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Balancing work and family responsibilities: the case of women in management positions in Nkangala district

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the government's aim to promote gender equality in the workplace, women are still underrepresented in management positions. Women still face many challenges, such as discrimination, gender stereotypes, the 'glass ceiling' and work/family conflict. This study sought to explore how women in management positions balance work and their family responsibilities. The study adopted the qualitative research approach and used multiple case studies to study the experiences of women in management positions. The study population consisted of women in management positions at Nkangala District in Mpumalanga. Purposive sampling was adopted to select eight participants for the study. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect data from the participants. To analyse the data, the researcher adopted thematic content analysis. The study revealed that women in management positions face conflict between their work role and family responsibilities. Participants also indicated that they managed the conflict through careful structuring and planning of their activities, prioritizing their responsibilities and delegating some of their duties. Participants also indicated that they needed support from spouses, families, employers, supervisors and colleagues in order to cope with their multiple roles. It is recommended that organizations (employers) develop policies that enable women in management positions to achieve work-life balance. Such policies may include career breaks, job sharing, flexible working arrangements and childcare policies. The study has the potential to contribute to a growing body of knowledge on how women in management positions balance their work and family responsibilities. Furthermore, the study could help managers and understand the experiences of women managers in the workplace, and thereby enable them to respond more effectively to the challenges that these women face. The study might be useful to other women in management positions, as the findings will help to create awareness of the challenges women in management face in balancing work and family responsibilities.

Key words: women in management, multiple roles, work-life balance, gender stereotypes, gender roles