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The barriers to success faced by women in management positions and the mechanisms to overcome them

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The barriers to success faced by women in management positions and the mechanisms to overcome them

Ané Verster

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 Business Administration

Johannesburg, 2017

ABSTRACT

The historical background of women in society and the stereotypes around the role and responsibilities of women, are some of the key reasons why women are still underrepresented in management positions within organisations. Women face various challenges in the workplace and this research explored the barriers to success faced by women in management positions and the mechanisms, such as mentorship and education, that they can use to overcome these barriers.

The qualitative research method was chosen to complete the study in an attempt to get female individuals' insights into the current situation women are faced in the workplace. Data was obtained by conducting interviews with 16 female respondents in management and executive positions across the financial services industry, media, consulting, automotive industry, engineering industry and healthcare industry. These interviews were based on a structured questionnaire.

The findings in this research where compared to the existing literature. Even though South Africa have implemented gender equality legislation, this research found that there are still various stereotypes that women currently encounter in the workplace which prevents them from advancing to the next level in their careers. The challenges that women face were identified as: gender bias, the underlying culture in organisations, networking, the role females play in an organisation, the payment gap, the glass ceiling effect as well as the Queen Bee syndrome. It was found that mentorship can be used as a mechanism to present future female leaders and allow them to accomplish the required performance,

whilst education, such as an MBA, was found not to be helpful to advance women to the next level in their career and specifically in the organisations that the respondents are employed with.

This research should be of interest to women who are already or who wants to be in management and executive positions. The researcher set out four suggestions for future research.

DECLARATION

I, **Ané Verster**, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

_____

Ané Verster

Signed at JOHANNESBURG on this the ____ day of JUNE 2017.

DEDICATION

To my two boys, **Enan and Liam**, for sacrificing so much play time and weekends to allow me to attend class and work after hours.

To **God** the almighty, for giving me the gifts of wisdom, knowledge and perseverance to complete this MBA journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people who helped me through this journey and completing this research project:

To my supervisor, Dr Zanele Ndaba, for her the guidance and advise throughout my research;

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to discuss the barriers to success, such as the glass ceiling and Queen Bee syndrome, women in management positions are currently facing in the workplace and how they can overcome those barriers through mechanisms, such as mentoring and furthering their education, to advance to the next level in their careers.

1.2 Context of the study

Names like Thuli Madonsela, Maria Ramos, Siza Mzimela and Mamphela Ramphele may be familiar to many South Africans, as female leader's worthy of recognition in our country. However, many other successful and inspirational South African women remain relatively unknown. Despite only one in every 26 women hired in senior management positions, South Africa is making progress in appointing females to company boards (Mandal, 2016). Though progress has been made, globally South Africa is still falling behind on the female gender representation in top management. The report from Grant Thornton released on International Women's day in 2015, shows that almost 39% of businesses in South Africa still do not have any female representation in senior management roles (Women in Business Survey, 2016).

The issue of gender diversity in South Africa has been on the agenda since 1994, however if one considers the statistics published by Grant Thornton International

and Business Women's Association of South Africa, amongst others, it is clear that no headway is being made. In a highly changing world, organisations should start to adapt their strategy to develop and retain female talent to ensure that business can continue to compete in a global landscape (Skade, 2015). Women do have the potential and ability to be the necessary leaders in the workplace, however lack of opportunities, support and resources often prevents women to advance to the next level and break through the glass ceiling (Fagenson, 2003).

Statistics South Africa estimated the population in the country to be 54.96 million of which approximately 51% (28.07 million) of this figure represent females (Statistics South Africa, 2015). A recent study done in 2015 by the Business Women's Association of South Africa ("**BWASA**") revealed that just two percent (2%) of women in South Africa holds CEO positions in companies listed on the JSE (Business Women's Association of South Africa, 2015). The two percent represents only 7 companies of the 293 JSE-listed companies with female CEO's (Skade, 2015). These statistics are quite alarming and points to the urgent need for South Africa to rethink the approach to women in management and the transformation of companies to reflect not only race -, but also gender equality that we promote in Section 9 of our Constitution (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Lee-Anne Bac, the director of Advisory Services at Grant Thornton, stated in the (Women in Business Survey, 2016) that the percentage of women in senior management positions is down from 27% in 2015 and dropped below the average of 26% achieved between 2004 and 2015. This research is not a good message

to women who want to advance in their careers. Ms Tabea Kabinda, CEE Chairperson, supports this view and stated that there is no achievement in terms of the advancement of women in top management (Henderson, 2016). Kabinda added that transformation is much too slow than what is needed. The fact that there is little or no progress in promoting women to management positions in organisations indicates that there are still barriers women are faced with the prevents them from advancing in their careers in both the private – and public sector (Doubell & Struwig, 2014).

Not everyone agrees that gender equality in the private sector is an issue. Colleen Larsen, CEO of Business Engage is of the opinion that even though there might be a decline of women on the boards of JSE listed companies, the role that some of these women play as non-executive directors or senior management still have a positive impact on the economy (Business Media Live, 2016). Despite the view of Larsen, the JSE imposed a requirement that from January 2017 all listed entities should have a policy on the promotion of gender equality in their executive boards and disclose how the company is performing against their policy (Jacobs, 2016). The new JSE requirements will ensure that companies not only comply with legislation advancing gender equality, it will also ensure that companies see the benefit of women at executive level in the private sector.

Women face many challenges that impacts diversity in the workplace. Despite impressive progression towards appointing more females into management positions through government legislation and policies, such as the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and affirmative action measures, female leaders continue

to experience some challenges in the distribution of their responsibilities as part of management (Diner, 2014). Larwood & Wood (2007) suggests, that a woman entering a management position in an organisation, must decide the extent and type of demands that she will be willing to accept. Female leaders play an important role in challenging gender stereotypes (Maseko, 2013). The statistics of women in management show that all women in South Africa experience to some extent the common glass ceiling experience, with black women continuing to be the most poorly represented group (Booysen L., 1999). Since the end of the apartheid era, legislation was ratified to ensure that inequality is addressed and significant importance was placed on advancing gender equality throughout society in South Africa (Marthur-Helm, 2004). The Employment Equity Act creates opportunity for women to remedy the gender equality in the workplace (Diner, 2014) and sets out the principles of equal pay for equal value (Bosch, 2015).

It is important to understand the factors in the current workplace environment in South Africa that contributes to the lack of transformation of women into management positions and as such preventing women to advance to the next level in their careers, specifically in the private sector, and how these barriers can be overcome. The participation of females in the economy remains key to eliminate inequality. This reiterates the importance of not only fighting inequality within the workplace but also within the broader society (Losi, 2016). In his Inaugural Speech Mandela (1994) stated that *"… freedom cannot be achieved unless woman have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. All of us must take this on board, that the objectives of the Reconstruction and*

Development Programme (RDP) will not have been realised unless we see in visible and practical terms that the conditions of the women in our country have radically changed for the better, and that they have been empowered to intervene in all spheres of life as equals with any other member of society". From the statistics available, it is clear that more should be done to ensure that women are treated fairly in the workplace and are embraced as part of the economy and economic activities (Marsland, 2004)

This study is focused on how the barriers, such as the glass ceiling and the Queen Bee syndrome, can be overcome through mechanisms such as mentorship and education, to ensure that equality is not just a buzz word in organisations and in South Africa, but rather a reality that every organisation is committed to.

1.3 Problem statement

1.3.1 *Main problem*

Women face many challenges that impacts diversity in the workplace. Change in organisational behaviour and culture can only begin once women take charge of opportunities offered to them (Govender, 2005). The main purpose of this study is to understand the stereotypes women currently encounter in the workplace.

1.3.2 *Sub-problems*

1.3.2.1 Are women still experiencing the glass ceiling effect in the workplace due to certain stereotypes and are women prevented from moving forward in their careers as a result of this?

1.3.2.2 Is the “Queen Bee syndrome” still a reality in organisations throughout South Africa and is it preventing junior females from reaching full potential in their careers?

1.3.2.3 Can these stereotypes that women face in the workplace, be overcome through mentorship and education?

1.4 Significance of the study

For various reasons females are still not being treated equally in the workplace. This study will provide an oversight of two typical barriers faced by women in the workplace and how gender inequality in the workplace and these identified barriers can be overcome.

It is clear that South Africa still has a long way to go to create an equal workplace where women can achieve their career goals and potential.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

This research was limited to two barriers, the glass ceiling and the queen bee syndrome, faced by women in the workplace and is therefore not an exhaustive list of barriers currently faced. Further, this research is limited to the private sector only and is not a representation of women in the private – and public sector in the South African workforce.

1.6 Definition of terms

BWASA	Business Women's Association of South Africa;
CGE	means the Commission for Gender Equality;
FEDSAW	Federation of South African Women;
Gender	means being male or female with reference to social and cultural differences between the two, rather than biological differences;
Gender equality	means the underlying causes of discrimination identified to give women and men equal opportunities in the workplace;
Glass ceiling	means a barrier affecting women in management that prevents them to advance to the next level in their career;
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange;
MBA	Degree of Master in Business Administration;
Queen bee syndrome	means a women in a position of authority who treats younger females more critically.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In South Africa it is known that prior to 1994, women formed part of a specific disadvantaged group of people. Since 1994, women are recognised in the workplace, however there are still some barriers women face daily that prevents them from advancing in their careers. This literature review explores two types of barriers that women are facing in the workplace and two possible solutions to overcome these barriers. The list is by no means exhaustive and it should be noted that this study is limited. In this chapter the background to gender inequality in South Africa will also be discussed. As a result of the gender inequality, it became necessary for South Africa to introduce measures to promote gender equality in the workplace. Women are confronted with various stereotypes and two barriers, the glass ceiling and the queen bee syndrome, and the measures to overcome these identified barriers in the workplace, will be discussed.

2.2 Background to gender inequality in South Africa

In South Africa, women played a prominent role in the fight for equal rights long before 1994. The position of women in South Africa cannot be fully appreciated without understanding how apartheid and British colonialism disrupted social relations amongst racial and gender lines. It was not until the Bill of Rights in our Constitution (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996) was introduced that all women in South Africa received formal recognition as equal

citizens (South African History Online, 2016). Certain customary – and common law principles excluded women from having certain rights.

On 9 August 1956, the Federation of South African Women ("**FEDSAW**") organised a march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to present a petition against carrying of passes by women. As a reminder, 9 August, Women's Day, is celebrated yearly. Since 1994, female representation in Parliament increased from 27.8% to 43.3% in 2009. Even though progress was made for female representation in the public service, there is still very low representation of females in senior management positions in the private sector (Apleni, 2012).

Although enormous progress has been made in the world of work as we know it today, management opportunities for women remains limited.

2.3 Gender equality in the workplace

Whilst significant attention has been given on how the women workforce can be effectively used as managers and leaders through their talents and skills that they bring, there is still a huge gender gap in the corporate workplace and in society as a whole (Davidson & Burke, 2011). Women continue to enter the workforce in South Africa in large numbers each year. This movement of constant entering placed a responsibility onto private sector organisations to open up more positions and promote women into management positions in the organisation.

Despite attempts to promote women in management, globally South Africa still lack behind some countries. With legislation introduced to breach the gender gap

of gender equality, private sector organisations are now compelled to invest in the development of women in their business to ensure that they get the best people for management positions whilst complying with the legal requirements of the relevant legislation and legal requirements (Anonymous, 2015). Women constitute more than half of the South African population and it would make no sense for organisations to ignore the talent of women and the benefits that they could bring to a diverse workforce.

More organisations need to realise that there are various benefits of having a diverse workforce and specifically having women in senior and executive management positions in an organisation (Barsh & Yee, Employing women in top positions drives profitability, 2011). Having more women on the board will help change the decision making process that will not only take into consideration the organisations needs but also the needs of the women in the organisation and in the process improve their performance (Davidson & Burke, 2011). Women bring various important aspects to the table as identified by Tarr-Whelan (2009). Women are typically more risk aware which generates higher profits within the organisation and allowing the organisation to have a greater ability to survive economic crisis (Ernst & Young Global Limited, 2009). Women allow for contributing policies to be effected in the organisation that will most likely promote and support fellow females in the organisation. Work-life balance will be more integrated into the culture of the organisation as women have a greater commitment to personal and corporate responsibility (Mahasha, 2016). The organisations Corporate Social Responsibility aspect will also get the exposure and the attention it needs to ensure that the organisation can attribute to society

as a whole. Tarr-Whelan (2009) also found that teamwork and participative decision making will be encouraged if there are enough women representatives on the senior or executive board.

More efforts are needed to help women to enter the workforce (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). Enacting legislation in South Africa to equalise and improve the proportion of women serving on executive or at least senior management level does work, however not enough as one would expect (Davidson & Burke, 2011). Research conducted by the Commission for Gender Equality ("**CGE**") reveals the challenges around transformation of gender relations and the empowerment women in the private sector (Manzini & Mosenogi, 2012). Without private companies engaging in the need to transform the workforce, goals for gender equality and the economic empowerment of women will not be accomplished. It can be argued that the private sector in South Africa plays a significant role in achieving the transformation goals of the country as a whole.

Most stakeholders today have no knowledge of the representation on the board of the company that they benefit from. No doubt that they will be surprised to know that there is very little diversity in the executive boardroom. According to a study by McKinsey & Company in 2015, research indicates that when companies commit themselves to a more diverse executive board, they are likely to be more successful. More diverse companies will win top talent and improve customer orientation, employee satisfaction and decision making which will ultimately lead to higher returns (Hunt, Layton, & Prince, 2015). Decision making requires the consideration of different points of view from different people with different

backgrounds and experience. Companies that have women at executive level and as part of their decision making structure set the example and send a clear message that they value diversity when making decisions in the organisation that ultimately leads to better performance (De Wet, 2016).

From the literature it is clear that there is value in having female representation on the executive board and that one of the aspects of corporate governance is to have a diverse board of directors (Smith, Smith, & Verner, 2006). The ability of women to improve the quality of corporate governance provide additional benefits to any organisation that could improve overall company performance (Willows & van der Linde, 2016). Notwithstanding the fact that various studies show positive results, women still face enormous barriers preventing them from reaching career goals. It is clear that policy and legislation in isolation will not improve women empowerment and that empowerment of women in the wider society within South Africa, is essential (Mathur-Helm B., 2017).

2.4 Barriers and challenges faced by women in the workplace

In a study by Booysen & Nkomo (2010), the same hypothesis as used by Schein (2001), was used to investigate the effects of race and gender on the typical stereotypes that women face in the workplace. The term ‘think manager, think male’ was introduced. Traits typically associated with leaders are stereotypically associated with men. These studies found that women are typically not treated as equals in the workplace which results in bais employment decisions. Men are viewed as very aggressive, dominant, strong, unemotional, competitive and logic amongst other caracteristics, while women are referred to as having opposite

traits such as being emotional, not confident enough and not commited to their jobs (Oakley, 2000). Female managers continue to face threats of stereotyping in the workplace and these stereotypes affect how women are perceived in the workplace (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). Although the stereotypes might continue to persist, research finds that there are very few differences in the management and performance of women and men. It appears that both women and men are likely to have the necessary characterisctics to achieve success as managers (Schein, 2001).

Research on gender tends to focus on the differences between males and females on a wide range of topics (Russo, Pirlott, & Cohen, 2012). Even though this research defines gender as being ‘stable’ and ‘unitary’ (Shefer, 2001), Abele (2003) proposed that gender issues are not fixed, but rather dynamic and constantly changing and influenced by socio-historical and culture, which plays a role in gender stereotyping and definition of social roles (Abele, 2003). In the social and traditional sense, women are perceived as being overly emotional, sensitive and physically weak in male dominated occupations (Ramaite, 2013). Ramaite (2013) goes on further by stating that patriarchy and domination by males are not just limited by to the home, but it also at the workplace.

In a Catalyst report from 2011, statistics showed that South African women only held 15.8% of board seats of which 5.3% was board chairs (Catalyst, 2011). The scale of economic gender underrepresentation of women in management positions is still a huge cause for concern (Dorius & Firebaugh, 2010). Without the necessary female representation in management positions, issues pertaining

to women in the organisation will not necessarily get the attention as it should. There might also be an impression that women are not suitable for management positions. The impression will result in the misconception that there is a glass ceiling in that organisation (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007, p. 8).

Studies show that assertiveness is viewed as a typical male quality that is useful when there is a need to take the lead. On the other hand, females are perceived to be supportive and nurturing. Those type of qualities are seen as more suited for roles outside of the organisation and not necessarily as part of the decision making role required in management positions (Wood, 2008). Women are very often perceived as unsuited to be part of the management in organisations as their social role is viewed as inconsistent with management roles (Ramaite, 2013). This perception resulted in male counterparts occupying the senior positions and having a greater status and as a consequence, reinforces the stereotype that women should rather stay home and play 'house' whilst men should continue to be the breadwinners (Rudman & Glick, 2008).

Competence and dominance are behaviours often expected from men (Maseko, 2013) whilst women are seen to be socially sensitive and qualities such as kindness, sensitivity, thoughtfulness and other attributes that demonstrates a concern for others in the workplace and society, are often referred to as communal (Eagly, 2007). A range of issues will arise for as long as the potential of women in the workplace is restrained, or in some cases ignored, by a patriarchal system where the decision-making powers are in the hands of males (Sadie, 2005). Women still find it difficult to advance in their careers

notwithstanding their qualifications or experience and mainly as a result of stereotyping and male favouritism. In a sense, women are being victimised for having career aspirations of becoming leaders. Despite global recognition that women should be integrated into the economy, job opportunities available to women are still significantly lower than those of men (Zahidi & Ibarra, 2010). It is also generally accepted that women are required to work harder than their male counterparts, to prove themselves in the workplace (Appelbaum et al., 2013).

In a typical organisation, there is very little encouragement from the executive board to aspire to become a future leader (Growe & Montgomery, 2000). The lack of encouragement can be contributed to the typical stereotypes surrounding these women in that home and family responsibilities might become an additional issue if there is a requirement for working long hours at a time (Sadie, 2005). Organisations must eliminate barriers that prevent women from advancing into senior management roles and provide females with equal opportunities (Zahidi & Ibarra, 2010). In order to remove barriers that prevent women from developing their careers, organisations require leadership at all levels, including the CEO, to drive change (Barsh et al., 2013).

2.4.1 *The glass ceiling*

The term ‘glass ceiling’ describes the lack of women in public and private sector organisations (Maume Jr, 2004). Some studies by psychologists explains that the glass ceiling in as a result of ‘natural selection’ that increased the success of humans over the past 20 000 years of evolution (Browne, 2006). Whilst a wide range of explanations have been proposed for this theory, some research show

that the existence of this theory is largely due to the different needs associated with women rather than men (O'Connor, 2001). Literature also indicates that the root cause for the glass ceiling are gender based barriers (Kumar S. , 2016).

This term further describes why women are prevented from advancing to senior management positions within the workplace (Weyer, 2007) and the obstacles and barriers faced by women who want to advance to the top (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005). In a study by Hoobler et al. (2011) it is argued that the glass ceiling results from the perception of the characteristics women should have in the workplace. These beliefs result in women being judged as unsuitable for leadership roles and explains why women advance to middle-management but not into senior roles despite their education and being visible (Hoobler et al., 2011). In general, women have to work harder than men to gain the same recognition and position (Kumar S. , 2016).

The glass ceiling might be invisible, but it is a powerful barrier that only allows women to grow their careers up to a certain point (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Eagly & Carli (2007) found that women still lack access to power compared to male counterparts. O'Connor (2001) means that women tend to prefer career 'trees' whilst men are more likely to climb the corporate ladder. Career 'trees' encompasses the various forms of career progression inside and outside of the organisation whilst the corporate ladder is the progression through an organisation specific fields from high to low. The argument is that if there is a career development path, or the career 'tree', there will be ongoing enhancement

of skills and knowledge that can lead to promotions into different positions and achieving career satisfaction.

More recent articles by Performheracademy (2015) and Brandheart (Young, 2014) suggests that men achieve more in their careers, not just because of being part of the 'boys club' but because women choose not to step into power positions. The gap between being competent to do the job and confidence that the job can be done by a woman, is a very wide one. Women tend to accept the glass ceiling effect and might, to some extent, be happy not to seek high level positions because they prefer a more balanced life rather than a high paid career (Wrigley, 2002). Wrigley (2002) goes further into this theory indicating that it is based on statements that indicate why women fail to pursue promotion due to the obstacles that they might face in the workplace. Studies in South Africa shows that the culture of long working hours and job requirements that might influence family and household work, discourages women to enter the boardrooms (Mathur-Helm B., 2006).

Mathur-Helm (2006) concluded that the glass ceiling experience are largely due as a result of culture, policy, strategy and competence, or lack thereof. While it is a common assumption that women do not want to advance in business, this view should be challenged. Oakley (2000) classifies the barriers faced by women as barriers caused by corporate practices, behaviours and culture of an organsation. A culture where women is supported in top positions in organisations will help to break the glass ceiling, however it would still be

necessary for women to grow, develop and empower themselves through education and career advancement (Kumar S. , 2016).

Eagly & Carli (2007) indicated that women still lack access to power compared to their male counterparts. As a result of this, gender is seen as the most common barrier to the advancement of female careers globally (Oakley, 2000). In a study by (Haslam & Ryan, 2008) it was highlighted that while women are suppressed by the glass ceiling, men are accelerated by a “glass escalator”. Women are more likely to be appointed in management positions as part of crisis management and as such women experience the glass ceiling (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). Evaluation for promotion and succession planning is often created by men on the executive board who do not necessarily understand the needs of women in the workplace. This might result in them blocking women from advancing to executive positions without noticing (Mathur-Helm B. , 2006). It is suggested by Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) that women can break through this so called glass ceiling. It would involve setting goals and promoting oneself through communication and determination to achieve these goals (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010).

If women can in fact break through this barrier, what is still holding them back? The business case for women in management is strong, however some of the important factors to consider, that contributes towards this theory, are the typical stereotypes in the social environment and workplace as well as the fact that women in most cases fulfil a dual role. Hurn (2013) adds that women tend not to put themselves forward to promote their skills and qualifications due to lower self-

esteem than their male counterparts. Well-developed networks are not usually associated with women whilst men usually benefit from a wider network due to socialising with colleagues after work. Further, women with families and a dual role find long hours, travel and some requirements inherent with the position, as disruptive. As a result of the aforementioned, there are simply not enough female role models. It is important for women in top positions to be visible to other females in their organisations so that they can realise it is possible to break through the glass ceiling (Sealy & Singh, 2006). The aforementioned is confirmed by Collins & Singh (2006) who is of the view that the presence of women in top positions provides a message to ambitious women that it is still possible for women to attain leadership roles in the workplace.

Generally, it is accepted that a business will benefit from a mix of skills, behaviour and experiences. Women bring different attributes to the boardroom like considering consequences of decisions and the skill to work more collaborative with team members. It is also argued that a diverse board will help to avoid the dangers from 'group thinking' (Hurn, 2013). Other than what was mentioned by Hurn (2013), women at senior level positions do not always create a pathway for other women in more junior roles in the organisation and would rather sustain the status quo. This is known as the 'Queen Bee' theory and one of the most impactful factors in any women's career in the private sector.

2.4.2 *The Queen Bee theory*

In nature, the Queen Bee determines the gender of the beehive and monopolise the male bees to attend to her every need. Often, this type of behaviour seems

to be mimicked in the workplace where females in senior positions will do anything to prevent other females from advancing in their career. The term was first introduced by Staines, Jayaratne and Tavris in 1973. This phenomenon is a fairly new concept in South Africa and one of the barriers faced by women in the current workplace. The behaviour was identified in women in senior positions in the workplace where their careers are generally dependant on male support (Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2013). Although progress has been made to promote women into management positions, opportunities remain limited. As such, women are in direct competition with each other for power positions (Mwasi & Mondele). Women view each other as a direct threat and act accordingly (Sills, 2007).

Some researchers suggest that there might be another reason for women acting this way. It is frowned upon if a women puts another women first mainly due to the stereotype that if this does happen, no one will take her seriously (Hite, 2007). A further study by Dobson & Iredale (2006), found that female bosses are more likely to discriminate against junior female employees specifially in situations where the female boss has to consider the promotion of a female candidate or candidates. They are more likely to determine that female candidates are less qualified than their male counterparts. By showing this type of behaviour, these female leaders are likely to be viewed as aggressive and that they rather prefer working with men than support women (Cherne, 2003). Mavin (2006) states that women find it difficult to relate to senior women in their organisation and this causes further division between them. The difference between the managerial role and the gender role continues to affect how women in senior roles in an

organisation are viewed by other women which often leads to female hostility in the workplace (Mavin, 2006).

Johnson & Mathur-Helm (2013) suggests that women executives fear that the women they promote might outperform them and this fear alters their behaviour towards other female employees. Self interest tend to drive the executive females' behaviour to prevent others from becoming empowered. There is also the belief that, since they had to work hard to get to the top, the more junior females should do the same. Usually these women experienced the same treatment throughout their own career and as such they are very protective of their own 'power' base that they do not want to share (Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2013). Networking behaviours are individual attempts to advance relationships with others that have the potential to assist or play a role in the individuals work or career (Forret & Dougherty, 2004). Women have a very different network of relationships than men. The inaccessibility to certain networks and relationships can be considered as a reason why women are not able to climb the corporate ladder (Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998).

This behaviour is not necessarily due to the competitiveness of certain women, but clearly also a way of coping with a primarily male dominating workplace environment. This new phenomenon illustrates the far reaching effects of gender discrimination that is affecting women in the workplace (Ramaite, 2013). Historically, women were not able to gain access to certain social networks. In the past few years, women increasingly entered higher corporate positions which allows them access to these networks that they were previously excluded from.

However, there are still very few social networks, informal and formal, that can lead to progress (Maseko, 2013). The nature of the career path of women is often blocked due to the limited access to informal or formal networks essential for advancement (International Labour Organisation, 2008). Women are often limited to sections of the organisation considered less vital or strategic (International Labour Organisation, 2008). Limited access to social networks where informal decisions are taken might impact on the organisational leadership of women (Maseko, 2013).

The management style of the typical queen bee involves power, influence and control which reflects the ability to influence others, which the queen bee use to advance her personal agenda and power dominance (Czarny, 2009). As this behaviour is more 'male' like, there is no surety that she will maintain the power for very long. The false sense of power can be viewed as 'false power', as male counterparts usually still holds the true power in that organisation (Johnson, 2010). Mavin (2006) concluded that if women want to fit in with their male counterparts, they have to behave more like them and are therefore perceived as not to represent other women. Gini (2001) argues further that a few women who already manage to break through the glass ceiling, have done so by being more aggressive than their male counterparts in an attempt to prove that they are just as strong and tough. These women are said not to have empathy and support for their junior female colleagues as a result of achieving success through hard work and expecting others to do the same (Gini, 2001).

Mavin (2006) highlights that even though some executive women did not agree that there are barriers preventing women from advancing in their careers and that it is their responsibility to help remove these barriers, there are still existing stumbling blocks in the career advancement of women. Mavin (2006) added that where organisations restructure internally, it creates a more competitive environment resulting in women working harder for their own career success and creating further barriers for women. In a study by Sheppard & Aquino (2013), it was shown that females in high ranking positions in an organisation are more likely to include women in lower positions and less likely to include other highly qualified female colleagues in their groups. Although young females often seek out these successful women to guide them in their careers, most of the time these females do not have no interest in acting as mentors for them and may even attempt to prevent them from advancing through the ranks (Baldoni, 2013).

The queen bee is task orientated and solely focussed on micromanagement, which demotivates female colleagues in an attempt to maintain control (Anon, 2014). Sheppard & Aquino (2013) believe that the queen bee syndrome is more common amongst women who are more masculine and who typically do not perceive gender discrimination as a barrier for women in the workplace. These females often distance themselves from their female colleagues. The queen bee is also typically mean, emotional and arrogant in their relationships with female colleagues and consciously work against them, criticise their failures and fail to encourage them (Mahaffey, 2013). Gender stereotyping could be regarded as a possible enabler for the queen bee syndrome.

From the literature it is clear that the queen bee phenomenon still exists today and the fact that it still exists necessitates awareness of this issue.

2.5 Measures of overcoming the identified barriers

Most of the strategies and measures aimed at achieving gender equity in the workplace in South Africa, are in the form of policies and legislation. There are however other measures identified which can be used to overcome these obstacles that prevent talented female managers to reach the boardroom. Companies need to realise that they cannot continue without the innovation generated by a diverse management structure. It is suggested that the best solution to address the typical stereotypes, is to bring the issues to the table and discuss it. Mentoring and education are some of the measures to overcome these barriers and are discussed in more detail below.

2.5.1 *Mentoring*

In most well established organisations, mentoring programmes already exist in an attempt to recognise the value of females in the organisation and building their confidence to be able to succeed and lead (Hurn, 2013). A study conducted by Kram (1985) defined a mentor as “an experienced, productive manager who relates well to a less-experienced employee and facilitates his / her personal development for the benefit of the organisation as well as the individual”. This is a growing argument that mentoring is essential for women to be able to advance to management positions as suggested by Maseko (2013). Mentoring gathers the needs from both women and men in the workplace and through mentoring programmes, talented women are attracted and retained within the organisation.

There is a potential for increase in the turnover when younger generation females in the organisation are mentored correctly and the women being mentored may feel a sense of belonging and that someone in the organisation cares enough to support them in their career and journey.

The best mentors for women in the workplace will be other women to ensure that there is interaction and sharing of experiences and knowledge. Male mentors are not uncommon, however the experience should help women to develop the necessary management skills women need to lead in the organisation. Women should make use of the opportunity to be mentored and coached as a way to advance in their career and to mentor younger females to esure the advancement and continuiance of female leaders in the organisation (Johnson, 2010). By observing others, people often learn to adapt certain leadership styles. Women can therefore watch male leaders, but they cannot learn how to direct or handle sex stereotypes from them (Collins & Singh, 2006). Collins and Singh (2006) argues that, the lack of female mentors and role models reinforces gender biases. Women in top management should therefore serve as mentors or role models for woman aspiring to get to the same level in their career. Collins and Singh (2006, p. 25) further argues that "…the presence of women in top positions provides a message to ambitious women that although there are a few women in the most senior positions, it is possible for women to achieve their full potential and attain leadership roles".

Mentoring will allow females to tap into informal social networks that will attribute towards the advancement of their careers. Ragins & Cotton (1993) found that

women have greater preference for mentoring programmes than men due to the difference in relationship needs. There is however a lack of female mentors available in most organisations mostly due to the possible exposure they might face just because they are female. There are also less time available due to external pressure to prove their worth in the organisation and the lack of confidence in their own abilities as a mentor might also have an impact.

Notwithstanding the above, there are still various benefits of being a mentor. Kram, (1985) suggest that being a mentor develops your own support base in the organisation and gain recognition for services they are delivering within the organisation as mentors. Raggins & Cotton (1993) found that mentoring might even be more attractive to women than men due to the relationships, support and friendships that could be formed through a mentoring programme. The attributes of mentoring in the workplace were found to be mutual, developmental benefits and related interaction over time. A mutually beneficial relationship as opposed to a one-way relationship is a longer lasting relationship as well as the developmental benefits that extends beyond the skills that required to perform a job (Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, & Wilbanks, 2011). Mentoring can also help females find their manegerial identity which will benefit younger females in the organisation. Women need to make more conscious decisions around mentorship, who they choose as a mentor and how they mentor others. Being able to learn from other senior women in the same organisation and embracing a leadership value such as emotional sensitivity, critical thinking and analytical skills will drive more women into senior management roles (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010).

It was found by Beeson & Valerio (2012) that organisations should note the importance of supporting women's only networks and to encourage women to share their different experiences with other women. Women should not underestimate the strenght of having a mentor who can assist to develop the necessary skills that is needed to succeed to the next level in their careers and organisations should only recognise males who are in favour off and focussed on diversity in management, as mentors to women (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). Berg & Karlsen (2012) found that coaching can help women to develop their strenghts and achieving personal and organisational goals. Mentoring relationshpis will help women to develop their interests and help them to make important contributions in their professions (Humble et al, 2006). Humble et all (2006) also found that without female role models of their own, women may not know how to mentor other women.

2.5.2 *Education*

Present day, suitable education and qualifications show to be important when promotion into managerial positions are considered. It is suggested by Laud & Johnson (2012) that both women and men consider education as an important part of their career advancement and personal development. The study by Laud & Johnson (2012) shows further that women have more regard for education as a differentiator from male counterparts. For women, education represents a positive contributor to their image and helping them to level the playing field in male dominated organisations (Laud & Johnson, 2012). Education also forms the evidence in circumstanes wher women are required to prove their

competence and when they are subject to stricter scrutiny of the qualifications they have obtained (Lyness & Heilman, 2006).

An MBA is perceived by many as a tool to fast track your career to a managerial role (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). Studies show that men who completed their MBA's moved more quickly into senior management positions than female counterparts (Maseko, 2013). Simpson (1997) found that men, after completing the MBA, are also more likely to earn higher salaries than females resulting in females leaving the organisation due to barriers encountered. Women believe that the MBA gave them the opportunity to develop in areas where they can add more value to empower people (Smith, 2004) and that the MBA will give them the edge in business and equip them with the knowledge of the core functions of an organisation (Milpark Education, n.d.). This is considered important requirements in changing the leadership paradigm, however, most women lack this qualification or the opportunity to persue same.

Many business schools in South Africa consider the MBA as a tool to attract more women, however no extra effort is made to attract potential female candidates, such as bursaries or scholarships (Mathur-Helm B., 2017). Many sponsorships from businesses are male-dominated (Finn, 2012). Formal qualifications may enhance opportunities for the career advancement of women mainly because it is more difficult for women to be promoted that their male counterparts (Melamed, 1996) and a lack of education and appropriate skills affect the majority of women on their way up the corporate ladder (Research Focus, 2009). Research Focus (2009) further argued that, women tend not to pursue qualifications that support

executive management positions and or post graduate studies due to the time constraints they experience and the negative impact it would have on their quality of life. Women also lack confidence and motivation to enroll for the MBA, however when they do enroll, their salary expectations are significantly lower than than that of their male counterparts (Mathur-Helm B.,2017).

Women in South Africa lack certain qualifications, like the MBA, necessary for promotions into management positions notwithstanding confirmation from other women in senior positions who completed their degrees, that the MBA gave them better knowledge of mangement and ability to add value to their companies and confidence to lead (Mathur-Helm B. , Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action for South African Women, 2005). The MBA proved to be helpful in advancing women into management positions and giving them some distinct advantages in the South African environment (Adler, 1993). Educating women will give them the necessary opportunities to advance in their career as managers. It is important for women to get the right education and training that can improve their chances of advancing to senior positions (Ramaite, 2013). April et al. (2007) argues however, that while it is important for women to improve their educational level and skills, education alone may not be sufficient for the advancement of a women's career because of organisational barriers that could override it.

Education emerged as one of the enablers to assist in achieving individual goals leading to career success. In a study done by Chinyamurindi (2016), it was found that acquiring an education not only open doors, but career development is also viewed as linked to career success. Whether an MBA is in fact the answer is not

100% proven, however literature show that it can definitely assist when striving towards a management position. Organisations need to invest in their female staff by supporting them in the journey of furthering their skills through education. Skills and caracteristics such as confidence, competence and high qualifications were found to be some of the measures women use to climb the corporate ladder. This confirms the study of Baumgartner & Schneider (2010), who represented different stratgies for women to overcome some of the barriers they face in the workplace. From the literature it is suggested that women promote their own career advancement through their education to show their willingness to work hard and to improve their credentials.

2.6 Research questions

The main purpose of this study is to understand the stereotypes women currently encounter in the workplace and to determine whether:

2.6.1 Women are still experiencing the glass ceiling effect in the workplace due to certain stereotypes and whether women are prevented from moving forward in their careers as a result of this;

2.6.2 The “Queen Bee syndrome” is still a reality in organisations throughout South Africa and whether it is preventing junior females from reaching full potential in their careers; and

2.6.3 These stereotypes that women face in the workplace, can be overcome through mentorship and education.

2.7 Conclusion of Literature Review

In summary, social and gender stereotypes influence how others perceive females in the workplace and the view of how they should behave. Females still not have it easy to break through the so called glass ceiling that is created by a predominantly male orientated corporate world, in order to advance in their careers. Notwithstanding the belief that women managers are the new source of talent because of their skills, abilities to share, listen and empathise (Blackmore, 2002), women still lack the opportunities to advance to management positions within the corporate world. Gender ideology associated with men and women respectively, continues to reinforce division in the workplace where decision making roles and high paying jobs are seen as unsuited for women (Clarke & Braun, 2009).

Eagly (2007) states that, although women are praised for their management skills that tends to be more effective than those of men, most people still prefer male superiors over female superiors. This made it even more difficult for women to succeed into management positions. It would seem that a change in corporate culture is needed to help women breaking through the glass ceiling and to overcome the queen bee phenomenon. Women representation in top management positions should be increased. Private sector companies have to create an environment and opportunities for talented women to experience the positive influence these women would have on the organisation (Johnson, 2010).

Overcoming the barriers identified and creating the necessary support structures for females in the workplace is a critical part of advancing women's economic

empowerment. It is important for current management to understand the factors that interfere with the development of women to assist them in overcoming the barriers.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore some of the barriers faced by women in the workplace and how they can overcome these barriers. The aim was to gather qualitative data through personal experiences of the research sample. The next sections will focus on the considerations in relation to the research design, data collection method and process and the data analysis. Qualitative research has a history of good results and is continued to be applied in many ways and different study areas.

3.1 Research methodology

Qualitative research are defined as an activity that locates the observed to the rest of the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) . This research method consists of a set of interpretive material that turns the study into a series of notes, interviews, conversations and recordings amongst other. One of the first examples of qualitative research in a leadership study, was completed by Bryman, Bresnen, Beardsworth, & Keil (1988). Marshall & Rossman (2011) interprets qualitative research that allows the researcher to explore the perception of other people and their experiences. It is clear that this method is concerned with the perspective of individuals (Howitt, 2010). Qualitative research display a wide range of interpretative practices that are interconnected with each other, to better understand the issue at hand. More than one interpretive practice is used in the qualitative research study (Schurink, 2008).

Rossman & Rallis (2012) recommends a qualitative research design when attempting to answer questions about the real world, as it best fits research which

seeks “to learn about some aspects of the social world and to generate new understandings that can then be used”. This type of research allows a researcher to explore the different points of view and document the researcher’s understanding of the social world and natural setting (Miller & Glassner, 2011). Schurink (2008) believes that this reasearch method requires hard work to ensure sustainability and expansion through taking advantage of the development and trends overseas.

When qualitative research are initiated, the researcher seek to find the meaning that participants attach to certain social interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Qualitative data provides rich, detailed information for the researcher (Rossman & Rallis, 2012) and generates data that provides complex descriptions of how individuals experience a certain research issue (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, & Guest, 2005). Detailed description was necessary to obtain an in-depth understanding of the barriers faced by women in the workplace and how they can overcome these barriers through mentorship and education to be successful in the advancement of women in their careers.

Some scholars in the field of leadership studies suggests that a quantitative study should be complemented with qualitative research which should play a more important role in that study. Due to some time constraints with regard to this research, a “point in time” study was most appropriate for the topic at hand. The study sought to understand the factors that are currently preventing women from achieving career progression and how they can overcome these barriers.

3.2 Research Design

The qualitative research method was chosen to complete the study in an attempt to get female individuals' insight into the current situation women are faced in the workplace. Kumar (2005) notes that qualitative research is rooted in social science. The aim of this study was to obtain data through the personal experience of females in the workplace by conducting interviews based on structured questions. A flexible research design was followed and an inquiry into the real world was conducted that focussed specifically on women occupying senior positions in organisations and women aspiring to senior positions in organisations (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 *Population*

Saunders & Lewis (2012, p. 132) define a population as a "complete set of group members". The population for this research included all stakeholders who are employed in management positions and women who are in or aspiring to be in executive positions. The study consisted of 16 (sixteen) female participants across various industries in the private sector.

3.3.2 *Sample and sampling method*

A sample of women in various industries within the private sector was selected, ranging from mid-management to executive level, to articulate their experiences throughout their careers. The participants was carefully sampled based on the assumption that they can make meaningful contributions towards this study

(Klenke, 2008). It was assumed that the female participants would share their experiences in the management positions that they occupy within their respective organisations.

The rationale for selecting sixteen interviews was explained by a study conducted by Marshall and Rossman (2011), who suggested that a sample size should be able to provide variability and depth of experience in order for it to be useful. Given the time and costs involved, the researcher was of the opinion that sixteen interviews would be sufficient in obtaining the depth and variability within the necessary limits.

Table 1: Profile of respondents (by position)

Description of respondent type	**Number to be sampled**
Managers	6
Senior Managers	6
Executives	4

3.4 The research instrument

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted using a questionnaire, attached hereto as Appendix A. The content of the questionnaire was informed by the themes in this study and was constructed in such a way that it allowed for open-ended interviewing. Questions were asked in such a way that female participants wanted to participate in sharing their experiences and thoughts on the issues.

Qualitative in-depth interviews are typically much more conversational than formal events with predetermined response categories (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Interviews were undertaken with women who are already in management positions to uncover the participants' perspectives.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

Female participants were identified and contacted via email to introduce the study as well as the researcher. The email contained the consent that the data can be used for purposes of this study and it was also confirmed during the interview process. Interviews did not take longer than 1 hour and was scheduled at a time convenient for the participants. The interviews were also conducted in an environment chosen by the participants. Permission was requested to record the interviews. These recordings were analysed.

The purpose of the study was again explained before the interviews commenced. Questions were asked based on the questionnaire; however, the interview was kept more conversational rather than structured around the questionnaire itself. In the event that the participants wanted to share additional information or experiences, this was captured and noted in addition to the information obtained from the questionnaire.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Qualitative data analysis involves the refining of data collected into smaller, manageable amounts. Respondents got to re-live their experiences through the

process of telling their story with the view to identify the hidden meaning behind the story (Blumberg, Cooper , & Schindler, 2008). This research used a questionnaire that comprised of different themes that the respondents had to structure their response around. The content analysis was done manually and recordings where transcribed where necessary. The analysis of the data was used to determine the occurrence of the specific themes and to ascertain the meaning from the content in the context provided. The themes were used to construct the findings of this study.

3.7 Validity and reliability

Howitt (2010) notes that the validity of qualitative research would involve detailing the process and methods used in the data collection and analysis. Data collected should be detailed and presented without alterations. The findings in this study were presented without any alterations to the answers provided by the respondents. Comments and input provided by respondents where cited verbatim on the questionnaire.

During the process of collecting the research, the researcher was very sensitive and aware of the influences that the assumptions of the study can have on the process. Confidentiality around the profile and personal details of the respective respondents were also guaranteed to ensure that the respondents give an accurate view of their experiences in their current organisations and also on their career and to give them the necessary comfort that all information disclosed would only be used for purposes of this study.

3.8 Potential limitations of study

Data analysis that was conducted as part of a qualitative research, can have an inherent limitation of introducing bias into the analysis and the interpretation of the results of a study like this one. The following points are limitations to this study:

This study was limited to women in South Africa who are currently in management positions in their respective organisations. It is not feasible to generalise the findings across all different levels in various organisations;

The sample size was very small and was not limited to a certain industry. The results may not be the true representations of all women in the same or different industries;

Only women were interviewed and other key stakeholders, like male counterparts who could provide a different perspective from the women, was not included for purposes of this study as this study is restricted.

3.9 Ethics and governance

Informed consent was obtained from these female participants and they were duly informed what the research entails and that they are part of this research (Ryen, 2011). Privacy and confidentiality was respected and maintained at all times. The respondents were informed that they could withdraw from the process at any stage if they should feel uncomfortable. Questionnaires with personal information and responses were kept safe during the data analysis process. All respondents elected to participate in this research provided that the data would only be used for purposes of this research and nothing else.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research method that was used to conduct this study. The qualitative research method was found to be more appropriate in the circumstance as it allowed the researcher to tap into the experiences of the female respondents that revealed insight as to the barriers that women still face in the workplace. The qualitative data further provided rich descriptions in order to understand the different perspectives of the respondents around the identified factors to overcome the barriers faced by women to advance to the next level of their careers. A flexible research strategy was followed and an enquiry into the "real world" was conducted.

CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings and discussions for the qualitative study that was performed. The objective of this study was twofold. Firstly, to discuss two of the known barriers women in management positions are currently facing in the workplace and secondly to establish whether women can overcome these barriers through mentoring and furthering their education to advance to the next level in their careers. The analysis of the data is presented in the sections below: Section 4.2 provides the demographics and characteristics of the respondents; Section 4.3 provides the detail of the data analysis techniques and the results of the structured interviews conducted with the respondents; Section 4.4 examines the similarities and differences on the challenges that women face; and Section 4.5 provides the summary of this chapter.

4.2 Demographics and characteristics of the sample

The sample for the study comprised of females in management positions across the financial services industry, media, consulting, automotive industry, engineering industry and healthcare industry in South Africa. The purpose of the study was to establish whether females in management positions across the different industries, face the same type of barriers and whether they use the same methods, identified in this study, to overcome these barriers in their current workplace. As a result of the aim of the study, the key stakeholders were female delegates who are in management positions in their organisations.

A total of 16 interviews were conducted with female respondents in management and executive positions, who shared their views and insights into their experiences in the workplace as a female manager. The details of all the respondents were kept confidential. Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents are in a position where they are heading up divisions.

Table 2: Demographics

Respondents	Number of Interviews
Managers	6
Senior Managers	6
Executives	4
Total	**16**

The findings in Table 3 show that 50% of the respondents were between the age of 36 – 45 and 90% of the respondents were between the ages of 25 - 45. Other than the age and level of the respondents in their respective organisations, this

study also investigated whether the respondents have a formal qualification. The findings in Table 3 show that 80% of the respondents have formal undergraduate qualifications.

Table 3: Characteristics of Respondents

Age Group	Respondents	Level	Qualification
25 – 35	6	4 Managers 4 Snr Managers	6
36 – 45	8	2 Managers 3 Senior Manager 3 Executives	6
46 – 55	2	1 Manager 1 Executive	1
55+	0	-	-

4.3 Data analysis

The structured interviews allowed for both open ended and close ended questions and the various themes were grouped together according to the research questions. The content of the interviews was analysed to establish the value of the data and to identify major themes.

The interview questions are attached hereto as Annexure A and was designed based on the themes in this research study. The actual words and viewpoints by the respective respondents are presented in this chapter. There are many similarities in the views of some respondents, some which were very directly and other implied. Some of the respondents were more open to the questions asked and talked more freely whilst others had to be prompted to express their views and opinions in more detail.

Table 4 is an interview guide to the research questions and the corresponding interview questions in Annexure A.

Table 4: Interview guide in relation to research questions

Research Question	**Interview Guide**
What are the stereotypes women currently encounter in the workplace?	**Questions:** 10 – 13
Are women still experiencing the glass ceiling effect in the workplace due to certain stereotypes?	**Questions:** 1, 2, 8, 14, 15 & 17
Is the Queen Bee syndrome still a reality in organisations throughout South Africa and is it preventing junior females from reaching full potential in their careers?	**Questions:** 3, 5, 7, 9, 16, 20 – 22

Can these stereotypes that women currently encounter in the workplace be overcome through mentorship and education?	**Questions:** 18 – 27

The initial questions asked led to discussions around the topic of women in leadership and the current challenges and shortcomings in the private sector pertaining to the transformation of women in the workplace. The literature discussed in chapter 2 created a need to understand in more detail, what skills women require to advance to the next level in their career. The respondents were also asked to give insight into the programmes or initiatives driven by their current organisations to ensure transformation of women into leadership as well as programmes to help them to advance to the next level in their careers. The responses have been classified in the different themes, being the challenge of work-life balance, gender bias, networking, the role of women in organisations, unequal payment, the glass ceiling and the Queen Bee syndrome, faced by women and using mentorship and/or education to overcome these barriers.

The results are show for each research question and the responses from each respondent. Many of the respondents made remarks that fell within multiple themes identified and the frequency count in each theme, add up to more than the number of respondents interviewed.

4.3.1 *What are the stereotypes women currently encounter in the workplace?*

The aim of this research question was to establish what stereotypes women encounter in the workplace. The interview questions that relate to this research question are question 10 to 13 in Annexure A.

In answering the research question, all of the respondents agreed that they face certain challenges in the workplace as a result of being a female manager. The interview started off by trying to understand the factors that prevent women to advance in their careers and what the respondents are currently experiencing. Respondents were asked what kind of challenges they are facing and whether there are any support structures in place to assist them in overcoming these challenges in their respective organisations. This resulted in the interview being more conversational and engaging instead of an uncomfortable dialogue. Various dominant themes were identified through the interviews.

Ranking	***Theme 1***	***Frequency***
1	***Work-life balance***	***9***

In analysing this theme, the data expressed the reality that women are still regarded as caretakers rather than business women in most of the industries. There is the perception that if a woman is a working mom, they will not put in as much effort into their work or be distracted. Women start to believe that it is almost impossible to be both a working mom and a successful leader in her industry as a result of stereotyping and organisations do not support them enough

to make them realise otherwise. This was supported by a respondent saying that *"I held myself back. I was married and had a lot of other responsibilities and believed that I could not attend to everything and be successful in both the personal and working environment. Later on, I realised that it was self-created barriers and not specifically as a result of the organisation or management at that time"*.

Others reported that while women are, to some extent, gaining the acceptance to enter the boardroom, the culture of long working hours and demanding requirements of the job are discouraging them from wanting a seat at the table. The inflexibility of organisations around the work life balance of female employees prevents women from advancing to the next level in their careers and as a result thereof, they experience a glass ceiling. A respondent, who is an executive in the financial services industry, explained that: *"Organisations should be more dynamic about their approach to women. There needs to be a distinction between flexibility versus being dynamic. Organisations need to change their thinking and they should focus on how they can retain their women"*.

In addition, the respondents indicated that organisations are not doing enough to grow female employees and to inspire them to become future leaders. This was supported by a respondent who said that *"I think that is implicit in every organisation that we will face challenges as women simply because of what we are. Especially if you are a working mom. Depending on what department you work in, they would naturally go with whoever would give you less hassles. I think because we lead families, women are natural multi-taskers. Women do so much*

in organisations and in the community. We have family, kids, work etc. Within organisations, I don't think they do enough to identify and grow potential female leaders. Organisations should be more understanding of women's needs and be flexible around their time and environment in general". Another respondent added that: *"Organisations should allow women to work from home when necessary and to be more flexible around their time. There should be more focus around deliverables rather than the hours spent at the office. Organisations also need to show more interest in the personal life of their female employees. There should be a culture where both males and females are motivated to spend time with their families and to attend their kids' soccer or rugby match when they have to. This will not only be to the benefit of the organisation but also the employees. Happy employees work harder and tend to be more loyal towards the company they work for"*.

Growe & Montgomery (2000) found that in a typical organisation, there is very little encouragement from the executive board to aspire women to become a future leader. The data from the interviews confirms that the lack of encouragement can be contributed to the stereotype that home and family responsibilities might become an additional issue if there is a requirement for working long hours at a time (Sadie, 2005). Maintaining the balance between work and your family life, is currently one of the biggest challenges faced by South African women in executive positions (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007), which is confirmed by the data. The challenges that women face as a result of stereotyping in the workplace affected their self-esteem and their own perception of their leadership capabilities (Oswald & Chapleau, 2010). This view is

supported through responses like *"I believed that I could not attend to everything and be successful in both the personal and working environment"* and "*I constantly felt torn between work and having to be a mom. The team was not supportive of your personal life and I felt like I was not competent enough to be a part of that team"*.

The data confirms further that inflexibility of organisations around time, work and family responsibilities prevents women from advancing in their careers. Studies in South Africa shows that the culture of long working hours and job requirements that might influence family and household work, discourages women to enter the boardrooms (Mathur-Helm B. , 2006). Respondents added that *"There should be more flexibility around the working hours and the needs of women"*. Oakley (2000) further classifies the barriers faced by women as barriers caused by corporate practices, behaviours and culture of an organsation. As pointed out by the respondents, *"Organisations should change their mind-set"* and *"Organisations need to put support structures in place for women in order for them to advance. More measures should be put in place to ensure that women are advanced to management levels"*.

Ranking	***Theme 2***	***Frequency***
1	***Networking***	***9***

The position in most organisations is that, by working late, it provides a platform for networking opportunities. The respondents argued that the lack of access to networks are one of the barriers for women to reach the top because networks

are important for career advancement. The respondents confirmed the *"need for more networking events for women only"* as *"women tend to be excluded from informal networks created and dominated by men in the workplace"*.

The respondents advised that there are so called 'networking events' in the respective organisations created for women specifically, however these events turn out to be a waste of time as it does not generate any opportunities to do more demanding jobs which would advance their careers. One respondent added that *"The networking events for women is not efficient"* with another one saying that "*There is also the issue that the important women who we need to have these networking opportunities with, are not in the room"*. The data confirmed the need for networking events with women who managed to break the glass ceiling who can, through their experience, help other women to follow in their footsteps. A respondent in the financial services industry voiced the need for "*Women who is already in leadership should share their stories of how they got there. They need to share what they do in order to encourage women to challenge the status quo".*

It is common knowledge that women have a very different network of relationships than men. The data confirms that the inaccessibility to certain networks and relationships can be considered as a reason why women are not able to climb the corporate ladder (Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). Literature indicates that limited access to social networks where informal decisions are taken, might impact on the organisational leadership of women (Maseko, 2013). The data from the interviews confirmed that women see no need to attend networking events created for women only as *"The important people are usually*

not in the room" and that these sessions are *"more of a 'fyi' session"*. Forret & Dougherty (2004) found that networking behaviours are individual attempts to advance relationships with others that have the potential to assist or play a role in the individuals work or career. This consistent with the data from the interviews and specifcially the need to have the right people present at networking events that can share their insights and success in order to encourage women who aspire to become managers and part of the executive leadership.

Ranking	***Theme 3***	***Frequency***
2	***Gender bias***	***5***

An evaluation of this theme revealed that transformation of women in management became a tick box exercise rather than a promotion of equal opportunities. There is the perception that women should be seen but not heard when they are sitting on an executive board or in important meetings. The respondents indicated that industries still need a lot of transformation. One respondent added that *"Male colleagues undermine their female counterparts when there are discussions around the strategy and management of big projects…"*.

The respondents argued that women who are promoted into senior positions, are still not enjoying the equal rights to make important business decisions. Male counterparts still lack the confidence in their female colleagues to lead the business and achieve the positive results. A respondent in the engineering

industry said that *"I really enjoy my job but I feel like I am a puppet on a string. I am authorised to make certain decisions, but I am still limited to a large extend"*.

The data revealed that in most organisations, where the respondents are currently employed at, still lack female representation on the executive board. The average female board representation, and specifically executive representation, for each of these organisations are only 2 females.

Dorius & Firebaugh (2010) noted that gender underrepresentation of women in management positions is still a huge cause for concern. The data from the results confirms that gender can be seen as the most common barrier to the advancement of female careers (Oakley, 2000) and the view of Eagly & Carli (2007) that women still lack access to power compared to their male counterparts, was further supported by data through responses like "*With only one female on the ExCo and LeadCo it is hard to believe that she has a say at all around the management of the company"* and *"The old generation of males are still in control of the decisions made in our organisation and by our ExCo. This needs to change"*.

Ranking	***Theme 4***	***Frequency***
2	***Role of women in organisations***	***5***

It was raised as a concern from the respondents that women are being stereotyped into certain roles in an organisation. This view continues to support the general view that women should be submissive and not leading. The

respondents argued that organisations tend to open positions for women in departments such as Human Resources or Finance and Compliance amongst others, whilst the executive positions that drives management and strategy are usually awarded to male counterparts, who sometimes have less experience and exposure than their female colleagues. This view was supported through responses such as *"We need more women in business and not just for the softer things. If you want to run a world class bank, you better have a couple of women in senior executive positions not doing the soft things like the compliance and the HR because your client base is female"* and *"Organisations should not require women to do 'pink jobs'. Just because a woman is a woman it does not mean that she should automatically take minutes in a meeting or be restricted to being in HR or legal or the more softer roles in the organisation"*.

The findings of the International Labour Organisation (2008) were confirmed in that women are often limited to sections of the organisation considered less vital or strategic. The data confirms that there is still a need to convince society that women can make intelligent decisions that will benefit the organisation and that business successes and failures are not linked to the gender of the executives. One respondent added that *"Women should not be limited to certain positions in the organisation. They should be allowed to be the CEO or MD…"*.

In a study by Clarke & Braun (2009) it was found that gender ideology continues to reinforce division in the workplace where decision making roles and high paying jobs are seen as unsuited for women. This was confirmed through responses like "*The important roles are typically reserved for males and I don't*

agree with that". Hoobler et al. (2011) further argued that the glass ceiling results from the perception of the characteristics women should have in the workplace and that these beliefs result in women being judged as unsuitable for leadership roles. The view of both Clarke & Braun and Hoobler et al. was confirmed by the respondents. This is also consistent with the view of Booysen & Nkomo (2010) and Ramaite (2013) that female managers continue to face threats of stereotyping in the workplace and that these stereotypes affect how women are perceived in the workplace which results to the social role of women being viewed as inconsistent with management roles.

Ranking	***Theme 5***	***Frequency***
2	***Unequal payment***	***5***

The data revealed that the issue of equal work for equal pay is still very pertinent in most industries. The respondents argued that there is still the perception that men should be rewarded more than females notwithstanding the fact that they will fulfill the same role and do exactly the same scope of work. The respondents noted the issue of equal pay and equal opportunities for women compared to their male counterparts. The respondents added that *"There should be equal opportunities for all genders. Organisations should reimburse women on the same pay scale as their male counterparts for the same positions held"* and *"organisations should pay us what they would have paid a male for the same position"*.

This voices the concern that organisations have made little or no progress to ensure that the principle of equal pay for equal work is implemented. The data indicated that the glass ceiling is not just restricted to career growth, but also with regards to salaries. There are still wide disparities in the uneven pay of men and women for the same jobs. On average, men earn more than woman. This was confirmed by one respondent who said that *"There is definitely also still a huge payment gap between males and females who holds the same position in an organisation. This needs to stop. It is quite ridiculous that organisations expect women to do the same work, if not more, than their male counterparts yet they refuse to pay these women the same or at least what they are worth"*. This could be mainly as a result of existing gender discrimination.

Notwithstanding the reality of gender stereotyping, when the respondents were asked whether they feel that there is still an opportunity for them to grow within their organisations, 90% of them were comfortable to say that there are still prospects of growth notwithstanding some of the challenges that they face. The respondents were very aware of their own leadership styles and what has benefitted them throughout their careers to ensure personal growth and career advancement.

4.3.2 *Are women experiencing the glass ceiling effect in the workplace due to certain stereotypes?*

The aim of this research question was to establish if women still experience the glass ceiling in the workplace. The interview questions that relate to this research question are question 1, 2, 8, 14, 15 & 17 in Annexure A.

In answering the research question, 50% of the respondents agreed that the glass ceiling still exist, not just in career succession, but also in remuneration structures that is not linked to education or experience and the opportunities that organisations present to the women versus their male counterparts. The respondents argued that the male perception of women in the workplace have not changed to the extend needed to ensure that women are afforded the same opportunities as their male counterparts and receive equal pay. Male counterparts still adhere to past beliefs that influence their expectations of women and the role that they are supposed to play in organisations.

The respondents argued that proper training to both males and females in an organisation *"around gender diversity and acknowledging the role that men and women play in the success of an organisation"* will *"…change the thinking in the organisation and give women more opportunities"*. The data however indicates that a lot more needs to be done than just training on stereotypes. There is also a need for organisations to educate males *"around the influence and skills women bring into an organisation and the value that they can add"* and that *"CEO and COO involvement"* is necessary to drive the need for change in organisations from their level.

Transformation of woman was another issue raised by the respondents. One respondent argued that if *"Transformation of women should become a legislative requirement like BBBEE and organisations should actually be awarded points and contracts based on the amount of women in management positions, the glass*

ceiling will no longer exist". Other respondents added that *"Organisations should not just promote transformation just to tick the regulatory compliance box. There should be clear plans and clear indications as to how they will execute them and what the requirements are"* and *"Organisations should be awarded "extra points", like in the instance of BBBEE, for the recruitment of females into management and executive positions"*.

Johnson (2010) proposed that private sector companies have to create an environment and opportunities for talented women to experience the positive influence these women would have on the organisation. The data supported this view and indicated that change must begin with male counterparts and specifically the need to educate them around stereotyping and how to change their behaviour and thoughts around their female colleagues in order to drive the need for change from their level.

Davidson & Burke (2011) found that the enacting legislation in South Africa to equalise and improve the proportion of women serving on executive or at least senior management level does work, however not enough as one would expect. This was confirmed by this small sample of the data that the actions taken by the Government in respect of gender equality, shows success to a large extent, however some respondents felt strongly that this resulted in transformation to become a tick box compliance exercise and that the heart of organisations are not really in it.

Whether transformation is legislated or whether there are more training programmes around stereotyping in place, the data shows that women can break through this so called glass ceiling, if they have not already done so. Baumgartner & Schneider (2010) found that it would involve setting goals and promoting oneself through communication and determination to achieve these goals. Ninety percent (90%) of the data are confident that there is still potential for growth in their organisations.

4.3.3 *Research question: Is the "Queen Bee syndrome" still a reality in many organisations in South Africa and do females in senior positions prevent junior females in the workplace from reaching full potential in their careers?*

The aim of this research question was to establish if the Queen Bee syndrome is still a reality in many organisations in South Africa and whether females in senior positions prevent junior females from reaching their full potential in their careers. The interview questions that relate to this research question are question 3, 5, 7, 9, 16, 20 – 22 in Annexure A.

In answering the research question, all of the respondents either currently or have previously worked for a female manager in their career. The personal management style of these managers were described as hard, difficult, authoritative and demanding amongst others. Most of the organisations that the respondents work for, are male dominant environments. However, these organisations have transformation programmes or committees in place with a plan to achieve more transformation of women in leadership positions within that

organisation over the next few years. Many of the organisations are not being proactive in the outline of the career paths of their women employees which leads to personal and professional development often driven by these women themselves.

In the sample size, more than 80% of the respondents manage a team that is predominantly female. They describe their own personal management styles as participative and collaborative, with some even confirming that they might be authoritative at times. About 75% of the respondents are very positive about their managerial role and have shown that they can overcome certain challenges they face as women in their organisations. The remaining 25% find their managerial role as extremely challenging which can be prescribed to the people management aspect rather than the technical requirements of the role.

The main question posed to the respondents was whether they think that women in an organisation that is predominantly male, would be more competitive. Ninety percent (90%) of the data confirmed that women are more competitive when they have to prove themselves in a male dominant environment. One respondent said that *"The biggest obstacles we as women face, are the obstacles other women put in our path. Girl-on-girl hate and competition in the workplace is a real thing. Females want to get to the top, but they don't necessarily want to help other females get there"* with another respondent adding that *"To the point where they will start being more like the males around them because they have to prove a point"*.

In a follow up question around the management style of female managers, 80% of the respondents noted that female managers tend to manage female colleagues a lot harder whilst being more lenient on their male counterparts. Respondents argued that *"Females tend to manage other females harder because of the insecurity and the environment creates the insecurity. I think these women think they have to behave in a certain way. That is why we also work so much harder to get anywhere"*. This was confirmed through another respondent who added that *"The more mature women have a bigger expectation from you. Whereas the expectation around men is that 'you can do it and I don't have to push you'. The trust is already there. With females, you have to keep proving yourself to them"*.

A further question to each respondent was whether they think that women should support each other in the workplace. Ninety percent (90%) of the data confirmed that women must support each other with one respondent saying that *"Women should definitely support each other. There are just some things that men won't understand about us women. We are different and we think differently. Women bring more nurturing into the working environment and that is sometimes necessary"* and other respondent adding that *"It's about being a human being not just about being a woman supporting another woman. You need to be considerate and kind to a certain point because it is the right thing to do. If we lose that as a human, we have a problem"*.

Forty percent (40%) of the respondents have not experienced the Queen Bee and have more support from female managers and executives in their current

role than what they had previously. The remaining 60% felt that there is no support available to them in their current management roles. This was supported through the view of one respondent who added that *"There is absolutely no support from my female director. If you are not one of her chosen favourites, she will make sure that you do not progress in your career at this organisation. It is hard to get anywhere without the support you need"*.

Mwasi & Mondele argued that women are constantly in direct competition with each other for power positions, which was confirmed by the data. This can be contributed to the fact that when women view each other as a direct threats, they act accordingly (Sills, 2007). Hurn (2013) argued that women at senior level positions do not always create a pathway for other women and would rather sustain the status quo. This was confirmed in the responses received from the data that *"Women have so much more to prove and that is why I think the will be more competitive"* and *"Women would be more competitive because they would want to try and prove themselves more"*.

Johnson & Mathur-Helm (2013) on the other hand suggests that women executives fear that the women they promote might outperform them and this fear alters their behaviour towards other female employees. This was confirmed in a *response that "…I do know that if a female feel slightly intimidated by another female, they will make your life as difficult as possible"*. Collins & Singh (2006) proposed that the presence of women in top positions provides a message to ambitious women that it is still possible for women to attain leadership roles in the workplace. The data confirmed this and one respondent added that *"I want one*

of the females who are already a success, to tell me what to do and tell me how she is going to help me to get there. We need to challenge the status quo" and other saying that *"Women already in senior management positions have already broke the barrier. These women who already managed to do it, made me believe I could also"*.

4.3.4 *Can these stereotypes that women currently encounter in the workplace be overcome through mentorship and education?*

The aim of this research question was to establish whether the stereotypes that women currently encounter in the workplace, can be overcome through mentorship and education. The interview questions that relate to this research question are question 18 – 27 in Annexure A.

4.3.4.1 Mentorship

Mentoring relationships are widely recognised as a key source to advance your career in organisations. The lack of mentors is one of the challenges that women face in the workplace. Very few of the organisations where the respondents are employed, has mentorship programmes in place. Most of the mentorship initiatives are not compulsory and individuals can choose whether or not they want to participate. Ten percent (10%) of the respondents work for an organisation where mentorship is compulsory and the organisaton promotes mentorship by appointing a Development Facilitator to each employee as well as pairing each employee with a director of the firm. Even though most of the organisations do not have these type of programmes in place, 70& of the respondents have external mentors or in the case of one respondent, a life coach,

that play a vital role in their careers and personal lives. These respondents valued their mentors for the *"confidence to deal with key stakeholders and take the lead when necessary"* and the *"perspective"* they gave that allowed these respondents to *"Harness those little strengths that I did not know I possess allows me to connect with people and reach a different level of fulfilment of myself and my team"*.

Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents felt that the mentors they had during their career gave them the necessary confidence to engage with senior colleagues and helped them to focus on their strengths as female managers rather than their shortcomings. Some of the findings also indicated that the women who did have a mentor, positioned themselves better in their careers and where they would previously rather have stepped back and took up a supporting role to others, they stepped up to take the lead. One respondent added that *"Previously I was very soft spoken and if something happened I would not have spoken up or I would do the other person's job. She helped me to stand up for myself and helped me to deal with these situations. She helped me to get recognition I deserve"*. Mentors also manage the unrealistic expectations of women and their experience in business helps to ground these women.

Benefits from the relationship can be reciprocal and mentors themselves can learn from women. This was confirmed through one respondent stating that "*By mentoring other females, you get a different perspective of things around you and you find new ways to develop yourself in the process. You might find something lacking in you when you mentor someone else, which will help you to identify*

areas where you need to focus on. Mentoring also helps to look at things differently".

All the respondents indicated that women in management roles should mentor the more junior women in organisations as a way to motivate them and help them to advance in their career. The findings show however that only 40% of the respondents actually mentor other females even though they are in favour of female-to-female mentoring. To ensure that mentoring is effective, respondents argued that it *"must be observed and incorporated as part of a company policy that regulates performance"* and *"It should be a requirement that more senior women in the organisation are expected to mentor the junior women who want to follow in their footsteps and several respondents support this view"*.

There seems to be an absence of women who assumes the role of a mentor over other junior women within organisations. It appears that most women do not want to make themselves available to mentor other women. This results in women seeking mentorship and coaching from males and relying on them to give guidance on certain challenges that they face as women within organisations. It is not uncommon for women to have or choose male mentors, but the best mentors for women are other women who can interact and share experiences and knowledge, which is more important. Male mentors eagerly encourage women to become leaders, however there is a lack of support to these women when they seek a position at the secondary level. The respondents also felt that senior women, who already had to fight through the challenges, should harness a mentoring role and become change agents to drive the agenda for women in

management. One respondent added that "*We need more women to step up and help other women to get to where they need to be without having a hidden agenda"* and another said that *"I will value the guidance from a female mentor more than a male because she would know what it is like to be in my position and what I need to do to advance my career"*.

The argument by Hurn (2013) that most well established organisations have existing mentoring programmes in an attempt to recognise the value of females in the organisation and building their confidence to be able to succeed and lead, was found to be inconsistent with the results of this study. The data from the interview indicated that only 10% of the organisations that the respondents work for, have formal existing mentoring programmes that are compulsory.

The data bears testimony to the positive attributes of mentorship as proposed by Haggard et al. (2011) in that the benefits of mentoring includes mutually, developmental benefits and related interaction over a period of time. Berg & Karlsen (2012) asserted that coaching can assist woman in developing their strengths and achieve personal and organisational goals, which the data also supported through responses such as *"My mentor exposed me to different stakeholders and gave me confidence to deal with key stakeholders and take the lead when necessary"* and *"There are individual things that I have learned from the different mentors I had, that helps me throughout my career"*.

The use of mentors in the workplace, would help to present future leaders and will allow women to accomplish the required performance in the organisation (Maseko, 2013). This view was supported by all the respondents through

responses such as *"You should have a talent pool and us as managers should be assigned to someone who we develop for the next year to help them get to their next role. We will develop more leaders and help them recognise potential in themselves"* and *"Female mentorship is such an important thing for any female who wants to grow her career and become a leader in an organisation"*.

Maseko (2013) found that mentoring is essential for women to be able to advance to management positions. The data from the interviews indicate that mentorship is valued as a necessary tool to be able to advance to the next level in your career. One respondent added that *"We all went through school and we know how to do the job, but when you start, you don't know how to tackle the 'corporate animal'. You need someone who takes you under their wing. Formal mentoring programmes should be in place and senior women should be more open to mentor other junior women because they were already there"*. Other respondents argued that while *"… female mentoring is necessary and that it helps you in your career. It should not be a tick box exercise. I don't want to be in competition with her for anything. She should be objective and really have my interest and career at heart"*.

The data from the interviews further confirms that being able to learn from other senior women in the same organisation and embracing a leadership value such as emotional sensitivity, critical thinking and analytical skills will drive more women into senior management roles (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010) specifically because these *"Women who are already in senior management positions have already broken the barrier"* and these women encourage others to *"believe that they could also do the same"*.

4.3.4.2 Education

Many respondents attributed their success to the fact that their experience in their respective fields brings about the knowledge that secured their credibility to a large extend. Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents have formal undergraduate degrees. Only one respondent indicated that it is an inherent requirement of the organisation she works for, to complete the MBA degree to be able to advance to the next level in her career. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents did not agree that the MBA would help them to advance to the next level in their careers.

The date indicated that organisations are open to support education and post-graduate studies that is in line with what individuals are currently doing and the role that they play in the organisation. However, most organisations do not support a MBA degree as a tool to advance to the next level of your career, whether or not you are a male or female. Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents are still of the view that a degree such as the MBA opens a new line of thinking and gives individuals who completed the degree more confidence in the workplace, even though the organisation they work for do not support the degree from a financial perspective.

Respondents also felt that it was key not to only provide women with formal education like an under graduate – or post graduate degree, but also to educate them around the softer skills and leadership skills to be able to manage people effectively. Women should be groomed to take on a management role in an organisation and they should be equipped with the relevant tools and training that

would not only boost their leadership skills but also their emotional intelligence. The respondents felt that most programmes designed to develop women in the workplace, fails to take into account and address the broader issues faced by women in the workplace environment. One respondent said that *"We should not just hire women, but also the right kind of women. Identifying and upskilling those women. We need to have talent and succession planning in place for those women. They have to be groomed to succeed in their roles. Women are not always natural leaders and not everyone is skilled is some softer issues"*.

The views of Mathur-Helm (2005) that women in South Africa lack certain qualifications, like the MBA, necessary for promotions into management positions, was not supported by the data. The data also did not support the fact that the MBA proved to be helpful in advancing women into management positions and giving them some distinct advantages in the South African environment, as suggested by Adler (1993). This was confirmed through responses such as *"I do think that the MBA will help you in your career but only for two reasons. One, there is a lot that you learn on how corporate issues work and what drives them, secondly, as a woman with a MBA you will tick more boxes. You may not necessarily be promoted because of the MBA though"* and *"If you asked me 6 or 7 years ago then I would have said yes to the MBA. However, I see more and more people with MBA's that are struggling. An MBA was previously recognised, but now it is too popular and almost everyone does it. I do think that it still gives you valuable skills"*. Other respondents argued that *"I think that an MBA will help in some companies but not in all companies"* and *"Honestly, I believe that it shapes you in a way in terms of your thinking, outlook*

and being pragmatic about challenges. Something as big as MBA benefits any organisation. Whether completed by a male or female. Life experience in itself challenges people in terms of resilience and dealing with situations. The MBA does add flavour to your rapport and it is not just a piece of paper. It is something that carries weight".

The data supported the view that it is important for women to get the right education and training that can improve their chances of advancing to senior positions (Ramaite, 2013). This was confirmed through responses such as *"Women should get more opportunities to advance their educational level, not just on technical aspects, but also on the softer skills and leadership skills required"* and *"If you put more emphasis on the people side of the organisation it will slowly start to progress to the softer side of leadership. We need more programmes in place that will help women in their careers"*.

The data from the interviews further supported the view of April et al. (2007) that education alone may not be sufficient for the advancement of a women's career because of organisational barriers that could override it. One respondent added that "*There should be more programmes driven towards women in leadership. There are so many programmes just in leadership but it is not driven towards women specifically. There should be more initiatives like the 'Take a women child to work' initiative. Also I think we need programmes in soft skills development. Grooming that additional skills will be confident boosting"* and other respondent argued that *"We need to have soft skills and the required EQ equally as much as we need the leadership skills and education"*.

4.4 Summary

The changing roles of women from caretakers to executive managers, resulted in various barriers that push them towards having to make more complex decisions around family responsibilities and their career aspirations. Even though women are making progress in their careers, they are still struggling to advance to the highest levels as certain stereotypes still remains in the workplace. Even though the glass ceiling is considered non-existent by certain respondents, the majority of respondents still experience the glass ceiling as a barrier to advance their careers. Some respondents are of the view that this is self-inflicted whilst others argue that it is nurtured by the underlying stereotypes associated with women in the workplace. Discrimination against women is not only embedded in the organisational life, it is also thriving in the work practices and cultural of organisations.

Most of the respondents felt that organisations could and should do more to advance the careers of women. Organisations should support women to succeed in their roles and create an environment that they need to develop and advance. Whilst there were various stereotypes identified by the respondents, they also considered mentorship, and to some extent, education as a way to overcome these barriers that they face to be able to advance to the next level in their careers.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a summary of the key findings, conclusions and recommendations. It also proposes areas for future research.

5.2 Conclusions of the study

The purpose of this study was to determine what stereotypes women are currently encountering in the workplace and whether it can be overcome through mentoring and education. It also explored whether women are still experiencing the glass-ceiling and the queen bee syndrome in their current workplace environment. This research should be of interest to women in management positions specifically because there is such a lack of women in these type of roles. It is also important from a diversity perspective as Research Focus (2009) indicated that diversity positively impacts on a company's performance.

The historical background of women in society and the role that they have to play as caretakers and home keepers are one of the key reasons why women are still underrepresented in management positions within organisations across all industries. Men are considered more masculine and are perceived to be natural leaders. This research found that there are still various stereotypes that women currently encounter in the workplace which prevents them from advancing to the next level in their careers. Even though South Africa have implemented gender equality legislation, it was found that women still experience the glass ceiling and

that there is still a lot to be done to address the inequalities of the past. The glass ceiling is one of the reasons why there is so little female representation in management and executive boards.

The challenges that women face was identified as: gender bias, the culture of organisations, networking, the role females play in an organisation, the payment gap, the glass ceiling effect as well as the queen bee syndrome. It was found that mentorship is essential in the workplace to ensure that women not only advance to the next level in their careers, but also to present future leaders and allow these female leaders to accomplish the required performance. It was further found that there is a need for senior women to mentor the more junior women in organisations as a way to motive these junior women and to help them to advance their careers.

Although literature from Mathur-Helm (2005) and Adler (1993) suggests that the MBA helps to advance women into more senior positions, this study found that the MBA is no longer considered an appropriate mechanism to overcome certain challenges that women face in the workplace or to advance them in their careers. Even though the MBA is no longer considered for career advancement, this study further found that the majority of the respondents still think that the MBA opens a new line of thinking and provides other skills necessary in a leadership role. Whilst education is considered an important factor, this study found that there is also a need for other educational programmes focussing on the soft skills and leadership development for women to prepare them for the management roles that they will fulfil and education to both men and women on gender stereotypes.

The researched revealed further that for the women who are already in management positions, the road to success is not an easy one. In most of the organisations, there is still a huge imbalance in power as well as the opportunities available to women. This study found that women are generally more competitive in a male dominant work environment and as such women face the challenge of other senior women intentionally putting obstacles in their way in an attempt to prevent them from being advanced to the next level.

There is a clear need for organisations to understand that equal opportunities and gender diversity in the management of that organisation, not only benefits employees but also the organisation itself. Organisations should start to realise that women play a vital role in the success of the organisation and that by retaining the talent of the women that they already have, will lead to success. Organisations should also realise that in an environment where there is not a lot of opportunities for women, it will create an environment where senior women who had to struggle to get to the top, will create difficult circumstances for junior women to advance in their careers because of the environment that creates insecurity.

5.3 Recommendations

This research has certain implications for women who want to advance in their careers and for organisations to retain talented women who are the future leaders and aspiring to get to management level in those organisations.

5.3.1 *Recommendation for women*

Women need to change their thinking around their career and the role that they have to play in society and their organisations. Women need to realise that they are natural leaders and multi-taskers and that they can still grow their career whilst attending to their family's responsibilities.

Women should speak up and say what they want. Whether it is more money, more flexibility or more time. Women tend to negotiate a lot lower than their male counterparts and it makes an impact on the end result. It is vital that women do small things to make their life easier for themselves and the women in their environment and not just accept the status quo. Women need to negotiate the salaries that they want and challenge the wage gap between them and their male counterparts.

Women need to improve their networking skills and form a 'girls club' that allows them the opportunity to walk with senior women who already managed to break the ceiling and learn from them how to overcome the stereotypes that they face to be able to advance in their own careers and to support each other in the advancement of our careers.

Women should be confident enough to apply for functions in an organisation that allows them to be part of the business and will grow them and prepare them for the executive positions that they want to end up in.

Male colleagues and family should be made aware of stereotyping and how to avoid it. Women should take the lead to make this change in the perception of the males in our environment.

Women should realise that acting like a man and taking on their leadership style, will not necessarily to help them to advance in their career. Women should not lose their feminine qualities in an attempt to get things done or to prevent other women from advancing in their careers.

5.3.2 *Recommendation for organisations*

Organisations should start to retain the talented females and groom them to become the future leaders of that organisations. Organisations should realise that it is to their benefit to have more women in business.

Organisations should create more opportunities to allow women to advance their careers and to challenge the status quo. There is a need for more forums and events to allow women to network with each other and to speak up and ask for what they want and what needs to change to allow them to grow their careers.

Organisations should create more flexibility around the working time and work space of the women in their environment. It has been proven by some of the major organisations that day care facilities and an interest in employees' family matters empower women more. Family friendly policies could encourage both men and women to take on family responsibilities equally which will allow women

to focus on their responsibilities at work without having to worry about family responsibilities.

Organisations should address gender diversity in their management and boards, not because it is a legal requirement but because diversity is important to the organisation. The view of traditional male and female roles in an organisation should be challenged. Recruitment for all positions should be done on the basis of qualification and experience in spite of gender.

Organisational culture and policies should be changed to guarantee support to women in their careers.

Organisations have to introduce more programmes focussed on women and how to develop their leadership qualities and style and helping them to address gender stereotyping and how to survive male dominated workplace environments.

Organisations should reimburse women on the same scale as their male counterparts for the same positions held in that organisation. The payment gap is one of the key factors that needs addressing in organisations.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

Research on the same study could be undertaken on a larger scale and in one organisation or industry.

Future research could be done on the payment gap between males and females in the same positions across an organisation.

In a study by the Melbourne Business School, it was found that male CEO's with daughters are more likely to challenge gender diversity on boards. A similar study in South Africa could be concluded.

Future research could be done on the view of males and how they view the challenges faced by women in the workplace to advance to the next level in their careers.

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APPENDIX A

DRAFT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name & Surname: _____

Current Role: _____

Organisation: _____

Age (range): 25 – 35 36 – 45 46 – 55 56+

Formal Qualification: Yes / No

QUESTIONS:

Career:

1. How long have you been in your current position?
2. How did you progress to this position?

   Did you advance through the ranks or did you immediately go into leadership role?
3. How many people are reporting into you?

   How many are females?
4. How do you feel about your managerial role?
5. How would you describe your own personal leadership style?

   (Authoritative / Participative / Dictator / Free-reign)
6. What kinds of managers have you worked for during your career?
7. Have you ever worked for a female manager?

   What were their style of managing?

Workplace:

8. Is your workplace predominantly male?

   Is leadership in your workplace predominantly male?

9. In your view, do you think that if the workplace environment is predominantly male, that women in that organization will be more competitive?

10. How do you compare the support you get in your current management role to previous junior or non-management roles?

11. Do you feel you face certain challenges as a women in a management position in your organization?

12. How would you say you overcome or deal these challenges?

13. Are there any support structures in place that support you with these challenges?

14. Does your organization have any forums in place for women that drives transformation?

15. Do you feel that there is potential for growth in your organization?

16. In your view should women look out for each other in the workplace?

17. What do you think needs to be done to get more women to move into senior management in your organization?

Mentoring:

18. Do you have a mentor or have you had a mentor through your career?

    Where they male or female?

19. How have they influenced your career?

20. Do you agree that mentoring of junior women who wants to climb the corporate ladder in your organization, will be helpful for them to advance to the next level?
21. Do you mentor or support any of these junior women?
22. Do you think it is vital that women provide and receive mentoring as a way of facilitating advancement in their career?
23. Are there any mentoring programmes in your organization?

Education:

24. Do you think that a degree such as the MBA would help to advance to the next level in your career?
25. Do you have an MBA?
26. Does your organization contribute towards post-graduate studies?
    If they do, do they pay for the studies in full and are there any requirements that you would need to fulfill before they will pay?
27. Does your organization support an MBA degree?
    Will they pay for this type of degree?
    Why do they not support this type of degree?