. This reality is seen in how managers with more social capital gain value for their human capital due to their ability to create more opportunities to engage others. Managing impressions and enhancing social capital through self-sustained networks or that of the sponsor thus assists women to gain access to a wider network within their organisations (Heilman, 2012), helping them to create more visibility for themselves.

Challenges of access to a mentor are more visible in areas where targeted groups are underrepresented (Li et al., 2018), which presents the same predicament in acquiring a sponsor. Hill (2015) identified a challenge in organisations of not having adequate pools of women who possess required skills, highlighting further the need to upskill women in line with industry skills needs. This underrepresentation of women, specifically in senior positions, suggests that women are most likely to experience sponsorship from a male. The unique socio-cultural aspects faced by black women compel sponsors to take a relational approach (Ragins & Kram 2007) with a future orientation towards growth and empowerment. This multiplexity creates social ties which can work to the benefit of career progression. Socio-cultural distortion underplays belief systems about power and social relationships, especially entrenched or enforced by institutions. In practice, a realisation of this distortion can be in implementing cross-gender sponsorship vs women for women sponsorship. Gendered social capital on multiple levels shape the type of resources one has access to through their networks, affecting women and men differently (Eriksson & Emmelin, 2013).

There's a lack of support structures, sponsorship, and female mentorship, hence the importance of organisations understanding socio-cultural dynamics to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of women (Moolman, 2013). Women's professional networks are at times deemed less powerful and ineffective compared to men's because of structural exclusion from powerful networks and influential structures with the dominance of males in decision-making roles. For a marginalised demographic due to gender and race, not much

attention has gone into sentiments of invisibility and hypervisibility experienced because of systemic oppression and racism (Buchanan & Settles, 2019). The struggle for women not to be seen as too assertive can silence participation and impede their professional success (Babcock & Laschever, 2009). Women's propensity to negotiate their professional identity, visibility and competition can be a deterrent, as western gender norms prefer masculine communication characteristics (Thimm et al., 2003). Hence, men are more likely to negotiate the allocation of complex projects or promotions.

A distinct attribute of sponsorship is protecting the protégé to encourage exploration and making mistakes without punitive effects (Hewlett et al., 2010). Black women who have experienced sponsorship reported feeling empowered and validated in the workplace (Holder et al., 2015). The same researchers found that experiences of discriminatory practices leave black women depleted emotionally and psychologically, so the sponsor relationship reduces the level of exclusion and the impact thereof.

According to McKinsey and Company (2016), women have fewer interactions with executives than their male counterparts, making it difficult for executives to invest personal capital advocating for women they do not know. Internal and external networking is related to the rate of advancement within organisations, and men are reported to spend more time networking after hours (Linehan, 2001). With gender roles, women are challenged in socialising in this manner, more so when they have families or do not have domestic support. Their ability to access executives is limited within the premises or confines of the work environment.

Gender bias can be seen in different performance expectations that women are held to; introducing a range of negative consequences on the treatment of women within organisations, including job placement (Heilman, 2012). To elevate professional profiles, black women cannot solely rely on performance management practices as they are viewed in a stereotypical lens, stemming from the belief that they do not hold the same credibility as males, or they are of a wrong race. Gender stereotypes have allowed for different standards for women's competence versus men (Koch et al., 2015).

Ibarra et al., (2010) sees the role of sponsorship as one with proven benefit in supporting integration and success in a new role, through the introduction of early feedback as part of managing delivery and performance (Magrane et al., 2018). This feedback facilitates the creation of psychosocial support, career support, and trust. Organisational leaders who display a trusting behavior can foster collaboration, promote innovation and risk-taking as well as increase the performance of staff (Mishra, 2013). Feedback supports sustaining behavioral change, and acts as a motivational tool. Openness, trust, listening, and mutual understanding are highlighted as features of rapport (O'Broin and Palmer, 2010; Gan & Chong, 2015). These features are seen as important not only in a coaching relationship but in a developmental relationship such as sponsorship.

In the selection process, the sponsor and protégé chemistry and relational attributes impact the formation of the relationship (Ang & Reb, 2017). Black women are found to have fluid biculturalism as an adaptive skill hence gender or race has no significant bearing on who they are sponsored by (Smith, 2019). Supporting black women's determination plays a pivotal role in how black women advance, particularly because socially and culturally, there is a strong legacy of survival, exposing them earlier to self-reliance (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

Sponsors are expected to invest substantial time in advocating for their protégés, and this advocacy needs to be met by exceptional performance as the tradeoff (Hewlett, 2019). Performance evaluation or assessment processes used as a sole determinant for sponsorship may be harmful, thus motivation, performance, and potential are to be taken into consideration (Smith, 2019). The study thus aimed to understand how black women have realised career progression through sponsorship barring existing challenges.

2.3.1 Proposition 2

Leader-led advocacy through sponsorship enables black women to achieve career progression and desired goals.

2.4 The Competence executive coaching model

The study is informed by the competence executive coaching model which supports the role of a coach as being one of a process consultant, essentially helping the coachee improve their situation (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). Cushion (2007) places the complex nature of the coaching process as one that is not cyclical, although dependent on aspects such as interpersonal relations and other externalities. Based on social analysis framework, coaching requires a coach to play multiple roles, with cognisance of the manner of interaction and understanding the power dynamics, thus influencing social learning.

The coaching process borrows from different fields such as socio-cognitive theory, which is concerned with processes that help individuals develop an understanding of a particular challenge, in order to change perception and ignite action (Scholz et al., 2013). In the coaching process, probing, reframing, interrogating, and providing the coachee with a safe space to reflect, facilitates common understanding. The authors argue that it can be underestimated how inter-relations and rapport can support the coaching process. Coaching is understood to be a social process and coaches can make or break the process. Coaching practice is influenced by positive psychology, which according to Palmer and Whybrow (2005) is concerned with psychological approaches and scientific anchors of adult learning, as learning can be facilitated within the coaching process. Whilst coaching was initially viewed as directive guidance, it has evolved to facilitative, non-directive learning as means for personal development and goal attainment (Ives, 2008).

Coaching approaches such as humanistic, behaviourist, positive psychology, systemic coaching are distinct in the underlying objectives of the type of coaching. Sargeant et al. (2015) reflected on the interaction between the one who gives feedback and the recipient being key to igniting improvement. The interaction as a central element supports themes that anchor rapport, trust, feedback and the inherent interpersonal relationship between the coach and the coachee (Jones et al., 2002). These elements are important to a coaching process. The context of this section examined how the executive coaching process is influenced by the

sponsorship. The process focused specifically on areas of rapport and working alliance, goal setting, and action.

2.4.1 *Rapport and Working Alliance*

Bombuwela and De Alwis (2013) found that amongst structural barriers, there are internal barriers that pose limitations to women fully realising their career potential. Bandura (1997) notes persistence in facing difficulty as a predictive effort of self-efficacy. The identity of black women is impacted by a duality of race and gender, socially and culturally requiring them to show more fluidity. This bicultural aspect deems them as outsiders-within and a minority, particularly in a male-dominated environment. The manoeuvring of the bi-cultural aspects introduces a uniqueness to black women's leadership development strategy (Shorter-Gooden, 2004).

Wycherley and Cox (2008) highlight interpersonal chemistry, with consideration for diversity, values and attitude, diverse experience, and objectivity, as part of coach and coachee selection. The relationship factors are crucial to the quality of the coaching working alliance as well as the outcomes (Ianiro & Kauffeld, 2014; Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015). Anonymity, confidence, a wider range of expertise, non-judgemental engagement and objectivity, place some preference on the usage of external coaches as opposed to line managers as coaches (Duffy & Sperry, 2007). There is little impact of gender in a coaching relationship (Quick & Macik-Frey, 2007); however understanding the socio-cultural barriers (O'Flaherty & Everson, 2013) when developing a coach-coachee relationship is beneficial for the working alliance.

Working alliance has been conceptualised as the quality of collaboration and serves as one of the predictors of the success of the coaching intervention (Baron & Morin, 2011). The definition dates to the mid '60s with Greenson's study of how feelings, attitudes have a contribution to unexpected difficulties experienced during therapy (Greenson, 2018). Over time, the study influenced different interests, with researchers drawing relevance to trust, rapport, behavioral

compatibility, commonality, and coach's credibility as part of working alliance. This alliance provides purposeful clarity on the collaboration expected.

The developmental nature of a relationship between a sponsor and a protégé has a career function focus, however, loyalty and trust are fundamental interpersonal factors (Hilsabeck, 2018). The rapport between the coachee and coach is of equal significance, due to the role that coach behaviors, transparency, and commitment shape the relationship (Gan & Chong, 2015). Chemistry in the triad relationship between the coach, coachee, and the organisation is important to the coaching success (Ferreira, 2011). Though these qualities are not exhaustive it is found that a holistic approach to leadership developmental, helps leaders manoeuvre through the stress and perceptions of being critiqued or assessed in the coaching relationship (Boyatzis et al., 2006).

Other studies have found that rapport may not necessarily determine the success of the coaching intervention (Masdonati et al., 2021; Haan et al., 2013; Baron et al., 2011). In the findings of a study by Haan et al., (2020), on coaching effectiveness, it was found that coaching success depends more critically on the coachee's self-efficacy, perceived social support, bond and resilience as it relates to personal development and career accomplishments. Executive coaching has been found beneficial in the development of self-efficacy, as it pertains to beliefs in goal setting, mindfulness, and putting into practice newly learned behaviors.

Organisational structures impact the ability of coachees to identify and implement the identified goal, potentially affecting action plans. To enhance working alliance and organisational commitment, the working environment needs to support learning using relevant people processes and other interventions such as sponsorship and performance monitoring. Embracing a belief in organisational values increases discretionary effort and increases the willingness of individuals to realise career growth within the organisation (Dajani & Zaki, 2015). Having supportive structures to hold one accountable and honest in the journey of change supports such transition. The give and take nature of

a sponsorship rapport (Ang, 2019) and the trust established in the coaching process can facilitate the required engagement levels and working alliance.

2.4.2 Goal setting

Kilburg (1996, 2007, 2016) reflected on goal identification as a key component in the definition of executive coaching, noting that the nature of coaching practice assists clients to achieve mutually identified goals. Numerous literature specifically on effectiveness of coaching, continue to emphasise the relationship between coaching and goal attainment (Grant et al., 2009; Sonesh et al., 2015). Concepts of feedback, goal identification, goal setting and motivation, are central to the coaching process and goal attainment (Haan, 2019; Jordon & Kauffeld, 2020; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

Theory driven models and framework of coaching that work as mechanisms of achieving coaching goals link three variables, the input, process and the output (Sonesh et al., 2015). A view expressed by Cerasoli et al., (2014), highlight intrinsic motivation as a primary input. The theory takes a humanistic orientation, that believes that the ability to thrive is determined by autonomy, competence and relatedness. According to Ryan and Deci (2019), the autonomous motivation essentially highlight the importance of self-awareness and self-understanding as part of internalising learning. The ownership of learning and the alignment thereof to personal values and aspirations allow for greater personal responsibility in attaining outcomes. Gessnitzer and Kauffeld (2015) support this view in their observation that coachee-initiated goals and actions produce a higher probability of meeting positive coaching outcomes.

Goals mutually agreed upon in coaching are usually referred to as developmental goals (Carr et al., 2011). These can be contrasted to task-oriented goals as they contribute to future job performance as opposed to current job performance. Goals are seen in a hierarchical manner, and it is believed that this placement allows for attainment of lower-level goals to serve as motivation for more complex goals. According to Bandura (1997), the belief in one's capability to execute required tasks is congruent to self-efficacy. This

view is supported by Carr et al. (2011) in the assertion that, the less self-efficacy, the more likely the individual will not set or pursue stretch goals. The frequency of open dialogue, feedback, setting clear goals, exchanging knowledge, identifying and solving challenges and collaboration are noted as key components in a supporting relationship with a protégé (Hilsabeck, 2018). Part of the researcher's discovery in a study conducted was that protégés expectations of sponsors included commitment to promises made, goal setting, honesty and trust.

Gender biases influence equitable distribution of high-stake projects and the usage of talent pools as stated by Seierstad et al. (2015). Learning on the job through formal or informal approaches enhance a sense of personal development (Wan, 2007), thereby developing talent and unearthing potential, widening insights, aptitude, and adaptability to change. A well-articulated developmental goal often acts as motivation for individuals to identify needs for change or to work intently on achieving goals (van Nieuwerburgh & Passmore, 2018). Kilburg (1996) suggests that in the context of executive coaching, mutually identified goals improve individual performance. Importantly, a coach's role in providing feedback, can help coachees manage daily work and long-term development goals (Gregory et al., 2011).

2.4.3 Action Planning

Executive Coaching is defined by Pedler (2011) as an action-learning process that has proven success in addressing organisational problems. It is the plan of what is to be achieved by the executive or leader and the timeframe of completion. The attainment of tangible outcomes provides motivation to change organisational culture, leadership style and improved performance through action-learning (O'Neil & Marsick, 2014). Behavioural thinking enables performance and goal attainment in support of organisational objectives (Passmore, 2018). This can be realised through developmental coaching approach, which concerns itself with capability and potential. It is used to recognise skills and potential, thus acknowledging the need to provide

opportunities to develop or use skills in the normal course of business (Sperry, 2008).

Coaching builds competence and self-efficacy in specific components of leadership capabilities (Moen & Skaalvik, 2009). The need for competence leads individuals to seek challenges to test their competence, inherent skills and potential, noting that where demand matches capacity, self-efficacy improves. The increase in self-efficacy introduces risks of women exiting organisations if work conditions are not pleasant (Ozyilmaz et al., 2018), so without opportunities being created, the potential may not be realised. Coaching considers pre-reflective experiences, bringing an awareness to mental processes, ultimately facilitating learning (Mouchet et al., 2018). As such, consideration can be geared towards integrated models, due to the strong focus on understanding underlying assumptions and self-concept (Flaherty, 2010). These predict how coachees see the world and how these assumptions ultimately influence action. Without the right effort, goal attainment may not materialise.

Women are accused of underrating their readiness for leadership positions due to self-doubt, which contributes to them not applying for the said roles (Travis et al., 2013). Where sponsorship creates the opportunities to apply action, the coaching process supports the coachee with observation, feedback and competencies such as self-confidence and self-awareness to follow through with action. The coaching process culminates to the development of action plans, implementation of the said plans and evaluation of performance in relation to the identified goal (Cavanagh et al., 2005). The researchers also found that empowered individuals have a higher sense of personal responsibility and ownership of actions. The benefits of such behaviors are reflective in how individuals pursue and achieve desired goals.

2.4.4 Proposition 3

Sponsorship has the potential to influence the executive coaching process by providing support to achieve set professional and personal goals.

2.5 Conclusion of Literature Review

The interplay between socio-cultural dynamics and organisational culture are important for career growth. Women continue to juggle between sociocultural dynamics, family responsibility and managing their own careers, making it a challenge to progress in their careers. Ang (2019) asserts that men are assessed on potential, whereas women are evaluated on previous experience. Without the exposure or opportunities in career defining roles, black women may continue to experience biases that exclude them from experiencing progression in their careers. Deliberate actions in developing leadership potential are needed and organisational culture relating to gender equity needs to be prioritised. Despite well intended and comprehensive legislation promoting gender equality in the workplace, adequate traction has not been made. This is reflective in the percentage of women in managerial ranks, explicitly at senior and top management. Black women face discrimination and are more likely to experience lack of mentoring, coaching and support in the work environment in comparison to peers. Organisations need to facilitate transformation through creating enabling environments fostered through social support, collaborative policy for inclusivity and progressive talent management approaches, prioritising specific target groups.

CHAPTER 3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter articulates the methodology followed in responding to the research questions in the first chapter. The study employed qualitative research principles to explore how black women's career progression unfolded, their experiences of sponsorship and benefits derived from executive coaching. The data collection was aimed to understand how sponsorship and executive coaching can be used as tools to advance black women in their careers. The qualitative methodology shed light on subjective experiences that fit within the scope of the research. A qualitative study, based on phenomenology facilitates a rich description of experiences of black women, sharing lived experiences (Cronin & Armour, 2017).

3.2 Research Approach

The research study is qualitative, focusing on feedback from black women's experiences of career progression, sponsorship in the workplace and executive coaching. Creswell (2003) stresses the role of a researcher in a qualitative study, as one of gathering participants words, analysing these to find common themes by interrogating the meaning behind. Sighted in Chapter 4 are the emerging themes based on the women's stories and their views given their lived experiences. In analysing the data provided by the participants, extensive amount of time was spent to find answers to the research questions. Kalu and Bwalya (2017) asserted that qualitative research is a useful approach to discover phenomena that are difficult to measure in quantitative research. Hence quantitative research narrates a story in numbers and qualitative research achieves the same in words.

Generic qualitative research has evolved into descriptive and interpretive qualitative research and is the least theory driven of methodology (Caelli et al., 2003; Neergaard et al., 2009). The three key areas of the study have a subjective sociological aspect to them; hence a qualitative approach aids in generating new insights, meaning, and understanding (Ulin et al., 2002). These experiences and

impact cannot be generalised however the participants' narratives shed light on the analysis and contributed valuable data in response to the research questions.

The research method blends and borrows from other methodologies such as naturalistic inquiry where the researcher looks at real-world situations instead of manipulating research outcomes (Bowen, 2008). Inductive thinking was adopted in this study as the principal interest was to achieve an understanding of the women' career experiences rather than using the data to anticipate future theories. This differs from a deductive method which assumes outcomes more scientifically (Bendassolli, 2013). As a research paradigm, phenomenology does not have room for the researcher to involve themselves in the stories of participants; as they are expected to assume the role of an observer (Khaldi, 2017). This view is particularly important where the researcher has experience of the subject at hand.

There has been a number of studies seeking to understand the dynamics of black women's career advancement, women in leadership, mentorship and sponsorship, as well as executive coaching. Mentorship alone is not enough, and more investment is needed, such as sponsorship to support career advancement of women (Hewlett, 2013). There was limited research available on how sponsorship can influence the coaching process, and in such instances, Creswell (2014) deems it fit to adopt a qualitative approach.

3.3 Research Design

This study sought to understand lived experiences of black women in their career progression, the challenges faced, and the influence of sponsorship and executive coaching. Phenomenology as an interpretive design was used in this study. Gill (2015) defined phenomenology as a research approach that seeks to understand individuals' subjective experiences, providing a basis for deeper understanding. Individuals have the autonomy to give meaning to their experiences of career progression challenges, sponsorship or executive coaching outcomes. The interpretative process of phenomenological analysis explored how participants made sense of their world, socially and personally,

given the three phenomena. Smith and Shinebourne (2012), emphasise the dynamic nature of the process, requiring active role playing from the researcher such as taking in the participants interpretation, to gain deeper perspective in making sense of the participant's sense of the world.

The study relied on subjective experiences; hence the use of a semi-structured interview guide to encourage probing to extract content of relevance and importance. Leedy and Ormond (2010) argue that effective extraction of participants understanding, perceptions and perspectives will help draw insights based on the study outcomes and findings. The subjective perspectives support adequately generic qualitative research methodology.

In interpretive research, insights are significantly influenced by the lived experiences in line with the phenomena (Balushi, 2016). The use of semi-structured interviews supported the development of these insights as the participants were able to state their experiences using their own perceptions, terminology, and words that shed light on their experiences. They were able to reflect on the effectiveness of different interventions that shaped their views of their career progression. The disadvantage of the research design through qualitative interviews is that the data is contingent on the truthfulness of the participants and their ability to reflect on uncomfortable occurrences in their experience. This can lead to participants not proving the full picture, based on insufficient information. In a qualitative study, the amount of time involved in transcribing and data analysis can be strenuous to the researcher due to level of detail one is dealing with.

3.4 Population and Sample

3.4.1 *Population*

For this study, the population comprised of black women in senior and executive management in any of the major Banks and Central Bank within Johannesburg and Pretoria. To ensure adherence to the design and research aim, the target group selected are in technical roles and not in areas of

business that generally experience an overpopulation of women, such as administration and human resources. The explicit selection allowed for the address of the central features. The women's age was not a consideration, thus the sample comprised of women in their early thirties and the oldest being a year away from retirement. The varied life stages would allow for unique career journeys.

3.4.2 Sampling

This method to sampling represented purposive sampling, which Etikan et al. (2016) characterise as sampling based on a target population meeting criteria. In this study, race, gender and jobs present a similarity which contributed to the topic. The targeted sample was able to provide fundamental information relating to the research objective.

For a phenomenological study, as sample size of between 6 to 10 is used as a guideline (Dukes, 1984), so that the volume of data to be collected is not too large, presenting a potential of a degree of saturation (Guest et al., 2006). Malterud et al. (2016) argue that seasoned researchers rely on a developed rule of thumb, employing pragmatic judgement. Applying a stopping criterion, interviews of ten (10) helped identify whether there are any new insights to be gained (Hennink et al., 2017).

Of the twelve women approached, only ten were available to be interviewed. The participants were approached through the researcher's current professional and social networks, from the large banks and the central bank. Referrals were also utilised to minimise familiarity of using only the pool of participants known to the researcher. To overcome sampling biases, as encouraged by Schensul and LeCompte (2012) in collecting data from a broad range of locations was adopted. The significance of the regions chosen was that most Head Office functions are in these regions, as opposed to branch functions which generally do not have the same organisational design or diverse scopes of management functions as ones found in Head Offices.

The following criteria was used when choosing the black women:

- They are in a middle, senior or executive management role;
- They are employed in a banking institution at a Head Office;
- The age of the women was not a determinant, nor their tenure in their current organisations, as the research study is reflective and experiential based.

3.5 The research instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was used, with three sections: the first one intended to understand how career progression was experienced, the second section included questions on experiences of sponsorship and the career goals attained. Lastly, section three contained questions concerned with executive coaching experiences and areas of change as a result of the coaching.

Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gain a richer perspective, by asking open ended questions and probing. Primary data aids in acquiring valid and reliable data for the study (Dalati & Gómez, 2018). This data reliability depended on participants expression of true experiences, thoughts, and feelings. The interviews were conducted online through Microsoft Teams, and the questions were guided by themes emanating from the literature review. The interviews allowed participants to share their experiences as it related to their definition of career progression, their perceived career successes, and the contribution of sponsorship and executive coaching to these.

Qualitative interviews strive to understand the subjective perspective of a phenomenon rather than a generalised view (Wahyuni, 2012). The quality of these inputs are impacted by the extent to which structured questions are used, as they are designed to minimise variability in the responses (Segal & Coolidge, 2003). The benefit of semi-structured interviews is the focus on the person as a subject being interview (Rogers, 2001), allowing for observation of behavioural cues and other essential information that may enhance the quality of inputs. The interview guide utilised in this study can be found in Appendix C of this report.

3.6 Procedure for data collection

The researcher was able to access a pool of participants and assess whether they meet the characteristics for the study, three key descriptors being that they are black women, they are in middle, senior or executive management, and lastly they work at a Head Office of a Bank within specified geographic area. Requests for referrals from fellow colleagues and associates were utilised. Consent was sought from the women who meet the criterion for the study, and an invitation for participation was communicated outlining the nature of the study and full disclosure aspects. Parties who express an interest in participating were contacted, and appointments set to conduct interviews. The researcher already had existing informal relationships with some of the participants, which helped establish rapport and develop the relationship. The interviews were conducted in English as a chosen language, they were carried out online using Microsoft Teams. Participants consented to their interviews being recorded and transcribed. The importance of the recording is to ensure accuracy and validity in the depiction of lived experiences of the participants. The research is reflective of present and past experiences, further highlighting the importance of non-judgement in the questioning to ensure that the topic is explored as broadly as possible.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the information shared by the study participants. Thematic analysis is a method to systematically identify, arrange, gain insights into emerging patterns of themes across a set of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It identified a language in which a topic is engaged, experienced or written, essentially the commonalities, which helped the researcher answer specific research questions. The analysis allows the researcher to understand the obvious or semantic meaning in the data or further interrogate meanings, ideas or assumptions behind what may be explicitly stated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The manner of analysis has served well in qualitative studies as a flexible tool for exploratory research (Herzog & Hitters, 2019). Verbatim interview content

was transcribed, to avoid recalling information by memory, which according to Hayes (2021), ensures that the analysis is focused on the information collected.

Braun and Clarke (2006) believe that at times a recording may have inaudible utterances verbatim, it is imperative to retain true account of the verbal account. Orthography, as described by Schmalz et al. (2015) infers to reading behaviour. The orthographic transcription looks at all spoken words, including nervous giggles and discomforts or pauses. Based on the six data analysis steps by Braun and Clarke (2006), the outlined guidelines was followed by the researcher:

- The researcher gained familiarity with the data by reading the ten transcripts numerous times for accuracy in transcription and to make initial notes at inception of the study.
- The researcher invested time in code generation to establish patterns that enabled understanding perceptions and experiences relating to the study areas, synching with Braun and Clarke (2006, p.82) thoughts of “themes capturing something important about the data in relation to the research question”. Blacker (2009) cautions that larger amounts of data help the researcher observe the predominant and important themes.
- The researcher used mind maps to establish how different codes help establish overarching themes and the relationships between codes. Related patterns were grouped and sorted, to identify themes, these were captured in a Microsoft Excel workbook. Fourteen themes and forty subthemes emerged and are supported by extracts from the transcribed interviews.
- Post theme definition and naming, the researcher continued investigating the connectedness of the data. The themes were refined to articulate the findings. The code list was submitted for review as part of the audit file.
- The researcher guarded against using predetermined categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005); to avoid compromising data trustworthiness.

3.8 Rigour in Methodology

Rigour is described as means to demonstrate integrity and adequacy (Aroni et al. 1999). To ensure the rigour in the study, methodological trustworthiness was essential. In qualitative research, it is believed that value is derived from the exploration of lived experiences as participants perceive them. The context is set in the next subsections on the trustworthiness of the study. To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, preparing detailed transcripts, systematic plans, and coding was appropriate; this is the view shared by Gunawan (2015).

3.8.1 *Transferability*

Transferability refers to the level to which a method is easily transferable to other settings or situations (Kohli et al., 2013). Direct transferability may not be reached in this qualitative study, particularly as participants' experiences are unlikely to be the same. The likelihood of this inappropriateness presents in instances where the study was taking a positivist stance, where the research aims to provide a basis for generalisation (Scapens, 2004). The fundamental belief of the research study is entrenched in epistemology, which from an interpretive perspective accepts subjective meanings, focuses on the detail of the occurrence and the meaning derived. From the interview responses, the researcher used verbatim quotations from participants to improve reasoning that the findings can be transferred to other contexts where main characteristics in sampling exist.

3.8.2 *Credibility*

Credibility is noted as the certainty placed in the accuracy of the research findings (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). The research analysis is thematic, which drew importance to aspects of the data collection. The correct interpretation of participants views as an epistemological anchor, in interpretive theory has been tested. These principles inspired the concept of a draft codebook, (Neuendorf, 2002), which allow the researcher to apply code analysis techniques multiple times on similar texts to improve and refine codes and themes to analyse. Similar was applied to the study, which means the text data needed to be reviewed after

each meeting to develop further interview questions where responses are ambiguous. Triangulation across the samples was employed to ensure correct categorisation of themes. A peer or supervisor will be able to come to the same themes in the review of any of the recorded material and the transcripts. The study was anchored in interpretivism; thus, one's ability to question own assumptions is critical (Polit & Beck, 2012).

3.8.3 Dependability

Bitsch (2005) explains dependability as “the stability of findings over time” (p.86). The dependability anchors on a test of whether given the same set of data, researchers would be able to find similar findings, themes, and patterns. Where data matches to the research objectives, and other means of data quality processes have been employed, such as data triangulation, method triangulation and evaluator triangulation, the margin for inappropriateness reduces.

Appraisal of the data collection process increases dependability, so does clarity on appropriateness and criteria used in selecting the sample (Moretti et al., 2011). Homogeneous sampling focuses on participants having similar traits (Etikan et al., 2016), in this study, the sample selected was deemed appropriate in terms of race demographic, occupation and industry. The use of semi-structured interview allowed for richness of the inputs and was tested through data triangulation, supporting quotes and review by the supervisor. The documented and recorded questions and responses to the study served as supporting audit trail, enabling replication of the study in future.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Without coherence and consistency in descriptions of data collected, the study may lack in support of themes and may not be representative of the views of the participants. The methodological approach included a clear description of how the study was conducted, including sampling, data collection and analysis. Kuper et al. (2008) believe that an iterative process constitutes distinct characters of qualitative research, should be clearly delineated to assist in data

appropriateness. The finding of the study must reflect views and experiences of the participants and not biased perceptions of the researcher (Elo et al., 2014), thus the data must be accurate presentation of responses. The usage of audit trail will improve confirmability, hence full documentation was kept throughout the research process including interim summaries, draft codebook and related. These were shared with the supervisor of the researcher.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was attained from the WITS Business School Ethics Committee prior to data collection. The research was voluntary and not focused on a specific Bank as an entity of interest, so the data collection and analysis has non-disclosure of the institution's names.

Consent in nature is communicative and must be contextualised (Miller & Wertheimer, 2010). An introduction letter/cover page (Appendix A) to participants had full disclosure of information to participate in the research. Participants had a choice to withdraw at any point without prejudice. Consent was documented and the language of use for the study was discussed to ensure comfort of the participants, the details of which can be found in Appendix B. The conduct of ethical research relies on the inclusion of participant voices on what is being researched and the means under which it will be carried out (Christians, 2011). Confidentiality and anonymity were preserved by concealing names of participants and organisations in the data collection, analysis, and reporting. This impressed upon the importance of privacy of communication and recording devices tools; the study participants have the right to privacy, so only pseudocodes were used in the study. This usage of pseudocodes as references was fully disclosed. Though anonymous, certain information could expose their identity.

The act of listening or questioning may present harm to others (Arifin, 2018, p.32). As a qualitative researcher, one recognises how participants feel. Hence positive regard to participants was key due to the sensitive nature of challenges experienced by black women, potential harm, psychological safety to not undo

any benefits that participants may have derived from previous therapy or counselling. Human rights were upheld throughout data collection, analysis and dissemination. Whilst there is an acknowledgement of confidentiality, research audit trail in qualitative research assisted in building the trustworthiness of the study (Bowen, 2008). It provided transparency towards steps followed in conducting the research through a collection of relevant supporting documents (Given, 2008).

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the results emanating from the data analysis of the interview responses from the participants. To ensure invariability between the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, the literature review, the research methodology and the propositions, a thematic approach to the data analysis was employed.

The interviews were transcribed to assist with familiarity with the data, which was read multiple times, noting preliminary and emerging themes. Once the initial codes were drawn, they were then organised into possible themes. Lastly, the themes were reviewed and refined using related extracts and data triangulation to reflect the patterns identified in the analysis.

The findings in this chapter, are stated by emerging themes from the qualitative data analysis process, starting with an outline of the demographic of the participants, secondly, the findings and lastly the conclusion.

4.2 Demographic of the Participants

Purposive sampling was applied in relation to the ten participants who were interviewed. The race, gender and jobs of the participants presented a similarity which contributed to the research objectives based on the identified phenomena. The participants hold senior and executive management positions in different banking institutions in Gauteng, with careers spanning over a period of five to approximately forty years in banking. The positions held by the participants include Heads of Divisions, Head of Credit Risk Assurance, Programme Manager, Acting Head of Customer Experience, Manager of a Regulatory Reporting team and Head of Regulatory Risk amongst others. The age group of the women who disclosed their age, ranged from the late thirties to fifty-nine.

4.3 Theme Development

The purpose of the research study was to understand how sponsorship was utilised in the executive coaching process in facilitation of the career progression of black women. The study focused on black women, in middle management, senior management and executive level, in the banking sector, in Gauteng, reflecting on their experience of sponsorship and executive coaching in relation to their career progression. The data sourced sought to answer the research questions as outlined below:

Table 4.1 List of research questions and summary of themes

<i>Research Questions</i>	Themes	Sub-themes
How have career challenges experienced by black women changed their personal and professional development goals?	Credibility and recognition	✓ Gendered Micro aggression ✓ Reliance on performance currency ✓ Lack of sponsorship ✓ Confidence
	Work-life Balance	✓ Opportunity to disengage from work ✓ Hybrid structures and remote working ✓ Balancing between being a mother/wife and pursuing career
	Self-promotion and self-efficacy in career development	✓ Intentionality ✓ Visibility and Exposure
How have they experienced leader-led visibility in their careers and the contribution thereof to their goals?	Perception of Sponsorship	✓ Favouritism; undue benefit; privilege
	Sponsorship Benefits	✓ Advocacy ✓ Improved candidacy and stretch targets ✓ Promotion, reward and recognition ✓ Conflict management
	Goal attainment	✓ Opportunity to work in high visibility projects and risk taking ✓ Competence development ✓ Constructive feedback ✓ Transition into a new role ✓ Diversification of role; ✓ Proactive ownership of next goals
	Career Acceleration	✓ Active career planning

		✓ Retention, talent pipelining and succession planning
	Social capital	✓ Access to internal and external networks ✓ Conflict management ✓ Use of relationship currency
	Psychosocial support	✓ Confidence building ✓ Trust and vulnerability ✓ Dispelling limiting beliefs ✓ Concern over quality of life
What was the role of executive coaching in their careers?	Leadership Development	✓ Self-awareness ✓ Reflection
	Transition into new role	✓ Acclimatisation within new environments ✓ Adapting to people management processes ✓ Elevating engagement with executives
	Goal attainment	✓ Decision making ✓ Career pathing
	Psychological support	✓ Vulnerability to engage on personal short coming ✓ Vulnerability
	Work life Balance	✓ Time management ✓ Assertiveness and boundary management

These themes surfaced from the study findings and were reflected upon based on the three propositions below, that the study theorises.

- Proposition 1 – The challenges experienced by black women can be alleviated through sponsorship and executive coaching.
- Proposition 2 – Leader-led advocacy through sponsorship enables black women to achieve career progression and desired goals.
- Proposition 3 – Sponsorship has the potential to influence the executive coaching process by providing support to achieve set professional and personal goals.

4.4 The challenges experienced by black women in women in the banking sector in Gauteng

The aim was to reflect on the challenges the participants experienced in their careers, and the influence of these on the women's personal and professional development goals. Of the ten participants, nine believed that the challenges they faced fueled their intentions to pursue their careers and ambitions. They were not impacted to an extent of curbing their aspirations albeit any hurdles or personal effect. Only one of the ten, expressed wanting to give up and is only encouraged to stay in their current environment due to benefits, such as bursaries for employees to be able to keep moving towards her career goals.

The career challenges experienced were placed into three core themes. The themes are relevant to the propositions that the study sought to address, and these are unpacked in this Chapter in detail.

- Credibility and Recognition
- Work-life Balance
- Self-promotion and self-efficacy in career development

4.4.1 *Credibility and Recognition*

The participants reflected on challenges experienced in their ascend into senior positions and a common theme emerged around building credibility and gaining recognition. A few participants reflected on the importance of merit and technical astuteness, hence sentiments of a willingness to work harder than peers to earn credibility. The table below is used as a summation of the sub-themes and factors that contributed to challenges experienced by the participants. These are unpacked further in this segment:

Table 4.2 Subthemes that contribute to challenges experienced in credibility and recognition

Sub-themes	Related meaning
Gendered Micro aggression	Not being taken seriously; being undermined by white male colleagues;

Reliance on performance currency	Merit solely can be inadequate; fair reflection of performance outputs;
Lack of sponsorship	No career changing endorsement; limited advocacy for skills or potential; no new opportunities
Confidence	Resilience; finding your voice; stakeholder engagement; assertiveness

Gendered Micro Aggression

The theme emerged from participants who felt that being black women, one is assumed to be incompetent in their role, and this created a different experience for them where they've had to overextend themselves to prove proficiency. The unconscious behaviors towards others, particularly when assuming intelligence or competence based on a person's race or gender presents a form of gendered microaggression.

These are some of the views shared by the participants:

"I think maybe, it's also because of the field that I chose to study in. It was mainly seen as a male type of job and then eventually women started, wanting to have a space in the IT industry and now we are you still finding it quite difficult to get the same recognition. At the top, is your male counterparts, same age. And I don't know if it's because of the patriarchy that exists at the top. We need to have equality in the workplace...." (Participant I).

"I think the key thing is to be outspoken because, males, and particularly white males, are not used to outspoken, vocal, articulates, clear black women, who can challenge them. I think that is key in terms of getting the respect and recognition that you require." (Participant B).

"We are in South Africa, and most of the challenges, when you get into the bank, most of South African banks that is, transformation is taking long. And I've gotten in a space where, as a manager, people that have been there are mostly white men, old men. It was a challenge to some extent because there are times when you feel a little bit undermined, they just don't understand. And some of them have to report to you. One had to grow faster in terms of authority and working with different races." (Participant E).

Credibility is multilayered and presents in many forms. Participant G reflected that, whilst she feels black women are fortunate in that dynamics of black women's career progression are so topical. She asks herself whether there is limited participation due to just numbers or are the women placed in positions due to a white washing game?

This view introduces questions of genuine autonomy in role. The lack thereof can result in attrition and women feeling disempowered. This was a challenge encountered by Participant A who shared that:

"Bank C just didn't work for me, and I felt that I didn't have the wings to actually change things, and the liberty and the mandate to just drastically improve things and lift the standard to what you believe is needed." (Participant A).

A tone that also came from the women was that, where there is aspiration to get to the top, one needs to trust in their abilities and gain confidence in their competence.

Reliance on performance currency

Whilst performance currency remained important as an indicator of technical competence, they still spoke to a sense of not being equally recognised for their contribution, with some believing that working hard on its own will not advance your career. The sentiment is that their race and gender did influence how they have had to navigate workplace dynamics by using performance as a lever for progression, although the experiences were not always without personal sacrifices. Whilst enhanced performance is a generally applied strategy for career advancement, that the participants felt that, to advance as a black woman one must do significantly more than what is required.

"I think as a woman, as a black woman, you have to work three times as hard as your peers to be able to even be recognised. I think that for me, was the pressure I felt my whole life. I've had to work really hard, work twice as much to be able succeed from one level to the next. And I'm not saying other people get it on a silver platter, no. If I were to sit and count the things that I've gone through in terms of the different projects that I've done, different work or type of jobs that

I've done. Some people have not endured all of that and yet you'll find them in the same positions somehow." (Participant C).

"As a black female, I've always felt, obviously, as a black person, there's a need to always, perform and go the extra mile and show your abilities and merit, and capabilities, so that what you do get is through merit ...I'm not going to just work harder and produce more good work. I know I can, and I feel like more times than not, we the women are the ones who are doing the work and the guys are the ones who are in the front presenting their teams, so we need to say no, I'm not going to be that person." (Participant B).

Lack of sponsorship

Four of the participants felt that the lack of sponsorship stagnates careers because whilst one is confident in their own competence, it is still important to have someone in your corner. Participant F articulated that, there is a new barrier to networking and having visibility for sponsorship. This in her view is "working from home". She felt that in the physical room, it's easier to be noticed as opposed to in the virtual world, thus this presents as a new hurdle. She stated that:

"I think that working from home environment, it's nice, I love it, but it's another hinderance in terms of making one visible If there's somebody at a senior level that knows what I am capable of and some discussion around people, and how to develop our people happens. That person should be able to be my voice to say, you probably don't know this person because there hasn't been an opportunity for her to be exposed." (Participant F).

The experience of sponsorship for Participant F, was more evident when she worked in the insurance sector, as she saw mobility twice from the sponsorship. In the banking space it has been limited to a short rotation thus her statement below:

"I feel stuck in my career, I feel like nothing's happening." (Participant B).

The challenge of lack of sponsorship was equally troubling for Participant D, who felt that in her current role, whilst there is limited sponsorship, it has not been particularly helpful in propelling her career to the next level. The career stagnation

with no sponsorship was experienced by Participant J, who was prepared to leave her employer for a lateral role somewhere else. She noted that:

“At that point, I felt that there was nothing more than what I was doing and there were no opportunities that were open at that particular point in time. So what actually helped was that at the time I was going to leave, we had a new executive coming in... The new executive committed that over time, they are looking at putting me in a position (vacated due to internal movement). And he then said, stick around, and I will make that happen for you and give you that career progression. Otherwise, if I hadn't had that opportunity of wanting to move, I probably would have still been stuck in that particular role. Because there wasn't really any much progression.”. (Participant D).

A statement from Participant B sums it up in her saying:

“I think sponsorship is so key. Without that you are just going to be a worker bee. You are actually just going to put your head down and work harder and not get anywhere.”. (Participant B).

Where sponsorship is seen as inadequate, frustration emerged, particularly when the sponsorship is not seen to benefit the protégé' in terms of career mobility or development. This brings about a question of the effectiveness of talent management initiatives. This is reflected in the statement by Participant D:

“I feel currently where I am it's not that beneficial or not that helpful because, yes, you can have somebody that motivates you and pushes you and sponsors you, but it's not something that is actively embraced within the organisation in the sense that, nothing really sets you apart from somebody else. Your path is exactly the same, but it helps in terms of personal growth and development, but not really in terms of propelling your career.”. (Participant D).

What also surfaced is that where one is looking to be mentored or sponsored, the ownership of the development agenda is important according to Participant A and should be led by the protégé. Participant D specifically noted that: *“I think it's a two-way thing because you can't just have somebody sponsor you. You've got to prove yourself as well and you've got to be doing something where there is something that stands out about you.”. (Participant D).*

This view is supported by Participant G, where she stated that *“It’s always best if you follow the approach of understanding what’s needed for a role and how you equip yourself for that process, but also again for people to facilitate that movement over and above, you having said you want to move from one area to another. With social capital, when they put your name forward, they’re comfortable that you are not going to let them down technically and you can actually deliver.”*. (Participant G).

Confidence

Confidence and positional power are seen as a critical to successful leadership. Challenges of finding your voice had different meaning for the participants. To some it meant acquiring confidence in their capabilities, to others it meant putting themselves out there to take risks, and to others it meant having a voice to engage stakeholders with impact. Sub themes that arose from confidence to deal with stakeholders emanated from comments such as below which spoke to Participant A’s lived experience and what Participant H perceived as her shortcoming:

“Where you have conflicting goals from your stakeholders. It helped me in that I learned resilience, I learnt to have honest conversations with the stakeholders to say this is what I’m facing. This is what you’re asking me. We need to find middle ground.”. (Participant A)

“I think the most difficult challenge is getting the stakeholder buy in; it’s not just particularly about getting into this role. I think as you transition in your career, you need to have people that have your back and I feel like if I didn’t have people with my back, I would never have gotten this particular position.”. (Participant H)

The invisibility aspect, can pose a challenge of fading into the background, in the words of two participants:

“So, you definitely need to be confident, you need to know what you’re talking about, you need to stand your ground because, you’re either going to sit back and be a quiet little mouse in your corner and then speak when you’re spoken to,

or you're going to fight to be heard and for you to be taken seriously.” (Participant I)

“Develop an in-depth knowledge of whatever area that you’ve in, in order for you to have a conversation with your stakeholders because it is in those conversations that you will be seen. It’s one thing to know the concept and sit down at your desk and not be interactive. The only way you’re going to be interactive is if you know the concepts that you’re dealing with.” (Participant H)

Participant C believes that where one uses opportunities for self-development it contributes to self-esteem. In her comment she stated that:

“You have to sharpen your own self-confidence as a person and if you can, stand up high so you can put your head up straight.” (Participant C).

Self-reliance to show resilience was also noted from statements such as:

“What I learned is that you can’t sit back and let someone else do it for you.” (Participant J)

“I hate to get on to blame game, but I feel, I think, we need to as black women, be more intentional and gung-ho and brave enough to actually says yes, I want that position and that’s where I’m going. I think we are very much apologetic and also expecting things to come our way. Unfortunately, I think it’s corporate space and it actually doesn’t need to be. You need to bet on yourself.” (Participant B)

4.4.2 Work life balance

The imbalance between work and personal lives was highlighted along with an expressed need to push oneself hard to accomplish career goals. This meant learning strategies for positively managing time, family commitments and work. The disharmony in managing the dynamics of individual obligations and work commitments meant that the women have had to make personal sacrifices in order for their careers to succeed.

Table 4.3 Subthemes that contribute to work life balance.

Sub-themes	Related meaning
------------	-----------------

Opportunity to disengage from work	Sacrificing family time to finalise work; working additional hours after cooking and putting children to bed; taking laptops during personal leave; round the clock accessibility; meetings taking place beyond normal working hours; working over weekends.
Hybrid structures and remote working	Ability to manage time between work and home: managing boundaries and expectations; organisational culture.
Balancing between being a mother/wife and pursuing career	Not being able to take child to the doctor; entrusting domestic support system with parenting responsibilities; career impacted marriage, leading to divorce; placement of child into boarding school because of work travel.

Opportunity to disengage from work

An ability to strike balance between home and work was a challenge that was a reality for most of the participants. The extent of their articulation did not take a much deeper meaning such as the social construct, or patriarchy, and touched on the issues on the surface. The research intention was to not delve extensively into the complexity of the work-life balance constraints. However, the challenges faced by the participants are notable as they can demonstrate the resilience one needs to manoeuvre between the two worlds. Work has become invasive in the lives of the women, for some, with unavoidable impact on the family members. The statements shared are as below:

“I used to work every Sunday in my previous role. Every single Sunday I’d go to church in the morning and come back, cook lunch and work until 8 o’clock at night. It was the only way I could get through my emails and prep.”. (Participant A)

Personally, I’ve had to consult with life coach a couple of times in my life just so that I can also be able to balance between my personal and my work life because, sometimes you’ll find that the work overtakes the personal and obviously it affects other things happening in the process.....It has helped me a lot. It has not caused me to sit back and say, I’m only putting in eight hours in my day. No, I can still put 11-12 hours in the day, but I also need to put 11/12 hours to the kids, at home, so how do I balance?.”. (Participant C)

Participant E gave a sense of being hyper self-conscious of her being a black competent woman in the work environment.

I worked very hard and that is where I think work life balance started to be affected because I had to prove a point. For some time, I had to make a decision that the scale will tilt, but it's not going to be for long. I made serious compromises personally, to be in the role and making sure that I continue to study. When it's time to deliver, I deliver whether it's a Saturday or Sunday. It didn't matter. Because I didn't want to feel like, because I'm black and a woman, I can't make it." (Participant E)

Hybrid structures and remote working

Organisational culture and the adoption of new ways of working, particularly post COVID19 pandemic has positively changed juggling between work and parenting responsibilities according to one participant. The flexible working hours are seen as family friendly and improved her engagement with the institution. This view is shared in the extract below from Participant C:

"Now I can take my kid to the doctor, then come back and continue to work. Before COVID, I would even bring the kid to work because, I'm trying to balance, and I am a mother. If I get a call from school, I'm going to go to school and come back and work, and sometimes, yes, I'll have to take an extra hour out after dinner or out of the kid's time, because I've had to take the jobs time to do personal things. I find that it makes it so much easier, to even commit yourself, to see yourself growing because here is a place where you are able to be a mother and part of management... In the past when the baby is sick, you call Mom to come and look after the kids. It's not like that anymore. If the kids are sick, I need to take care of the kids. Yes, during work hours". (Participant C)

Whilst a hybrid structure is appreciated, there are some draw backs shared by Participant F, who fears that the lack of physical interaction introduces a risk of limited recognition or opportunities to engage with sponsors.

Balancing between being a mother/wife and pursuing career

Despite the growth of women participation in paid labour, the extent of juggling between two worlds have affected women. Manoeuvring normative expectations of running a household and managing careers was eased to some extent by the effectiveness of support structures that the women had. The support of domestic or family structure was a key feature particularly for those who are parents. The

experiences of the women brought in aspects of conscious parenting. This is a sentiment shared by Participant A and E who expressed that:

“My child was always complaining that we (both mother and father) are just too busy, and I made sure that because he was vocal. I had to be conscious about spending time with him.”. (Participant A).

“My daughter went to boarding school at the very young age from grade one, to high school. She ended up going to University and by the time she went to University, I knew I have lost her, there’s no coming back home. She’s still my child, but I knew, I missed building on that solid relationship with her because of my career to a great extent.”. (Participant E).

Another example that speaks to having support when one is juggling more than one role, came to the fore when Participant E share the following:

“My ex-husband, we had one car, and he had come to fetch me, he was outside. Then I called to let him know I’m still giving an update...Now he starts seeing people going and I’m not coming out of the building. He ended up calling and I said to the Director, it’s my husband. You could see a little bit of irritation in his face. You know, when we’re having a meeting and somebody’s calling and asking when we are going home so it’s one of those things where along the journey, they happened but anyway we live with consequences.”. (Participant E)

Participant E admitted hesitantly that her being career focused was a contributor towards the divorce. She stated that when you get into a relationship, there’s an expectation that eight to five you will be at work and after five you should not be there.

4.4.3 Self-promotion and self-efficacy in career development

The experience shared by some of the women, linked with existing research of the importance of self-promotion and self-efficacy in career management. These were of importance for the women, bearing in mind the views they shared of performance currency not yielding significant results in terms of career progression. The emergent themes were categorised as follows:

Table 4.4 Subthemes that contribute to self-promotion and self-efficacy in career development

Sub-themes	Related meaning
<i>Intentionality</i>	Building competence; self-directed career movements; apologetic, expecting things to come our way; unlearning influence of upbringing; realising true potential; reactive approach to career planning
<i>Visibility and Exposure</i>	Risk-taking; putting yourself out there; comfort zone and stretch targets

Intentionality

Without intentional, active career management and an enabling environment, a feeling of being stuck is common, which can create despondency. This was the case with two of the participants who saw limited career mobility as a contributor to them wanting to leave their current employers during their tenure.

“Career mobility – if you don’t apply, you’re stuck. If you don’t have someone that’s got your best interest at heart like a sponsor that would guide and help you with moving your career within whatever employer, then you just need to apply and leave the company or apply elsewhere internally and hope to get a position somewhere... My challenge has always been that.”. (Participant F)

Participant J in particular spoke sheepishly to the influence of upbringing, in that she was raised and taught that when you get into an organisation, one worries about job security as opposed to progression. This view can impede active career management. She initially treated her role as an occupation until she was exposed differently to the Bank and its functions. Her statement was as follows:

“With career progression, to be honest with you. The only time I saw career progression was when I was going to leave the bank. Other than that, I felt that I had reached the ceiling, there was nothing. I didn’t see anything further in respect of the role that I was in.”. (Participant J)

Self-efficacy was explored in Chapter 2, in the context of the executive coaching process and managing career mobility. In engaging with the women, self-reliance in managing developmental gaps, career progression and understanding the environment emerged. The terms “get myself out there” and “get out of my comfort zone” were recurrent and can be tied to the lack of confidence in initiating

self-directed career development, career decision-making and self-doubt. From the responses received, in more than one instance, the women were asked to apply for specific roles and did not do so on their own accord to seek out new opportunities.

“I think we sometimes think that we’re just going to work harder and someone’s going to notice you, that you’re this brilliant individual. But I think the reality is that it doesn’t. It doesn’t always pan out that way. And so, you actually need to kind of put yourself out there and have the right conversation so that you are eligible for the positions that you do want.”. (Participant B)

“You need to know what you need to bring the table right. But likewise it forces, the audience, (corporates and organisations) to really hear what the plight of the black woman is beyond what they think the plight of the black woman is. That then requires us as black women to be very clear about what works for us and what doesn’t but also to be clear in terms of finding an alignment between those ambitions, which may be personal and organisational ambitions, to find a middle ground that works for both sides.”. (Participant H)

Where “putting oneself out there” was shared in positive light was in a statement made by Participant C that:

“There are people that I found there, when I started, some of them I started with. Some of them I found them in those positions and yet I managed to exceed them. Same with moving over here and make an example and the guy that I found in one of the positions that I occupied I’m actually now their manager so I think it’s because I’ve put myself out there and push myself, and obviously you know you need the support of your team, the support of the institution to do all of that, but you know, it also takes the individual to be able to do that.”.

Participant C, felt that individuals have a personal responsibility to develop their competence through agility:

“In my case, I find that because I pushed myself and worked hard, I would get to the next position before the said timeline expired. You know, and yes, and even when, I am the level that I am now, my portfolio hasn’t even stayed the same as what it was even two years ago. Its rotating in terms of me wanting to look at different things. So, I feel it’s more having to push myself.”.

The self-deterministic aspect showed that black women are not waiting for anyone to open the door for them, they can open doors for each other or themselves.

“I think with my current manager, he has been my biggest sponsor, but at the same time, I think you need to be your own sponsor as well. You can’t necessarily rely on someone else because there’s only so much, they can do for you. There’s been a lot of politics, even with this particular role if I can put it that way, because I had to make sure that my footprint within the business speaks for itself..”.
(Participant J)

Visibility and Exposure

Visibility as an enabler to career progression was present in the experiences that women shared. To heighten visibility and create opportunities for progression, the exposure extended beyond operational areas and required a variety of initiatives. The exposure seems to have had a positive contribution, not only from a technical perspective, but an opportunity to really engage in individual’s sense of competence and career direction. This can be noted in the below views as a benefit of high visibility projects:

“I think I have been given the opportunity sort of to navigate into areas where I found, I wanted or needed to upskill. And that has really helped in terms of #1 Challenging me – not challenging in a negative perspective but pushing myself and really getting myself into an area of comfort. From being able to execute but also understanding what the bigger environment and market looks like for me to know what I need to do and hone into, for me to be competent, both internally for my role as well as externally in terms of what clients want and I guess from an investment banking perspective.”. (Participant G)

“I think it certainly gave me or opened networks to the people that are relevant in the organisation so that they get to know me, it opened those conversations. I think it also helped, to expose me to certain things, it gave me opportunities such as hosting certain events which result in a lot more visibility through that sponsorship.”. (Participant B)

"I am on a significant board currently...I would definitely say through sponsorship of some sort because it's not something that I had actually thought that I could do or wanted to do." (Participant D)

In relation to the support of employment equity representation at senior level, Participant J, who is awaiting the officiation of her appointment into a senior manager role, spoke of the need for the bank to appoint black women in line with the targets. This gave her a positive chance to get the role. She stated that:

"Taking into consideration for example, now this role. I know that in terms of our BEE scorecard, they are lagging when it comes to females in senior management roles, especially when you get to senior management or heads, and execs. So there is a scorecard that they need to chase and it needs to be fulfilled. So obviously they need to fill that quota to make sure that they meet the criteria. And so, I think to a certain degree, that BEE scorecard does assist in a way because they do need to make sure that they find black females. I think even the executive team now, they had to make sure because there was a lot of vacancies, they had to make sure that they fill these with black african women which is what is done." (Participant J)

4.5 Experiences of sponsorship and the benefits

The complexities of career progression for black women have been researched extensively. Other than job commitment, leader led visibility or sponsorship has shown to successfully influence career experiences, which synchs with the sentiments of the positive contributions of sponsorship to the participants careers. All ten of the participants benefited from sponsorship and leader led visibility at different stages of their career. Whilst the definition of mentorship and sponsorship are distinct, the participants understood to a large degree the definition of sponsorship and could speak to the benefits thereof. They mostly had their direct managers play the role of sponsor, as opposed to someone else higher up the ranks, except for Participant C and D, whose manager's manager took a keen interest in them.

The insights from the interviews gave indication that the sponsorship came mostly as a single event and has not been adopted as a long-term tool for career development or having the same person supporting their careers on multiple

occasions. Below is a table illustrating themes that emanated from lived leader-led visibility experiences of the participants and the impact on their careers or goals.

Table 4.5 Subthemes that contribute to leadership led visibility

Sub-themes	Related meaning
<i>Perceptions of sponsorship</i>	Favouritism; undue benefit; privilege
<i>Sponsorship Benefits</i>	Advocacy: exposure to increase readiness for candidacy; promotion, reward and recognition; stretch targets; conflict management
<i>Career Agility</i>	Opportunity to work in high visibility projects; profile enhancing opportunities; risk taking, competence development; provision of constructive feedback; ease of transition into a new role; diversification of role; academic excellence; Sink or swim strategy, proactive ownership of next goals
<i>Career Acceleration</i>	Active career planning; Retention, talent pipelining; succession planning
<i>Social capital</i>	Access to internal and external networks; conflict management; use of relationship currency
<i>Psychosocial support</i>	Confidence building, enhances trust; helps in dispelling limiting beliefs; vulnerability; concern over quality of life

From the experiences of the sample group, the role that direct managers played in the development of their careers was seen as positive. This sponsorship seemingly increased the women's visibility and perceived credibility. Noticeably the women credited their success to direct reporting managers in providing elements that generally are associated with sponsorship.

4.5.1 Perceptions of sponsorship

It was important to ascertain the participants understanding of sponsorship, and from the responses, it was highlighted that a negative perception exists of sponsorship. Participant A stated this in her utterance that: *"It's a swear word, but it's important. I think it depends on how you use it and depends on how you see it. Some people see it as favouritism... Recognise the privilege as once in a lifetime opportunity"*.

Whilst there may be a negative perception, what literature has shown in Chapter 2, was that sponsors are also seen in a positive light.

Participant G's understanding and perception of sponsorship is as follows: *"I think it's fundamental. It's important more so when you work for large organisations because it's very easy to get lost in the numbers. So, somebody with senior influence is always very helpful for #1 them to get to notice you amongst many numbers in terms of employees. Numbers #2, for them to also put their social capital on the line to recommend you and sponsor you. I think we're very fortunate in that, we are in an environment where people development over the past few years has been quite critical, in how the organisation delivers and functions because of the importance of human capital."*

4.5.2 Sponsorship Benefits

The participants expressed being protected by their sponsors. This protection was experienced by three women against general injustice or undue harshness that could have been of negative effect to them. This was reflected in the examples below:

*"We dealt a lot with various stakeholders in the bank, but the risk management that we're doing sometimes resulted in us having to take away profits from various areas. And that for me, one of the sponsors that played a big role who is as I said earlier is actually the *** of the bank now. He allowed us to go through the process, allowed us to engage the stakeholders, but in the end, you know, business units are measured based on their bottom line, right? So, in the end, the way he came in to mediate. He'd say the situation was not that you guys have failed."* (Participant I)

"There was another one, (name of a person), when I was young, she also just decided she's going to put me under her wing. She protected me from a racist who used to go to every branch and decide, to get rid of everything, black, indian or coloured... They couldn't promote me because I was black, so my boss made sure that I am at least rewarded for the work that I do." (Participant A)

The remunerative benefit was also experienced by Participant J, who with the support of her sponsor saw salary progression. In her words, she stated that: *"I*

think even salary wise, that was the catalyst to kind of lift up my salary. Otherwise, it hadn't moved much in the couple of years that I've been them."

Participant E also spoke of an instance where her salary was improved whilst she was on maternity leave, receiving both a bonus and share incentive, due to the influence of her sponsor. She felt included, as she was also invited to key processes even though she was on maternity leave. This made her feel like a valuable member of the team.

Supporting one's candidacy was a recurring theme amongst five of the participants, who were asked or recommended for application into specific senior positions.

"I was the only person that was requested to apply within the department and through the support of my managers I was able to take that, and I was in that institution basically for five years. (Participant C)

I think had he (my sponsor) not been around and put me in the that position or in the position that I'm in now, I think I would have been overlooked. (Participant I)

The same was felt by Participant D, who was handpicked to work on a high impact project within the Bank, and when the role became available, she was placed in an advantageous position having been sponsored to work in such a unique area of business.

"Having been the first one to start with that work and really going out and interacting with the stakeholders and all of that, it did put me in a favorable position." (Participant D)

Participant A felt that she really got favour with the people who led her and afforded her many opportunities to learn and grow. She was afforded an opportunity to work in every segment of the branch, so moving into corporate banking, this exposure and experience eased the movement. She stated that:

"I left the country for about a year, and came back and went into their corporate banking, which was easy for me because then I could work in any segment because I was coming from the old branch banking where you managed every single segment."

The benefit of short-term problem solving was also spoken to by three participants who felt that their sponsors have also played a role of sounding boards, which they found to be positive.

4.5.3 Career Agility

Five of the participants spoke to credible visibility which is seen as a critical strategy to career progression. This refers to advocacy for high visibility projects and public endorsement that ultimately raised the profile of the protégé. These are reflected upon in the examples stated below:

“It definitely elevated my profile, I think the previous executive, he would mention my name in exco, and they would ask who is Participant J? And my boss would say Participant J is so and so, and this is what she does and has done. So that made sure that your name gets out there so that people are aware of who you are within the business.”. (Participant J)

“I have that with my current line manager, none of the managers I have reported to have done that for me except with the current one. For the first time, I’m sharing a KPI with someone. It’s the first time. I mean, I’m being brought into sessions alongside him, or I’m presenting in sessions where he would naturally present. So, this is my very first time that I’ve been exposed to that type of thing.”. (Participant I)

“I see it as personal development. I mean, (name of person) headhunted me from Bank E and when I arrived, he didn’t just leave me to my devices... He created visibility, and he didn’t only do that, he also showed that he believes that there’s a value in what I do, and he doesn’t want his team to miss the opportunity to use it in a constructive manner.”. (Participant A)

This type of endorsement allows for employees to take risks, to make mistakes and to challenge themselves. These stretch targets for Participant C, came in a form of a project that she had not done before, centred around a major event at her Bank and for this project she was recognised as employee of the year. The visibility of this project was significant to the Bank. She notes this experience as one of her career milestones, where she was thrown in the deep end to sink or swim. She further added the below:

“So, I think how I’ve experience sponsorship is in terms of personally being supported by the institution, when to go to school, to different courses, even with the little courses as well. When I came into the institution that I’m in right now, there was very few black people and it sort of made me to stand out, if I can put it like that. And, because I’m a very curious person, I’m somebody that’s always asking questions, I would even question people above me on certain things. My manager’s manager took me under her wing in terms of trying to mould me into being this person because naturally I’m a very quiet and shy person. I had to come out of that box for me to be able to grow, within the institution and I would be given different projects.”. (Participant C)

Three of the participants noted that although one may not meet all the requirements, it is important to use the sponsorship to advance the development of competencies, to not fail someone who is in your corner. This includes openness to direct feedback on shortcomings. This highlights that sponsorship allows you to make mistakes as you are learning. This was supported by the below statements:

“Yes, you’re not always going to tick all the boxes, right? But, with the with the right support and the right push, then you do make it, because it also challenges you. That’s what I found. It challenged me as well to get outside of my comfort zone because now you’re like, there is somebody who’s actually put their head on the line for you. You know, you can’t disappoint this person. And equally, it was something that I was excited about because I don’t think I would ever agree to it, if it was something that I didn’t fall within.”. (Participant D)

I think personally, I have achieved what I have achieved and am where I am because there’s always been people that were pushing and supporting me and not pushing in terms of in a bad way, but encouraging, if I may put it like that to get from point A to point B. Change the way that I see the world, the way that I do things and basically improve myself personally and professionally, all of that.”. (Participant C)

“You’ll get frank feedback. You’ve got those performance appraisals to say yes you are ready, or no you are not. Even as frank to say look, I know this is where you see yourself, but you’ve got this colleague who’s better placed than you. Which happens, it’s life right and you need to then spend two more years with

somebody else to get to this position. The reality of life is often, there are always finite rules so they'll always be competition anyway.”. (Participant G)

Four of the participants have particularly highlighted their involvement in other activities such as board representation, women's advocacy forums and other committees outside of their full-time role as this gives them additional visibility, to an extent of even hosting events in their banks. The confidence gained because of sponsorship and other opportunities encouraged them to gain critical mass differently. Some of their statements are as follows:

“I also have done some board work where I have sat on audit committees and chaired some non-executive boards and being the non-executive director on various organisations. And for me I think that also gives you a lot more exposure than the current day-to-day work because sometimes I find that we stay very insular in terms of this is what I do and this is all I do.”. (Participant B)

It's about institutionalising the ability for women to progress, right.”. (Participant G)

I am on a significant board currently...I would definitely say through sponsorship of some sort because it's not something that I had actually thought that I could do or wanted to do.”. (Participant D)

4.5.4 Career Acceleration

Positive experiences of career acceleration were reported by Participant D, Participant E and Participant F earlier on in their careers, outside of the banking sector. These were formalised sponsorship programmes, which were different from the informal experiences that they endured within the banking sector. A developmental movement as a result of sponsorship in a bank for Participant F, was in a form of a short secondment to another business unit, to provide her with working experience in her area of interest. She however feels stuck in her career as the duration of the movement did not make a meaningful impact in her career, nor does she have an active sponsor since her initial sponsor left the bank.

A sense of stagnation was shared by Participant D, who felt her career has not changed from a positional perspective although personally, she feels she is

growing and maturing within her current role. The limitation she highlighted are in the implementation of actionable career movements due to organisational inhibitors at executive management within the bank. She shared below:

“I feel currently where I am, it’s not that beneficial or that helpful because yes you can have somebody that kind of motivates you and pushes you and sponsors you, but it’s not something that is actively embraced within the organisation in the sense that, well, nothing really sets you apart from somebody else. Your path is exactly the same, so it helps in terms of personal growth and development, but not really in terms of propelling your career.” (Participant D)

Participant E’s sponsorship resulted in her appointment as Chief Financial Officer in a bank, she shared this as part of her reflection of the benefit of direct career conversations and candidacy for roles. Her comment was as follows:

“I remember at some point he called a meeting with me; he asked me where to from here? What are you planning to do with your career? Then he sat me down to ask if I see the opportunities ahead? He stressed the fact that I am a woman, a black woman. . The opportunities were there, to progress as CFO. I think that was a significant moment.” (Participant E)

A positive experience of career progression was shared by Participant C, who benefited from mobility within a short timeline frame, which she was pleased with:

“There are people that I found there, when I started. Some of them, I started with, some I found them in those positions and yet I managed to exceed them. Same with moving to the current role. I’ll make an example – the guy that I found in one of the positions that I occupied, I’m now their manager so I think it’s because I’ve put myself out there and pushed myself, and obviously you know you need the support of your team, the support of the institution to do all of that, but you know, it also takes the individual to be able to do that.” Participant C

Participant I felt that her appointment would not have happened without the sponsorship of her manager. She also stated that this move was in fact part of succession planning.

“I think personally, I have achieved what I have achieved and am where I am because there’s always been people that were pushing and supporting me and

not pushing in terms of in a bad way, but encouraging, if I may put it like that to get from point A to point B. It changed the way that I see the world, the way that I do things and basically improve me personally and professionally.” (Participant I)

4.5.5 Social capital

Four (4) participants responded to experiencing social capital associated with sponsorship. Participant J's experience of her manager bringing up her name in different forums left her feeling that through the sponsorship, exco and other managers can relate to her function and that her name has become synonymous to the work that she carries out. In this context, she felt that the sponsorship played a huge role. Similarly, Participant A felt that the sponsorship from her CEO, opened doors of internal stakeholders, to allow her function to show value to business.

The ability to connect to others within the organisation was found to be critical to successful integration and advancement. This view was observed by Participant H, who stated:

“I think the young people that are coming into our organisation right now have the privilege of accessing strong black woman and strong black men at certain levels. So, have those particular people in your corner, not because they are black or white, but because they want to see you progress, but also, they are going to connect you to the other nonblack people that are still sitting at the table.”
Participant H

Below statements continue to harmonise known research on the potential of sponsorship opening doors and access to people within the organisation:

“I think it certainly gave me or opened networks to the people that are relevant in the organisation, so that they get to know me, it opened those conversations. I think it also helped, to expose me to certain things, it gave me opportunities such as hosting certain events which result in a lot more visibility through that sponsorship.” (Participant B)

Participant B also found the capital useful in directing her towards people to speak to in relation with specific matters. This guidance from the sponsor was found beneficial.

4.5.6 Psychosocial support

Five of the participants indicated a combination of factors that left them feeling supported. The support created trust, confidence, gave assurance and left some feeling validated and being seen for who they are. For Participant J, this meant trusting that her manager will deliver of the promise he made to get her to the next level. She articulated this in her statement:

“The executive was telling me at the time that he was going to make sure that I get the role that I deserved, just stick around. So, sometimes those promises are made, and they’re not necessarily kept because they just want to keep you as you’re a good employee. In me trusting him and trusting what he told me, that progression happened within a course of a year, I think. He elevated me from my previous role. I think for me that was a defining moment in my career.”.
(Participant J)

The participants reflected on the personal effect of sponsorship on their confidence and motivation, to challenge their own negative self-perceptions.

“I think it has assisted in giving me the assurance, the confidence to know that it’s (board membership) something I can do, you know, moving and growing with within my career ... You see it (an opportunity) from a distance and you’re like OK, there are people for that and I’m not one of those.”. (Participant D)

“That I’m in a place that is supporting me and my dreams, because it also increases your self-esteem. If you know you are trusted, you are supported. You are also able to push yourself, sacrifice yourself so that you see the success for yourself and the success of others around the team.”. (Participant C)

“I think he pushes me; I think even with this head of department role, he was the one who was like, “apply for it. I believe that you are ready, I believe that I’ve seen your growth. I’ve seen how you have been able to develop relationships with stakeholders. I’ve seen how you’ve come into yourself and become confident in yourself and how you articulate yourself, how you present yourself to

stakeholders, how you develop relationships with stakeholders.”. So, he’s been the catalyst of just making sure that I believe in myself as much as he believes in me. He’s played quite a big role.”. (Participant J)

“He was honestly somebody who understands that my child lived away from me when I got divorced. When my face is sad, he will be interested to find out what’s going on. When I stay in office until 20:00 o’clock, he will ask why you are still here late. When the opportunity comes, I will be that person he will consider, to get the job done.’. (Participant E)

With Participant A being a sponsor to others, she contributed further to the theme in her articulation of the importance of having conversations that are not superficial and believes in having no hold barred meetings. She shared how she experienced her protégé:

“I’ll bring a box of tissues, and she knows that she’s going to cry. Because she used to cry, then she stopped crying, eventually, when she realised that that’s just how we operate. We tell each other the truth, and I encourage her to do the same.”. (Participant A)

4.6 Experiences of executive coaching and the influence of sponsorship on coaching process

Of the women interviewed only four of the ten had an opportunity to work with an executive coach. This representation is shared below:

Table 4.6 Coaching Profile of Participants

	Executive Coaching Experience	Other
Participant A	No	
Participant B	Yes	
Participant C	No	Worked privately with a Life Coach
Participant D	No	
Participant E	Yes	
Participant F	Yes	
Participant G	Yes	
Participant H	No	
Participant I	No	
Participant J	No	

Of the participants interviewed, those who have worked or are currently working with an executive coach shared the contribution thereof to their goals largely in the below areas:

- ✓ Leadership Development
- ✓ Transition into new role
- ✓ Goal attainment
- ✓ Psychological support
- ✓ Work life Balance

4.6.1 Leadership Development

Two of the participants indicated that executive coaching helped them with gaining self-awareness and increased their ability to self-reflect. This reflection was of relevance to areas of leadership development.

“I’ve recently become an executive having joined my current institution probably just over a year ago, it’s something very new. But my experience of it is really very different to mentoring, which I find from my experience to be more work task orientated, whereas coaching is more about how to bring your best self as a human being to get the best out of people. And it’s been very difficult for me in that I’m a private person. But I guess, you get to realise that you need to inspire, motivate a team, to be the best of themselves and to also deliver for all intents and purposes, despite and against all oddsIt forces you to think deep and hard. If you’re going to open up yourself in terms of who you are? How you come across as a leader and how that aligns with business objectives, and imperatives. It automatically forces you to think about what’s next beyond just the job or how you’re impacting people.”. (Participant G)

Being experienced authentically by those being led was also an important outcome of executive coaching. This was a theme that emerged from Participant G:

“I have also had to critically look at myself in various ways. In terms of how I open up to be a lot more genuine, how do I show up even when I’m not in a meeting, my authenticity, whether I’m sitting at my desk or I’m in a meeting. There’s that

consistent approach in that I am not putting on a facade because of management, but there's a human element of me.”.

Participant E also found that the interaction with her executive coach forced her to think beyond her job and had to answer difficult questions about herself as a leader.

4.6.2 Transition into new role

Three of the participants made use of executive coaching on recommendation and support of their managers, which had a positive impact on their acclimatisation within new environments. This helped not only from an adjustment perspective, but it gave the women tools for dealing with new teams.

For participant G, it is a more recent experience, however with Participant E, it happened in two instances. The first was in her appointment as CFO where she felt she needed support as a new executive, and the second being in her current environment.

“I've been very fortunate in that I've had very understanding bosses so when I joined Bank A, it was twofold. #1: I joined in a remote working environment and was sitting in Johannesburg. My team was in a different country, so that in itself was a dynamic in that you're dealing with new people who you've haven't physically met but engaging them on a daily basis. #2, it was then to deal with the cultural challenges being South African and dealing with out of country colleagues. So, I think I was very fortunate in that my bosses saw that challenge, that I would need to adjust to and it was a question that was raised whether I think coaching will help me adjust in terms of how engage the team and of course, how to drive the business, but also help me transition into the bank and from South Africa into the out of country region.”. (Participant G)

“So, for me I think, I recognise why my boss proposed it (executive coaching) early in the role. It was to make sure that if there are any areas of development, I deal with them so that they do not hinder me or make me miss opportunities because of challenges that might come into the new environment. So, the coach created for me that space where, he will interrogate me. He'll ask me about the team and reflect on my plans. So, he really helped me to settle.”. (Participant E)

Though her first encounter with an executive coach was outside the banking sector, Participant F feels that the skills she learned benefit her to date in her current role. She was encouraged by her manager then to take up the opportunity to work with an executive coach to enhance her effectiveness in dealing with stakeholders who were largely white males. In this role, she reported a lot to the board of the insurance company and the senior management of the insurance company. The services of the coach helped her with her delivery to this audience.

4.6.3 Goal attainment

Two of the participants felt empowered in making big decisions with career decisions. These leaned towards personal accomplishments vs an organisational imperative. In Participant B's case, she was at crossroads about what she wants to do with her career and other interest. She felt her decision to leave the bank for a period and pursuing a coaching career was supported by having an executive coach.

"I think my decision to leave the bank for a while was definitely through the intervention of coaching. And even ironically, the decision to return. I remember at the time I was actually thinking, do I continue this or whatever and I remember my coach said to me 'there's no right or wrong answer to these things, but you must be comfortable that, with whatever transpires, you made the best decision with the information that you had at hand ...I think it's been great. It certainly provided me a lot more clarity and also courage and confidence to actually do the things that I want as opposed to that whole analysis paralysis, where you think about stuff and it's two years later, you still haven't done anything about it. So, it holds you accountable.'" (Participant B)

Participant E equally felt assisted by her coach in deciding to take up further study. Her coach played a key role in getting her to have a different view of the direction her studies could take.

"She was somebody who directed me to say experience and current technical qualifications are enough. You need to open your mind as you go to executive level to have some skill in other areas, especially when you're going into the boards or interacting with different executives." Participant E

4.6.4 Psychological support

The participants found comfort in speaking to their coaches about topics they could not engage their direct managers. These included indecision about career moves or feeling exposed in terms of their perceived shortcomings.

Participant B stated that she first considered executive coaching mid-career, when she was uncertain of the next career moves that she'd like to make.

"What do the next five years look like? How am I going to get there? And sometimes, you know, you can't have those conversations with your manager or the people you report to." (Participant B)

A discomfort of being vulnerable to a direct manager, was shared by Participant E, who felt more comfortable to talk to the coach about having cried and having her competence questioned.

"He (the coach) met me when I just joined Bank D and trying to find my feet, and know the team, the boss, and really doing the best that I can. So, even some of the things, that were happening, I was still observing. When you need to make a decision or call a person to order, he would give you that confidence. So, I think that's what the coach did because often the direct manager or report, they evaluate your performance. You are not sure whether your weaknesses, will be taken as non-performance." (Participant E)

"She always allowed me to have that moment of reflection, she really played a critical role in terms of bringing sanity." (Participant E)

The time and space to reflect afforded by the executive coach was positive, as highlighted by Participant E and Participant G. Participant G, felt that the relationship created more self-awareness of how she came across to others.

4.6.5 Work life Balance

Participant C highlighted that although she has not worked with an executive coach through her employer, she has privately sought services of a life coach to support her in managing her work life balance. Her view was that this had a positive effect in managing her time differently to be effective.

Participant F has in the past worked with an executive coach to manage work life balance, and challenges of adjusting to her then environment. She admits that she has gained assertiveness and self-acceptance but has not succeeded with work life balance. Her way of work was found to not be effective for the business operations:

“I think at Company X, I was worse in terms of working early hours of the morning. Everybody knew they would get an e-mail from me at three o'clock in the morning, then at 15:00 during the day, I knock off. I didn't sleep so 1:00 is cut off time. I'm leaving, I'll sleep and I wake up again at 1:00 o'clock and continue to work.” (Participant F)

The participants who had not received executive coaching shared areas which they felt executive coaching presents as a viable development tool. Their responses were as per the segment below:

Table 4.7 Expressed executive coaching needs

	Executive Coaching Needs
Participant A	Not intending to get coaching services
Participant C	Career direction - “Change direction in terms of where I am because I think right now where I am, I won't move unless if the CFO leaves.”.
Participant D	Self-Advocacy and assertiveness – “So one of the things that I mentioned was just getting myself out there, number one, I'm not sure if I do enough of that in the sense that I find that it's normally people that will tell me, do this and that. But I feel like I'm not out there enough.... I do have a good relationship with people, but I think when I look at my personality sometimes, I'm not direct enough and I know this is feedback I get.”.
Participant H	Conflict management and resilience – “How to deal with difficult stakeholders without wanting to bang a wall or to resign or to move to a different area.”.
Participant I	Influence and impact – “How to be influential. If I can read the room, be able to get into a room full of intimidating males and be able to influence or be able to talk to them in such a way that they hear me and they able to listen to me”.
Participant J	Assertiveness and emotional resilience – “Some of the development areas that I feel I could work on, are making sure that I stand my ground...and learn to take criticism and be able to decipher between constructive and what's meant to tear you down.”.

Participant A is approaching retirement and is not intending to use services of an executive coach. She expressed that earlier in her career, reliance was placed on mentors as part of development. She thus learned leadership skills differently:

“There were no formal coaches when I became an executive. It's only become a big thing in the past ten years. So, that's why I've ended up coaching others instead of being coached. I got mentorship which gave me opportunities to ask the questions you ask when you're being coached. I've learned a lot of my leadership skills through reading, observing, asking questions and hearing the views from others. So, I've ended up not needing the coaching.”. (Participant A)

4.7 Consistency Matrix

The table below illustrates a summarised view of the research objectives, stated propositions as well as the themes related to the propositions.

Table 8: Summary view of research objectives, propositions and themes related

Research questions	Research Proposition	Research Themes
How have career challenges experienced by black women changed their personal and professional development goals?	The challenges experienced by black women can be alleviated through sponsorship and executive coaching	Theme 1: The challenges experienced by black women in the banking sector in Gauteng ✓ Credibility and recognition ✓ Work-life Balance ✓ Self-promotion and self-efficacy in career development
How have they experienced leader-led visibility in their careers and the contribution thereof to their goals?	Leader-led advocacy through sponsorship enables black women to achieve career progression and desired goals.	Theme 2: Experiences of sponsorship ✓ Perception of sponsorship ✓ Sponsorship Benefits ✓ Goal attainment ✓ Career Acceleration ✓ Social capital ✓ Psychosocial support

What was the role of executive coaching in their careers?	Sponsorship has the potential to influence the executive coaching process by providing support to achieve set professional and personal goals.	Theme 3: Experiences of executive coaching and the influence of sponsorship on coaching process ✓ Leadership Development ✓ Transition into new role ✓ Career direction ✓ Psychological support ✓ Work life Balance
---	--	---

4.8 Conclusions on the findings

There is a general appreciation from the participants that being a woman and being black presents a different dynamic which requires one to be resilient and not have a linear approach to managing careers and using relational opportunities within the environment. There was consensus from the participants relating to technical astuteness being one of the contributors to getting on the radar of persons with influence so as to not fade into one of numbers, especially in large organisations. Where the participants enjoyed great success was in their relationships with their direct managers, particularly before landing in senior management. Their advocacy, frank feedback and persuasion enabled the participants to come out of their shell and be mindful of their own contributions to their development and progression. These speak to challenges of overcoming shyness, not putting up a hand or guarding against complacency.

The senior managers who winged their development without having access to executive coaching have not presented as less successful than those that have. This is largely due to their commitment to not fail or not meet their achievements. The women felt that sponsorship does move the bar for many black women in banking and eased the pressure of the many challenges. Organisational culture plays a role in how the women saw themselves growing within entities.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter expands on key themes that emanated from the findings in the previous chapter. The themes discussed are further synthesised to the main objective of the study, which is to examine how sponsorship can be utilised in the executive coaching process in facilitation of the career progression of black women.

It was critical for the study, to understand the inhibitors and supporting tools in the career progression of black women in the sector of interest. These are synthesised into three themes from Chapter 4 and to the responses to the research propositions. Each of the themes will be discussed and compared to the results of the literature review. Thereafter concluding remarks will be positioned with observations.

5.2 Discussion pertaining to Research Question 1

Research question 1 states: How have the career challenges experienced by black women changed their personal and professional development goals? This section sought to respond to the research question, and the proposition that; the challenges experienced by black women can be alleviated through sponsorship and executive coaching.

The participants confirmed that although challenges existed in their professional and personal journey, they did not give up, change their goals or reduce ambitions; in fact the obstacles increased their determination to make their lives a success. In a similar study conducted in India by Nath (2000), it was found that women who made it to the higher strata of organisations painted a similar picture of a determination to stay and confront the barriers, supported by different structures and intrinsic motivation to succeed. Acting in line with their desire to advance in their careers allowed the participants to break out of their comfort zone and test their abilities.

Davis and Maldonado (2015) highlighted that due to demographics of the workforce changing with a higher representation of women, there is a requirement to manage people differently. The retention and development of women has become complex, hence there is still frustration from women about the barriers that influence how they are seen and recognised in the environment. Despite substantial advancements towards gender equality, evidence of differences in treatment are still a reality for women. Carnes et al. (2011) stated that a significant number of women successfully made it into middle and lower levels of management than into the C-suite, due to difficulties of breaking through the glass ceiling. Understanding challenges, biases and organisational practices that continue to embed the glass ceiling is critical, to close the gap and fast-track the career progression of black women.

In unpacking these challenges experienced by the participants, three subthemes emerged, and these are namely concentrated on credibility and recognition, work-life balance and self-promotion and self-efficacy in career development.

5.2.1 *Credibility and recognition*

The exclusions of the apartheid era constructed social discrimination and created a racial and gendered hierarchy. The significance of gender and race in organisations has been researched extensively, with findings that continue to highlight how racism and sexism negatively affect black women's career experiences (Booyesen & Nkomo, 2010; De Alwis & Bombuwela, 2013; Jaga et al., 2017). Racism and sexism can be invisible and artful as experienced by some of the participants. Participant A's experience of racial discrimination was overt, in that she could not be promoted due to her race and was protected by her then sponsor from her employment being terminated or being moved to a less impactful area of business. This was despite her excellence and credibility in her role and purely based on race.

Where racism and sexism is not exercised openly, it surfaces in well-disposed unconscious everyday behaviours (Sue, 2010). These microaggressions means targeting and demeaning a group of people by relegating them to inferior status. Uda (2017) cited that when racism is systemised, it can be detected in attitudes

and behaviours that equate to intolerance through ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racial stereotyping. Gendered stereotypes can lead to biases that reduce women to their gender and race, which raised anxiety for participants who articulated their need to perform beyond expectation so as not to fail and gain recognition on merit.

Feeling undermined or seen as less competent based on gender and race is a form of microaggression and in the example shared by Participant A, she described being seen as inferior. The emphasis from Participant B, Participant E and Participant I on their race and gender, and the heightened need to succeed supports the view of Rosette and Livingston (2012), that generally black women are often expected to fail as they are often performance evaluated negatively when they make mistakes. This forces black women to exhibit exceptional diligence in their outputs, and unduly disadvantages them. Black women are often faced with challenges of having their competency and authority questioned (Harlow, 2003).

Participant B and Participant I introduced an aspect of invisibility to the challenges black women face particularly in male dominated environment. Intentional invisibility is defined by Ballakrishnen et al. (2019), as a strategy women adopt that is risk-averse and conflict-avoidant to quietly navigate gender imbalanced work environments. Deciding how to show up has a cost which can result in entrenching existing stereotypes, inauthenticity and increased scrutiny (McCluney & Rabelo, 2019). The two participants highlighted the necessity to be outspoken and not blend in, thus adopting strategic visibility and coping strategies, allowing them to show up confidently.

As a coping mechanism, the participants highlighted the need to show up confidently, and self-assured in your abilities. Authenticity was highlighted as key, as women often struggle defining their leadership style and may adopt more agentic traits to be accepted and recognised in a male dominated environment (Eagly & Carli, 2018). To gain critical mass, the participants had a realistic view of how they must bend to manoeuvre their environments and have adopted collaborative style which allowed them to be authoritative without being repressive.

Organisations that reject the notion that women have a unique style and character in a workplace, place significant hurdles in the career progression of women (Budhwar et al., 2005). Embracing this uniqueness may improve the potential of adopting gender-free recognition systems, thus alleviating the pressure from women having to work twice as hard to prove their worth and to gain same recognition as their male counterparts.

5.2.2 *Work-life Balance*

Traditional beliefs and societal attitudes concerning the role of women can confine them to the role of homemaker (Kiamba, 2009), and these can place women under pressure of juggling the two worlds. Career adaptability takes into consideration factors such as work life balance, and how one manages the interplay between social expectations, opportunities and own abilities (Cosentino et al., 2021). Jaga et al. (2017) posits that a failure to develop family friendly policies or workplaces, and diversity strategies to include a new norm may limit women and the organisation itself of the opportunity to meet the transformation agenda. An example of such family-friendly environments are those that afford employees flexible working. This is an aspect appreciated by Participant C who felt that she is fully accepted in her environment as a mother and a manager. The ease of being able to fulfil the dual roles has improved her experience of work. Hayman (2009) suggest that flexible work best supports a balance between work and home.

A view shared by Participant E, of having to attend to an unscheduled meeting past working hours, whilst her husband was waiting for her in the parking lot is example of manager insensitivity. She stated that when she raised the fact that her husband was waiting, she sensed an irritability from her manager which sights evidence of poor organisation support to work-life balance. Family friendly policies are seen as central to strategies to attract, engage and retain resources within inclusive environments. Women's obligatory roles as caretakers, against the backdrop of social norms can introduce occupational stress on female managers as long hours are used as proxy for commitment.

Whilst organisations have advanced in making available tools to support flexible working, a conscious approach to creating sustainable balance between work and home is needed. In other examples shared by the participants, the tools of trade have created wider accessibility where it becomes difficult to totally disengage from work. Examples include working during leave periods, attending to emails and other workplans once children are put to sleep. Allen et al (2013) posits that workplace practices such as flexible work can help reduce employee family and work imbalance, however without the right cultures there may be limitations. Leaders can impact how individuals experience a work environment by building positive work culture and leading with empathy which is seen as a critical leadership behaviour (Holt & Marques, 2012).

Behson (2005) argues that the lack of work control, independence and choice of how and when work undermines well intended practices. From the tone of the participants, it alludes to an inability to communicate boundaries where necessary, or an environment where one cannot say no to such demands. The inability to decline requests that infringe on family time, confirms that the importance of the balance between work and home is undermined. This difficulty to disengage from work has seen the participants taking a sick child to work or relying on family support to tend to the child, due to work obligations. The challenge raised are similar to other similar studies that found that coping strategies adopted by women include leaning on paid help, domestic support and communicating boundaries (Bittman & Lovejoy, 1993; Linehan, 2001). Hall et al. (2012) found another coping strategies, being placing reliance on other black females for support as a response to managing workplace stress. This was seen in experiences of Participant A and Participant E.

Two of the participants used coaching services to remedy work life challenges and time management. Coaching can be used as a tool to address work stress and wellbeing using models that integrate the coachee's personal approach to facilitate change. Kossek (2016) sighted boundary management as a growing competence for leaders in managing themselves and others inclusively. Thus boundary renegotiation is areas wherein executing coaching can be impactful to resolve such obstacles. With black women being held to higher levels of scrutiny;

their intolerance towards making mistakes places additional burden to work twice as hard and twice as long, thereby inconsequently creating imbalance between home and work. These were common sentiments from the participants.

5.2.3 *Self-promotion and self-efficacy in career development*

Self-promotion describes an individual's ability to speak of own accomplishments in order to be viewed as more competent, thus promoting self-image (Ferris & Judge, 1991). The researcher drew from theories of impression management, that speak to conscious and unconscious image control through social interaction. Mäkinen (2012) believes that self-promotion is in response to circumstances one finds themselves in, largely influenced by the changes to the labour market, social state, changes in the organisation or economics. Previous research suggested that women who self-promote were generally viewed negatively in comparison to male peers who engage in the same behaviours, because agentic behaviours are seen incongruent to female traits however this argument does not hold true for african women (Livingston et al., 2012).

Bandura (2001) sees personal agency as one's ability to exercise agency over their life as a function of self-reflectiveness of own competence, intentionality and purposeful pursuit of own outcomes. This self-directed action aids personal growth, development and goal attainment. The participants applied different strategies including taking up assignments they felt less confident to execute, in order to stand out, thus creating a personal leadership development strategy, and shaping conversations about their careers.

Determination and resilience are related to self-efficacy, which forces women to show an ability to adapt uniquely (Abrams et al., 2014). There was a strong sense of self-reliance from the participants, as they shared common thoughts of not waiting for someone to hand down anything to them. This intrinsic motivation is seen as a determinant of performance behaviours and needs to be supported by reward and recognition tools such as career progression, promotion, and involvement in high-impact projects (Cerasoli et al., 2014).

It is determined that generally women lack self-confidence, as they have a greater negative self-reflection of their abilities than men, which can impact self-promotion (Zenger, 2018). Confidence is seen as an underlying competence to the success of leaders (Hopkins and Bilimoria, 2008). The lack thereof, can be heightened by a lack of self-direction in careers, independence and self-motivation particularly in a male-dominated world.

Black women's career journeys are diversely nuanced as they manoeuvre the duality of race and gender against the backdrop of biases, microaggressions, lack of leadership interest in developing black excellence and self-doubt, thus impacting self-confidence (Liff & Dale, 1994; Gill & Orgad, 2017; Shaw, 2020; Baines, 2020). In male dominated environments, men generally receive more sponsorship than women, thus creating perceived competence for those being supported. Given the need for organisations to show agility and inclusiveness, the standards against which women are generally held, cannot continue without change.

The career models that offered job security as opposed to job satisfaction are outdated as more women exercise career self-agency and want to enjoy the balance between work and home or different employee value proposition. Career self-agency depends on the absence of gatekeepers, so in male dominated environments, biased leaders can act as gatekeepers (Fernando & Cohen, 2014). Women seeking opportunities need to adopt strategies such as self-promotion as means of ensuring their visibility to secure themselves sponsors, as women are deemed to lack the right social capital. Using self-promotion tactics, one is able to draw interest from others to the qualities that highlights their potential, future ambitions and past achievements (Proost et al., 2010). The participants used the words "get yourself out there" often in an attempt to highlight the importance of self-promotion and career agency in order to grab to right attention and potentially gain favour for future opportunities.

5.3 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 2

The proposition was concerned with whether leader-led advocacy through sponsorship enables black women to achieve career progression and desired goals. The related research question sought to understand how black women experienced leader-led visibility in their careers and the contribution thereof to their goals.

The findings were aligned with the existing literature on the benefits derived from sponsorship. The participants all benefited from a sponsor relationship in their careers, which resulted in career mobility. The type of career mobility that the women experienced aligns with the career mobility systems articulated by Turner (1960), that career success can materialise through contest-mobility and through sponsored mobility.

Social cognitive theory as outlined by Bandura (2001), has three modes, namely personal agency, collective agency and proxy agency. Proxy agency essentially relies on other's actions to get desired outcomes. Social capital theories do not exclude intraorganisational ties, such as sponsorship as a social system that increases legitimacy and produces greater visibility for career advancement, especially when the sponsorship is from higher organisational levels (Seibert et al 2001). To ascend in careers, one needs networking, mentoring and sponsorship strategies as part of career development (Wells and Hancock, 2017). Sponsorship is earned, with protégés expected to significantly exceed performance measures (Hewlett, 2019). All the participants attested to this sentiment as it related to expectations they held of themselves as protégé's.

Sponsoring an individual is seen as high-stake game, as one needs to be certain that the protégé will deliver in order to give advocacy. According to Ang (2018) women are likely to receive mentorship than sponsorship. Sponsors have largely been seen as subset of mentoring and the terms were used interchangeably until delineations that saw sponsors as individuals who support individual careers progression through breaking hierarchical barriers (Roche, 1979; Kram, 1985; Hewlett, 2013). Whilst mentorship provides career support to women, it may not

necessarily provide advocacy. Advocacy is seen as positive sponsor behaviour, as it can allow for women's contributions to be discussed to the right audience.

Travis et al. (2013) posits that sponsorship has the potential to catapult untapped talent that would have been otherwise unknown, into platforms for greater visibility to the leadership. The writer also suggests that sponsors can push women to put up their hand to take up stretch targets, as they would ordinarily not be asked to tackle them. The participants spoke to being given opportunities to take up different projects, to partake in meetings that they would have not been invited to, if it were not for their sponsors. This includes being asked to apply for specific positions. From the participants experience, it was clear that being given opportunity to conduct functions of a specific role increased readiness at the time the position become available, thereby positively impacting candidacy.

There are a number of reasons for the lack of black female representation, and one such challenge includes lack of sponsorship. Without the sponsorship, women are likely to be overlooked for management positions due to varying perceptions of "readiness", especially when the measures of success are based on gendered stereotypes. Sponsorship, based on the women's experiences can take place at many levels to elevate women's visibility. The participants experienced sponsorship from persons with positional power who publicly advocated for their advancement and engagement in high visibility project. This fits into one of the defined characteristics of sponsors.

As determined by Larson et al. (2004), a key feature to facilitate positive development includes the provision of psychological safety through supportive relationships, skills development, encouragement of self-efficacy. Balthazar and Murphy (2021) see sponsors as persons who can actively influence diversity, and act as talent scouts. A known risk to sponsors is assuming risk for the protégés, who may perform to expectations or underdeliver. To take risks, exercise agility, and experience diversification in roles, requires one to step outside their comfort zone and trust themselves. In this instance, research suggests that one does not have to navigate the muddy waters alone or be fearful of making mistakes as sponsorship offers some degree of protection.

The currency of sponsorship elevates the individual brand, due to the difficulty of being taken seriously if one is unknown (Ang, 2018). Managers who acted as sponsors brokered introductions to other influential people, allowing for the protégé's to lean on their social capital and human capital (Broadbridge, 2010). Social capital is known to play a role in creating access to opportunities for black women (Moalusi, 2013). Two of participants spoke to using own networks and industry engagements to access opportunities, whilst most of the participants were requested to apply for specific roles. This potentially alludes to women facing potential challenge in using social capital for personal advancement, whilst men are known to apply networking strategies purposefully. What was evident in the findings was that the participants benefitted from social capital much earlier in their careers to facilitate mobility. At later stage in their careers, social support and getting critical mass through board representation and partaking in committees was seen to be an important lever to advance the agenda of women equality in the workplace.

In a study conducted by Ibarra and Obodaru (2009), an inability for women to formulate and create a vision for themselves was one of the career barriers flagged (pp. 1). The study suggested that women showed lack of confidence to step out of the box and be courageous in claiming credit for work they carried out. These sentiments have been shared by participants who had their moments of self-doubt and being overlooked based on race and gender. A competence of leadership associated with women includes possessing transformational qualities, which indicates women's appreciation for being a supporter, a collaborator who are inclined towards using diverse inputs and creating alliances as a strategy (Silva & Mendis, 2017). In Chapter 2, a reference has been made to relational theory asserting that women's developmental plan is edged on connecting and building trusting relationships based on authenticity. When a stereotypical lens is applied, these qualities can be ignored for more masculine traits. Sponsorship in this instance allowed the participants opportunity to test themselves without fear of recourse. It also aided in the development of inner confidence and career advice through provision of frank feedback on performance. Openness, trust, listening, and mutual understanding are highlighted as features of rapport (O'Broin and Palmer, 2010; Gan & Chong,

2015). These features are seen as important not only in a coaching relationship but in a developmental relationship such as sponsorship.

5.4 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 3

This proposition related to sponsorship having the potential to influence the executive coaching process by providing support to achieve set professional and personal goals.

Job security is no longer adequate to keep staff engaged, as opposed to wider employee proposition, as organisations move towards participative management and wider inclusion, particularly of black women and other groups previously disadvantaged (Booyesen, 2007; Van der Merwe, 2018). In a study conducted in a bank in Lagos, Amori and Becky (2020) highlight a combination of reward and recognition, development opportunities, employee engagement, autonomy, leadership style as factors that improve retention. These factors are not different from a South African context, with an expectation that talent can only be nurtured when championed by leadership (Mahadeo, 2012). Globally, banks recognise the fight for talent and are pressured to develop leadership pipeline to safeguard future success, as banks have not been left unimpacted by leadership crisis (Bingab, 2019; Zintl, 2015; Amori & Becky, 2020). In this context, leadership coaching is critical to be able to provide developmental support and engage leadership behaviors in support of leaders' self-interest and the well-being and motivation of those being led.

Whilst there are a number of views on what coaching is, a more common definition is that coaching is generally tailored to individuals through reflective conversations, in a trusting and supportive environment (de Haan & Duckworth, 2013). Executive coaching is described by Witherspoon (2014) as action-learning process used to ignite action and learning. Two of the participants expressed getting a recommendation of executive coaching as transition programmes into new roles, and this was well received by them.

Executive Coaching being used as a tool to gain confidence and wider team acceptance is not in contradiction with literature relating to leadership confidence,

integrating leadership identity and encouraging authenticity (Yip et al., 2020; Kilpatrick, 2022). Though all participants from the sample group worked with sponsors at some point in their careers, it was difficult to get a larger sample who have been exposed to executive coaching in their management journey, thus the reflection is based on the four participants who have had this benefit.

Reichard and Johnson (2011) advocate for leaders being self-developers, meaning that self-development and self-mastery orientation play a role in the quality of leadership. Executive coaching is seen to aid in identifying leadership style, increasing self-confidence, self-efficacy, and a sense of authenticity to the benefit of the coachee. The benefits and use of executive coaching is not contrary to areas that six participants foresee as developmental gaps that could be remedied by executive coaching.

Barn and Morin (2010) found that executive coaching was most used in four instances, including skills development as a result of a promotion and skills development needs related to the manager as an individual. Participant E, Participant F and Participant G noted that their need for executive coaching stemmed from being promoted into senior roles, where their integration into the role was supported through executive coaching. The process enabled mutually developed goals to fully entrench them into new roles. Participant E had the same experience twice in her career, where she has had to work with an executive coach to help her with transitioning into a new role and help her acclimatise to the organisational expectations in dealing with other executives, and general management of teams in line with the set tone of people management. Similar to Participant E, elevating executive presence through coaching was a goal shared by Participant F. Participant F benefitted from working with an executive coach, in an effort to overcome work life balance challenges, to improve general quality of life.

In the case of the four participants, the intervention was recommended by the Human Resources practitioner and direct reporting managers and not their sponsors. Sponsorship is seen by Ibarra et al., (2010) as having proven benefit in supporting integration and success in a new role, through the introduction of early feedback as part of managing delivery and performance (Magrane et al.,

2018). In this context it's important that the parties are well oriented as to the expected outcomes and to gain an appreciation that without working alliance as part of the coaching process, the coaching goals can be undermined (Potrac et al., 2000). The establishment of the coaching climate and the readiness of the coachee are supported by the trust relationship that an individual has with the initiator of the executive coaching intervention. Goal attainment is achieved where coachees are in harmony with the perceived outcome as it satisfies their autonomy, competence and relatedness, thus engaging sustained efforts (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999)

Baron and Morin (2010) affirmed the intended results of coaching in the development of self-efficacy beliefs and outcomes, aligned to setting one's own goals, acting in a balanced way, and mindful living and working. Participant G believed that coaching is helping her in showing up as authentic and defining her leadership style whilst integrating into a new team. She did articulate that she is naturally a reserved individual who now needed to shed her identity so as to be more people-centric in line with the organisational leadership expectations. The essence of leadership authenticity is weaved from several positive traits including trust, reliability, genuine interest and being reputable (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). The researchers further reflect on authenticity as a product of greater self-awareness and self-regulation, thereby fostering positive self-development.

Observations made of participants who received executive coaching was that they had readiness to learn, and positively experienced the rapport between themselves and their coaches. They highlighted the importance of feedback, which allowed them to self-reflect and self-regulate through daily challenges. In instances where they did not want to engage their reporting managers about performance or internal conflicts, the coaches created a safe space for them. Other than the coachee's readiness, central to the coaching process is the coach allegiance and working alliance used to support transparency and foster trust in the coaching relationship (Lai and Palmer, 2019). The relationship between the coachee and the coach sets a tone to the success of the coaching process, and where there is failure to foster trust, the developmental milestones may be compromised. The analysis of the data collected gave positive indication of a

trusting relationship and working alliance with their coaches, however there was no evidence that sponsorship influenced the coaching process.

Participant D used an alternated form of coaching other than utilising services of an executive coach to manage work life balance. There was limitations to the existing literature on organisational benefits derived as a result of leaders pursuing personal development and goals through other forms of coaching other than executive coaching. Participant B and Participant G, decided to leave the banking world to pursue own businesses as a result of clarity gained from executive coaching, which supported them in taking the leap. These were personal goals that they achieved. Individuals pursue personal goals for the attainment of greater psychological well-being, self-efficacy and self-awareness, which are seen as agentic influences. Personal goals have much to do with self-idealisation and promoting personal development and may include goals related to health, time management, career changes, family goals, and relationships (Nair, 2003; Grant, 2008; Gazelle & Liebschutz, 2015). It was evident that, executive coaching is less accessible to women as opposed to being sponsored or mentored, and that the personal challenges such as confidence, self-promotion, self-direction in careers are challenges that can be supported through one-on-one intervention in early careers to development future leadership skills.

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

The challenges of discrimination on the basis of race and gender can hinder career progression for black women. The findings provided valuable insights that addressed the research questions and showed that the challenges experienced by black women can be remedied through sponsorship and executive coaching. The findings were in harmony with existing literature relating to the challenges faced by women, the known benefits of sponsorship and executive coaching and the contribution thereof in career progression of black women.

Sponsors seemingly influenced career mobility largely in middle and senior management, and not as evident in the movement into executive management. To fill this gap, the women relied on the known currency of social capital and

using industry engagements to find other opportunities for themselves. The findings showed that the women possess self-agency, self-reliance and self-efficacy to succeed in their careers, using supporting systems including mentors, however sponsors contributed a meaningful change to their careers.

This finding is supported by research that associates self-agency and self-efficacy to adaption to changes within the organisation and highlights it as a central role player in how individuals deal with their own motivation towards goal attainment. Self-efficacy has been linked to improved work performance in areas requiring complicated interpersonal tasks, which are central for management. Shear will, industriousness and determination of the women could not solely aid the advancement of their career, as the findings showed the contributory factor of sponsors in their advancement. Although executive coaching has become increasingly adopted as a developmental tool for leaders, access to executive coaches remains an intervention available to a limited numbers of women. The participants that had received executive coaching found it useful in the areas aligned to the general purpose of coaching and found it to be an enabling tool that provided security, guidance and space to reflect purposefully.

In conclusion, the findings of the study are not misaligned to existing literature on how sponsorship and executive coaching can advance careers of black women. There was however no evidence that suggests sponsorship has an influence on the coaching process, as the four outcomes of coaching that have been met, were not tied to any sponsorship outputs. The findings suggest that the participants showed great self-direction and self-efficacy in the attainment of their respective goals.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to blend the findings from the study propositions by supporting the conclusions drawn, discussing the theoretical and practical implications of the study findings and making appropriate recommendations. The recommendations of the study are made to Human Resources Practitioners who engage with talent management data, coordinate coaching efforts and the design of development interventions aimed at women in leadership. The study will also assist leaders who are willing to assume the role of sponsor and black women who intend to progress in the workplace. The study concentrated on challenges that black women have experienced in their careers, the role of leader-led visibility and how sponsorship influences the coaching process.

6.2 Conclusions regarding research question 1

The findings relating to the first research question sought to understand how the career challenges experienced by black women changed their personal and professional development goals. The findings showed that participants experienced common challenges linked to the glass ceiling, which has been researched extensively in the past. Some of them experienced micro-aggressions from stakeholders and colleagues, where they had their competence second guessed, or their authority undermined. Lack of sponsorship was shared as a stumbling block in examples shared of career stagnation. These challenges have been highlighted in previous research and are still common in modern day workplace, hence there are no new phenomena. The participants highlighted the importance of above par performance, so as to be credible amongst your peers, however this came at a cost of an imbalance between home and work. The women expressed strong regard for self-reliance and intrinsic motivation to continue pursuing their career ambitions.

The research demonstrated that black women in male dominated environments face discrimination that impacts their career experience, thus it is important to understand and interrogate the stereotypes and assumptions made about black women and leadership. Additional findings show that the type of challenges experienced can be alleviated through sponsorship, executive coaching and organisational culture that accept women for who they are. This acceptance promotes authenticity, confidence and agency to stretch oneself. The study also showed that the agentic behaviours typically presented by males were present in black women, thus there is a need to understand how these behaviours have not improved senior management opportunities for women.

6.3 Conclusions regarding research question 2

The second research question sought to understand how the women experienced leader-led visibility in their careers and the contribution thereof to their goals. With regards to leader-led visibility through sponsorship, the black women who participated in the study gained favour from visibility, advocacy, social capital, mediation and candidacy provided by sponsors. They reported mobility in their careers that they can attribute to sponsorship. These findings are not new to existing studies of the benefit of sponsorship. The participants experienced sponsorship largely from males which may give indication that the lack of black women representation may be a contributor to low numbers of women sponsoring other women.

6.4 Conclusions regarding research question 3

The participants asserted that the support one receives from their coach is crucial to the relationship and the coaching process. There is positive assertion across literature of the relational considerations between the coach and the coachee, being fundamental to ensure that the coaching agenda is led the coachee, and that the coach does not act as a teacher. The feedback and the reflective probing increased self-awareness and self-regulation amongst the participants who received coaching. The areas positively affected by the coaching initiatives

included career changes, positive management of work life balance, leadership development, authenticity and integration into new roles.

Learning goal orientation and the positive coaching experience improve perceived psychological safety and discretionary performance efforts (Baron & Morin, 2010). The participants had an inherent behaviour aligned to goal orientation and strong self-efficacy which increased their learning agility. In reflection of their coaching experiences, career sponsorship did not impact the coaching process, as the coaching was aligned to normal business practice.

6.5 Recommendations

Eradicating institutional barriers and discrimination, requires purposeful pursuit of transforming the relationship among race, racism and power (Sanyal & Sweeney, 2015). Workplaces continue to see an increase in numbers of women across generations, race and ethnicity, which is an indicator that managing diversity has become a business imperative. The banking sector is largely seen as male dominated with a stagnation of careers for women. There is a need for leaders and management teams in the sector to take an active interest in gender specific barriers so as to improve progression, inclusion and transformation. Based on the above, the below recommendations are proposed to the stakeholders in the first chapter.

Organisation wide implication

Organisations must adopt a diverse and inclusive culture, with measurable outcomes of management actions as enablers. The adoption of such programmes builds a culture of trust, and encourages employee participation, through improved communication, access to information and a sense of community. The other benefit to embarking on a diversity and inclusion journey is addressing the unconscious bias and identifying barriers within the environment. Demystifying diversity and inclusion will allow for organisations to understand the daily experiences of employees and the structural impediments that exist. Previous research on diversity concentrated on talent acquisition, mentoring programmes and increasing retention, however there is a need to

consider wider impact points. The success of purposeful diversity is hinged on engagement and specific performance indicators for diversity and inclusion, to eradicate exclusions.

Some of the strategic changes that impact diversity in the workplace include giving authority to different committees to break down known barriers within the environment. Providing financial backing and resources to such committees where there is shared identity creates space for solutions, improved engagement and retention (Welbourne et al., 2017). People's wellbeing is contingent on their ability to exercise goal directed behaviour, pursue goals, access resources and community support (Hobfoll, 2002). Shapiro et al., (2009) encourage organisations to promote and reward career self-agency. This can be done through sharing of positive stories, to change perceptions of career limitations within the institutions. Women's lived experiences provide useful insight into real first-hand experiences in order to address the underlying issues.

Organisations should adopt family friendly policies and ways of work to allow for flexibility. This change in culture can help dispel perceptions that work should be a primary priority if you want to advance. The change in culture will also allow for long hours to not be used as proxy for commitment. Building a high-performance culture requires for working hours to be regulated and for staff to have personal discretion over time, in order for employees to have a balance between home and work (White et al., 2003).

Recommendations for leaders and sponsors

Sponsorship is one of the strategic resources known to improve diversity and gender diversity in the workplace. Advocating for women's visibility gives impetus to women being accepted and being seen as credible competent peers within the organisation, thus reducing the belief of having to work twice as hard as peers to gain recognition. In gendered environments, leaders and sponsors play a critical role in creating opportunities for others through gender integration to facilitate attitude changes. This consciousness to gender equity provides an opportunity to advance black women into senior and executive positions through sponsorship, as it has been shown as integral to career progression.

Understanding the challenges and specific factors that impede the progression of black women gives way to understanding the areas of impact. Sponsors have an opportunity to gain wider impact through advocating for gender equality holistically and not only specific black women's careers, (Scheepers et al., 2018).

Recommendations for black women

Growing up, women are often raised to keep a low profile and to be less aggressive, whilst boys were raised to be confident and outspoken. Challenges with such societal norms is that women are forced to discard leadership and submit to men (Schwartz et al., 2016). These societal norms affecting black women introduce a difficulty for women to aggressively pursue their career objectives and renders the concept of self-promotion as non-existent.

Networking - Women are encouraged to invest in creating communities and forums through industry engagements to actively build advocacy, access to resources and information and develop the right social capital depth to respond to industry needs. These can comprise of internal and external colleagues in order to expand professional networks through self-selection. Seeking supportive professional networks could assist individuals to learn about different opportunities, help improve organisational practices, and allow for sharing of strategies to advance their careers (Terosky et al., 2014).

Personal brand strength - Individual barriers for women can be alleviated through adoption of strategies to help in building personal career brand. According to Gorbato et al. (2019), personal branding is a series of well-designed actions to position, communicate professional value and package a value proposition. This can be adopted in careers by employing self-promotion to attain positive career outcomes. This is seen as intentional career behaviours that support career agency. Engaging in efforts of self-directed learning and career pathing helps design unique career experiences for women. This may contribute positively to creating a personal leadership development strategy.

Self-Advocacy - A study by Hobfoll (2002) highlighted that individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are capable of employing their own resources to actualise their pursuits. The women's perception of their own agency sets a tone on how

they engage in active career planning conversations. To realise agency, one needs to be able to identify career opportunities, exercise career adaptability and self-presentation behaviours.

Sponsor other women - Sponsors hold high expectations of their protégés and still view hard work performance, and leadership competencies as prerequisite (Scheepers et al., 2018). Women must cultivate deep range of skills to capacitate themselves with the necessary tools to engage meaningfully within technical areas, in this way they gain merit and credibility. Hickman (2020) suggests that women who are sponsored are five times likely to get promoted than those without. It is critical to understand and scan the environment for opportunities to create visibility and advocate for other women. Although women seek agency over gender issues through board representations, the lack of boardroom diversity hinders the power distribution and limits the trickle-down effect.

Recommendations for Human Resources Practitioners:

Human Resources Practitioners should consider introducing learning and development programmes that do not box women into one career stream. Through career conversations, variation of career paths can be established for future leaders and for women that do not want a career in management. This will be useful in identifying upcoming opportunities and designing unique interventions to accelerate the readiness of women.

It is critical to guard against poor implementation of redress programs as these may not adequately address underlying problems of attitudes towards women. Utilising organisational data points in order to design and implement fact-based transformation strategies can aid in facilitating fit for purpose solutions, with long term effects. Develop and strengthen enforceable policies advocating for promotion of gender equality and the deployment of women across different levels.

Recommendations for Researchers:

Studies are needed to determine a view from women executives, of systemic organisational hurdles or personal limitations that influence their own participation as potential sponsors. This view may give guide to the type of support needed for future female sponsors to improve representation of women in decision making roles.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

This study demonstrated how black women experienced of leader-led visibility, their experiences of executive coaching and how the sponsorship influenced the executive coaching process. Based on the findings, the following recommendations for future research about sponsorship and executive coaching:

- A study is needed to understand the challenges and successes of sponsorship for black women by black women.
- Conduct a study to track career progression of black women over a longer period focusing on the sponsor and protégée relationship over time.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of introducing individual level coaching at middle management for black women to address personal barriers to entry into senior management.
- The effectiveness of the development of diversity metrics in aid of women representation at leadership.

6.7 Limitations of the study

The sample chosen are black women in a niche sector in Gauteng, whereas challenges to career progression are not only a black woman issue. The limitation to the sample and geographic area posed a limit in acquiring a wider view from other women.

Employing a qualitative approach, eliminated the opportunity to empirically assess performance improvements, confidence, and other sentiments post executive coaching or sponsorship.

Using technology to facilitate interviews introduced anxiety to participants hence it was key to work around their availability. The quality of connectivity gave impetus to the interview and the positive flow of relation between the researcher and the participant. The lack of disruption bodes well for transcribing and recording in line with conducting a thematic analysis. The data analysis process followed an iterative process that placed limitations to the categorisation of themes, to heighten dependability challenges.

The study did not focus on the benefits of mentorship programs. The focus on mentorship can limit opportunity to deepen the understanding of sponsorship and the advocacy it provides towards career progression.

The study focused on the sponsorship experiences of black women and did not consider experiences of sponsors in identifying protégés. This limited gaining a view on how black women should position themselves to gain visibility and access to potential sponsors.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, J. A., Maxwell, M., Pope, M., & Belgrave, F. Z. (2014). Carrying the world with the grace of a lady and the grit of a warrior: Deepening our understanding of the "Strong Black Woman" schema. *Psychology of women quarterly*, 38(4), 37-38.
- Adams, R. B., & Ferreira, D. (2009). Women in the boardroom and their impact on governance and performance. *Journal of financial economics*, 94(2), 291-309.
- Akala, B. M. (2018). Challenging gender equality in South African transformation policies—a case of the white paper: a programme for the transformation of higher education. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 32(3), 226-248.
- Al Ariss, A. (2014). *Global talent management*. Springer.
- Allen, T. D., French, K. A., & Poteet, M. L. (2016). Women and career advancement. *Organizational Dynamics*, 3(45), 206-216.
- Allen, T. D., Johnson, R. C., Kiburz, K. M., & Shockley, K. M. (2013). Work–family conflict and flexible work arrangements: Deconstructing flexibility. *Personnel psychology*, 66(2), 364-365.
- Ang, J. (2018). Why career sponsorship matters for advancing women. *Women and Business*, 1(4), 36-43.
- Ang, J. (2019). Career Sponsorship: An Effective Way for Developing Women Leaders. In *Leading for High Performance in Asia* (pp. 89-105). Springer.
- Ang, J. (2019). Reciprocal Nature of the Sponsor Relationship. In *The Game Plan of Successful Career Sponsorship*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Ang, J., & Reb, J. (2017). Why every manager needs a sponsor.
- Anwar, A., Nisar, Q. A., Khan, N. Z. A., & Sana, A. (2014). Talent management: Strategic priority of organizations. *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies*, 9(3), 1151 - 1152.
- Arifin, S. R. M. (2018). Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International Journal of Care Scholars*, 1(2), 30-33.
- Aroni, R., Goeman, D., Stewart, K., Sawyer, S., Abramson, M., & Thein, F. (1999). Concepts of rigour: When methodological, clinical and ethical

- issues intersect. Association for Qualitative Research Conference, Melbourne,
- Athanasopoulou, A., & Dopson, S. (2015). *Developing leaders by executive coaching: Practice and evidence*. OUP Oxford.
- Babcock, L., & Laschever, S. (2009). *Women don't ask*. Princeton University Press.
- Bachkirova, T. (2010). The cognitive-developmental approach to coaching. *The complete handbook of coaching*, 132-145.
- Baines, P. (2020). *Exploring the Perceived Barriers that Create a Disadvantage for Black Women to Obtain Leadership Positions in the Finance and Investment Industry*. Liberty University.
- Baker, E. L., Hengelbrok, H., Murphy, S. A., & Gilkey, R. (2021). Building a coaching culture—the roles of coaches, mentors, and sponsors. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, 27(3), 325-328.
- Ballakrishnen, S., Fielding-Singh, P., & Maglioni, D. (2019). Intentional invisibility: Professional women and the navigation of workplace constraints. *Sociological Perspectives*, 62(1), 31-32.
- Al Balushi, K. (2016). The use of online semi-structured interviews in interpretive research. *International journal of science and research (IJSR)*, 57(4), 727-729.
- Bamberger, P. (2009). Employee help-seeking: Antecedents, consequences and new insights for future research. In *Research in personnel and human resources management*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual review of psychology*, 52(1), 10-12.
- Barner, R., & Higgins, J. (2007). Understanding implicit models that guide the coaching process. *Journal of Management Development*.
- Baron, L., & Morin, L. (2010). The impact of executive coaching on self-efficacy related to management soft-skills. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*.

- Baron, L., Morin, L., & Morin, D. (2011). Executive coaching: The effect of working alliance discrepancy on the development of coachees' self-efficacy. *Journal of Management Development*.
- Bartlett II, J. E., Boylan, R. V., & Hale, J. E. (2014). Executive coaching: An integrative literature review. *Journal of Human Resource and Sustainability Studies*, 2(04), 188.
- Behson, S. J. (2005). The relative contribution of formal and informal organizational work–family support. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 66(3), 50-56.
- Bendassolli, P. F. (2013, January). Theory building in qualitative research: Reconsidering the problem of induction. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 14, No. 1).
- Berdahl, J. L., Cooper, M., Glick, P., Livingston, R. W., & Williams, J. C. (2018). Work as a masculinity contest. *Journal of social issues*, 74, 422.
- Berry, D. M. (2003). An evaluation of mentoring to develop a strategy for facilitating the objectives of the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998). Unpublished manuscript.
- Bhide, V., & Tootell, B. (2018). Perceptions of sponsoring as a career advancement tool for women: Are they different in Europe? *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 16(1), 3-19.
- Bickman, L., Goldring, E., De Andrade, A. R., Breda, C., & Goff, P. (2012). Improving Principal Leadership through Feedback and Coaching. Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness.
- Bitsch, V. (2005). Qualitative research: A grounded theory example and evaluation criteria. *Journal of agribusiness*, 23(345-2016-15096), 86.
- Bittman, M., & Lovejoy, F. (1993). Domestic power: negotiating an unequal division of labour within a framework of equality. *The Australian and New Zealand journal of sociology*, 29(3), 317-319.
- Blacker, R. L. (2009). A thematic analysis of psychodynamically-oriented supervision of observations in an acute impatient ward [University of Leicester].
- Bligh, M., & Ito, A. (2017). Organizational processes and systems that affect women in leadership. In *Handbook of research on gender and leadership*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

- Bluckert, P. (2006). Psychological dimensions of executive coaching. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Blumberg, K. M. (2016). Competencies of outstanding executive coaches: A grounded theory approach.
- Bond, A. S., & Naughton, N. (2011). The role of coaching in managing leadership transitions. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 6(2), 165-179.
- Booyesen, L. A., & Nkomo, S. M. (2010). Gender role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics: The case of South Africa. *Gender in Management: An international journal*, 25(4), 285-300.
- Booyesen, L. (2007). Barriers to employment equity implementation and retention of blacks in management in South Africa. *South African journal of labour relations*, 31(1), 47-71.
- Bowen, G. A. (2008). Naturalistic inquiry and the saturation concept: a research note. *Qualitative research*, 8(1), 137-152.
- Bowling, C. J., Kelleher, C. A., Jones, J., & Wright, D. S. (2006). Cracked ceilings, firmer floors, and weakening walls: Trends and patterns in gender representation among executives leading American state agencies, 1970–2000. *Public Administration Review*, 66(6), 823-836.
- Boyatzis, R. E., Smith, M. L., & Blaize, N. (2006). Developing sustainable leaders through coaching and compassion. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 5(1), 8-9.
- Bozer, G., Sarros, J. C., & Santora, J. C. (2014). Executive coaching: Guidelines that work. *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*.
- Bramante, A. (2015). *Correlation between self-esteem, self-efficacy, personality, fear of success, and self-defeating behaviors of performing artists* Walden University.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Brue, K. L., & Brue, S. A. (2016). Experiences and outcomes of a women's leadership development program: A phenomenological investigation. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 15(3), 76 - 78.
- Buchanan, N. T., & Settles, I. H. (2019). Managing (in) visibility and hypervisibility in the workplace. In: Elsevier.

- Budhwar, P. S., Saini, D. S., & Bhatnagar, J. (2005). Women in management in the new economic environment: The case of India. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 11(2), 183-184.
- Burke, R. J., & Major, D. A. (2014). *Gender in Organisations: Are Men Allies or Adversaries to Women's Career Advancement?* Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Caelli, K., Ray, L., & Mill, J. (2003). 'Clear as mud': toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 2(2), 1-13.
- Carnes, W. J., & Radojevich-Kelley, N. (2011). The effects of the glass ceiling on women in the workforce: Where are they and where are they going? *Review of Management Innovation & Creativity*, 4(10).
- Carr, P. L., Helitzer, D., Freund, K., Westring, A., McGee, R., Campbell, P. B., Wood, C. V., & Villablanca, A. (2019). A summary report from the research partnership on women in science careers. *Journal of general internal medicine*, 34(3), 356-362.
- Cassells, R., & Duncan, A. S. (2021). *Gender equity insights 2021: Making it a priority* (No. GE06). Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC), Curtin Business School.
- Catalyst. (2020). Quick Take: Women in Financial Services. <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-financial-services/>
- Cavanagh, M. (2005). Mental-health issues and challenging clients in executive coaching. *Evidence-Based Coaching Volume 1: Theory, Research and Practice from the Behavioural Sciences*, 21.
- Cavanagh, M. J., Grant, A. M., & Kemp, T. (2005). *Evidence-based coaching* (Vol. 1). Citeseer.
- Cerasoli, C. P., Nicklin, J. M., & Ford, M. T. (2014). Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic incentives jointly predict performance: a 40-year meta-analysis. *Psychological bulletin*, 140(4), 980.
- Chapman, L.A. (2010). *Integrated experiential coaching: Becoming an executive coach*. London: Karnac.
- Charleston, L. J., George, P. L., Jackson, J. F., Berhanu, J., & Amechi, M. H. (2014). Navigating underrepresented STEM spaces: Experiences of Black women in US computing science higher education programs who actualize success. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 7(3), 166.

- Chisale, S. S. (2018). Ubuntu as care: Deconstructing the gendered Ubuntu. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 39(1), 1-8.
- Christians, C. G. (2011). Journalism ethics in theory and practice. In *The handbook of communication ethics* (pp. 210-223). Routledge.
- Choi, S. (2019). Breaking through the glass ceiling: Social capital matters for women's career success? *International Public Management Journal*, 22(2), 2-3.
- Cloete, N., Bunting, I., & Maassen, P. (2015). Research universities in Africa: An empirical overview of eight flagship universities. Knowledge production and contradictory functions in African higher education, 1, 18.
- Clutterbuck, D. (2008). What's happening in coaching and mentoring? And what is the difference between them? *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*.
- Commission on Gender Equality. 2000. Promotion of Gender Equality and Prevention of Unfair Treatment Act No. 4. Pretoria: Government Printer
- Cortland, C. I., & Kinias, Z. (2019). Stereotype threat and women's work satisfaction: The importance of role models. *Archives of Scientific Psychology*, 7(1), 81.
- Cosentino, A., Weese, W. J., & Wells, J. E. (2021). Strategies to advance women: Career insights from senior leadership women in professional sport in Canada. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 3, 716505.
- Cox, E., Bachkirova, T., & Clutterbuck, D. A. (2014). *The complete handbook of coaching*. Sage.
- Cronin, C., & Armour, K. M. (2017). 'Being'in the coaching world: new insights on youth performance coaching from an interpretative phenomenological approach. *Sport, Education and Society*, 22(8), 919-931.
- Cushion, C. (2007). Modelling the complexity of the coaching process. *International journal of sports science & coaching*, 2(4), 398-399.
- Dajani, D., & Zaki, M. A. (2015). The impact of employee engagement on job performance and organisational commitment in the Egyptian banking sector.
- Dalakoura, A. (2010). Differentiating leader and leadership development: A collective framework for leadership development. *Journal of Management Development*.

- Davis, D. R., & Maldonado, C. (2015). Shattering the glass ceiling: The leadership development of African American women in higher education. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 35, 48-64.
- De Alwis, A. C., & Bombuwela, P. (2013). Effects of glass ceiling on women career development in private sector organizations—Case of Sri Lanka.
- De Haan, E. (2019). Critical moments in executive coaching: Understanding the coaching process through research and evidence-based theory. Routledge.
- De Haan, E., Duckworth, A., Birch, D., & Jones, C. (2013). Executive coaching outcome research: The contribution of common factors such as relationship, personality match, and self-efficacy. *Consulting psychology journal: practice and research*, 65(1), 40.
- De Haan, E., & Duckworth, A. (2013). Signalling a new trend in executive coaching outcome research. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 8(1), 6-19.
- De Haan, E., Moly, J., & Nilsson, V. O. (2020). New findings on the effectiveness of the coaching relationship: Time to think differently about active ingredients? *Consulting psychology journal: practice and research*.
- De Klerk, S., & Verreynne, M. L. (2017). The networking practices of women managers in an emerging economy setting: negotiating institutional and social barriers. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 27(3), 477-501.
- De Vries, J., & Binns, J. (2018). Sponsorship: Creating career opportunities for women in higher education. Canberra, ACT, Australia: Universities Australia Executive Women (UAEW).[Google Scholar].
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). The general causality orientations scale: Self-determination in personality. *Journal of research in personality*, 19(2), 111-128.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2012). Motivation, personality, and development within embedded social contexts: An overview of self-determination theory.
- Derks, B., Van Laar, C., & Ellemers, N. (2016). The queen bee phenomenon: Why women leaders distance themselves from junior women. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(3), 456-469.

- Duffy, M., & Sperry, L. (2007). Workplace mobbing: Individual and family health consequences. *The family journal*, 15(4), 398-404.
- Dukes, S. (1984). Phenomenological methodology in the human sciences. *Journal of religion and health*, 23(3), 197-203.
- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2018). Women and the labyrinth of leadership. *In Contemporary issues in leadership* (pp. 147-162). Routledge.
- Eddleston, K. A., & Powell, G. N. (2012). Nurturing entrepreneurs' work–family balance: A gendered perspective. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 36(3), 513-541.
- Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness. *SAGE open*, 4(1), 2158244014522633.
- Eriksson, M., & Emmelin, M. (2013). What constitutes a health-enabling neighborhood? A grounded theory situational analysis addressing the significance of social capital and gender. *Social Science & Medicine*, 97, 112-123.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American journal of theoretical and applied statistics*, 5(1), 1-4.
- Faizan, R., Nair, S., & Haque, A. (2018). The effectiveness of feminine and masculine leadership styles in relation to contrasting gender's performances. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 17.
- Fernando, W. D. A., & Cohen, L. (2014). Respectable femininity and career agency: exploring paradoxical imperatives. *Gender, work & organization*, 21(2), 150-152.
- Ferreira, A. M. (2011). Coaching as a leadership development tool: A case study to consider the factors that influenced the perceived failure of an executive coaching intervention. Unpublished thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch.
- Ferris, G. R., & Judge, T. A. (1991). Personnel/human resources management: A political influence perspective. *Journal of management*, 17(2), 20.
- Flaherty, J. (2010). Coaching. Routledge.
- Fletcher, E., Pande, R., & Moore, C. M. T. (2017). Women and work in India: Descriptive evidence and a review of potential policies.

- Gan, G. C., & Chong, C. W. (2015). Coaching relationship in executive coaching: A Malaysian study. *Journal of Management Development*.
- Gandhi, M., & Johnson, M. (2016). Creating More Effective Mentors: Mentoring the Mentor. *AIDS and Behavior*, 20, 294.
- Gazelle, G., Liebschutz, J. M., & Riess, H. (2015). Physician burnout: coaching a way out. *Journal of general internal medicine*, 30, 510-511.
- Gessnitzer, S., & Kauffeld, S. (2015). The working alliance in coaching: Why behavior is the key to success. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 51(2), 177-197.
- Ghosh, R., & Reio Jr, T. G. (2013). Career benefits associated with mentoring for mentors: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 83(1), 106-116.
- Gill, M. J. (2015). A phenomenology of feeling: Examining the experience of emotion in organisations. In *New ways of studying emotions in organisations*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Gill, R., & Orgad, S. (2017). Confidence culture and the remaking of feminism. *New Formations*, 91(91), 14-15.
- Given, L. M. (2008). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Sage publications.
- Gorbatov, S., Khapova, S. N., & Lysova, E. I. (2019). Get noticed to get ahead: The impact of personal branding on career success. *Frontiers in psychology*, 10, 2.
- Goldstein, M., Gonzalez Martinez, P., & Papineni, S. (2019). Tackling the Global Profitarchy.
- Goleman, D. (2017). *Leadership that gets results (Harvard business review classics)*. Harvard Business Press.
- González-Serrano, L., Villacé-Molinero, T., Talón-Ballester, P., & Fuente-Cabrero, C. D. L. (2018). Women and the glass ceiling in the community of Madrid hotel industry. *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management*, 18(1-2), 91-111.
- Grant, A. M. (2008). Personal life coaching for coaches-in-training enhances goal attainment, insight and learning. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 1(1), 64-65.
- Grant, A. M. (2014). The efficacy of executive coaching in times of change. *Journal of change management*, 14(2), 258-280.

- Grant, A. M., Curtayne, L., & Burton, G. (2009). Executive coaching enhances goal attainment, resilience and workplace well-being: A standardized controlled study. *The journal of positive psychology*, 4(5), 396-407.
- Greenson, R. R. (2018). *The technique and practice of psychoanalysis: Volume I*. Routledge.
- Gregory, J. B., Beck, J. W., & Carr, A. E. (2011). Goals, feedback, and self-regulation: Control theory as a natural framework for executive coaching. *Consulting psychology journal: practice and research*, 63(1), 26.
- Greguletz, E., Diehl, M.-R., & Kreutzer, K. (2019). Why women build less effective networks than men: The role of structural exclusion and personal hesitation. *Human Relations*.
- La Guardia, J. G., & Patrick, H. (2008). Self-determination theory as a fundamental theory of close relationships. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 49(3), 202.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field methods*, 18(1), 59-82.
- Gunawan, J. (2015). Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Belitung Nursing Journal*, 1(1), 10-11.
- Hagan, T. L., & Medberry, E. (2016). Patient education vs. patient experiences of self-advocacy: changing the discourse to support cancer survivors. *Journal of Cancer Education*, 31(2), 375-381.
- Haggard, D. L., & Turban, D. B. (2012). The mentoring relationship as a context for psychological contract development. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 42(8), 1904-1931.
- Haines, E. L., Deaux, K., & Lofaro, N. (2016). The times they are a-changing... or are they not? A comparison of gender stereotypes, 1983–2014. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(3), 353-363.
- Hall, J. C., Everett, J. E., & Hamilton-Mason, J. (2012). Black women talk about workplace stress and how they cope. *Journal of black studies*, 43(2), 221-222.
- Hancock, M. G., & Hums, M. A. (2016). A “leaky pipeline”? Factors affecting the career development of senior-level female administrators in NCAA

- Division I athletic departments. *Sport Management Review*, 19(2), 198-210.
- Harlow, R. (2003). "Race Doesn't Matter, But. . .": The Effect of Race on Professors' Experiences and 194 Teaching Sociology 38(3) Emotion Management in the Undergraduate College Classroom." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66(4):354.
- Hayes, N. (2021). *Doing Psychological Research*, 2e. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Hayman, J. R. (2009). Flexible work arrangements: Exploring the linkages between perceived usability of flexible work schedules and work/life balance. *Community, work & family*, 12(3), 335-336.
- Heifetz, R. A., & Linsky, M. (2002). A survival guide for leaders. *Harvard Business Review*, 80(6), 65-74.
- Heilman, M. E. (2012). Gender stereotypes and workplace bias. *Research in organizational Behavior*, 32, 117.
- Hellriegel, D. J., Slocum, S., Staude, J., Amos, G., Klopper, T., Louw, H., & Oosthuizen, L. T.(2007). *Management*. 3rd South African Edition. In: Oxford Press. Southern Africa.
- Hennink, M. M., Kaiser, B. N., & Marconi, V. C. (2017). Code saturation versus meaning saturation: how many interviews are enough? *Qualitative health research*, 27(4), 591-608.
- Henry, W. J., & Glenn, N. M. (2009). Black women employed in the ivory tower: Connecting for success. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 29.
- Herzog, C., Handke, C., & Hitters, E. (2019). Analyzing talk and text II: Thematic analysis. In *The Palgrave handbook of methods for media policy research* (pp. 385-401). Springer.
- Hewlett, S. A. (2013). *Forget a mentor, find a sponsor: The new way to fast-track your career*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Hewlett, S. A. (2019). *The Sponsor Effect: How to be a Better Leader by Investing in Others*. Harvard Business Press.
- Hewlett, S. A., Peraino, K., Sherbin, L., & Sumberg, K. (2010). *The sponsor effect: Breaking through the last glass ceiling*. Harvard Business Review Boston, MA.

- Hickman, E. (2020). *Diversity, Merit and Power in the C-suite of the FTSE100* (Doctoral dissertation, UCL (University College London)).
- Hideg, I., & Ferris, D. L. (2014). Support for employment equity policies: A self-enhancement approach. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 123(1), 49-64.
- Hill, K. I. (2016). The use of power in executive presence. Gonzaga University.
- Hills, J. (2015). Addressing gender quotas in South Africa: Women empowerment and gender equality legislation. *Deakin L. Rev.*, 20, 153.
- Hilsabeck, R. C. (2018). Comparing mentorship and sponsorship in clinical neuropsychology. *The Clinical Neuropsychologist*, 32(2), 284-299.
- Hobfoll, S. E. (2002). Social and psychological resources and adaptation. *Review of general psychology*, 6(4), 307-308.
- Holder, A. M., Jackson, M. A., & Ponterotto, J. G. Racial. (2015). Microaggression Experiences and Coping Strategies of Black Women in Corporate Leadership.
- Holloway, I., & Wheeler, S. (2002). Qualitative research in nursing. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Holt, S., & Marques, J. (2012). Empathy in leadership: Appropriate or misplaced? An empirical study on a topic that is asking for attention. *Journal of business ethics*, 105.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative health research*, 15(9), 1277-1288.
- Hunt, D. M., & Michael, C. (1983). Mentorship: A career training and development tool. *Academy of management Review*, 8(3), 475-476
- Hunt, J. M., & Weintraub, J. R. (2016). The coaching manager: Developing top talent in business. SAGE publications.
- Ianiro, P. M., & Kauffeld, S. (2014). Take care what you bring with you: How coaches' mood and interpersonal behavior affect coaching success. *Consulting psychology journal: practice and research*, 66(3), 231.
- Ibarra, H. (2019). A lack of sponsorship is keeping women from advancing into leadership. *Harvard Business Review*.
- Ibarra, H., Carter, N. M., & Silva, C. (2010). Why men still get more promotions than women. *Harvard Business Review*, 88(9), 80-85.

- Ibarra, H., & Obodaru, O. (2009). Women and the vision thing. *Harvard business review*, 87(1), 1.
- Ishak, S. (2015). Career success studies: An examination of indicators, approach and underlying theories in literature. *Science Journal of Business and Management*, 3(6), 251-257.
- Ives, Y. (2008). What is 'coaching'? An exploration of conflicting paradigms. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, 6(2).
- Jackson, S. (2019). Coaching women towards authenticity: an appropriate workplace environment. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 17(2), 64-78.
- Jackson, S., & Bourne, D. J. (2020). Can an online coaching programme facilitate behavioural change in women working in STEM fields. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 15(1), 21.
- Jaga, A., Arabandi, B., Bagraim, J., & Mdlongwa, S. (2018). Doing the 'gender dance': Black women professionals negotiating gender, race, work and family in post-apartheid South Africa. *Community, Work & Family*, 21(4), 12-13.
- Jayachandran, S. (2021). Social norms as a barrier to women's employment in developing countries. *IMF Economic Review*, 69(3), 576-595.
- Johnson, L. N., & Thomas, K. M. (2012). A similar, marginal place in the academy: Contextualizing the leadership strategies of black women in the United States and South Africa. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 14(2), 156-171.
- Jones, R. L., Armour, K. M., & Potrac, P. (2002). Understanding the coaching process: A framework for social analysis. *Quest*, 54(1), 34-35.
- Jordan, S., & Kauffeld, S. (2020). A mixed methods study of effects and antecedents of solution-focused questions in coaching. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, 18(1).
- Joshi, A., Neely, B., Emrich, C., Griffiths, D., & George, G. (2015). Gender research in AMJ: an overview of five decades of empirical research and calls to action: thematic issue on gender in management research. In: Academy of Management Briarcliff Manor, NY.

- Kalu, F. A., & Bwalya, J. C. (2017). What makes qualitative research good research? An exploratory analysis of critical elements. *International Journal of Social Science Research*, 5(2), 43-44.
- Kets de Vries, M. F., & Rook, C. (2018). Coaching challenging executives. *Mastering Executive Coaching (2018)*, Jonathan Passmore and Bryan Underhill, (Eds.) Routledge, INSEAD Working Paper(2018/01).
- Khaldi, K. (2017). Quantitative, qualitative or mixed research: which research paradigm to use?. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 7(2), 22.
- Kiamba31, J. M. (2009). Women and leadership positions: Social and cultural barriers to success. *Wagadu Volume 6 Journal of International Women's Studies Volume 10: 1*, 19.
- Kilburg, R. R. (1996). Toward a conceptual understanding and definition of executive coaching. *Consulting psychology journal: practice and research*, 48(2), 134.
- Kilburg, R. R. (2007). Toward a conceptual understanding and definition of executive coaching.
- Kilburg, R. R. (2016). The development of human expertise: Toward a model for the 21st-century practice of coaching, consulting, and general applied psychology. *Consulting psychology journal: practice and research*, 68(2), 177.
- Kilpatrick, A. (2022). Senior leadership transition: how coaching supports challenges to confidence. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*.
- Koch, A. J., D'Mello, S. D., & Sackett, P. R. (2015). A meta-analysis of gender stereotypes and bias in experimental simulations of employment decision making. *Journal of applied psychology*, 100(1), 131.
- Kohli, D., Warwadekar, P., Kerle, N., Sliuzas, R., & Stein, A. (2013). Transferability of object-oriented image analysis methods for slum identification. *Remote Sensing*, 5(9), 4209-4228.
- Koortzen, P., & Oosthuizen, R. M. (2010). A competence executive coaching model. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 36(1), 1-11.
- Kossek, E. E. (2016). Managing work-life boundaries in the digital age. *Organizational dynamics*, 45(3), 258-259.

- Kram, K. E. (1983). Phases of the mentor relationship. *Academy of Management journal*, 26(4), 608-625.
- Kress, D. M. (2008). A phenomenological study exploring executive coaching: Understanding perceptions of self-awareness and leadership behavior changes, University of Phoenix.
- Kuhl, J., & Beckmann, J. (2012). *Action control: From cognition to behavior*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Kumra, S., & Vinnicombe, S. (2010). Impressing for success: A gendered analysis of a key social capital accumulation strategy. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 17(5), 521-546.
- Kuper, A., Lingard, L., & Levinson, W. (2008). Critically appraising qualitative research. *Bmj*, 337.
- Lai, Y. L., & Palmer, S. (2019). Psychology in executive coaching: an integrated literature review. *Journal of Work-Applied Management*.
- Landman, M. S., & O'Clery, N. (2020). The impact of the Employment Equity Act on female inter-industry labour mobility and the gender wage gap in South Africa. WIDER Working Paper.
- Larson, R., Eccles, J., & Gootman, J. A. (2004). Features of Positive Developmental Settings. *Prevention Researcher*, 11(2), 8.
- Leath, S., Jones, M., & Chavous, T. (2021). A strengths-based qualitative exploration of academic motivation strategies among lower-income Black college women attending PWIs. *Journal of African American Women and Girls in Education*, 1(3), 28-44.
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2005). *Practical research* (Vol. 108). Pearson Custom Saddle River, NJ.
- Levendale, C. (2017). Towards women's economic empowerment: An overview of challenges, achievements, legislative mechanisms and programmes. International Women's Conference, August,
- Li, S., Malin, J. R., & Hackman, D. G. (2018). Mentoring supports and mentoring across difference: Insights from mentees. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 26(5), 563-584.
- Liff, S., & Dale, K. (1994). Formal opportunity, informal barriers: black women managers within a local authority. *Work, Employment and Society*, 8(2), 189-190.

- Lin, N. (2017). Building a network theory of social capital. *Social capital*, 3-28.
- Lindwall, M., Weman-Josefsson, K., Sebire, S. J., & Standage, M. (2016). Viewing exercise goal content through a person-oriented lens: A self-determination perspective. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 27, 91-92.
- Linehan, M. (2001). Networking for female managers' career development: Empirical evidence. *Journal of Management Development*.
- Liu, K. (2015). Critical reflection as a framework for transformative learning in teacher education. *Educational Review*, 67(2), 135-157.
- Livingston, R. W., Rosette, A. S., & Washington, E. F. (2012). Can an agentic Black woman get ahead? The impact of race and interpersonal dominance on perceptions of female leaders. *Psychological science*, 23(4), 356-357.
- Luthans, F., & Avolio, B. J. (2003). Authentic leadership development. *Positive organizational scholarship*, 241(258), 1-26.
- Magrane, D. M., Morahan, P. S., Ambrose, S., & Dannels, S. A. (2018). Institutional matchmakers, sponsors, and strategists: Roles of academic STEM executives in developing the next generation of leaders. *Open Journal of Leadership*, 7(2), 168-186.
- Mahadeo, J. (2012). *Discerning Leadership Through Engaging and Nurturing Talent*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa).
- Mäkinen, K. (2012). *Becoming valuable selves. Self-promotion, gender and individuality in late capitalism*. Tampere University Press.
- Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: guided by information power. *Qualitative health research*, 26(13), 1753-1760.
- Marshall-Triner, J. (1986). "Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life", by Kathy E. Kram (Book Review). *Human Resource Management*, 25(4), 639.
- Matsa, D. A., & Miller, A. R. (2011). Chipping away at the glass ceiling: Gender spillovers in corporate leadership. *American Economic Review*, 101(3), 635-639.
- Mbokota, G. (2019). *The Process of Transformative Learning in Executive Coaching: a Realist Evaluation* University of Pretoria].
- McKinsey and Company. (2016), Women in the Workplace 2016. <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Or>

- ganization/Our%20Insights/Women%20in%20the%20Workplace%202016/Women-in-the-Workplace-2016.ashx
- McLellan, K. L., & Uys, K. (2009). Balancing dual roles in self-employed women: an exploratory study: empirical research. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 35(1), 1-10.
- McCluney, C. L., & Rabelo, V. C. (2019). Conditions of visibility: An intersectional examination of black women's belongingness and distinctiveness at work. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*.
- Melamed, T. (1996). Career success: an assessment of a gender-specific model. *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology*, 69(3), 217-242.
- Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of transformative education*, 1(1), 58-63.
- Miller, F., & Wertheimer, A. (2010). The ethics of consent: theory and practice. Oxford University Press.
- Mishra, A. K., & Mishra, K. E. (2013). The research on trust in leadership: The need for context. *Journal of Trust Research*, 3(1), 59-69.
- Mittler, P. (2014). Preparing for Self-advocacy. *Enabling Access*, 279.
- Moalusi, T. (2013). *Social networking sites in the accumulation and management of social capital for Black woman entrepreneurs* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).
- Moen, F., & Skaalvik, E. (2009). The effect from executive coaching on performance psychology. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, 7(2).
- Mohelska, H., & Sokolova, M. (2015). Organisational culture and leadership—joint vessels? *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 171, 1011-1016.
- Moolman, B. (2013). Rethinking 'masculinities in transition' in South Africa considering the 'intersectionality' of race, class, and sexuality with gender. *African Identities*, 11(1), 93-105.
- Moretti, F., van Vliet, L., Bensing, J., Deledda, G., Mazzi, M., Rimondini, M., Zimmermann, C., & Fletcher, I. (2011). A standardised approach to qualitative content analysis of focus group discussions from different countries. *Patient education and counseling*, 82(3), 420-428.
- Moss, S. (2012). Organismic integration theory.

- Mouchet, A., Morgan, K., & Thomas, G. (2018). Psychophenomenology and the explicitation interview for accessing subjective lived experience in sport coaching. *Sport, Education and Society*.
- Mpemba, N. (2018). Glass ceilings-a study into the barriers faced by aspiring professional black women in the South African Built Environment University of Cape Town.
- Nair, K. S. (2003). Life goals: the concept and its relevance to rehabilitation. *Clinical Rehabilitation*, 17(2), 195-196.
- Nakitende, M. (2012). Senior women leaders' motivation and success in higher education administration in the united states. Cardinal Stritch University.
- Nath, G. (2000) Gently shattering the glass ceiling: experiences of Indian women managers, *Women in Management Review*, 15(1), pp. 44–52.
- Neergaard, M. A., Olesen, F., Andersen, R. S., & Sondergaard, J. (2009). Qualitative description—the poor cousin of health research? *BMC medical research methodology*, 9(1), 1-5.
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). Defining content analysis. *Content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- O'Broin, A., & Palmer, S. (2010). Exploring key aspects in the formation of coaching relationships: Initial indicators from the perspective of the coachee and the coach. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 3(2), 124-143.
- O'Flaherty, C., & Everson, J. (2013). Coaching in South Africa. *Diversity in coaching: Working with gender, culture, race and age*, 75-86.
- O'Neil, J., & Marsick, V. J. (2014). Action learning coaching. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 16(2), 202-221.
- O'Neil, D. A., Hopkins, M. M., & Bilimoria, D. (2015). A framework for developing women leaders: Applications to executive coaching. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 51(2), 253-276.
- Onyechi, K. C. N., Eseadi, C., Okere, A. U., Onuigbo, L. N., Umoke, P. C., Anyaegbunam, N. J., Out, M. S., & Ugorji, N. J. (2016). Effects of cognitive behavioral coaching on depressive symptoms in a sample of type 2 diabetic inpatients in Nigeria. *Medicine*, 95(31).
- Ozyilmaz, A., Erdogan, B., & Karaeminogullari, A. (2018). Trust in organization as a moderator of the relationship between self-efficacy and workplace

- outcomes: A social cognitive theory-based examination. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 91(1), 181-204.
- Palmer, S., & Whybrow, A. (2005). The proposal to establish a special group in coaching psychology. *The Coaching Psychologist*, 1(1), 5-12.
- Passmore, J. (2018). Behavioural coaching. In *Handbook of coaching psychology* (pp. 99-107). Routledge.
- Passmore, J., & Fillery-Travis, A. (2011). A critical review of executive coaching research: a decade of progress and what's to come. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 4(2), 70-88.
- Pedler, M. (2011). *Action learning in practice*. Gower Publishing, Ltd.
- Peltier, B. (2011). *The psychology of executive coaching: Theory and application*. Taylor & Francis.
- Perkins, R. D. (2009). How executive coaching can change leader behavior and improve meeting effectiveness: An exploratory study. *Consulting psychology journal: practice and research*, 61(4), 298.
- Peterson, D. B. (2011). Executive coaching: A critical review and recommendations for advancing the practice.
- Pizam, A. (2017). The double bind phenomenon of hospitality female leaders. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 100(60), 142-143.
- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2012). Gender bias undermines evidence on gender and health. *Qualitative health research*, 22(9), 1298.
- Potgieter, S. C., & Barnard, A. (2010). The construction of work-life balance: the experience of black employees in a call-centre environment. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 36(1), 1-8.
- Potrac, P., Brewer, C., Jones, R., Armour, K., & Hoff, J. (2000). Toward an holistic understanding of the coaching process. *Quest*, 52(2), 190-191.
- Proost, K., Schreurs, B., De Witte, K., & Deros, E. (2010). Ingratiation and self-promotion in the selection interview: The effects of using single tactics or a combination of tactics on interviewer judgments. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 40(9), 2156-2157.
- Quick, J. C., Macik-Frey, M., & Cooper, C. L. (2007). Managerial dimensions of organisational health: The healthy leader at work. *Journal of Management Studies*, 44(2), 189-205.

- Ragins, B. R., & Kram, K. E. (2007). The roots and meaning of mentoring. The handbook of mentoring at work: Theory, research, and practice, 3-15.
- Ragins, B. R., & Verbos, A. K. (2017). Positive relationships in action: Relational mentoring and mentoring schemas in the workplace. In *Exploring positive relationships at work* (pp. 92-93). Psychology Press.
- Rao, V. (2019). Rethinking sponsoring: evidencing and conceptualising sponsorship as a relational practice for women's career development: a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, School of Management, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand Massey University.
- Reichard, R. J., & Johnson, S. K. (2011). Leader self-development as organizational strategy. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(1), 33-42.
- Reiss, S. (2012). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. *Teaching of psychology*, 39(2), 155-156.
- Rekalde, I., Landeta, J., Albizu, E., & Fernandez-Ferrin, P. (2017). Is executive coaching more effective than other management training and development methods? *Management Decision*.
- Republic of South Africa, R. o. S. (2013). Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (B50-2013). In: Government Printer Pretoria.
- Republic of South Africa. 2015. Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998 as amended: Code of good practice on equal pay/ remuneration for work of equal value. Government Gazette, No. 38837: 1 June 2015
- Riley, G. (2016). The role of self-determination theory and cognitive evaluation theory in home education. *Cogent education*, 3(1), 3- 4.
- Roberts, L. M., Cha, S. E., Hewlin, P. F., & Settles, I. H. (2009). Bringing the inside out: Enhancing authenticity and positive identity in organisations. *Exploring positive identities and organisations: Building a theoretical and research foundation*, 149-169.
- Rogers, R. (2001). Handbook of diagnostic and structured interviewing. Guilford Press.
- Rogish, A., Shemluck, N., Hazuria, S., & Danielecki, P (2022, June 16). Advancing more women leaders in financial services: A global report. <https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/financial-services/women-in-financial-services.html>

- Rosenthal, S. L., & Black, M. M. (2006). Commentary: Mentoring—Benchmarks for work performance. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 31(6), 643-646.
- Rosette, A. S., Koval, C. Z., Ma, A., & Livingston, R. (2016). Race matters for women leaders: Intersectional effects on agentic deficiencies and penalties. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(3), 429-445.
- Rosette, A. S., & Livingston, R. W. (2012). Failure is not an option for Black women: Effects of organizational performance on leaders with single versus dual-subordinate identities. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(5), 1163-1164.
- Rosha, A., & Lace, N. (2016). The scope of coaching in the context of organizational change. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 2(1), 2.
- Rowe, T., & Crafford, A. (2003). A study of barriers to career advancement for professional women in investment banking. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1(2), 21-27.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2019). Supporting autonomy, competence, and relatedness: The coaching process from a self-determination theory perspective.
- Ryan, R. M., Lynch, M. F., Vansteenkiste, M., & Deci, E. L. (2011). Motivation and autonomy in counseling, psychotherapy, and behavior change: A look at theory and practice. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 39(2), 193-260.
- Sabharwal, M. (2015). From glass ceiling to glass cliff: Women in senior executive service. *Journal of public administration research and theory*, 25(2), 4-5.
- Sadie, Y. (2014). Gender policy and legislation during the first 20 years of democracy. *The Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 36(2).
- Sansone, C., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (Eds.). (2000). *Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: The search for optimal motivation and performance*. Elsevier.
- Sanyal, C., Wilson, D., Sweeney, C., Smith Rachele, J., Kaur, S., & Yates, C. (2015). Diversity and inclusion depend on effective engagement: It is everyone's business to ensure that progress is maintained. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 23(5), 23-24.

- Scapens, R. W. (2004). Doing case study research. In *The real life guide to accounting research* (pp. 257-279). Elsevier.
- Scheepers, C. B., Douman, A., & Moodley, P. (2018). Sponsorship and social identity in advancement of women leaders in South Africa. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*.
- Schensul, J. J., & LeCompte, M. D. (2012). *Essential ethnographic methods: A mixed methods approach* (Vol. 3). Rowman Altamira.
- Schmalz, X., Marinus, E., Coltheart, M., & Castles, A. (2015). Getting to the bottom of orthographic depth. *Psychonomic bulletin & review*, 22(6), 1614-1629.
- Scholz, G., Dewulf, A., & Pahl-Wostl, C. (2014). An analytical framework of social learning facilitated by participatory methods. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 27, 396-399.
- Schwartz, J., Mosharafa, E., & Wallace, S. L. (2016). Women of Color in Academia and the Influence of Religious Culture on Self-Promotion: A Collaborative Autoethnography. *Rev. Eur. Stud.*, 8, 89.
- Scoular, A., & Linley, P. A. (2006). Coaching, goal-setting and personality type: What matters. *The Coaching Psychologist*, 2(1), 9-11.
- Segal, D. L., & Coolidge, F. L. (2003). Structured interviewing and DSM classification.
- Seibert, S. E., Kraimer, M. L., & Liden, R. C. (2001). A social capital theory of career success. *Academy of management journal*, 44(2), 224-226.
- Seierstad, C., Huse, M., & Seres, S. (2015). Lessons from Norway in getting women onto corporate boards. *The Conversation*, 6.
- Senge, P. M., Scharmer, C. O., Jaworski, J., & Flowers, B. S. (2004). *Presence: Human purpose and the field of the future* (Vol. 20081). SoL Cambridge, MA.
- Sharma, G., Narula, N., Ansari-Ramandi, M. M., Mouyis, K., & Churchill, W. (2019). *The Importance of Mentorship and Sponsorship*.
- Shaw, L. E. (2020). *The Confidence Factor: The Lived Experiences of African American Female Senior Student Affairs Administrators* (Doctoral dissertation, Ashland University).

- Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1999). Goal striving, need satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: the self-concordance model. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 76(3), 485.
- Shorter-Gooden, K. (2004). Multiple resistance strategies: How African American women cope with racism and sexism. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 30(3), 406-425.
- Silva, D. A. C. S., & Mendis, B. A. K. M. (2017). Male vs female leaders: Analysis of transformational, transactional & laissez-faire women leadership styles. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 9(9), 19-26.
- Singh, P., & Pattanaik, F. (2020). Unfolding unpaid domestic work in India: women's constraints, choices, and career. *Palgrave Communications*, 6(1), 1-13.
- Smith, J. A., & Shinebourne, P. (2012). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis*. American Psychological Association.
- Smith, S. B. (2019). Overcoming the race-sex barrier: what matters most in the executive sponsorship of black women.
- Smither, J. W., London, M., Flautt, R., Vargas, Y., & Kucine, I. (2003). Can working with an executive coach improve multisource feedback ratings over time? A quasi-experimental field study. *Personnel Psychology*, 56(1), 23-44.
- Sonesh, S. C., Coultas, C. W., Marlow, S. L., Lacerenza, C. N., Reyes, D., & Salas, E. (2015). Coaching in the wild: Identifying factors that lead to success. *Consulting psychology journal: practice and research*, 67(3), 189.
- South Africa. 1996. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. Pretoria: Government Printers
- South Africa. 2003. Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act, Act No. 53 of 2003. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Sperry, L. (2008). Executive coaching: An intervention, role function, or profession?
- Srivastava, S. B. (2015). Threat, opportunity, and network interaction in organizations. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 78(3), 246-262.

- Stamarski, C. S., & Son Hing, L. S. (2015). Gender inequalities in the workplace: the effects of organizational structures, processes, practices, and decision makers' sexism. *Frontiers in psychology*, 6, 1400.
- Stanley, C. A. (2009). Giving voice from the perspectives of African American women leaders. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 11(5), 551-561.
- Statistics South Africa. 2018. Quarterly Labour Force Survey (Q2). Quarterly Labour Force Survey – QLFS Q2:2018 | Statistics South Africa (statssa.gov.za)
- Sue, D. W. (2010). Microaggressions, marginality, and oppression: An introduction.
- Sultana, A. (2010). Patriarchy and women s subordination: a theoretical analysis. *Arts Faculty Journal*, 1-18.
- Taylor-Abdulai, H. B., Appiah-Kwapong, L. S., Sintim-Adasi, G., Sarpong, E., & Darkwa, A. (2014). Socio-cultural factors to breaking through the glass ceiling: A case study of university of Ghana, Legon. *Social Sciences*, 3(5), 170-176.
- Taylor, E. A., & Hardin, R. (2016). Female NCAA Division I athletic directors: Experiences and challenges. *Women in sport and physical activity journal*, 24(1), 14-25.
- Terosky, A. L., O'Meara, K., & Campbell, C. M. (2014). Enabling possibility: Women associate professors' sense of agency in career advancement. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 7(1), 69-70.
- The Banking Association South Africa. (2020). 2020 BASA Transformation Report.
- Thimm, C., Koch, S. C., & Schey, S. (2003). Communicating gendered professional identity: Competence, cooperation, and conflict in the workplace. *The handbook of language and gender*, 528.
- Tideman, M., & Svensson, O. (2015). Young people with intellectual disability—The role of self-advocacy in a transformed Swedish welfare system. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 10(1), 25100.

- Travis, E. L., Doty, L., & Helitzer, D. L. (2013). Sponsorship: a path to the academic medicine C-suite for women faculty? *Academic Medicine*, 88(10), 1414-1417.
- Travis, E. L., Doty, L., & Helitzer, D. L. (2013). Sponsorship: a path to the academic medicine C-suite for women faculty?. *Academic Medicine*, 88(10), 1415-1416.
- Turner RJ. (1960). Sponsored and contest mobility and the school system. *American Sociological Review*, 25, 855–867.
- Udah, H. (2017). Racial hierarchy and the global black experience of racism. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 5, 140-141.
- Ulin, P., Robinson, E., Tolley, E., & McNeill, E. (2002). Qualitative methods. A field guide for applied research in sexual and reproductive health. USA: Family Health International.
- Van Aarde, A., & Mostert, K. (2008). Work-home interaction of working females: What is the role of job and home characteristics? *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 34(3), 1-10.
- Van den Broeck, A., Ferris, D. L., Chang, C. H., & Rosen, C. C. (2016). A review of self-determination theory's basic psychological needs at work. *Journal of management*, 42(5), 1197-1198.
- Van der Merwe, S. (2018). *How Women Gain and Retain Management Positions: A Study of South African Female MBA Graduates*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa).
- Van Nieuwerburgh, C., & Passmore, J. (2018). Creating coaching cultures for learning. In *Coaching in Education* (pp. 153-172). Routledge.
- Vansteenkiste, M., Niemiec, C. P., & Soenens, B. (2010). The development of the five mini-theories of self-determination theory: An historical overview, emerging trends, and future directions. *The decade ahead: Theoretical perspectives on motivation and achievement*, 117-121.
- Wahyuni, D. (2012). The research design maze: Understanding paradigms, cases, methods and methodologies. *Journal of applied management accounting research*, 10(1), 69-80.
- Wan, H. L. (2007). Human capital development policies: enhancing employees' satisfaction. *Journal of European industrial training*.

- Welbourne, T. M., Rolf, S., & Schlachter, S. (2017). The case for employee resource groups: A review and social identity theory-based research agenda. *Personnel Review*.
- Wells, J. E., & Hancock, M. G. (2017). Networking, mentoring, sponsoring: Strategies to support women in sport leadership. In *Women in Sport Leadership* (pp. 130-147). Routledge.
- White, M., Hill, S., McGovern, P., Mills, C., & Smeaton, D. (2003). 'High-performance management practices, working hours and work-life balance. *British journal of industrial Relations*, 41(2), 191-192.
- Williamson, S. (2011). Executive presence is a top priority for leadership. Training. In.
- Witherspoon, R. (2014). Double-loop coaching for leadership development. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 50(3), 2-3.
- World Economic Forum (2017). Global Gender Gap Report 2017. WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf (weforum.org).
- Wright, J. (2005). Workplace coaching: what's it all about? *Work*, 24(3), 325-328.
- Wycherley, I. M., & Cox, E. (2008). Factors in the selection and matching of executive coaches in organisations. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 1(1), 39-53.
- Yip, J., Trainor, L. L., Black, H., Soto-Torres, L., & Reichard, R. J. (2020). Coaching new leaders: A relational process of integrating multiple identities. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 19(4), 503-520.
- Zenger, J. (2018). *The Confidence Gap in Men and Women: Why it Matters and How to Overcome it*. *Forbes*. Retrieved from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackzenger/2018/04/08/the-confidence-gap-in-men-and-women-why-it-matters-and-how-to-overcome-it/#45e849d53bfa> (accessed February 5, 2023).

APPENDIX A - An introduction letter / cover page

Subject: Introduction and Research study Information Sheet

My name is Tebogo Legote, (Student Number: 731341), and I am a student registered for Master of Management in Business and Executive Coaching (MMBEC).

I intend to conduct research to explore Sponsorship and Executive Coaching as tools that facilitate career progression of black women in the banking sector in Gauteng. It will be a qualitative study to understand their career journey and experiences as women, specifically in relation to sponsorship and the value of executive coaching in career progression.

The participants have been selected on the basis that they have been able to attain a level of seniority within their respective organisations and would contribute meaningfully to the context of the study based on their own experience of their career mobility. I would like to emphasise that the study participation is voluntary and requires your consent for me to video and/or audio record the interview so ensure accurate reflection of your experiences. Upon your acceptance, and at your most convenient availability, I will set up an hour (60 minutes) in your calendar to allow us to have a one-on-one interview.

Prior to any interview, I will also request your written consent by completing and signing the related consent form. Whilst the study is voluntary, I would like to impress upon you, that you may still withdraw your agreement to participate at any point where you are no longer comfortable to proceed.

The recordings will be kept confidential and may only be shared for review with people evaluating my work including my research supervisor. All records will be disposed of safely after the marking of my research study in 2022, and in all reports, you will only be referred to by initial only, with no mention of the organisation you are employed by. To maintain further integrity to the work, should there a need to use any quote verbatim, you will be engaged accordingly for your review.

I endeavor to share the outcomes of the study with you, at completion of the programme.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you (optional). The data collected from this research project will be stored in line with the university procedural guide. With your permission the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers (optional). If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za.

My supervisor is Ms Ayanda Magida, and all contact details and supporting information will be shared once permission has been granted by the University and by my Supervisor,

Please see below consent sheet.

Kind Regards, Tebogo Legote

APPENDIX B – Participant Consent Sheet

Research Title: **Sponsorship, executive coaching and the career progression of black women in the banking sector in Gauteng**

Please indicate with an X in the allocated space.

Declaration	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information sheet provided		
I have been provided with an opportunity for any question of clarity about the study		
I agree to partake voluntarily and understand that I can stop participation anytime		
I understand that my participation will be treated confidentially		
I agree to the video and audio recording of my interview		
 _____ Signature of Participant: Date of signature: _____		

APPENDIX C – Research instrument

Background and demographic information of the participant

Race		
Occupational management level (middle / senior)		
Occupational description		
Number of years in the sector		
Age range		

Ice Breaker: Thank the participant for making time to meet. Use an icebreaker like events of the morning to assess that they are at ease with the process.

Career Progression and challenges:

1. Please share your career journey thus far?
2. What significant challenges have you come across in your career progression? To what extent did these impact your career ambitions?
3. What do you consider to be your defining career milestones? Tell me more.
4. How have you experienced mobility (competition vs other mobility)? Expand on other mobility.

Sponsorship:

1. Please share with me your understanding and experience of sponsorship?
2. If one has not experienced sponsorship, what other processes have you experienced that created visibility for your skills/profile?
3. If you could, would you embark on seeking sponsorship and what would be your reasons (similar if the response is No)
4. Do you have a specific person in mind that can endorse you, and what prevents you from approaching them?

Executive Coaching:

1. Please share your understanding and experience of executive coaching?
2. At which stage of your management career did you start considering coaching as a development tool?
3. Please share any notable goals achieved through coaching?
4. How did sponsorship influence any of your goals?
5. What competence/potential were you looking to improve, and do you feel this has been attained?

Concluding question:

1. Do you draw any relationship between your career success to the direct benefits of sponsorship and executive coaching? If so, please expand your view on the perceived benefit?

Adhoc questions asked:

1. How have you experienced challenges in your career advancement as a result of your race or gender?
2. Those that have experienced sponsorship, I have asked them to disclose the race and gender of their sponsors.

APPENDIX D – Ethics Clearance Certificate

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg



Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/BE731341/239

This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).

Project title	Sponsorship, executive coaching and the career progression of black women in the banking sector in Gauteng
Investigator / Researcher	Ms Tebogo Legote
Nature of Project	MM (Business & Executive Coaching)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentiality.
Issue Date of Certificate	2022-05-20
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Prof Anthony Stacey ☎ +27 11 717 3587 ☎ +27 82 880 4531 ✉ anthony.stacey@wits.ac.za

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Stacey', positioned to the right of the contact information for the Chairperson.

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T Legote', positioned above the signature line.

Signature

24/05/22

Date: