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Mashele, Winsome

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University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

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Wits Business School

Presented by Winsome MASHELE (1776051)

Under the supervision of Professor Imhotep Paul Alagidede

The Glass Cliff: Exploring the Dynamics Around the Appointment of Women to Precarious Leadership Positions in Corporate South Africa

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AUTHOR:	Winsome Mashele
SUPERVISOR:	Professor Imhotep Paul Alagidede
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ABSTRACT

The current research explores the "glass cliff" form of discrimination. The research argues that while women are now appointed in high-profile positions, there is a greater likelihood that they end up on a 'glass cliff' as compared to their male counterparts. Glass cliff positions put women executives' in potentially risky roles that could harm their reputations and career prospects because, when a company performs poorly, people tend to blame its leadership without considering situational variables. The research problem statement centres around the overrepresentation of women who are in senior leadership positions in organizations that are experiencing difficulties, which is an increasing concern in corporate South Africa. The main objectives of the study, among others includes to: (i) gain a better understanding of why women choose risky leadership positions. (ii) identify the leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relation to gender. (iii) understand the suitable leadership styles that women facing the glass cliff have at their disposal to build relationships with internal shareholders as well as influence the structure of the organisation. (iv) understand the tools and resources that are needed to support women in senior leadership roles during times of crises in corporate South Africa.

Design/methodology/approach: A qualitative research methodology was employed, and data collected through semi-structured interviews from a total of 15 participants.

Findings: The findings suggest that women are now allowed to occupy senior leadership positions where these positions record a decline in status, competence and prestige, and as a result are time consuming and difficult to combine with a successful academic career. An important set of findings is: (i) the participants perceived the risky activity as a form of promotional opportunity and were willing to accept an offer. (ii) if women are placed in the right positions with the right skills, success is potentially guaranteed. (iii) leaders should practice the situational leadership style which evolves according to the situation, the time at hand and its nature.

Contribution / value: Despite some limitations that were experienced over the course of the study, some answers emerged in response to the key question on which the study was premised. Furthermore,

the aim of this study was achieved in terms of its contribution not only in providing guidance to organizational decision makers, policy makers and business leaders to address inequalities in corporate South Africa, but also in highlighting the role played by women in making career decisions within the rubric of the glass cliff phenomenon.

Key words: Gender; Leadership positions; Glass cliff; Corporate, Risk taking; Precarious, South Africa.

DECLARATION

Student Number: 1776051

I, Winsome Mashele hereby declare that THE GLASS CLIFF: EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS AROUND THE APPOINTMENT OF WOMEN TO PRECARIOUS LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN CORPORATE SOUTH AFRICA is my own work and that all sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I declare that this thesis, submitted for my degree of PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) in Business Administration Degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, has not been previously submitted by me at another university or faculty.

Ms. Winsome Mashele



14 February 2022

Signature Date

DEDICATION

To Lettie “N’wa Dinga” Nkata Mashele, my loving mother who could not wait to call me “Dr Mashele”. That did not happen as you took your last breath during the last days of the completion of my studies. Your teachings and prayers moulded me into the woman I am today. You taught me that nothing is impossible with God. This is for you… .....true love always prevails.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound gratitude to my late parents, Wilson and Lettie Mashele, I am sad you are not here to witness the fruits of your teachings and prayers, but I know you are rejoicing in heaven. I hear you mama saying “Na khensa n’wananga, inkomu”.

My siblings, Patricia, Gladness, Percy and Pearl you are the best and many thanks for your support always. We are partners forever.

My children, Xikombiso, Vutivi and Nomathemba. I am nothing without you. You were selfless. You made sure you give me space when I needed it to enable me focus. You prepared meals when the going got tough. How can I forget Hluhlu? You always told me that I must finish my “homework” and go to get you some ice cream. You are my shining stars.

My deepest appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Imhotep Alagidede, for believing in me. I will never forget how your words of encouragement kept me going. I am thankful for your professional acumen and personal support. Thank you for helping me through this journey and making me a better person.

My editor, Ijeoma Loren Uche-Okeke who worked with me day and night to meet required deadlines. I truly appreciate your selfless support and assistance.

Finally, to the women in corporate South Africa who took their time to participate in this study, and contributed significantly to the realization of this thesis, through incredibly hectic work schedules and pressures, you opened your doors to me. The stories you shared about your journeys during your careers inspired me tremendously. You are truly heroines and personify the essence of “girl power”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT 3

DECLARATION 5

DEDICATION 6

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 7

LIST OF FIGURES 13

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS 14

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND 15

1.1 Introduction 15

1.2 Background and problem statement 16

1.3 Rationale / justification of the study 18

1.4. Problem statement 19

1.5. Purpose of the study 20

1.6 Research questions 21

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 25

2.1 Introduction 25

2.2 Social role theory 25

2.3 The think-manager-think-male 25

2.4 The role congruity theory 26

2.5 Rationale for the concept of theory 26

2.6 Conclusion 28

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW 29

3.1 Introduction 29

3.2 Women and precarious leadership 29

3.2.1 Think crisis-think female 30

3.2.2 Market signals and glass cliff 31

3.3. Possible factors creating the glass cliff: Psychological process and socio-structural reality 33

3.3.1 Implementing organisational leadership change 34

3.3.2 Social Identity and Glass Cliff 35

3.3.3 Hostile Sexism 36

3.4 Factors that prevent glass cliff and the role corporates play in avoiding 37

glass cliff appointments. 37

3.4.1 Social support and resources 37

3.4.2 Organizational justice and perceived equality 38

3.5 Research Contribution 39

3.5.1 Conceptual contribution 39

3.5.2 Practical Contribution 40

3.6 Chapter Conclusion 41

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 42

4.1 Introduction 42

4.2 Research design 43

4.2.1 Phenomenology 44

4.3 Research Paradigm 44

4.3.1 Philosophical Paradigmatic Discussion 45

4.3.2 Positivism and Constructivism/Interpretivism 45

4.3.3 Suitability of Interpretivism versus Constructivism 46

4.3.4 Rationale for choosing Interpretivism 46

4.4 Study Population 47

4.5 Data collection 48

4.5.1 Methodological challenges – interviewing elites 49

4.5.2 Methodological implication of interviewing peers 50

4.5.3 Follow-up interview 50

4.6 The data transcribing, analysis and coding processes 51

4.6.1 The thematic data analysis approach 52

4.7 Strategies employed to ensure rigour 55

4.8 Ethical considerations 58

4.9 Chapter conclusion 58

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS 59

5.1 Introduction 59

5.2 Profile and overview of participants 60

5.3 Main themes 61

5.3.1 Acceptance of risky leadership positions 61

5.3.2 Leadership experience 70

5.3.3 Leadership style 76

5.4 Strategies to overcome obstacles / challenges for women in senior leadership roles 85

5.5 Conclusion 85

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION 87

6.1 Introduction 87

6.2 Findings 88

6.2.1 Leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relation to gender 88

6.2.2 Appropriate leadership styles that women in senior leadership have at their disposal 89

6.3.3 Tools and resources that are needed in corporate South Africa for women in senior leadership positions 90

6.2.4 The reasons and times women decide to take risky leadership positions 92

6.3 Framing Model 93

6.3.1 Individual (Role of women) 95

6.3.2 Organisation (Role of Organisation) 96

6.3.3 Societal level (Role of the society) 96

6.4 Conclusion 97

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 98

7.1 Introduction 98

7.2 Overview of the study 98

7.3 Contribution of the research 102

7.3.1 Theoretical Contributions 102

7.4 Recommendations for further studies 103

7.4.1 Recommendations in relation to the research findings 103

7.4.2 Recommendations for future research 104

7.5 Limitations 105

7.6 Conclusion 106

REFERENCES 107

APPENDIX 1: Interview Questions 119

APPENDIX 11: Participant Information Sheet 121

APPENDIX 111: Research Participant Consent form 123

APPENDIX 1V: Ethics Committee Clearance Certificate 124

APPENDIX V: ATLAS.ti visual example of codes in a theme 125

APPENDIX V1: Identifying Recurrent Themes across Participant Accounts 126

APPENDIX VII: Research themes and subthemes 128

APPENDIX V111: Personal experiences of the glass cliff 130

APPENDIX IX: Participants work profiles and positions on the board 136

APPENDIX X: Overcoming obstacles or challenges as presented by participants in corporate South Africa 143

APPENDIX X1: Sample Matrix 146

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 : Research Methodology Framework

Figure 4.2 : Braun & Clarke's six-phase guide for doing a thematic analysis

Figure 6. 1 : The Warship's Wheel Model

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACSA	:	Airports Company South Africa
B2B	:	Business-to-Business
CEO	:	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	:	Chief Financial Officer
CNBC	:	Consumer News and Business Channel
COO	:	Chief Operating Officer
COVID-19	:	Coronavirus Pandemic
DPE	:	Department of Public Enterprises
FTSE	:	The Financial Times Stock Exchange
GM	:	General Motors
HRM	:	Human Resources Management
IBL	:	Intent-Based Leadership
ICT	:	Information and Communications Technology
IDC	:	Independent Development Corporation of South Africa
JSE	:	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
MD	:	Managing Director
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organizations
RCT	:	Role Congruity Theory
PMAESA	:	Port Management Association for Eastern and Southern Africa
SAICA	:	The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants
SOE	:	State-Owned Enterprise

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Despite the confirmation that women are breaking through the "glass ceiling", which has hindered their full participation in economic life, true gender equality has not yet been achieved, and it remains a battle for women to gain access to senior leadership roles which remain highly restricted.

Women around the world who seek leadership positions continue to face systemic barriers and frustrations in the workplace that hinder their progress (Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014: 425). For women, climbing the company ladder is always a challenge, and the ascension to top leadership positions in the corporate environment continues to pose challenges universally, and has been investigated by numerous researchers. Glass ceiling is still seen as the invisible barrier that continues to prevent women from climbing the corporate ladder in an organisation (Bendl & Schmidt, 2010). Social policies that include women empowerment, affirmative action, and organizational initiatives, have been developed and implemented to rectify the demographic disparities in leadership. The gender gap remains wide and apparent advances have been made. For example, in December 2019, women held 30 (6%) CEO positions in Standard & Poor's (S&P) 500 companies. At the start of 2020, the number was 6.7%, and at the close of 2020, women held 7.8% of CEO positions, with UPS, Clorox, Citigroup, CVS, and Dick's Sporting Goods naming women as leaders of their companies (Catalyst, 2022). However, according to a 2019 report by McKinsey & Company and Lean In, 329 companies were surveyed that employed more than 13 million people, and the results of the survey indicated that 35% of the companies had one female C-level executive or none at all. In 2020, the number of female executives at the C-level increased with more companies recording higher numbers than in previous years.

This suggests that the international debate around social roles and professional gender equality is far from being resolved (Uwizeyimana & Mathevula 2014). Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) note that, "the relatively small number of studies focusing on leadership suggests that there is a need to fully explore the meaning and practice of leadership among African women leaders."

The existing research indicates that more women have been successful in climbing the corporate ladder, the question has therefore shifted from whether women can lead and how effectively, to what kind of positions they are occupying (Northouse, 2007). The focus should be shifted, and attention paid to the conditions under which women are promoted, the kinds of the positions they are moved into, and the kinds of assessments done once they are at the top.

In this study, evidence gathered from researchers clearly indicates that the way women and men tend to achieve senior leadership positions differ remarkably. It reveals that in comparison with their male counterparts, women who break the glass ceiling are often appointed to positions that are likely to be difficult and associated with a higher risk of failure. This is a phenomenon coined by Ryan and Haslam (2005) as the glass cliff. Though women are gradually attaining key positions as they ascend on the corporate ladder, they are still under-represented in positions of power.

To support this argument, a consolidated summary of experimental evidence on the glass cliff that has been accumulated over the past years has been presented. In doing so, the study reviews both lay explanations for the glass cliff and empirical research which sheds light on the factors contributing to the phenomenon.

1.2 Background and problem statement

The interest in doing this study is informed by the claim (Ryan & Haslam, 2005) that women are overrepresented in senior leadership positions in organisations during crises. Despite the various challenges relating to gender inequality encountered by women in the workplace, the number of women in the work force has seen a steady increase. According to a report presented by Statistics South Africa (2015), women make up 51% of the total population of South Africa and account for 45,1% of the working population (BWASA, 2017). In the sample which reflects South Africa's mainstream economy, the number of women CEOs has doubled from 7 in 2015 to 14 in 2017, but only one State Owned Enterprise (SOE) has a woman CEO. It is noteworthy that the share of JSE-listed companies with at least three female Directors has decreased to 25.6% in 2017, from 35.9% in 2015 (McKinsey, 2016). The share of female Executive Managers has risen slightly to 29.5%. This statistic confirms the claim by researchers that the underrepresentation of women in senior positions is no longer a universal problem. The focus has now shifted to the nature of positions they occupy in organisations (Northouse, 2007).

Women who are breaking the glass ceiling and occupying senior leadership roles continue to struggle with issues relating to discrimination. Glass ceiling indicates inefficiencies in relation to women's employment opportunities, highlighting the challenges women face when they reach a higher level in their careers (Kolade & Kehinde, 2013). Current research shows that women are still facing a glass ceiling with regards to leadership positions (Pai & Vaidya, 2009). The worrying factor is that even if a female executive struggle and eventually breaks through the glass ceiling, more often than not they find themselves trapped in a secondary form of glass ceiling "glass cliff", which is more precarious (Ganiyu

& Akintunde, 2017).

Ryan and Haslam (2005) coined this phenomenon “glass cliff.” Watts et al. (2015) expressed a similar view in terming it as a “glass cliff” and Farmer (2013) viewed it as a “glass escalator.” Yaghi (2018) suggests that due to injustice, women leaders may suffer when they are singled out solely because of their gender as a key factor. This creates a “glass prison” that confines women and precedes them wherever they go as described by Yaghi (2018) as an attitude in which people convince themselves that men always want to dominate the working environment, and high-profile positions while women are inferior.

Ahn and Cunningham (2020), asserts that women may have an advantage when a company is not doing well with the metaphor “think crisis, think female” as compared to the “think manager, think male.” Ryan et al. (2016) indicates that a possible reason for organisations to make glass cliff appointments maybe based on the need to signal to the market that there is a commitment to innovative strategies. Appointments of this nature is reflective of the symbolic management of corporate governance, rather than a broad acceptance of the principle that gender diversity is good for business (Main & Smith, 2017). No women or any individual in general should be promoted for transformation purposes or just to “tick boxes”, it should be based on merit through hard work, and achievement of targets. Cook and Glass (2014) argue that it is not about the relative risk aversion of men vs women, a debate that has attracted attention globally since the financial crisis in 2008.

Kulich et al. (2021) supports the glass cliff theory in highlighting that women are mostly favoured in senior leadership positions during a crisis. In support of this viewpoint Main and Gregory-Smith (2017), further posit that the appointment of women to glass cliff positions can set in motion a chain of events that are potentially damaging both for the women in those positions, as well as for the organisations that employ them, the resultant effect on their reputation is often lengthy and it tends to take time to be repaired. Rejecting or turning down the offer constituted a risk to their careers, as in their view the roles presented opportunities for them to achieve visibility and credibility. In agreeing with the findings from Glass and Cook (2016), which posits that women do not necessarily prefer these risky positions, but because they are afforded fewer opportunities than men, they do not have the luxury of turning down these kinds of positions. According to Ashby et al., (2007) such positions are viewed as “golden opportunities” for women and a “poisoned cup” for men.

According to Main and Gregory-Smith (2017), glass cliff appointments are associated with the high risk of stress, which may end up reducing employee motivation and make women shy away from applying to high level positions. Over the past years, there have been several headlines spotlighting female leaders, a few examples are; Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo since July 2012, Mary Barra, CEO of General

Motors as of January 2014, and Lisa Su, CEO, of Advanced Micro Devices as of October 2014. As an example, in January 2014, Barra became CEO of General Motors, exactly two weeks after Barra assumed her new role as the head of the third largest carmaker in the world, the company suffered a major setback, a massive recall due to a faulty ignition switch linked to 124 deaths and injuring several more. It is noteworthy that the experiences of the three women, mentioned above, showed that they were all appointed when these organizations were in trouble or in crisis. The crisis in this case is the driver of the highlighted glass cliff appointments, which follows the pattern outlined by the glass cliff theory as these women were placed at the helm when the organisation was experiencing difficult times. However, it is alarming that women are favoured in senior leadership positions when organisations are facing a crisis, if the glass cliff effect on appointment is driving this perception then underrepresentation should not be a central debate anymore. A high hazard alert should then be sent out to deter women in high profile positions from falling prey to such circumstances. Looking at the examples given above, glass cliff situations can be identified. Generally, women are believed to have better crisis-leadership, multitasking and problem-solving skills (Kim, 2014).

In the study conducted by Hegarty and Bruckmüller's (2013) on the glass cliff phenomenon, the first instrument asserted that when a company that has a male leader performs well, there is no need to change leadership, but it has been observed that when male leaders lead the company to failure, a female leader is preferred. In another experience it was revealed that in companies that remained successful, male leaders were always preferred. The study went further to describe women leaders as “wreaking havoc on companies’ performances.” However, a counterargument can be made against Judge’s (2003) claim that women may be favoured not because they are expected to improve the situation, but because they may be good people and can take the blame when things go wrong.

Woods (2004) quoted "I know of women who don't want to sit on a board that isn't a challenge, and who feel that if they go to a company that's doing quite well, they might not be noticed”.

1.3 Rationale / justification of the study

It is noteworthy that most studies around glass cliff appointments were mainly done in the context of the United States of America. There has been minimal research done around glass cliff appointments in the South Africa context. However, it is useful to investigate several anecdotal cases that can potentially be referred to as glass cliff instances. In understanding the reasons why, the glass cliff occurs, it is important to understand how it practically impacts both women leaders and organizations in several crucial ways (Chizema et al., 2015). Basically, this kind of research can provide in depth information on this issue as well as the best way to address it. Answering this research question not only

assists women in making sound judgements in relation to their career choices and paths, but it can also potentially equip organizations with practical solutions or tools to better deal with this kind of discrimination in the workplace. Chizema et al. (2015) asserts that organisations primarily focus on tackling the issue of gender inequality in the leadership by employing more women, however, glass cliff research clearly demonstrates that diversity programs solely intended to increase the quantity of females in leadership positions are no longer sufficient to deal with these fundamental issues.

1.4. Problem statement

Is it true that to have more women in leadership roles has resulted in lower corporate share prices? The issues addressed in this research study clearly buttresses the fact that women in senior leadership positions in corporate South Africa are confronted with numerous challenging circumstances that are enacted in various forms of gender discrimination. Men are regarded as the head of the family; therefore, the perception is that it is natural thatthey also lead in the corporate environment. Women belong in the kitchen, taking care of the family.This view is supported by the assumption made by Schein (2007) that when it comes to leadership positions, most countries prefer men to women, hence "think manager think male". Gruber et al. (2018) support the repeated equation of notions of masculinity to notions of leadership, opining that observers are less likely to "spontaneously categorise" women as leaders or potential leaders.

Overrepresentation of women in precarious leadership positions in corporate South Africa is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, this suggests to women in lower-level positions that are aspiring to climb the corporate ladder that it is unobtainable. Therefore, highly qualified and experienced women may feel intimidated or discouraged to apply for those positions, to avoid being singled out for finger-pointing and humiliation. Evidence collected through various research studies shows that women who resign from under-performing companies are likely to suffer from a tarnished reputation and might not be offered directorships or leadership positions. As a result, organizations lose the opportunity to effectively utilise the skills and competencies of their female employees (Hobbler et al., 2016). Secondly, when corporates in South Africa are in crisis, and seeking a dramaticshift, which, given the historical dominance of men in powerful roles, frequently means seeking women to lead.

Thirdly, overrepresentation of women in these risky positions is problematic, as when women are fewer in senior leadership positions, women who are still climbing the corporate ladder will lack mentors. With the lack of female mentors to guide women through what might be understood as a policy-driven succession planning process, women may feel unprepared for senior leadership and will not apply for

such positions (Mazorodze & Buckley 2020). For example, for many (female) graduates-in-training within an organisational context their career training, and exposure begins in the work environment. Therefore, an increase in female role models will provide encouragement for these new (female) employees to seek or aim for senior leadership positions (Hobbler et al., 2016). According to Bass and Riggio (2006), female leaders are more transformational and effective than their male counterparts. Having a group of women with diverse skills, experience and knowledge in senior leadership roles is valuable because it provides a diversityof viewpoints, role models, and leadership styles. There is a need for more women in senior level positions to help in closing the gap (Mckinsey, 2016).

Several studies have been conducted over the past decades to investigate gender differences in leadership. Research around the glass cliff has primarily focused on documenting the existence of the phenomenon and understanding the psychological processes that contribute to the appointment of women to precarious positions. As Ryan and Haslam (2007) put it, "if and when that failure occurs, it is then women (rather than men) who must face the consequences and who are singled out for criticism and blame". The current study is aimed at identifying those factors that may explain when and why women are willingto accept precarious job positions. It is important to further extend the investigation to understand the leadership style women employ when they are appointed during times of crisis.

1.5. Purpose of the study

Recent evidence found that there is a greater preference for women leaders during times of crisis and poor company performance. This phenomenon has been argued as being another form of discrimination in addition to the glass ceiling and it was coined as a glass cliff by (Ryan & Haslam, 2005).

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the "think crisis, think female" concept, which suggests that women are more likely to be appointed as leaders in times of crisis in corporate South Africa. It seeks to do this using several investigative approaches. Firstly, to explore the reasons why women accept senior leadership positions when they are offered. Secondly, to investigate the causes of the glass cliff. Thirdly, to interrogate the appropriate leadership style(s) these women should adopt to enable their survival in these positions, and lastly to interrogate the role organisations need to play to avoid glass cliff appointments. It is envisaged that a greater understanding of individuals' lived experiences of glass cliff could assist in influencing the organisations when developing future strategies in gender equality, and to better deal with the subtle perpetuation of discrimination.

I hope that this study will influence a paradigm shift in terms of how women in general view gender stereotypes, and encourage them to make informed judgements and sound decisions with regards to

their careers. It is noteworthy that the success and effectiveness of a leader and his/her ability to manage his/her role is dependent on a combination of leadership attributes and characteristics. It is also anticipated that the present study by highlighting the need for more in depth research in relation to the glass cliff, will serve as stimulation for future research in the general field of leadership.

1.6 Research questions

The above issues/problems lead to the following research questions as a framing and guide to the present study:

1. What are the leadership experiences of women leaders in organisations in relation to gender?
2. What is the appropriate leadership style that women in senior leadership have at their disposal to build relationships with shareholders and influence the structure of the organisation?
3. What tools and resources are needed in corporate South Africa for women in senior leadership positions during times of crises?
4. When and why are women more willing to accept risky leadership positions?

1.7 The significance of the study

This research is important in terms of its theoretical and practical implications to the existing body of research knowledge. It contributes to theory in that there is a substantial body of work that more generally focuses on the way in which males in comparison with female leaders are selected (Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010; Bruckmüller et al., 2014; Glass & Cook, 2016; Ryan & Haslam, 2005; Ryan et al., 2016), but none investigating important factors that help women leaders in leading an organisation during crisis periods more importantly. Due to the lack of prior research and given the relative newness of this field of research, two stages of research design were proposed for this study. Stage one consisted of a literature review to explore andidentify a suitable theoretical framework for this study. In stage two, a one-on-one semi structured interview was conducted to gather data to investigate the research problem. The methodological insight used in this study will contribute to the body of research knowledge in corporate South Africa.

In addition, the findings of this study will also impact many senior leadership functions in corporate South African business. The main practical contributions are as follows: First, the study will help in advising organisations in adopting practices that foster “debiasing” of decisions regarding promotions to top leadership, and for human capital departments in providing a series of trainings regarding

decision-making that raise awareness about the possibility of biased judgments related to gender and leadership. Second, for women aspiring to be leaders of organisations, this study will give guidance in assessing and researching the motive of the position being offered in order to make informed decisions on how to navigate through it. Third, for executive leadership of organisations. Fourth, the contribution of the study is in its benefit to society in challenging and interrogating the traditionally held societal belief that there should be different expectations from male and female leaders. This belief or view is supported by the statement by Szameitat et al. (2015), that men seem to show or have different abilities compared to women. Last, people who are making decisions should be cognizant of the potential consequences of gendered policies that are offered to women in times of crisis.

Lastly, a significant area that is underrepresented in the existing literature that the study seeks to contribute to, is interrogating the after effects of glass cliff appointments. Given the relative newness of this field of research, little attention has been paid to the consequences of the glass cliff effect. Therefore, it is worth noting that after understanding how and when the glass cliff effect is likely to occur, it is equally important to discern why females are likely to be offered these positions. Without any insight into the reasons behind these appointments, it is impossible to rectify the issues that the glass cliff effect presents for women and leadership.

1.8 Glossary terms

Gender – is viewed as a relationship between men and women, both intellectual and material. Gender is determined because of sexual orientation of women or men, not only determined biologically, but socially constructed (Lindqvist, 2020). The description corresponds with the topic that is being discussed as gender issues focus on women and the relationships between men and women, their roles, access to and in managing resources, interests, and needs.

Leadership – Kermal (2015) described "leadership" as a leader of a position, organization and in a community setup. Leadership is simply an act of leading a group of people or an organisation, it can be in the corporate world or in a traditional set-up. Participants in the current study highlighted the choice of leadership style that transforms and is used as a tool to succeed and build the vision of their followers and to guide change with motivation and inspiration that goes together with meaning.

Glass cliff – mainly refers to a form of gender discrimination where women are more likely to be offered leadership positions in risky situations (Velte, 2018). Kulich et al (2021) suggests that in a glass cliff women are more likely to occupy high leadership positions when organizations are experiencing difficulties. Women and members of other inadequately represented groups breaking the glass ceiling often find themselves in leadership positions that are risky. Recent research has also shown that if women are fully empowered and transparent in carrying out their duties as leaders, feel

empowered through their work, and are treated well, and are provided with social assistance and resources, then glass cliffs become less dangerous.

Risk-taking - Marcus and Mell (2021) describes it as a 'human activity in which people engage, is perceived to be risky but is undertaken deliberately and from choice.' The definition means that at least two dimensions are important: the degree of not thinking (or knowing) that the risk is taken to a certain degree of control (or agency) that gives a person an understanding of being able to make decisions and have some agency. Lack of knowledge is a real problem in many risk-taking activities, as stylistic texts emphasize that leadership positions in times of disaster will not be compromised if organizations are clear about the purpose of the position.

Precarious – According to Henninger (2019) a risky job is a type of job that arises from uncertainty. Risky employment refers to different types of jobs that generates social inequalities, the challenges are not only experienced with employees but communities as well (Stutha & Jahnca, 2018). Current research has shown that because many jobs require certain qualifications as the main requirement the absence of these qualifications greatly increases the chances of risky employment.

Corporate – Eukeria and Favorite (2014) views a corporate group as a combination of two or more companies with different categories in an organization. Typically, subsidiary companies operate within a variety of business entities; the business group is also known as the holding company. The definition according to Eukeria and Favorite, (2014) is consistent with the present study in terms of understanding what an organization is.

1.9 Format of the study

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background: This chapter introduces the research problem, background and its aims and objectives. It seeks to identify the gap to be filled by the research and the real impact that the research potentially has on thinking and practice. The limitations and delimitations of the research are also briefly discussed.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework: This chapter reviews theoretical foundations related to gender and leadership, theoretical concepts and ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the thesis

Chapter 3: Literature Review: This chapter situates the theoretical foundation and the role of the literature review through qualitative research. The chapter also presents a tool utilised to investigate the relationship between female leaders in South African corporations as well as the various challenges they face after occupying these leadership roles.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology: this chapter outlines the type of study, research design and research methodology used and the functional definitions of the research procedures such as sample,

data collection and research analysis.

Chapter 5: Presentation of results: This chapter presents the profiles of the participants and discusses themes from the data supported by presenting detailed views from the participants on emerging themes and selected extracts.

Chapter 6: Discussion: This chapter presents a discursive interpretation of the research findings in relation to the literature and highlights how it assisted in answering the research questions. A framing model is developed and discussed.

Chapter 7: Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations: This chapter discusses the limitations and implications of the research as well as the importance of the study, and its contribution to the field of women leadership. It concludes with actions and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an introduction and background to the research. This study is part of gender and leadership research discipline; therefore, this chapter reviews the theoretical foundations of gender and leadership. When females enter male-dominated occupations, they do not live up to the expectations of the skills or competencies expected in that profession, and therefore experience extreme bias and discrimination (Koburtay et al., 2019). Leadership is a quality that is closely associated with men, most of the characteristics cited in the literature for an effective leader have been male traits (taking a risk, decisiveness, directing, assertive, ambitious) (Vinkenburg et al., 2011). Theories like "think-manager-think-male" (Koenig et al., 2011; Schein 1975, 2007), social role theory (Eagly & Sczeny, 2019) and the role incongruity theory (Hoyt & Burnette, 2013; Koenig et al., 2011) also describes the role of men in leadership positions.

2.2 Social role theory

Social role theory is important in defining the existence of gender stereotyping. Based on this view, leaders have expectations about candidates' behaviour related to behavioural tendencies and activities that are relevant to their social roles, and that can be based on gender, economic status or other demographic subsets (Skelly & Johnson, 2011). It explores the differing leadership styles of men and women; men being viewed as more agentic and women showing communal behaviors. Some of the agentic traits inhibited by men are aggression, insecurity, acting like a leader, self-reliant, self-confidence, coercive negotiation, independence, domination, and ambitious (Eagly & Sczeny, 2019). Communal behaviors attributed to women are gentle, kind, loving, compassionate, nourishing empathetic, nurturing, sensitive and helpful (Eagly & Sczeny, 2019). Although these differences form the basis of social role theory, Eagly and Sczeny (2019) states that men and women acting in accordance with their social roles are often segregated according to gender and that this applies to gender equality (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021; Koenig & Eagly, 2014).

2.3 The think-manager-think-male

The think-manager-think-male framework tends to dominate the leadership literature. The concept was originally developed by Schein (1975) and was tested and replicated in many places, including the rest of the world (Koenig & Eagly 2014; Fischbach et al., 2015). Schein's tests involved both male and

female managers. It is a common belief that women have more feelings than men, but it is still unclear how the superstitious notions of women compared to men affect leadership ideas. The results from the above-mentioned tests showed that both male and female managers saw the manager's job as male and equally equitable with men. Braun et al. (2017) argue that because of the prominence between women's social roles and followers, it is predicted that people will show preference, i.e., favor female followers over male. Likewise, men are often seen as better suited to leadership positions, which are thought to require the characteristics of an agent, a thoughtful manager - assumes a men's organization (Schein, 1973). Kulich et al. (2021) found that the association between masculinity and leadership decreases in times of crises, when times are hard, stereotypically feminine traits are important for leaders to have, what the authors call a think crisis – think female association. On the other hand, women seem to be better prepared for leadership positions in these situations and are more likely to be elected as leaders. Therefore, if women are elected to leadership positions in times of crises due to a mental disorder - consider a women's organization, they should be limited to situations where feminine qualifications are required (e.g. social or emotional abilities), not when specific masculine qualities are required (Kulich et al., 2021).

2.4 The role congruity theory

Gruber et al. (2018) suggest that as leadership skills are ascribed more to men than women, there is discrimination against those who will become women leaders. Role congruity theory suggests that the apparent discrepancy between roles and characteristics associated with women and the roles and characteristics associated with successful managers will lead to far more negative situations for women managers (Gruber et al, 2018). Dambrin and Lambert (2012) also emphasize that while there is a strong case for the increase in the number of women in the workforce it decreases significantly as women continue to face discrimination and remain in senior management positions.

2.5 Rationale for the concept of theory

A theory provides us with ways to build, test, evaluate, and share information (Bardzell, 2016). Therefore, it is important to select and apply a theoretical approach to the perceptual aspects that contribute to the over-representation of women in critical leadership positions in South African companies. According to Robinson (2021), the choice and application of the theory is fundamental to understanding the factors that lead to the causes of glass crossings. After understanding these things, recommendations that address this situation can be developed.

The literature can be roughly grouped into three schools of thought. The first theory to be considered

seems to be based on the premise that partner preferences are based on cultural expectations which are the theory of social role. According to this view, the beliefs of the gender role are clearly contradicted in terms of the social role that we see men and women living in (Wood & Eagly, 2012).

A second theory which is “think manager, think male” suggests that if you are like most people, you probably thought of a man. Lastly, the role congruity, as defined by Carmona-Cobo et al. (2021) is the theory of prejudice towards female leaders and proposes a perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles. It leads to discrimination that women are considered inferior to men in leadership positions, thus unfairly examining the behavior that fulfils the mandate of the role of the leader when exercised by a woman.

In this research, I use role congruity theory (RCT) as a leading framework for investigating existing gender and leadership documents and assessing the potential for women's appointments to leading in leadership positions in South African companies. The following questions guided my review of the literature: 1.) What are the leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relation to gender? 2.) What is the appropriate leadership style that women in senior leadership have at their disposal to build relationships with shareholders and influence the structure of the organisation? 3.) What tools and resources are needed in corporate South Africa for women in senior leadership positions during times of crisis? 4.) When and why are women more willing to accept risky leadership positions? These questions will help to understand the current situation regarding the concept of women being appointed to senior leadership positions in times of crisis through the RCT. The main goal of the RCT is that the roles of leaders and women vary due to the inconsistency of women's beliefs. Glass and Cook (2016) highlights the potential benefits women leaders have consistently achieved in their roles and leadership skills. While it is generally acknowledged that such benefits are not widely publicised in a situation where there is no belief in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities, my view is that there are a few organizations and communities where this principle of gender equality is recognized and practiced . Given that the current study follows the basic concept of the RCT, I agree that gender inequality is one factor (among many others) that can lead to the dramatic increase in the employment of women into senior leadership positions during a crisis.

Therefore, the use of the role congruity theory as a framework will assist in bringing in and allowing for the voices of women in senior leadership to be heard through this study, as well as the opportunity to share their unique views on the discourse around women in senior leadership positions during times of crises.

2.6 Conclusion

This review is motivated by the overrepresentation of women in today's top leadership positions in organizations during a crisis, and the perception that a key issue may be distorted perceptions of leadership skills or the perceived inability of women to lead. This concept seeks to answer four specific questions raised at the beginning of this study.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed and critical review of relevant literature on the causes of glass cliff leadership positions involving international experts in the field of leadership, as well as perspectives from South Africa and developing countries on why women accept these types of leadership positions; the strategies women use to succeed in these leadership positions and concludes with the role corporates play in avoiding glass cliff appointments. The literature reviewed in the study, is therefore, based on the research objectives of the study.

3.2 Women and precarious leadership

Building on what was indicated in the previous section, the perceived proposition that women are suitable in senior leadership positions when an organisation is in crises is likely to increase. This speculation is in line with research findings reported by (Haslam & Ryan, 2008), which indicated that the difficulties that men face on their way up the ladder to the highest echelons in their organisations, are more likely to serve a positive self-developmental purpose than their female counterparts, since they view their challenges more as obstacles to be surmounted. The research findings suggest that men and women are selected differently for both rewarding and unrewarding jobs, which leaves questions of importance unanswered.

Clearly, the concept of the glass cliff applies to the analysis of the organisations wellbeing, as its impact extends beyond recognizing the suitability of women for dangerous leadership positions because they are related to the integration of organizational units. As these ideas are the basis of real organizations, they should have an impact on the type of responsibilities given to women in organizations if they are successful in advancing to the corporate level. Kiser (2015) analysed archival and experimental data to compare the work experience of men and women in senior leadership positions. The results revealed that positions held by women tend to pose a risk and low levels of dignity. In general, women find their positions less satisfying or more attractive than men, which leads me to the conclusion that although there is an apparent increase in women taking on more senior positions, this also increases the likelihood to exposure to gender discrimination such as glass cliff.

In a study conducted by Ryan et.al. (2007) participants were asked to read and respond to a news story that summarizes Ryan and Haslam's (2005) original archival study. The participants responded to a number of closed-ended questions about their perceptions of the glass cliff as a problem for women, and an open-ended question that asked them to comment on the factors that make the effects of a glass cliff. Several reasons have been given for this effect, from the most dangerous definitions emphasizing gender and the use of women to broader definitions that emphasize gender beliefs and the desire to promote equality. However without being biased, it is important to note that women are not easily afforded the opportunity to attain senior ranks as corporate executives, oftentimes when the opportunity arises they do not do the prerequisite research or investigate the risks attached to theposition being offered. Women immediately make themselves available to take up the offered position, which highlights the findings that females are overrepresented in precarious leadershippositions (Ryan & Haslam, 2005a, 2005b).

This is not the subject of the current study, however. In the following section the focus will be on two categories, which are think crisis-think female and females as signals of change, with further insights provided to support empirical data that relates to each category. The theme of think manager-think male will be excluded as the concept is a psychological barrier to the advancement of women in leadership positions and fosters bias against women in leadership selection, placement, promotion and training decisions.

3.2.1 Think crisis-think female

People perceive men as having extremely popular leadership qualities, such as independence and competitiveness, which leads to the “think manager-think male” metaphor. However, the concept of “think crisis-think female” begins to work in times of organizational difficulties (Ryan et al. 2011). Several studies have found evidence of the "think crisis-think female" effect, including a study involving business leaders. The notion of “think crisis-think women” is mainly based on unspecified gender references that people hold and exercise in leadership roles. According to popular belief, men are linked to the qualities of an agent and women to social symbols (Daher et al., 2017). In the original research conducted by Schein (1973), which became the foundation for later theories concerning gender and leadership, concepts such as the lack of fit model and role congruity theory was used. According to both theories, as skills are considered essential to the success of a leader with masculinity by nature, there is a discrepancy between the qualities women seem to have and the tangible requirements of a leader's job. This apparent mismatch between the biased gender identity of the archetypal leader leads to negative expectations about

the expected performance of women leaders and the assessment of whether men are better suited to leadership roles. When women conform to their gender role and exhibit (traditionally ascribed) feminine behavioural patterns, they are often seen as incompetent and unable to handle challenging leadership roles (Kulich et al., 2020). They are perceived as lacking the prerequisite masculine traits necessary to meet requirements that are compatible with the leadership role. However, when the nature of the job changes, it causes the leadership role to be more congruent with the female gender role, there is an immediate switch and a consensus that female leaders can be equally effective. The reason for this is that women appear to have the necessary qualities in difficult times, such as the ability to build confidence in others, teamwork, communication skills, the ability to motivate others, and team building (Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010). The main reason for the glass cliff, as suggested by Bruckmüller et al. (2013) may be the result of overconfidence, in which women prioritize leadership roles in times of crises or organizational malpractice, because they see themselves as having 'what it takes' to fix things. In the context of the above arguments, it is therefore plausible to argue that, in crisis situations, people may not automatically "think manager–think male" but may, in fact, be more likely to "think crisis–think female" (Ryan et al., 2007). Yaghi (2018) is in agreement with other researchers in the field of study on the concept of "think crisis-think female", however, the current study suggests that women are failing in leadership because men are somehow targeting them and placing them in unusual and dangerous positions when the chances of failure are high. Kulich and Ryan (2017) believes that appointing a woman as the new leader could serve as a visible break in the approach of the previous leadership, if the leadership was predominately male. The next section will look deeply into another possible reason for glasscliff appointments.

3.2.2 Market signals and glass cliff

Another explanation for the effect of glass cliff is based on the idea that underperforming companies wish to show all relevant stakeholders that they are making a big difference. Given that women can be appointed as a means of changing organisational structures, the question remains as to whether they were actually appointed to change things, or they are used as a "window dressing" strategy to win back investor confidence, customers, and other stakeholders (Haslam & Ryan, 2007; Helland & Sykuta, 2004).

As women symbolize the deviation from the common good of leadership, appointing a woman to a higher position is one way to send a positive message with a difference. In a qualitative study investigating the causes of the glass cliff (Ryan et al., 2007), participants first expressed the belief

that the appointment of a female CEO indicates a significant change that may be needed as a last resort when disaster strikes. It can also be a way for companies to present themselves as progressive, equitable, and socially responsible (Brady et al., 2011). A study by Bruckmüller et al. (2014) indirectly coincides with the definition of female leadership as signs of change. I suggest that even though the company's leadership history is more masculine as compared to women's, it can have an impact on how the glass cliff plays out.

There is researched evidence that women may be over-represented in precarious positions not only because they are perceived to have traits that are necessary in these difficult circumstances but also because in doing so, organisations can send a positive signal to the market, however appointing a male indicates business as usual, while appointing a female signals a change in organisational strategy. Stanisic (2018) supports this point, based on the case study of Mary Barra at GM motors that provides a useful comparison of how, choosing a highly qualified and competent (female) CEO with direct working experience in her field, was highly successful in salvaging a multinational company in decline. It is noteworthy that her case is the exception and not the norm. Once a company expands exponentially, a large part of the market share almost immediately begins to decline. An interesting comparison would be to look at the number of female CEOs that successfully started large companies or guided such companies into becoming global giants with extensive market share. It is argued that the conversation currently, is very loose on context and very heavy on narrative. The strong belief and observation based on the existing framework of research, is that closing the gap on gender equality raises the economic pipeline for all, so it is up to us all to break the glass ceiling, eliminate the glass cliff, and be wise with gold skirts.

The glass cliff phenomenon is well described in the economic literature as it is severally used in times of high uncertainty, where women often get opportunities to occupy a higher position than in normal times, due to the risk of failure under changing circumstances. Robinson et al. (2021) asserts that the fact that women are now put in positions to clean up messy situations may not only be a sign of acknowledgement of their ability to perform better in financial leadership, but potentially signals hope that they will bring the situation back to normal, this may potentially lead to the replacement of these women by men underscoring the precarious nature and temporality of their position and the reversion to business as usual once they have served their purpose. Cleaning up a mess is certainly an expression of caring – mending the web of relations as the ethics of care scholar Robinson et al. (2021) states. But it may not serve the women well, as after the job is done and the sector is back on track – it is relatively easy to find a reason to push these women over the cliff, since they had to fire and punish some of their subordinates who are largely male. It may

well be that when financial markets stabilize the old boys' network will tighten to exclude them as before.

This may not augur well for women, as once the work is completed and the sector is back to normal - it is easy to find a reason to demote or victimise these women , because they meted out disciplinary or punitive actions on their subordinates, who are largely male. It is also possible that as financial markets tighten the old boys' network closes ranks to keep them out as is the norm.

Interestingly, this phenomenon was also found during a financial downturn as indicated in an empirical study (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). They did a comparative study between firms listed at the London Stock Exchange that had higher ratios of women on their boards, with firms that had fewer or no women on their boards. They discovered that "in a time of a general financial downturn in the stock market, companies that appointed a woman had experienced consistently poor performance in the months preceding the appointment" (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Further research by Bruckmüller et al. (2014), also suggests that women leaders are selected to display change to the outside world, rather than dealing with the real problem. Looking at various research studies done on the glass cliff effect, in most cases when companies experience a major crisis, the preferred strategy is to change leadership, more specifically with the consideration of replacing male leadership with female, as a way of resolving the crises, this is not always the best solution. This view is unarguable given that the glass cliff is more likely to occur when the crises is associated with a cause that can be controlled from within the organisation, such as past leadership, rather than uncontrollable external factors such as the global economy (Kulich et al, 2015). But the more general viewpoint behind this notion, which is insupportable is that once these businesses recover women are moved away from those positions before enjoying the benefits of their hard work, this consequence in my view presents an important framework for future research. In the next section, I explore a range of underlying causes for the preference for atypical leader's crisis contexts.

3.3. Possible factors creating the glass cliff: Psychological process and socio-structural reality

Revised archival and experimental studies provide a strong evidence that women are chosen to lead under very different circumstances in comparison to their male counterparts. These studies were conducted using a qualitative method for the purpose of evaluating these factors individually (Ryan et al, 2007). According to Robinson et al. (2021) the declining view of the glass cliff highlights the challenging and discriminatory consequences that may arise when women are appointed in times

of crisis, while placing men at the forefront when conditions are ideal. Alternatively, in a dangerous situation, critical situations can lead to women as the preferred choice, activating women's discriminatory beliefs of warmth, concern, or power-related relationships (Robinson et al., 2021).

Women are judged as being endowed with many social factors that are important in rehabilitating negative situations. Numerous studies provide evidence that women are preferred in decision-making because women's attributes are thought to be effective in times of organizational crisis that have been shown to be directly linked to female gender stereotypes (Rink et al., 2013). Women who seek leadership positions are frequently faced with barriers that hinder their progress (Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014: 425). Factors that prevent women from being promoted to leadership positions or disrupting their career growth include extremist views, lack of training, inability to access important networks, discrimination in the workplace, family matters and becoming one's own boss.

These potentially devastating effects have a profound impact on the organisation's processes and operations if we are to prevent this subtle form of gender discrimination. According to Link et al. (2013) The metaphor "glass cliff" refers to the subtle nature of this phenomenon as risk-free employment may be targeted at subgroups. Moreover, these subtitles can obscure the truth about someone's prejudice, since that practice is only a reflection of the many cases involved. Other psychological factors may also work, in addition to processes related to the scope of social and organizational realities. Indeed, in line with the investigation of other forms of gender inequality in the workplace, it seems reasonable that glass cliffs arise from a combination of psychological and structural factors (Kulich et al., 2020). These factors affecting the glass cluster will be dealt with in detail in the next section, by dividing them into three categories; applying change of organizational leadership, social identity and hateful sex. This will help to focus on the importance of understanding the impact factors and on creating a glass cliff with the following impacts.

3.3.1 Implementing organisational leadership change

One of the most common and well-known factors contributing to the glass cliff is that of the selection process utilized by many companies. According to Haslam and Ryan (2008) the explanation for the glass cliff is that companies having trouble are willing to make a change by appointing an atypical leader, this evidence is supported in the study by Kulich et al. (2015). In addition, a study by Brown et al. (2011) have shown that female leaders are strongly associated with change and that glass cliff occurs more frequently when male leaders fail (Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010). Therefore, implementing a change in organizational leadership can motivate companies to appoint women leaders. Kulich et al. (2015), consider that the glass cliff is effective

when the problem is caused by a failure of leadership. This situation can be controlled and managed by the organization through a change in leadership.

When a change is likely to occur, one wonders what kind of change is expected. In 2008 during the financial crisis, Kulich et al. (2015) argued that banks were harvesters of women directors and the decision was justified for highlighting risky male leadership. Women were then appointed into those positions as replacements and that was a sign of change. The motivation for change is likely to be driven by the need for a strategic and figurative form of change. The strategy for change of leadership is considered to have an impact on financial performance and is a change that reflects financial transformation and improved stakeholder relationships. Under this analysis, women may find themselves in risky leadership positions not because the organisation's decision makers are deliberately hostile but because this reflects the development process, in which progressive gender policies are incorporated.

3.3.2 Social Identity and Glass Cliff

Another possible factor that may lead to women being elected to leadership positions that are dangerous in the organization can be defined as group dynamics/social identity. In describing the effects of group dynamics on the glass cliff, the concept of social identity needs to be considered briefly. Robinson et al. (2021) defines social identity as "individual knowledge that a person belongs to a particular social group and a certain emotional significance and importance of membership of a particular group". I view social identity theory as classifying people into different categories based on prototypes which are psychological indicators of factors that define the traits and values of each group. In addition, it has been suggested by Robinson et al. (2021) that group members are more selective than members of the external group as in the group in which one associates with .

A consistent definition of group dynamics and social identification shows that women are more likely to be appointed to leadership positions as they are often seen as out-group members by men holding positions of power. Ryan and Haslam (2005) in an archaeological research study show that the glass cliff originated from intentional behavior (e.g., in-group bias, when men expressed their love for other people), in those who exhibited non-intentional processes where women often lacked other leadership opportunities. However, many decision-makers in the workplace, especially men, are likely to protect their fellow in-group members, who are men from high-risk

areas, leaving dangerous positions on the glass cliffs to outsiders who are more likely to be women. Ryan and Haslam (2005) noted that some participants' responses relied heavily on the assumption that decision-makers would see women being used more than their male counterparts and therefore more willing to choose them for risky positions (Morgenroth et al., 2020). Evidence of this contradictory approach is mixed and depends on how one defines in-group choice. In experimental studies reviewed so far by Rink et al., (2013) and Gartzia et al., (2012) the choice associated with a male leader in times of success and a female leader in times of difficulty remained independent of participants' gender, not providing direct evidence of party selection.

3.3.3 Hostile Sexism

Another explanation for the tendency to put women in risky positions of leadership is the direct manifestation of hostile sexism in the workplace. Oelbaum (2016) suggests that women are appointed to risky positions simply because sexist men, or women who are reborn or who adhere to the male sex culture actively strive to degrade women and have a desire to see them fail. According to Schein (1975) hostile sexism shows women as inactive, especially in masculine situations such as leadership. Ryan, Haslam, and Postmes (2007) conducted interviews with ordinary people to get answers about the reasons for glass cliff, one of the alleged causes of glass cliff was hostile sexism. The findings of the study suggest that glass cliff cannot be easily defined in terms of this feature alone. In other words, proponents of sexuality were less likely to choose women than those who rejected those views. Thus, hostility against women may serve the company's interests by giving the impression that the company is not responsible for the crisis but rather there's a single person at fault. Therefore, in a hostile organization, a woman can be considered a good person for this role. In a study by Ashby et.al, (2007) no relationship was found to support the theory that women are favoured for glass cliff appointments. Gartzia et al. (2012), however, found that participants with more sexual qualities were more likely to consider a male candidate and were more likely to choose one with masculine traits in a critical situation rather than the same female leadership traits. In African culture, women are made to believe that they can only perform light duties, and this is perceived as a form of sexism, or an objectification or degradation of women.

However, modern ideas of distributed leadership see it as a collective phenomenon, realizing that it has ceased to be a one-man quality. In fact, leadership has never been an individual thing, because even in the past a leader was always surrounded by advisers, whether they were secret or legitimate. Based on existent cultural dynamics, it is perceived that African men find it difficult to allow

themselves be influenced by a charismatic female leader as they are made to believe that women are traditionally subservient to men, and that their role is to look after them. An African man automatically assumes a leadership role culturally and cannot be corrected by a woman, therefore African men find it difficult to be led by women.

An understanding of the global empowerment of women provides an overview of the South African situation and the lessons to be learned in the developing world. Those lessons are important in trying to formulate strategies for eliminating glass cliff.

3.4 Factors that prevent glass cliff and the role corporates play in avoiding glass cliff appointments.

In the preceding sections, some insights were given regarding the factors that contribute to the glass cliff phenomenon that are likely to play a role in the preferential recruitment of women for precarious leadership positions. Having clarified this, the next obvious question is how much each of these factors contributes to the pursuit of leadership responsibilities in organizations. Morton et al. (2006) from their findings, recommend that there are a few approaches that organizations can take to prevent glass cliff positions and encourage gender diversity and equality in leadership positions. More importantly, the different explanations for the glass cliff that individuals or organizations endorse are likely to impact on the recommendation for interventions. Indeed, a key point here is that if the explanations given for the motivation of events such as this one is not persuasive, interventions based on these theories are unlikely to be accepted or to achieve the desired results.

3.4.1 Social support and resources

Stereotypes are also implicated in a lack of support and networking opportunities for women, and their exclusion from mentoring programs. Examining the empirical evidence provided by (Rink et al., 2013), for many successful women, whether they are in the corporate world, or in the media, a recurring word that is indicative of the challenges faced by the group of women indicated above is “support.” Agreeably, support and allocating resources when offered a new role is of utmost importance. As a female executive, when offered a senior position, it is important to assess not only the financial gains, but to also look at the social resources. One can also conclude that organizations must deal with potential problems in the glass cliff by giving leaders in high-risk positions greater access to public resources (Rink et al., 2013). Indeed, social networks, mentors,

and support programs, many of them informal, may help leaders to build and maintain relationships and provide assistance in their career planning (Oelbaum, 2016). Walter (2013) confirms the valuable contribution made by mentorship to women's confidence and career progression.

However, women often have less access to these resources than men while, ironically enough, they are at the same time expected to be particularly good at mobilizing such support (Rink et al.,2013). Certainly, providing such resources to women, for example in the form of mentoring (Oelbaum ,2016), would seem to be a promising strategy not only to help women attain the mantle of leadership, but also to help them perform at their full potential once they have secured it. The current study clearly suggests that these resources should be designed in such a way that they do not strengthen the association between women and stereotypically feminine leadership traits.

3.4.2 Organizational justice and perceived equality

3.4.2.1 Perceived justice

Perceived justice represents the human perception of fairness (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). Moreover, it can be directly linked to perceived equity, organizational justice equals equality in the workplace (Zayer and Benabdelhadi, 2020). It is disputed by some researchers (Fujimoto, Hartel & Azmat, 2013) that it is important to incorporate organizational justice principles within the decision-making processes for effective diversity management. Therefore, it can be said that a perceived justice among employees is required in implementing employee equity and diversity in programs.

3.4.2.2. Trust

Employees' perceptions of trust are valued by organizations because it is believed to strengthen the leadership role in the performance appraisal process and the link between work and compensation (Ovidiu-Iliuta, 2013). According to this analysis of glass cliffs, it is said that it is inevitable when it comes to certain contexts. One important factor to consider is the nature of specific problems such as glass cliff and support structures around those positions. If women and members of other minority groups were given the power needed and trusted to successfully carry out their leadership roles, and made to feel empowered through their work, treated with organizational justice and equality, and provide with social assistance and resources, then the glass cliff would not be so dangerous. In addition, it plays a role in mediating between Human

Resources Management (HRM) programs and the union's commitment, participation and national ethics (Katou, 2013). Additionally , the concept of trust among employees is believed to be the most important factor in effective HRM systems especially in times of change (Ovidiu-Iliuta, 2013). It could be said that for HRM practices, including equality practices, to be effective they must be supported by employee organizational trust.

3.5 Research Contribution

The original contribution of this study is in the field of women in leadership literature. While the subject matter in women leadership continues to capture the attention of the nation (Viviers et al, 2017; Northouse, 2007), most of the studies in this field have been confined to Western countries and have largely investigated the barriers women face in trying to climb the corporate ladder, with evidence suggesting that they typically confront a 'glass ceiling' while men are more likely to benefit from a 'glass escalator' (Cizel & Cizel, 2014); Ndinda & Okeke-Uzinde, 2012; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). However, despite these barriers, the number of women who occupy leadership positions is increasing. But what happens when women achieve these leadership roles and what is the nature of the positions are they given? I argue that while women are now achieving more high profile positions, they are more likely than men to find themselves on a 'glass cliff'(Ashby, 2007; Darouei, & Pluut, 2018; Glass & Cook, 2016; Oelbaum, 2016; Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Since researchers have not investigated the robustness of the glass cliff in corporate South Africa, this will provide original contribution to the body of knowledge from both a theoretical and practical perspective.

3.5.1 Conceptual contribution

Firstly, most studies in the context of women leadership literature tends to focus on the glass cliff effect in general, without further investigation into the factors that promote or contribute to the creation of the glass cliff. So far, there have only been two cross-country studies on the glass cliff effect (Cook & Glass, 2014a; Cook & Glass, 2014b) and no significant conclusions have emerged. One research focused on the link between company performance (market-based) and glass cliff (Cook & Glass, 2011; Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Mulcahy and Linehan (2014) however, focused on investigating the occurrence of financial-related losses reported in most companies listed on the UK stock exchange. As previously stated, studies that have explored the glass cliff phenomenon are limited, and none of these have considered investigating the causes and the preventative measures in the C-suite in corporate South Africa. Therefore, in providing the necessary support in the creation of a glass cliff, this explains why companies

making a loss have subsequently increased gender diversity on their boards, however, this only occurs when the loss is massive. The framework presented highlights factors contributing to the creation of the glass cliff and assesses the extent to which these factors impact on high growth firms. It also contributes to guiding organisations when formulating human-capital related policies as well as when making decisions, which is an area that is chiefly ignored within the women leadership literature. Additionally, there are several approaches that organizations can take to prevent glass cliff positions and to encourage gender diversity and equality in leadership positions.

Gender diversity remains an important organizational issue, and many organizations have existing policies and practices aimed at promoting this. Many of these initiatives are aimed at increasing the number of women in leadership roles, for example, through women-focused leadership training initiatives, women's networks, and specialized mentoring programs, or more directly through gendered targets and quotas at senior management and executive levels. Therefore, from the analysis of the nature of glass cliffs, it is inevitable that certain contextual factors such as support structures, relevant resources, power and trust are dealt with to prevent the glass cliff from being precarious.

3.5.2 Practical Contribution

First, the stories of women who have been successful in senior leadership positions are important for women aspiring to climb the corporate ladder, by presenting alternatives on how to prevent the glass cliff and assisting those who are already stuck in such a situation with advice on how to navigate through the glass cliff in corporations.

Second, the findings of the study will also assist the executive committee of various organisations as to how work environments and cultures can be conducive to creating an enabling environment for women to advance and make it to the pinnacle of their chosen career paths. Human capital departments can implement a series of training regarding decision-making that raise awareness about the possibility of biased judgments as related to gender and leadership once they have a better understanding of glass cliff appointments.

Third, the notion of trying to establish the psychological and socio-structural reality of the glass cliff. It is necessary to establish whether the glass cliff phenomenon extends outside the boardroom, in the household and into traditional leadership arenas, theoretically it adds value to the literature on women leadership. It is also important to see whether the phenomenon is

associated with a low-status group membership in general and hence is a manifestation of a general social psychological process rather than one specific to gender (e.g. as discussed by Haslam et al, 2003). Along these lines, there is further evidence to suggest that, at least in Japan, the company's efficiency is associated with the appointment of 'outsiders' to the board of directors. Ironically, this is in line with the findings that if psychological factors are not considered, they can easily promote the inequality that women intend to address.

Finally, the appointment of women to senior leadership positions during difficult times, enables the organization to meet the call for increased gender diversity and at the same time manage the increase of the number of independent external directors. Hobbler et al. (2016) emphasize that this type of appointment, to some extent increases the likelihood that women's participation in senior leadership roles, shows that the organization has good business governance rather than accepting gender diversity as being appropriate. Although there is an ongoing debate about instituting gender diversity in corporate boardrooms (Adams et al., 2016), the evidence regarding barriers to women gaining senior leadership positions is still well-researched. Since conceptualizations of gender, gender identity, and gender roles are fluid and vary across time and space, it is important to study the effects of gender across multiple contexts over time.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

In summary, this chapter analyses the theoretical framework of the relevant literature and its relations to the challenges women face in senior positions in organizations. Given the challenges women face, the transformative leadership approach will favour women in leadership positions and as a source of empowerment that best suits their standards of support and care. In the next chapter, a more detailed research methodology is presented.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

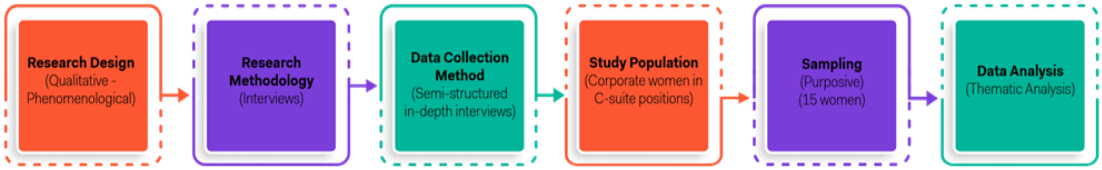
In the previous chapter, relevant literature on women leaders and the glass cliff was reviewed to gain a better understanding of the issue under investigation, and to conduct an analysis on the circumstances surrounding the appointment of women to precarious leadership positions. In this chapter, a detailed recount of the research methodology will be outlined and explained.
The term methodology refers to a set of ideas regarding the relationship between the phenomena of how scholars gain knowledge in research contexts and why (Daher et al., 2017). It is the process of studying a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009).

One of the gaps identified by Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) in their research, and also highlighted briefly in the literature review section, indicated that in some of the research studies on women leadership a quantitative approach was used and there is little focus on qualitative methodology. In this current study, the focus is on exploring and gaining an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon, and of women's experiences of being promoted to precarious leadership positions in corporate South Africa. The study relied on women leaders who provided accounts with an understanding of their experiences, and the research clusters that were appropriate in understanding the subjective meanings, which such individuals ascribe to their social worlds, and privileges subjective forms of building knowledge (Busetto et al., 2020). Included in this section is a description of the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the research as well as an explication of the research design and the methodological plan for the practical research exercise in its entirety. The purpose of the research methods used is to ensure the effectiveness of the research in relation to the large contribution of participants in the research conducted. The methodological assumptions and research design that guided the research methodology will be provided afterwards.

Also included, in this section is a brief explanation of the nature of this research in terms of its philosophical underpinnings and the significance of an understanding of these issues in the chosen research approach and design. As a reference point, it will continue to detail the qualitative methods employed to gather the data. It reviews the different methods of data collection and analysis. This is a complex process that requires attention, especially in terms of where women's voices are involved. It calls for a combination of theoretical and conceptual processes, practical experiences,

and an astute narrative, thus dismissing the proposal as a complete blueprintowing to the initial perception of it as a technical, linear and logical process. The final section ends with a discussion on validity, reporting methods, ethical considerations and the limitations thereof. Figure 4.1 below is a summary of the research methodology framework used in this study, to demonstrate how the different elements were covered in the current study and followed by a detailed discussion thereof.

Figure 4.1 Research Methodology Framework



4.2 Research design

In this study, the research questions are not framed by operationalising variables; instead, they are formulated to investigate issues in their complexity in context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). It is guided by the manner in which research is done and may be visualised in terms of looking for a solution to a problem: the research question, the nature of phenomena-experience, the approach and employed research strategy; thus, the research instruments utilized. It is a project that "describes events and examines relationships between objects without the direct illusion of experienced situations" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Another reason for using the qualitative approach is because the revised literature has revealed a slight rise in the voices of women leaders themselves. It is noteworthy that previous research used quantitative research methods, particularly research, to study such things as women's experiences in leadership positions. While it is acknowledged that such statistical approaches are vital in identifying the presence of a problem, they fall short in unveiling why the phenomenon happened (Busetto et al., 2020). Although it is known that such qualitative methods are important in detecting the presence of a problem, they fail to explain why this phenomenon occurred (Busetto et al., 2020).

After deciding to use a qualitative method, the next step is to identify the appropriate method. Therefore, according to (Jamali, 2018) different qualitative approaches are considered including grounded theory, ethnography, discursive enquiry and phenomenology. The most recognised

qualitative methodologies are grounded theory, ethnography, narrative enquiry and phenomenology (Lal et.al, 2012). Grounded theory is concerned with a systematic generation of theory from a structured research process through the analysis of data (Jamali, 2018). As the aim of this study is to explore individual women's experiences and understand the meaning of their experience and not develop theory, grounded theory is not appropriate for this study. Ethnography involves the study of people and cultures and is an appropriate methodology to use when describing how a cultural group works by exploring their beliefs, language, behaviours and other issues such as power and dominance (Jamali, 2018). As this study aimed to explore individual's subjective lived experiences and to understand the meaning of their experiences, this methodology would not address the research question. Discursive enquiry explores the role of language in participants' descriptions of events and conversations (Jamali, 2018) whereas phenomenology explores how people ascribe meaning to their experiences in their interactions with their environment (Smith et.al, 2019). Purposive and snowball sampling was used to recruit a limited number of women leaders at different levels within organisations. With the aid of a computerised qualitative data analysis software (ATLAS.ti), thematic analysis was applied to data generated during semi-structured, in-depth interviews.

The design for this study is phenomenological.

4.2.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenological philosophy is a movement that began in the early 1900's with Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and then developed further by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) stated that the focus of phenomenology is to "return to the things themselves" where its aim is to focus on a person's perception of the world inwhich they live and what this means to them: a focus on a person's lived experience. Husserl's aim was to try to establish a secure philosophical and scientific knowledge, and he saw that his point of travel should be informative, because, without it, nothing else could be achieved in terms of knowledge. Phenomenologists resist the subject-object dualism that is central to positivism and the scientific project, where one sees the world as it really is and the world as it appears through perception (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

4.3 Research Paradigm

Before choosing a methodology, researchers need to know and declare their research paradigm; this paradigm, together with the purpose of the study, influences the choice of methodology researchers use to find answers to the central research questions. Rehman and Alharthi (2016) emphasise the

importance of choosing the right methodology that provides the support needed in getting the right answers and required outcomes to the research questions. Furthermore, Creswell (2009) asserts that a clear understanding of the research paradigm is essential.

4.3.1 Philosophical Paradigmatic Discussion

Researchers need to be able to understand and articulate beliefs about the nature of reality, what can be known about it and how to go about attaining this knowledge. These are elements of research paradigms. Rehman and Alharthi (2016) assert that paradigm is a basic set of beliefs and a theoretical framework with at least 1.) ontology, 2.) epistemology, 3.) methodology and 4.) methods. In other words, it is a way of understanding the truth of the world and of learning it. In line with the above, I will take a closer look at four aspects of the research paradigm. Ontology of the paradigm is a branch of philosophy concerned with the assumptions we make in order to believe that something makes sense or is real, or looks deeper into the very nature or essence of the social phenomenon we are investigating (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). It is a philosophical study of the nature of existence or reality, and the basic categories of things and their relationships. Researchers have speculation (sometimes obvious) about the truth, how it exists and what is not known about it. The ontological question that led me to this study is to ask what kind of truth there is.

Epistemology refers to “a branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and the process by which information is acquired and validated” (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). It is concerned about "nature and [kinds] of information, how it can be obtained and how it is transmitted to other people". Investigators have speculations (sometimes obvious) about the truth, how it exists and what is not known about it.

4.3.2 Positivism and Constructivism/Interpretivism

Positivism and constructivism/interpretivism are the underpinning philosophical paradigms most associated with the social sciences. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) noted that positivism refers to attempts to explain the phenomena they study in the most economical way possible. Additionally, the generalizability assumption tells us that the results obtained from a research project conducted within the positivist paradigm, in one context, should be applicable to other situations by inductive inferences. As a result of this assumption, the positivist view promotes the use of multiple research methods as the backbone of a researcher's ability to define the definition of parameters and coefficients in data collected, analyzed and interpreted, in order to understand the embedded

relationships in analyzed data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Conversely, constructivism is a more critical, discursive (qualitative) approach, which views social reality as mutually constructed between people in the real world. According to Patel (2016) this approach makes efforts to 'get into the head of the study' so that we can speak and understand and interpret what the subject thinks or what the context means. The quality focus of this study is based on the paradigmatic translation and construction of truth and knowledge. The ontological and epistemological factors affect what is commonly referred to as the human worldview which has a profound effect on the relative importance of the facts. The possible worldviews that may be interpretivist and constructivist.

4.3.3 Suitability of Interpretivism versus Constructivism

After a thorough review of the literature, I found that the most relevant and suitable philosophical paradigm is embedded within the constructivist and interpretivist persuasions. Looking back, it was clear that it was naïve for me to think that a certain degree of simplicity would exist to find a more relevant philosophy on which this research would be based. The interpretivists departed from the notion that social activity, including scholarship, emerges from intentional action and interaction at the individual level, in addition to other internal and external causal factors. As, interpretivists argue, the study is not conducted in a conclusive sense, but as a preferred course of personal study, many opinions were collected on the research problem, both in the form of literary studies and personal interviews. Constructivism as a scholarly approach to the problem assumes that the reality and morality of the person in it is reflected in continuous change, adjustment and transformation that works simultaneously in many areas (Aldridge, 2018). According to Van der Walt and Wolhuter (2018) constructivism provides a vivid picture of how facts emerge, and how facts are formed, scholars are confronted with a diverse but interconnected relationship, in which differences, similarities, and interactions are found, in ways that are increasingly important in the art of diversity, historical or cultural diversity. The constructivist theory is utilised in the study to create knowledge through interaction between myself and the participants, using dialogue and reasoning as the primary methods of investigation.

4.3.4 Rationale for choosing Interpretivism

Ontologically, the interpretivist paradigm helps to illuminate the relationship between paradigm

and choice of methodology (Kivunja & Kuyini 2017). In the process of trying to understand the experiences of women in senior leadership positions in organisations during times of crisis, I chose the interpretivist paradigm as it assumes that there is no single reality. Epistemologically, interpretivists allow for the interpretation of the participants' perceptions of their own realities. In this case, an interpretivist epistemology would be ideal because it underscores the fact that meaning, or knowledge is not there to be discovered but is individually or socially constructed. This paradigm ascertains that people make their own reality by the meanings and interpretations they give to their own experiences and that there are multiple truths. Reality is a result of our own making (Furlong, 2013), starting from this paradigmatic understanding, I then asked myself the question, how can I know the participants' world or experiences, or how can I gain knowledge of their perceptions of their experiences?

Now that the research paradigm is decided, the following section outlines how the research will unfold. It starts with the sampling, data-gathering methods, then an explanation on data analysis, validation and reporting. Thereafter follows the limitations of the study and ethical considerations.

4.4 Study Population

The target population of the current study are women in senior leadership positions (C-suite) and board chairpersons in corporate South Africa, these include state-owned enterprises. Initially in my research proposal the study centred around state-owned enterprises, however after doing the pilot study with a CEO in that context it was advisable to change the focus to corporate South Africa due to the major crisis around SOEs, involving severe financial difficulties, operational problems as well as corruption. It would have been difficult to get permission from the shareholder – the Department of Public Enterprises, also taking into consideration the flexibility of the CEOs in question in terms of agreeing to participate in the study. Therefore, I took the decision to shift my focus to the corporate sector in order to get a broader scale. The sample for the study was selected purposefully, carefully accounting for many aspects of the participants' experience (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) recommended selecting participants that would best help me to understand the questions associated with the research study. The choice of the first participants was informed by my ease of access made possible because I hold a senior position in stakeholder relations in a state-owned enterprise. Participant number 4 specifically, was identified by the first participant as someone with characteristics that were relevant to the study. The other participants were recommended by others as the interview progressed. This technique known as snowball sampling is appropriate for research studies that require finding populations of people who engage

in stigmatized behaviour (Naderifar, 2017). Snowball sampling is created through a series of referrals that are made within a circle of peoplewho know one another (Naderifar, 2017).

In qualitative research, the sample is known as the unit of analysis (Dolma, 2010). The unit of analysis enables me to get insight into the subject of study. For the purpose of this study, the units of research were the women who currently occupy senior positions in corporates in South Africa. Initially, an introductory email was sent to 28 individuals. The target of this study was to reach out to at least 15 participants in the relevant strata, which is representative of women leadership from different races and class. Different races and classes had to be represented in order to answer the research question. Appendix X11 provides a breakdown of the interviews.

4.5 Data collection

An ethical certificate was granted, permitting me to proceed with the required fieldwork. Research clearance usually involves an ethics committee that looks at research objectives and investigative methods to ensure that the research will be conducted in a way that protects the dignity, rights and safety of study participants, and that the research design is reasonable and likely to deliver expected results. The study adopted a highly structured in-depth interview process that allowed for open communication with the study participants. According to Vasileiou (2018), the most critical phase in research is the time during which data is collected. Beneficial data collection involves critical thinking about the type of participants, sampling, sampling processes, data collection methods, instruments to be used, and the actual data collection function in accordance with the relevant research design.

Semi-structured, one-on-one, in-depth interviews are most successful in soliciting thoughts and feelings from participants (Smith et al., 2019). This approach reveals the subtle experiences that women face in their daily workplaces, which affect their professionalism, attitude to work and career choices. In addition, it allows participants to set the boundaries of the discussion rather than being held by a predetermined agenda. Aiding in the development an exploration of organizational values, roles and relationships within the context of career development. Due to time constraints participants were scheduled for an hour for each interview with the option to have a follow-up interview. Participants were enabled to tell their stories with minimal interruptions from the interviewer to ensure that the research questions are answered. As already indicated, purposive sampling was used to identity the participants for the study. The study population and sample included women in leadership positions in corporate South Africa. The methodological challenges

that were experienced in the process of interviewing the participants are highlighted below.

4.5.1 Methodological challenges – interviewing elites

For me, being in a management position t on the one hand, and having direct communication with senior leadership in the workplace on the other hand has its challenges. Researchers have used the term elite in a relational sense, defining it either in terms of their social position as in my case or as compared to the average person in society (Stephens, 2007). The problem with this definition is that there is no guarantee that an elite subject will necessarily translate this power and authority in an interview setting. Indeed, Harvey (2011) found that on the few occasions she experienced respondents wanting to exert their authority over her, it was not from elites but from relatively fewer senior workers. Interviewers need to gain the trust of their respondents in order to collect high quality data. In the context of this research, elites are defined as those who occupy senior leadership and board level positions within organisations.

To gain the trust of the participants in order to collect high quality data, research was conducted based on the background of the interviewees to gain further insight about the participants, and to avoid asking unnecessary and obvious questions, also in the context of being as transparent as possible, I provided participants with full information with the intention of putting them at ease. Interviewers in turn, need to gain the trust of their respondents in order to collect high quality data. Harvey (2011) argues that this trust is built up over time and researchers should attempt to build a rapport with elite subjects from the moment they first contact them to the interview itself and beyond the interview. I ensured a high level of organisation through the process of contacting the participants, to attending the interviews, and thoroughly prepared for each meeting with individual participants. I was very familiar with the interview questions as emphasised by (Harvey, 2011). More importantly in conducting research with senior leadership, flexibility and patience is critical in terms of time constraints as some participants were rescheduling appointments at the last minute and in some cases, it was a cancellation. There were times when scheduled interviews were cut short due to the participant having to leave to attend an emergency meeting, flexibility was then required in terms of finding alternative ways to complete the interview, in the context of the study the alternative was to conduct telephonic interviews. The importance of the ability to be accommodating of sudden changes, provided elites with as much flexibility as possible in answering the questions, which maximized the response rate. Stephens (2007) rightly argues that telephone interviews can be more time efficient for the interviewer and interviewee, particularly when they are in different regions.

4.5.2 Methodological implication of interviewing peers

There are both advantages and disadvantages to interviewing professional peers, which should be considered in the light of the objectives of a study. According to Luan and Julius (2006) there is the possibility when interviewing one's peers of ''conceptual blindness'', whereby ''the interviewer's own feelings and opinion about the field [may] govern the dialogue and interpretation''. Some of the advantages of interviewing colleagues include ease of access as they were contacted directly without me having to go through a personal assistant, also there were no trust issues with participants, and they were comfortable to engage directly with me. However, peer interviewing posed a challenge for me in terms of risks associated with the personal-professional conflict, aswell as fear of over-disclosure due to potential repercussions especially where the interviewee is a colleague. I managed this risk by first doing a pilot interview with a colleague identified to participate in the interviews to prepare her and allay her fears about the interview process.

4.5.3 Follow-up interview

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and this was done after obtaining the participants' permission. While Rutakumwa et al. (2020) advise against the use of a recorder during interviews, Nordstrom (2015) recounts a situation in which he first tried to hide a tape recorder in order to get the desired result from the interviewee until the interviewee asked for the recording. It is appropriate to get the interviewee's consent before turning on the recorder during the interview, because it is a matter of confidentiality and must be consensual. In some cases, the decision to turn off the recorder comes from the interviewer knowing that the presence of the instrument makes the interviewer nervous.

Although I agree with Nordstrom (2015), I also took into consideration challenges that may occur in terms of the audio recorder experiencing a technical problem and was prepared to take notes in addition to recording interviews. During the process of transcribing the interviews, there was a need to schedule follow-up interviews with participants, this was easy for me as I had access to participants since they were colleagues. However, with the various challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lockdown in South Africa, it was necessary to utilise available technology in the form of Microsoft teams conferencing to sustain the face – to –face interview process, thus aligning with the advancement of ICT, which has called for online learning as a feasible and economically appropriate means of extending quality higher education (Asunka,

2008). The role of ICT in education, specifically higher education, cannot be downplayed, it is beneficial for teachers and students (Aljaraideh & Bataineh 2019). In-person interviews are often a pain to coordinate, one has to deal with travelling, time management and the geographical contexts of interviewees being dispersed across various parts of the country and over long distances. With Microsoft Teams, you have the tools to interview anyone, anywhere, and because the browser version of Teams is free, my interviewees did not have to download any extra apps or create accounts to join the call.

My interview experience was highly satisfactory, and I generally rate Microsoft Teams above alternative interviewing mediums such as face-to-face, telephone, and other videoconferencing services, platforms, and products. I realized that there could be a lot of flexibility in when and where discussions can be held, and costs are saved in reducing or eliminating travel expenses by utilising the tools provided by the Microsoft Office Suite to collect data. My research participants were also more comfortable with this method of conducting the interviews. Similarly, for research participants, online methods may be more attractive than in-person interviews due to advantages such as convenience, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and flexibility (Horrell, Stephens, & Breheny, 2015). Over the months of lockdown in South Africa, there were several women's debates held virtually through various online/digital media, I saw an opportunity to leverage on one such discussion that was hosted by CNBC Africa around women empowerment. This supported me in further refining the research questions that I posed to the women leaders from various corporates that participated in my study and assisted me with the research findings and in making recommendations.

4.6 The data transcribing, analysis and coding processes

This section describes the method that was used in the study to analyse data and offer validation. Data analysis is described as a mechanism for reducing and organising data to produce findings that will require interpretation by the researcher, in this context me (Simmons et al., 2011). Dishongh (2014) believes data analysis is challenging and is a creative process that is characterised by an intimate relationship between myself, the participants and the data generated in this phenomenological research. The analysis began as soon as the first data was collected as described by Dishongh (2014). This is a way of capturing first impressions, as well as finding proper compilations. Two strategies were used as suggested by Dishongh (2014) to find interpretation in

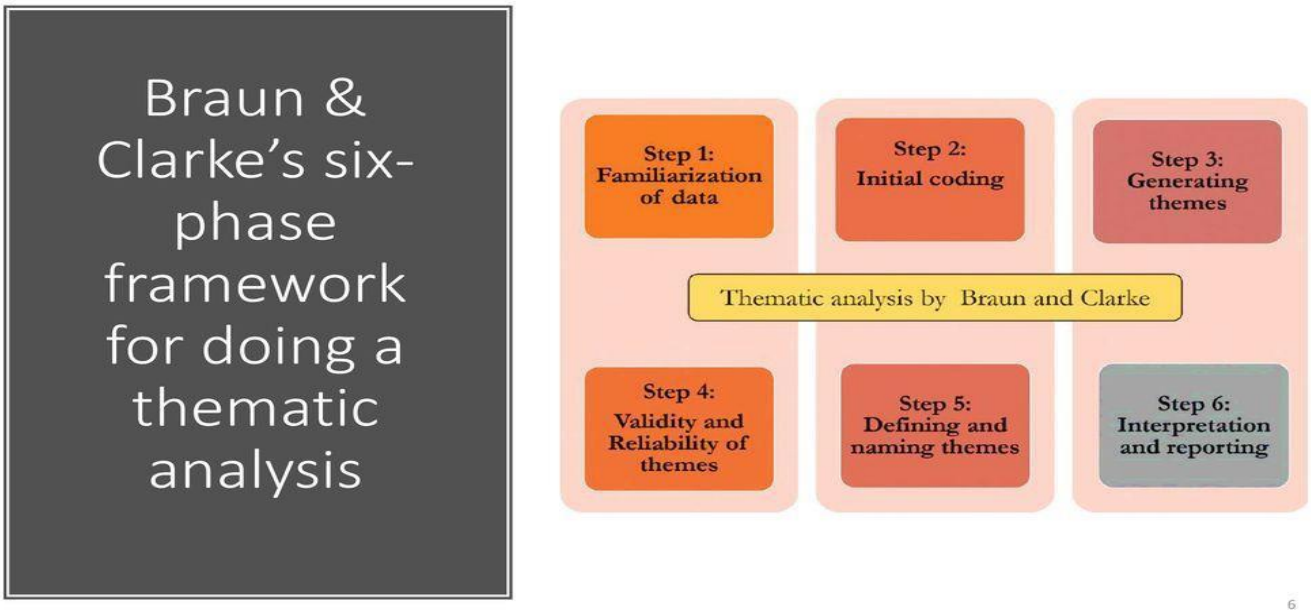
the data collected. First, by direct interpretation of a single illustration. Second, by aggregating instances for the purpose of drawing conclusions on female leadership. The purpose ofdata analysis is to impose some order on a large body of information so that some general conclusions can be reached and communicated in the research report (Polit & Hungler, 2008). According to Aspers and Corte (2019) data analysis is the most complex and mysterious of all phases of qualitative research. Aspers and Corte (2019) state that the aim of data analysis is to cast light on the experiences of participants.

In phenomenological research, the analysis begins as soon as the first data is collected. I engaged with the data through an immersive process of reading and rereading the data, in order to achieve closeness to the data and a sense of the whole for familiarisation. When I was satisfied that the text had become accessible, all "meaning units" were delineated throughout the entire interview transcription, and she decided which ones were relevant to the central research questions posed , to bind the meaning units that contain them. The analysis of the interview transcripts was based on an inductive approach geared towards identifying patterns in the data by means of thematic codes (Bowen, 2009).

4.6.1 The thematic data analysis approach

The basic function of the thematic data analysis approach that is presented in this study is to organise and simplify the complexity of the data into meaningful and manageable codes, categories and themes. This thematic data analysis approach suggests that the data collection and preliminary analysis occurs simultaneously, with the analysis becoming more intensive as the research progresses (Merriam, 2012). During data collection, the thematic analysis operates iteratively as "a flexible and useful research tool, to provide a potentially rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 4). Braun and Clarke (2006) provided a six-phase guide I used as a foundation in my study in conducting thematic analysis. It stresses that these steps should not be viewed as linear, requiring completion of one stage of analysisbefore beginning another.

Figure 4.2 Braun & Clarke's six-phase framework for doing a thematic analysis



Source: Braun & Clarke (2006)

4.6.1.1 Familiarisation

Once the data was collected, I was faced with the raw data that needed to be internalised. To ensure I completed this phase of analysis and immerse myself in the data, I transcribed the interview sessions of each participant, I reread the transcripts at least twice to begin to identify patterns and meaning, taking notes as I went along (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initially the plan was to transcribe the recording personally, the first attempt was with the pilot interview during which earphones were used to listen to the recording and then typed directly, which was a tedious process. Due to time constraints a transcribing service was engaged for half of the interviews. After transcribing half of the recording, it was realised that the language used by the appointed transcriber was not satisfactory and not to the requisite standard, therefore, corrections had to be done. Regardless, it was vital for me to be intimately familiarised with the depth and breadth of the content by reading repeatedly, searching for meanings and patterns before forwarding it to the coder to begin with the coding. To a significant extent, this process was made easier because of the substantial amount of time I spent in the field gaining a good understanding of the dynamics and contexts of the study. The transcripts were uploaded to the program and an analysis was

conducted to pull out the significant language, patterns, and themes that were discovered throughout the participants' interview transcripts.

4.6.1.2 Generating initial codes

At this stage of the analysis, I analysed and sorted the codes to identify themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This phase was utilized to draft the theme development and code placement. The processing of themes and finding the patterns is a very involved exercise. A code category represents "a collection of similar data sorted into the same place, and this arrangement enabled me to identify and describe the characteristics of the category" (Morse, 2008, p. 727). The concern here was with addressing specific research questions and the data was analysed with this in mind – so this was a theoretical thematic analysis rather than an inductive one. Based on this, each segment of data was coded according to relevancy and captured anything interesting about the research question, not every piece was coded. Thereafter, I reviewed the extensive code list, the codes' descriptive statements and the coded extracts to identify emerging patterns and correlations.

4.6.1.3 Searching for themes

Themes generally refers to the grouping of codes into meaningful units (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Themes were generated once the coding process is completed, and I was confronted with several codes that have been generated or applied to the text**.** In this context,a theme is characterised by its significance. If you have a very small data set (e.g. one short focus-group) there may be considerable overlap between the coding stage and this stage of identifying preliminary themes. As Braun and Clarke (2006) explain, there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a theme. At this stage various codes with differences and similarities were compared

and sorted according to their families of categories and sub-categories for labelling purposes. I was faced with so many codes that seemed not to be making any sense or facilitating the coding process, however, there was a follow-up process known as creating themes to help identify underlying patterns. Appendix (iv) provides a visual example of a work-in-progress showing samples of the ATLAS.ti system printout of codes in a theme. In this case I examined the codes and some of them clearly fitted together into a theme. At the end of this step the codes had been organised into broader themes that seemed to say something specific about the research question.

4.6.1.4 Reviewing themes

During this phase the preliminary themes that were identified was reviewed, modified and

developed in order to make some sense out of it. According to Bree and Gallagher, (2016) this can be made easier by using the 'cut and paste' function in any word processing package, by taking a pair of scissors to your transcripts or using something like Microsoft Excel. However, this process was made easier and quicker by using a qualitative analysis software, ATLAS.ti. Data associated with each theme was read and considered to see whether it is supported. The next step was to check whether the themes work in the context of the entire data set. In the context of the study, the data set is one extract but usually you will have more than this and willhave to consider how the themes work both within a single interview and across all the interviews.

4.6.1.5 Defining and naming themes

This process is the final refinement of the themes, and the aim was to easily identify the essence of what each theme is about according to Braun & Clarke (2006). This final phase of analysis had two objectives, namely (i) to define and further refine themes and entailed identifying the essence of each theme and (ii) to analyse data within themes. The participants in this current study shared their experiences and views based on the questions posed to them which was structured in codes, themes and categories. This assisted in making sense of what the theme is saying, how the subthemes interact and relate to the main theme and how the themes relate to each other.

4.6.1.6 Producing the report

The final opportunity for analysis occurs when producing the report, I began as soon as the set of fully worked-out themes around the final analysis was ready, starting with a selection of vivid, completing extract examples, a final analysis of selected extracts, "relating the analysis back to the research questions and literature, and then producing a scholarly report of the analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The final section focuses on data analysis and downloads for information that transcends data specifications and creates controversy regarding research questions. It also provides a concise, coherent, logical, repetitive and enjoyable account of the story spoken with the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). As with the sample of data extract shown above, data snapshots were presented in the findings to substantiate my interpretations of the data.

4.7 Strategies employed to ensure rigour

The rigour of research is demonstrated through its alignment with and the articulation of the philosophical assumptions that guide the research methods. Meriam (2009) asserted that this

alignment endorses the trustworthiness of the methods and substantiates the findings to assure the reader about the rigour of the knowledge claims. The rigour of the research process is important to establish the trustworthiness of the results of a study and needs to be built into the research design, collection of data, interpretation and communication of results. Schurink (2009)points out that despite many attempts there is at present a lack of consensus among researchers as to what criteria would be acceptable to assess a qualitative research study. An essential issue when discussing the trustworthiness of the findings of qualitative research is the presumption that a text has multiple meanings, and some level of interpretation is required when approaching a text (Rahman, 2016). The concepts of credibility, dependability, transferabilityand confirmability have been advanced as being necessary to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research (Loh, 2013).

- **Credibility:** concerning credibility the most relevant question arises when making decisions about the focus of the study, selecting the participants and the approach to take in gathering data and the analysis process (Rahman, 2016). Credibility of research findings requires that the most suitable meaning unit be selected. The meaning unit is the grouping of words or statements related to the same central meaning or theme (Rahman, 2016). Credibility of the research findings also deals with how well categories and themes cover data to ensure all relevant data is included. Johnson and Waterfield (2004) asserts that credibility is enhanced using direct quotes from the transcribed interviews, data triangulation, which is discussed in an earlier section, and my disclosure of personal and intellectual biases.

- **Truthfulness:** The amount of time spent in collecting data can lead to inconsistencies therefore, it was essential to maintain a balance between all participants to ensure that the feedback from interviewees was as honest and transparent as possible, I always involved my supervisor in debriefing sessions during the study, especially during the data collection and analysis phases. Before data was collected, my supervisor gave feedback on the topic guides to ensure that the questions were open ended, as intended, and would elicit good responses from the participants. The data collection process is an evolving one in which questions can change as researchers gain new insights into the area of study (Aspers & Corte, 2019) as data was collected over a period of more than six months. In facilitating transferability, I gave a clear description of the context of the study, the criteria used in the selection of the participants, collection method and how the data analysis was to be conducted.

- **Internal Validity**

  (i) **Triangulation.** Multiple data collection methods and interviews were used. As highlighted by Schurink (2009) this implies using multiple data collection methods, data sources, theories and methodologies. In this study, credibility was ensured in different ways. Firstly, the study participants came from different ethnic groups and social classes, this helped to add the required depth and richness to the data collected. Secondly, the use of semi-structured and open-ended interviews assisted me in getting more information from the participants as there was no limitation. Lastly, the use of direct quotes to support the themes that emerged also ensured that the credibility of the study could withstand scrutiny.

  (ii) **Peer debriefing.** The support from my supervisor and other scholars assisted me in critically self-examining my role and minimised the effect my professional relationship with the study participants may have on the outcomes of the interviews as recommended by McMillan andSchumacher (2006). To check the reliability of the specialist in coding, I allowed the supervisor to check the pilot analysis before proceeding to check if it is in line with what is required. This was of great assistance, as the recommendations made at the initial stages using the pilot analysis, allowed me and the coding specialist to amend the format of the analysis.

  (iii) Researcher bias. This was addressed by declaring the interest in the topic beforehand as well as transcribing the interviews verbatim, also participants who were interested in the topic requested the findings and these were provided.

After the data collection and analysing process, a meeting was secured with my supervisor for alignment purposes as well as sharing the format to use in terms of interpreting the data. The session also served as a debriefing process of what I encountered in the field. The session assisted in preparing me for what to expect ahead and to feedback on the various strategies in terms of dealing with the pitfalls emotionally and mentally, as a I am new in the field of study.

4.8 Ethical considerations

In undertaking this research study, there are many ethical principles. Most importantly the need to ensure that the participants in the study did so voluntarily and without coercion, and that their anonymity was confirmed. All participants in the study were informed of the general limitations of the study and were asked to give their consent in advance. To ensure that behavioural factors were not violated, written information about the study was provided to participants for informed consent. Informed consent is based on the provision of a full definition of research and the assurance of their right to anonymity. Participants were asked to sign the required consent forms prior to the start of the discussion (Shenton, 2004). Because the data collection process took place over a long period of time, approval was confirmed with all participants ahead of time. The ethical issues for this study are contained in the research introduction letter that was sent to participants as soon as they accepted to be part of the study. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants and their organizations. Each participant was identified by a pseudonym. Integrity in research is important (Cooper & Schindler, 2003) and every effort was made to report findings as accurately as possible. Contact details for the manager were also provided to participants should there be a need to confirm or provide further information.

4.9 Chapter conclusion

The chapter has outlined several issues related to a qualitative research approach in the context of the present study, as well as the research methodology that was used. The brief summary of the research process was discussed, followed by discussions around the research design, and its paradigm, data collection and conceptualisation. It was deemed necessary to discuss the data collection method and the ensuing methodological challenges experienced during the interview process. The data analysis process, as well as strategies to ensure research consistency and how they were employed was covered. Demonstrating the highest standards of ethical practice, for both participants and professional ethical practice, the chapter concludes with the ethical considerations I have considered in my field service and reporting on findings. The next chapter introduces and discusses the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presents an outline of the research design and methodology that is employed in this study. A qualitative research design was applied to fully understand the lived experiences of women in senior leadership roles in corporate South Africa, while the methodology of phenomenology guided the study. In this chapter, I present the key findings of the study, which are discussed by drawing on existing literature. The discussion will explore and expand on the major themes that emerged from the study. A theoretical framework that is aimed atassisting women in navigating the glass cliff is presented. The issues that are addressed in this study highlight the fact that females in senior leadership roles in corporate South Africa are confronted with a series of difficult circumstances that are enacted through various forms of genderdiscrimination. The aim of this study is to investigate the factors that contribute to the appointmentof women in senior leadership roles during times of crisis. Traditionally, when society thinks about the senior role, a man comes to mind first, as opposed to a woman. It was important to further extend the investigation to understand the leadership style women apply when they are appointed during times of crisis. Initially the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relation to gender?
2. What is the appropriate leadership style that women in senior leadership have at their disposal to build relationships with shareholders and influence the structure of the organisation?
3. What tools and resources are needed in corporate South Africa for women in senior leadership positions during times of crisis?
4. When and why are women more willing to accept risky leadership positions?

I present the key findings which are discussed by drawing on an extensive review of existing literature, starting with the research participants' profiles (Appendix IX). The data collected includes positions held prior to participants' current roles, years of experience, board position if any, and highest qualifications. In the second part of the presentation, important themes that emerged from the analysis are tabled and outlined. These include a detailed description of significant themes that emerged from the interviews supported by the relevant literature. The themes are organized according to topics in the interview protocol and presented by means of

summary points where applicable. The third part consists of a table that represents a code list that is categorized into code groups and includes comments with frequencies. The fourth part consists of subthemes shared by the participants that are perceived as significant to overcoming obstacles or challenges to enable women to succeed in senior leadership roles, this is in alignment with the resources and tools that I recommended /proposed in the literature review. To ensure participants' privacy was protected, pseudonyms suggested by myself and participants were used in place of participants' actual names.

5.2 Profile and overview of participants

One of the study participants had a PhD, six participants had master's degrees and eight had bachelor's degrees. Several of the participants in this study started their careers already with advanced degrees as it was a primary requirement for employment in the corporate space, as well as for various public and private institutions. As previously mentioned, to protect the naming of the participants, I used pseudonyms. (Appendix IX: Participants work profiles and positions on the board).

I conducted the pilot study with participant 6 (Malawe) due to the ease of availability basedon my previous work relationship with her as a line manager. Highlighting the researcher's experience with participant 6 (Malawe), and initially the decision of approaching her to participate in the study was mainly because she is new in the C-Suite role and quickly moved from one senior role to another within a period of 6 months. Malawe was appointed as a COO in the marine sector, the performance of the business was starting to appreciate. The CEO of the company was suspended due to non-performance. Malawe is considered to have substantive knowledge of the sector, coupled with her hands-on involvement within the company and the dynamics she has brought in, through her positive interactions with other executives. Subsequently, she was then asked to act in the CEO position. I recall that during the interview I was positive about her capability to turn the situation around and the possibility of being appointed as CEO on a permanent basis. It is noteworthy that approximately two weeks after the researcher's interview with the participant she was suspended, and it is believed that the charge is based on non-performance and misconduct. The study carried out by McKinsey & Company (2000) raises an interesting point that stakeholders expect a new CEO to come out with a strategic vision within the first eight months of employment, which is sometimes impossible. However, this does not necessarily mean that leaders should not move quickly, for example, 72 percent of wish they had taken less time to reshape their teams. Malawe's comment during the interview reflects this, she notes that:

"We take those positions because we have also been in this situation where we say I want to prove that women can do it. Because at times, we are being asked, not because they believe you are competent. They want to test whether you are going to do it. And they set you up for failure. And you just need to prove that you

can do it."

Relating to making mistakes as a leader:

"But thirdly to be given that authority to say you are in charge. And you take decisions, even if you make mistakes. You are able to correct those mistakes." (Malawe, Acting CEO)

Some of the reasons they gave for women's failure to advance in the corporate world were: one-third believed women were less objective, less capable and less aggressive less capable of contributing towards organisational goals; one-third further believed that it was completely due to the women's internal disposition (April, Dreyer & Blass, 2007).

Remember that talent, leadership and appointment of people is always for a business need. As much as it is sometimes for an opportunity for that person, you should make a distinction. You cannot at the time of crisis now go and find people

that need development. You are just now, putting them up for failure and putting the organisation into disrepute." (Vonani Mama)

5.3 Main themes

This section presents the themes that emerged from data analysis and the findings are organised around the research questions in the current study. Each theme has subthemes underneath and the description of thecodes are explained as they relate to the study.

5.3.1 Acceptance of risky leadership positions

The first question to be answered in this study was *"When and why are women more willing to*

accept risky leadership positions?" The participants were hesitant to confirm the actuality of the glass cliff phenomenon in corporate South Africa, and shared a broad number of reasons to justify the existence of the glass cliff and why women find themselves in those roles. Participants' responses were categorized into five subthemes: *Challenging traditional views, female career shortage, career benefit and advancement, eager to accept challenges, female vs males.* Eachtheme will be discussed in detail.

Challenging traditional views. This subtheme refers to the woman leader attempting to challenge the status quo in relation to the gender stereotypes that they are faced with in the organisation or within the line of discipline that they find themselves in. It is through accepting these risky situations that they become committed to proving a point, by dismantling the stereotypes they encounter and go further to show that women in leadership have the potential to advance as much as if not better than their male counterparts. Most of the participants recounted numerous stories oftraditional norms of thinking, that have supported recurring behaviour or attributed to maintaining the status quo for decades, and promoting the entrenchment of repeated behavior, were identified as reasons for the existence of the glass cliff exists in corporate South Africa. It is through this process that participants' have learned to develop a sense of autonomy, self-respect and the drive that allowed them the opportunity to grow and develop the skills that have enabled them to advance to positions that have given them more power and authority, through these positions they have had the opportunity to become great leaders within an organisation.

Chrissie further noted that culturally, society does not encourage young women to have an education because they are perceived as an asset due to the dowry paid to the families when they marry. However, referring to the participants profiles Appendix IX the women in the study are well qualified. Malawe shared her view on how women are viewed:

> *"Because traditionally, women are perceived to be expert in doing office "housework" like organising office parties. And you just need to prove that you*
>
> *can do it. It is also about our legacy. You want to leave a legacy. You want to say, you know what, I have done it, other women can do it. But also, we are doing it to support other women so that you can bring other women to the level where we are. And even beyond"*

The extract above is indicative that the gender gap as regards to housework seems to be narrowing but women still carry the load. There is no explanation for why women end up doing more housework, it must then be as a result of societal norms and standards. Some of the participants acknowledged that the responsibilities for women outside of the office are often more demanding

even though they hold senior level positions and are exposed to the same pressures as their male counterparts. Women are still responsible for most of the household chores and childcare. Chrissie also shared that women are always taking on challenging and risky roles despite the societal perception that women are more capable in the home environment and not in the workplace. In her words;

> *"Women are not scared of challenges, positions that are easy do not excite them. Additionally, women take risky positions to prove a point that they are capable though society believes that women belongs in the kitchen as they are very fragile. And they put more effort to make sure they are successful, if they fail, they are judged very harshly".*

Participants believe that women are not just appointed in senior leadership positions during crisis periods, their view is that because they are few women at this level who can be appointed in those senior roles, they attract significant amounts of attention regardless of whether it is during a crisis period or not. Damase shared her experience in one organisation that was having trouble and appointed a white male:

> *"Because being a leader is a risky business anyway. I never know what drives women to take positions that are risky. I don't have the answer. But it is quite interesting. And you know why it is interesting? It is not interesting because they appoint women when there is a crisis. When they get out of the crisis, they appoint a man, white man, they did not appoint a woman. Maybe I don't know, perhaps women rejected the offer. I recall a company that was appointing a CEO to lead the organisation. He went and said this organisation is in trouble, and it was already at that point, according to him, in trouble. So, why we always see when women get appointed. Because they are so few. Do we see when they are appointed because there is a crisis? Do we see, if* ***(company name supplied)*** *was not in trouble?*

In this extract, the participant's response is in defence of womanhood, and the fact that women in the corporate space are constantly under scrutiny, she emphasized the significant attention that is given when a woman is appointed in comparison to her male counterparts, and also alludes to the fact that it is not every day that a female is appointed. Nicci being the most experienced participant in the C-suite with 23 years of service shared her view in terms of her confidence and braveness, as well as with regards to women accepting senior leadership roles during times of crisis:

> *"I don't know whether or not women take more risky positions. You know there is*

the other premise which says, and I also don't know if this is true. These women won't put themselves forward when they know they can't really do something. I mean I do know that leadership in general is not easy. I sometimes say to people

if you want to be popular sell ice. Leadership is not a popularity contest, and it is hard. If you have to look at my journey at the very top end of this organisation you know, 18 years, the economy has been really difficult, I had to retrench, and Ihave had big technology projects I had to implement which did not go so well.
You could if you just look at my track record you will say "wow"; you must be brave to do that. When I took the job, I didn't expect it to be anything else other than a demanding risky leadership job. It's got its moments of good things and its moments of very difficult things".

Consensus was reached amongst the participants in the current study that the traditional view of themale as "breadwinner" and the female as "homemaker" has shifted over time.

Nicci in this extract emphasized the issue of perseverance, admitted that not everything goes according to plan sometimes there are failures. On following up on the technology project that did not go well, Nicci stated that there was no chance that she would give up, an alternative strategy was implemented to make it a success.

Female career shortage. The fact that there is such a shortage of women in leadership positions adheres to the fact that they are more than willing to accept these leadership positions that are risky. Although this is slowly starting to increase there is still a sense of traditional viewpoints related to women in the workforce as not being worthy of a "man's job". This in return, makes thewoman leader more eager to accept these risky leadership positions due to this direct shortage.

When Nicci was asked about the issue of women accepting risky leadership positions she responded:

"I don't know. It is definitely fewer; you know there are very few women in senior leadership positions. So, there must be an element of truth to the fact that there

are very few positions and when you are offered, don't think twice as it might not present itself again".

In this extract Nicci was either not sure or not comfortable to confirm the question of few women in senior leadership positions. Damase's experience is that because there arefewer opportunities in

these senior roles, most people will then take it, and to be the first woman to occupy such positions they will certainly need to work very hard at fulfilling their roles and theresponsibilities that go with it. She recalls:

> *"I mean, because yesterday I was in a board meeting, there were fifteen people around the table I was the only female CEO and only black person. And you are saying it is 2019. Why am I the only woman in this space?"*

. According to Helena:

> *'So, where they are spot on is that because of the fewer opportunities in these senior roles, most people will then say I will take it, because if I don't take it, what else am I going to get. And some of them will say it is actually great to be the first woman to do this and therefore I am just going to strive at it.*'

Participants in the current study were all in agreement with a shortage of women in the space, and that they are more than willing to accept these positions. However, participants were all in agreement that a senior leadership role whatever the circumstances is hard for both males and females.

Career benefit and advancement. Nicola, Vonani Mama and Nicci confirmed their lack of confidence earlier on in their careers. Their confidence was built through hard work and putting more effort in their duties. However, I disagree that all the other attributes are gender specific, nor does she believe that leaders of whatever gender must be hostile to be successful. Nicola said:

> *"The one is quite aggressive, 'one of the boys' style, and it works quite well in financial services. If you are aggressive and you come across like one of the boys, you go out with them, you drink with them, you swear with them. They keep you in their circles and you end up getting to the top that way".*

In the extract above, the participant is emphasizing that if you can't beat them one will have to cooperate, it is a good strategy for infiltration so you can be seen to be one of "the boys," the purpose being to learntheir weaknesses through being part of the group and beat them at their own game, utilizing the option of joining the boys' club to try and fit in. The potential result being that if women start joining these groups and shaking things up, the traditional boy's club will flat-out not exist. Fitting in should not be about going to work and trying to be like a man, pretending to be someone you are not. What if instead of trying to fit in women used a different approach, something that works just for them, perhaps starting a girls' only club? The traditional boys' club might be much

more diluted, and the exclusive culture they have created will eventually be neutralized if they are not given any attention or are simply just ignored. This statement also stresses the need for women to turn negativity into positive by reinterpreting the negative constructions and embracing them. This kind of socializing for the participants was necessary in order to get ahead. For example, people who skipthe pub after work miss out on "office gossip", opportunities for promotions, who has been promoted, etcetera.

Malawe emphasized that the reason for women accepting promotions to more senior roles during crisis, is that they fear that there will never be another opportunity to do so in the future. Fusi believes that women calculate risks very well, if it is a 3-year commitment by the time crisis erupts the contract is already close to expiring. Women are not afraid to go and test waters and, insome cases, it works to their advantage. Furthermore, based on Fusi's views that women always weigh their options, when they see that the position will compromise their image, they turn downthe offer. Katso buttressed this by adding:

> *"I believe women calculate risk very well, for knowing that is a 3-year commitment therefore what is it for me in this period. Women think very hard. Very analytic. Women are not afraid to go test waters and in some cases it works. And based on that women always weigh options, when they see that the position will compromise her image, they do turn down the offer. A good example is me where I find myself turning down 2 different board positions due to calculating the risk of failure and denting my image based on the unethical behaviour of the executive team. The effort and the dirt were not worth it."*

Helena was quite firm that women feel they must accommodate their occupational preferences so that their eventual choices are achievable in the real world. In this subtheme, participants in this study indicated that they do in fact take these positions as a means of advancing their careers through the acceptance of certain challenges that are seen as being quite daunting. The risk in this situation is rather seen as an opportunity to prove their competence by working through challenges in order to learn more. It allows them space to grow throughout the process and the opportunity to be recognized by their peers which is greatly beneficial in the end. Through experiencing these taxing challenges and overcoming them, the participant is able to acquire certain skills that are potentially beneficial in navigating other sectorswithin the organization, and presents important opportunities and advantages for growth that will allow them to advance to higher positions within the organisation.

Eager to accept challenges. Besides taking risky jobs for career advancement, participants in this study agreed that they also accepted risky positions just for the sake of the challenge. The predetermined social mindset of women not being able to face certain challenges are being dismantled from these women's perspectives. Rather than accepting stereotypically mediocre jobs or careers, they keep challenging the status quo in order to prove that they are worthy of greatness and can run a big corporate entity. These women are constantly eager to accept difficult and challenging positions that allow their minds and capabilities to be challenged and would not otherwise be able to function in a job that does not challenge their minds in any way. Becoming tougher had allowed them to deal with challenges and controlling emotions. Male oppression is also re-asserted by dismissing the hurtful impact of theexperiences as recounted in the following extract:

> *'For me is that women always think about the bigger picture approach, they think about the joy of winning, they want to be part of creating the better future of the organization. Even if the organization is struggling and is made up of people who were appointed for a specific reason, there is a spark, there is something unique seen in them. Since women know that they can inspire and turn that spark into a fling and get the people there, taking the organization out of struggle they can do it.'* ***Martha***
>
> *'I don't know. I can just tell you why I would be willing to do it. For me it is because, the reason I work is because I want to have something that is intellectually stimulating. And because I want to continuously challenge myself. So, it is in my nature. Why other women do it I don't know. Just for me I am not, I am scared and maybe it is because I also don't want to see myself as being in a comfort zone and being comfortable and settling for anything. So, I like being uncomfortable and challenged and being grown and being stretched. 'Nicola***

Katso emphasised the importance of having a good reputation among one's peers of working hard and delivering. She believes women do not get fulfilled if they are in boring roles. She recalls a timewhere 2 positions were offered to her from different companies to sit on a board and having doneher research, she decided to choose the one that looked most challenging.

Helena, Mpola, Malawe agreed that being visible and displaying competence in jobs that are challenging is an important career move. What was interesting about these commentswere the reasons given; women being hardworking and risk-takers, is noted as the fundamental driver for

why women accept risky leadership positions.

Female vs Males. As communicated by the participants in this study, they do not view taking on these roles as a risk, for them the issue is that it is quite derogatory, to doubt the fact that they are capable of taking on the roles and responsibilities of such a position. For these women, their sense of accomplishment has been achieved through passion and perseverance in order to reach these high levels of achievement. They do not think that these positions are as critically challenging as societal beliefs ascribe them to be, for them there is no gender difference and therefore, no reason for the gender biases. However, the integration of gender qualities through identity construction was also positioned as authentic power:

> *'If I have to look at our senior women, generally they are outspoken, very result-focused. Very technically savvy or specialists in their roles, in their fields. High risk takers, and people that focus on action. Not just talk, but delivery. And I have to compare it to the male counterparts, I have to admit that they aren't. There is not that much pressure on them'.* ***Nicola***

In the above extract the participant is implying that there is a gender difference in brain activity involved in computing risk and preparing for action. The participant is saying women are go getters and they walk the talk. However, the statement is not conclusive because men grew up being taught that "tigers don't cry". Therefore, if you look at men in their positions of responsibility they also excel. Does that mean men are too reckless and women are too cautious during crises? If this is the case, what then is the reason why organizations still believe in men asleaders? This question leads us into another topic that is critical and requires further exploration. Martha shared the view that sometimes when something does not work you don't have to bringthe same thing as a corrective measure. If it is a woman you bring in for a turnaround strategy forinstance, you do so because it presents a different solution to what was there previously. This is called a counter-intuitive approach. In her opinion, it has nothing to do with a female being considered for the position only during times of crisis. However, Mpola had a different view. Herview was informed by decisions that were taken in board transformation committees. Perhaps thatis how the board committee gets trapped into transformation. She recalls being confronted with the situation of solving the dynamics in one department as stated in the extract below:

> *'That is a trap of transformation as well, I remember I was confronted with a situation in one position that I wanted to fill. I had two CVs, a female and male. In the department there were dynamics, I needed to get a guy to dissolve the dynamics. The lady was suitable in all elements, so*

I asked myself whether I need to consider the male as I had an agenda meanwhile the deserving is the female. I am lying to myself. Am I taking this guy to balance the numbers or to take the ladyto do right? You focus so much on gender, and you end up forgetting the challenge. That is why you find a high turnover of recycled leadership because you haven't defined what you are looking for. Women need to know themselves, recognise their gaps otherwise you will get swallowed and fail.' ***Mpola***

Damase believes that for an organisation that is extremely wounded, getting a woman to deal with the wounds would be much better than getting a man. Men are unable to deal with emotions.

Damase's comment implies that women think beyond what they see therefore they are capable of turning the situation around. If this is the truth, why are women still failing to succeed in those senior roles if they are capable? Additionally, Damase's statement is an expression of beingoverly confident. However, if it is true that appointing a woman to lead a failing and problematic organisation is much better, why is it that they end up taking the blame, failing and ruining their reputations, as in the case of Marissa Mayer – the former CEO of Yahoo, whose failure to turn the company around was highly publicised? Though it was not conclusive that Marissa Mayer was an unsuccessful leader, perhaps her perceived failure was due to high level of emotional intelligence associated with successful leadership.

Another empowering discourse that emerged was the view that society does not allow men the opportunity to be nurturers, therefore, they are unable to cope during times of crisis.

We don't teach men to nurture. Because we allow them not to be at home. We allow them not to take care of children. We allow them not to cook. We allow them not to carry children on their back. We allow them not to pitch up when

'We don't teach men to nurture. Because we allow them not to be at home. We allow them not to take care of children. We allow them not to cook. We allow them not to carry children on their back. We allow them not to pitch up when there is a funeral. We allow them not to do nurturing things. We allow them, then they don't grow the nurturing skills. They just stand and look. I am the only one being called when the child is sick at school. We are all here as parents, let's cook and take care of our children, let's have a good time. So, if we are saying we are appointing women because they are more nurturing, we taught them to be nurturing. And that is just my attitude towards the differences between men and women'. ***Vonani Mama***

The effect of the text is to position herself as observer of both male and female behaviour. At the same time, when Vonani Mama made a joke about men and women ‘we are all here as parents, let’s cook and take care of our children, let’s enjoy’, she mocks the parody and highlights the universal view of being human and spontaneously authentic. She is challenging their male counterparts to also have a wonderful experience that's very enjoyable. As opposed to rallying around woman-ness as a result of her gender, the participant deliberately focuses herself on strategic thinking, and getting results, not results that would have been gotten by a man or a woman but desired results. Simplified, this is aperson who has consciously trained and disciplined herself to be mindful of her thoughts and actions, who has done away with gender stereotypes and is focused on specific results. The participant uses both her “male” and “female” characteristics to the advantage of humanity. Whereas her strong female side of nurturing is unquestionable, she consciously/mindfully elevateswhat is generally regarded as a male strength in order to balance her performance. A lot of what isdone unconsciously is what has been internalized over a period, what we have been socialized to do without questioning or what we have experienced and potentially believe in. It influences what is in the conscious mind.

5.3.2 Leadership experience

The key theme “leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relation to gender” addresses the clearer understanding of lived experiences and perceptions of women’s experiences in relation to gender when leading big corporations. The participants did not identify their personal experiences as women leaders as being directly associated with gender biases. Participants spoke about having to sacrifice family events in their position as leaders, the idea that men deserve to be placed in high leadership roles as opposed to women, and the challenge of creating a balance between their personal and professional lives. The issues are categorised into four subthemes: Firstly, the creation of a balance in their personal and professional lives, reflects the need for women in leadership positions to strike a balance in their personal and work lives. Secondly, serving on the board of a major corporation requires time and effort, and comes with increased responsibility and the pressure to perform. The third subtheme involves patriarchal attitudes that generally apply to the conviction that men should play the more important and authoritative roles in society. In concluding, the personal sacrifices related to familyand personal relationships, these include but are not limited to events such as important birthdays, anniversaries, family holidays and overall quality time with children and their partners due to the responsibilities associated with their position and the significance of the obligations attached to it.

Creating a balance in personal and work life. Some of the participants indicated that they sometimes feel judged for being tired during work hours due to the fact that they have other family responsibilities that include taking care of their children, cooking for the family and ensuring that the household is well taken care of. This stems from the patriarchal perspective thatthe woman in the house needs to ensure that the food is cooked and that the children are well taken care of. This puts immense pressure on the participants as they barely have any time for themselves, which potentially has the resultant effect of burnout and self-negligence. Other participants have indicated that it is quite important for them to be able to take time out for spiritual rejuvenation through a variety of means including meditation, reflection and employing religious practices, which gives the participant a sense of spiritual wellness. Women are sometimes faced with tensions between fulfilling their traditional roles as wives and mothers and their career requirements. This is known as 'role-conflict'.

> *"Women have to prove themselves all the time. And there is still that perception that women have to behave like men. Women still have to work and still go home and look after their family, doing homework, prepare dinner. And when you pack up early to go home, they look at you like where are you going?"* ***Chrissie***

The participant expresses her ability to multitask, an ability that women excel at. The work also reveals that the brain cannot effectively handle more than two complex, related activities at once.

Thobile believes in taking time for herself to reflect, weigh her options and action her primary daily goals. The best investment ever is allowing oneself to grow spiritually. When it comes to spiritual well-being there can be no compromise. Despite the long hours and challenges at work she always invests in prayer time to ask God for direction.

Helena also reflected on the importance of balancing personal and work life:

> *"I have invested in a lot of programmes to further improve myself where I am lacking. Spiritual growth where you don't even get a chance to fellowship with other Christians. One needs to be able to get a space to have introspection and enjoy quality time away from the working environment".*

However, McMahon's main challenge is being able to balance school and work. She considers herself fortunate as she has a very supportive husband who always assists at home.

> *"The difficult thing is to balance between work and school. I do not have children, it's just me and my husband and I am blessed as I have a very supportive husband. From a work point of view is knocking off late, neglecting your family".*

The participants indicated that the challenge of finding balance is not limited to taking care of their families, or spending time with their partners and direct family members. Based on the comments shared by participants, the support provided to managers in terms of work-life balance programmes was neither satisfactory nor adequate. For Thobile, it was feeling the responsibility toexercise in order to be physically fit, relieve stress and maintain her emotional well-being. Thobilesuggested that regular exercise, meditation and other soft skill practices can be initiated to advance the emotional and spiritual balance and well-being of employees. Additionally, as women perceive themselves as being good multitaskers, most participants are involved in community forums, serving as board members for both small and large companies, this provides opportunitiesto boost their public profiles and to climb the corporate ladder through a process of functional specialization. This leads into the next subtheme to be presented and discussed in the following section.

Board positions. Serving on a particular board provides the participant with the opportunity to be part of and contribute to key decisions that are made within a company, this seemed to be an important achievement for most participants in terms of reaching one of the major goals that they prepared themselves for over the course of their professional development. It is also a great achievement for women in leadership as board memberships attained in top-level positions drastically reduces the barrier of gender inequalities. This level of positioning is often short-lived as indicated by participants, as serving on a board seems to be linked to the factor that women are often involved in these processes during periods of crisis in a company. In a sense, the role of being a board member is only accorded to fulfil and comply with transformational leadership characteristics as previously discussed in the literature review. Damase indicated that there is stilla significant shortage of women in board positions in corporate South Africa:

> *"I mean, because yesterday I was in a board meeting. Where there were fifteen people around the table, I was the only female CEO and only black person. And you are saying it is 2019. It is 2019 why am I the only person."*

In the extract above, the participant was rubberstamping all her previous comments of "being the first female" and the "first black person". However, with regards to board positions, participants shared that most companies do not allow their employees to sit on external boards. Fusi highlighted the policy around participation in a company board using herself as an example, *"I do sit on the*

board internally however we are not allowed to sit on external boards, it is company policy". Participants concurred with regards to the issue of sitting or not sitting on company boards being stringently regulated by company policies, I view these statements as defensive, and a critical question that needs to be asked is if men are affected in the same way by these policies or if they are excluded.

Buttressing this point, Nicci shared her involvement in board positions based on the company policy.

> *"At my company, I am obviously on the board, but we are not allowed to be board members of other corporations. I am the chairman of a school in Cape Town and I am also on the board of the Johannesburg hologram."*

Notably, most of the participants mentioned the company policy restriction limiting them from participating on external boards. Similarly, the job of the CEO has become more demanding and time-consuming, causing CEOs to be more selective about their outside board commitments. My intention here is to highlight the research findings on the presence of women on boards of directors, which clearly indicates that women experience the same fate as their male counterparts in the industrialized world, namely the effects of the "Old Boys Club".

Based on the feedback from the participants it is not just women that are prevented from participating in board positions, it also confirms that there are company policies that limit participation to ensure that their duties are performed effectively. Performing both leadership roles and caring for children, leads women to choose which role to prioritise, as a result they sacrifice personal happiness for professional brilliance.

Sacrifices. With regards to losing precious quality time with family and friends, participants have indicated it is sacrifice they are making due to the important leadership positions they occupy. They admitted to missing important family functionsdue to being occupied at work, participants noted that leadership roles took up a significant amount of their personal time. This implies a very unhealthy personal life and career balance, showing that the participants have experienced a significant loss of sense of quality of life.

Mpola expressed concern with the current trend that she has personally observed as a key challenge for women in senior roles, the significant sacrifice of lost personal time with the consequence of losing touch with what is happening in their family lives.

> *"When I converse with a lot of women in that level, a lot of motherly duties are*

outsourced. And this is one thing that came out of you and you can't get it right. The consistent trend observed you afford more and again pump up more resources with that extra cash. With the structures I think they sort of push you in that direction, e.g. board meetings away from home, events at night etc. when do you actually get time to perform your motherly duties?"

Nicci speaking about sacrificing personal happiness for her job, recalls a period whereshe was literally sleeping only two hours in a night for a period of three months. She was implementing a turnaround strategy, and her job was on the line if implementation was compromised. By the end of the assignment she suffered from ill-health and was placed on bed rest for 3 weeks due to fatigue. With the support she received from her team and her passion anddedication, the strategy was implemented successfully at the expense of her health. Under-representation of women leaders was affected by the discouragement and lack of support from society. In addition, educated women sacrifice a lot, although they still were not encouraged to be leaders, irrespective of their qualifications, but rather were encouraged to get married early and bear children. Damase pointed out this when she commented:

"I recall spending four months in Paris for work assignments and my daughter was only 3 months. I had trust in my family to look after my children. I took it exactly the way it is coming. It is an opportunity; I am taking it as seriously as it comes. And I am throwing myself at it. So, for me I think I invest a lot of time and effort and diligence and enthusiasm in opportunities that come my way. I really give it my all. I have sacrificed a lot more. I know my investment is time".

The support of husbands, mothers and/or domestic workers came out strongly as one of the critical success factors for businesswomen for the participants due to their hectic schedules. There was an interesting racial dynamic though.All white participants who had children were getting assistance from their husbands and none mentioned any kind of help from extended family or domestic workers. The experience was quite different in the case of the black women. Black women see family as places of safety from the hostile environment of work and society. The absence of black women leaders who were getting support from their husbands was intriguing. Could this situation mean that marriage success rate for black women is lower compared to white women? This question requires further interrogation.

Patriarchal gender roles / Gender stereotypes. Participants' views in this study are usually significantly weighted towards traditional cultural roles that affect and impact on the work context. This code relates to the idea that men should be placed in high leadership roles as opposed to

women, who are viewed as wives and mothers predominantly. The typical "female role" is apparently quite visible within the corporate sector, and some male employers or leaders show this traditional mindset in their approach to how women's roles are perceived within the work context. Damase who was exposed to international background does not regard the cultural emphasis on traditional female roles, as necessarily being a barrier to employment or career progression; she has been acquainted with many women who have held senior positions in her lineof work. However, she made the point that women who reach these positions are still expected to juggle the full responsibility of traditional 'mother' and 'wife' roles alongside their careers. It is as if women have to push much harder in order to achieve the same status as their male counterparts within the corporate sector. Damase shared one of her experiences while working inFrance:

> *"Most of the men globally are starting to appreciate women's presence in the boardroom. Because it is not a problem in South Africa. I mean I work for a French company now. I am the first woman and the first South African to hold this position. You go to any company that is French in South Africa and the CEO is French. So, for the French to take the ball stand of employing a South African, a black woman. So, but what I find is when I get to France itself, it is not just South Africa that is in trouble. Because everybody in France is quite excited that this role has been given to a woman. Because it means there is still a problem.You see my point, the problem is not here, and it is global".*

In the above extract, Damase acknowledges her need for status as something which is incongruent with her identity. There is something of a confession in her acknowledgement "you see my point" as a way to make people understand the purpose, intention of something.

> *"Let's call it stereotypes, socialization. Girls sit quietly and look pretty. And men being aggressively busy with fast cars, fast pace. It's probably still with us and perhaps we will see it fading away in the next generation. They are not going to pay attention to those gender stereotypes."* ***Martha***

In the above extract, Martha makes the differentiation in the socialisation of women and men. It is worth noting that in some cases there are advantages to be a woman and looking pretty inspite of being on equal educational levels with male counterparts and doing the same job.

Beautiful women have it even better and get away with things ordinary people cannot get away with. Research has shown that the success achieved by a gorgeous woman, is immediately credited to their looks by both male and female counterparts, and not to any talents or brains they may

possess. However, beauty has both positive and negative effects. Mpola shared how her mother had a problem in accepting that she is holding a more powerful position than her husband, meaning a breadwinner in her family. Society believes that a man is a head of the family thereforethey need to earn more than women. It has taken a lot of time for society to accept this gender- reverse in male-female role stereotypes. Meanwhile Mpola's husband does not feel threatened as his wife assumes her role of wife and mother fully when at home, completely stepping out of her senior role as a CFO.

This confirms McMahon's statement that men are getting domesticated; however, peer pressure outside the home is still preserving gender role stereotyping. Participants highlighted the fact that the long history of intergenerational trauma, seems to have unconsciously played a part in shaping the way ethnic minority leaders view and interact with the world. It is also highlighted that there is a difference inleadership styles with respect to their various work experiences and individual approaches.

5.3.3 Leadership style

The top nine major subthemes emerged from the coding process: (a) assertiveness, (b) confidence, (c) innovative thinking, (d) employee value, (e) prioritisation, (f) empathetic approach, (g) effectivecommunication, (h) team leader, (i) transformational leadership: non-gender differences. On the other hand, leaders with very little strength may be unpopular, but they will not be able to achieve their goals and be considered ineffective. Self-confident people are also determined to protect themselves from aggressive people.

Leadership skill: Confidence. One of the most prominent skills that participants indicated as required is confidence. It seems that confidence is a key element that allowed these women leaders to climb the corporate ladder, as it allowed them to take on certain tasks that other women (and even men) would not have otherwise been "confident" enough to take on. It is due to this high level of confidence that these women can make major decisions for a major corporate company and provide constructive input. These individuals tend to face daily gender role "bashing" and are continuously judged or misunderstood because they are women. Due to the nature of the corporate industry that originated as a male based ecology, it is still the standard today that these women have to prove themselves to be on the same level as men, regardless of the significance of their contributions to the company, they are still viewed as being subordinate to men within the corporate sector. Therefore, it is immensely important for these female leaders to have a high level of

confidence in order to face these daily gender role challenges (which are additional stressors and daily challenges). Self-confidence is a personal characteristic identified by women in this study. Many divulged howtheir confidence allowed them to seek and accept feedback and criticism. To reiterate, Hosana's light-hearted comment says it all:

> *'Being confident, as I deal with figures and presentation of the financial results and all. I find it necessary to work on my confidence, if I don't believe in myself who else is going to believe in what I am presenting? I started talking positivity to myself, attending motivational speaking seminars as well as investing in leadership programmes.'*

The women in this study emphasised that it is important for women leaders to be confident in what they are doing as it will enable them to be more innovative.

Leadership skills: Innovative thinking. This subtheme refers to the woman in leadership being quite innovative in the leadership role. This is of great importance, especially in times of crisis where the individual will require the capability to develop newly formed ideas and approaches in order to sustain the company in their endeavours. This skill is relevant for both genders; however, it is reflected in both the participants, and the literature reviewed that innovation within female leaders is usually utilised in times of crisis. It seems as if women are chosen to take the role of leader when things are difficult within the organisation. This is quite a tricky paradox or even an oxymoron as women are seen as "lesser" individuals or leaders, however, they are placed in situations where they are expected to "fix the mess" when their male counterparts are not able to do so. Nonetheless, this is seen as one of the most prominent leadership skills for the sustainabilityand development of an organisation.

> *"Innovation is not a choice and creativity have also been found to be dominant traits in women leaders and are qualities they also encourage in their teams. It is interesting to note that innovation plays a crucial role during crisis. I do it all the time. The need to innovate appears to be more decisive in crisis times".* ***Thobile***

Participants feel very strongly that leaders who are innovative and creative survive during times of crisis. One can do well with less. It is important to value employees by communicating and updating them on progress made and on new developments in the organisation. Shifting towards an employee-centric mentality is key in times of crisis as they are the ones who know what customers need and are able to deliver those needs satisfactorily.

Leadership skill: Employee value. This relates to the value a leader should place on their employees or teams. A leader can value their team by respecting their ideas and allowing space for creativity. The leader should be able to have some appreciable amount of emotional intelligence that enables them to relate to their subordinates and encourage the growth of others under their leadership. This is where the women in leadership employ the transformational leadership approach that is more understanding, encouraging, motivational and sympathetic, and allows for a more sophisticated synergy within whatever corporate structure they are leading. The leader should be aware that the value and pitfalls associated with this approach, is in the way they relate with and communicate to their subordinates, this reflects on the leadership being perceived as being either good or bad.

> *"Respecting people's ideas, participating in a business decision for them to feel valued and important is very crucial in my position as the Human Capital expert. I find it very beneficial to myself and to the organisation."*
> ***Thobile***

In the above extract, Thobile emphasises the value of the trust she has placed in her people and highlights the important role the support she receives from her employees plays in her own success as a leader. Fusi weighing into the discussion on employee value element, notes that:

> *"However, I make sure that I recognise good work. I appreciate people who put more effort into whatever they are doing".*

The participant in the above statement, makes the point that she places value on an employee that goes the extra mile and rewards their efforts accordingly. Employee recognition is as much an organizational leadership issue as it is one related to the basic needs of individuals. The other participants in this study also were extremely proud of the teams they have built and the leadership values they have fostered in their employees. The feedback from Fusi is in line with Thobile who heads a human capital department.

Leadership skills: Prioritisation. This subtheme addresses how participants manage their workload and their ability to do so in an effective manner using their time effectively and efficiently. Participants indicated that when they prioritise important work it is reflective of their skill capacity and reflective of their contributions in support of the organisation's continued growth and progress. Viewed from a different perspective, if an individual is able to prioritise their workload with increased efficiency, they will potentially have more time to spend on their personal life and are able to have more time to reflect on certain decisions that they have made. Strategic thinking and implementation are core to a successful business, it is desirable and

expected that an effective leader in a high-level position has the capability to think strategically, and the skill to oversee the smooth implementation of these strategies is expected, in order to ensure the continued growth and advancement of the organization.

> *"Because strategy is direction. So, if you poorly execute a strategy it can also go spectacularly wrong. Look at Teresa May, who wrecked her strategy to win over Brexit. If you carry through a bad strategy you are taking people to the doldrums with you. So, strategy is tough in the sense that you are always thinking about the other people."* ***Damase***

The extract above by Damase, emphasises the importance of understanding the value of prioritizing, in terms of strategic planning for example, when carrying out your responsibilities as a leader. She concludes her narrative by using the example that the reason for the failure of Teresa May's strategy was based on the error she made in not identifying what needed to be prioritized the most. There is however no conclusive evidence based on research clearly showingthat leaders fail due to a lack of prioritization. Although when a leader lacks vision, it is very likely that a lot of other qualities such as inspiration, focus and the ability to prioritise are also negatively affected. When a leader lacks a sense of direction the team is most likely not going tohave a sense of focus, and this leads to unproductivity.

Helena notes that:

> *"Prioritising is very important for me, and I identified a gap in my personality to do so. When you don't prioritise it normally holds your talent back. I learned to give myself time to understand the most important thing to be working on at any given time. When it is done well, I see it creating space and allows me to be creative and be effective."*

In the above extract, the participant is introspective, she recognizes a gap in her personal development and understands that this is a skill that she needs to work harder at developing and is working on being more effective and efficient at prioritizing her workload. The participant is underscoring the high importance of members of the group learning to prioritize their workload. The reflection aspect is also of great importance as they need to process the decisions, they make in order to understand better how to apply them through a more efficient and improved process. Participants recognize that there is the stereotype that women are better than men at being open to receiving multiple perspectives, being empathetic, and compassionate in dealing with work related issues.

Leadership skills: Empathetic approach. This subtheme addresses the ability for a leader to beempathetic towards their peers and subordinates. It is important that the subordinate can see that the leader understands the situation and context of the issue at hand. Helena sees empathy as a critical leadership skill, and she says:

> *"One of the critical skills in my journey and I felt it is important to grasp is empathy. I believe it is an important leadership skill. The ability to put myself in other's shoes and understand their perspectives is critical to my long-term success as a leader. Empathy allows me to be more open and create a space for listening rather than only me who is always talking. Empathy allows me to take a few moments before writing an email, sending out a newsflash or even giving my team critical feedback".*

In the extract above, the participant's response displays her intentional objective to build the characteristic of being empathetic. Further analysis of her response draws attention to the emotional component and value placed on feeling compassion for another person. A leader who can apply this characteristiceffectively needs to have had similar experiences and challenges and is able to relate to what theirsubordinates are experiencing. Thobile addressing the issue of empathy states:

> *"I believe that women leaders understand that making the work environment feel safe is critical to success and that empathy can influence their negotiation style as well. It works very well when engaging with labour colleagues".*

The feedback received indicates that in general participants agree that being female has contributed to their having a better understanding of the value of being empathetic. In this sense, the argument can be made based on the feedback received from participants that as leaders women possess the ability to be more empathetic than their male counterparts, and this is a strongcharacteristic that they bring to their leadership styles in organisations that they manage.

Leadership skills: Effective communication. Effective communication skills support values like trust, transparency, and loyalty and builds a cohesive corporate community collectively working towards achieving the same goals, this strengthens the organization and supports a strong leadership. Leaders can communicate more effectively and openly with their peers and subordinates. This is not an easy skill to master and requires that the leader is very familiar with the corporate environment, and well-grounded with a sound knowledge of the specific field to enable he or she effectively communicate tasks that need to be implemented. Effective communication

needs to go hand in hand with good listening skills, if subordinates, employees and peers are not given the chance to voice their concerns and have an opportunity to contribute, the leader will lose the confidence and respect of these individuals. This can have a huge ripple effect on the synergy of the organisation. Martha notes that:

> *"Information, in most cases in terms of crisis most people are too paralyzed they start forgetting the simplest thing, which is to communicate how bad the situation is. Depending on your style some people are afraid to tell the truth especially if you're bossy. More than often, my team would call me "bossy". That is how I got the nickname "MARTHA".*

Being called bossy gives the feeling of negativity, a pestering, and nagging authority. Martha draws our attention to the negative results that a lack of communication can produce. This communication must go both ways, from the leaders to his or her subordinates and from the subordinates to the leader. There needs to be a free flow of communication and the leader must bein control of the situation to enable him or her to act in the best interests of the organization. This can only be achieved if subordinates have the confidence to speak to their leader openly and truthfully about the problem. When a woman in a leadership position asserts her authority and delegates as her position necessitates, she is regarded as being "bossy" and denigrated for carrying out her responsibilities in the same way as her male counterparts have always done. The point made is particularly important given that the ability to communicate effectively and to delegate sothat tasks are carried out efficiently requires that the leader is firm, especially in a crisis, it is crucial. Bossiness and female leadership are not mutually exclusive and need to be separated and not highlighted as an exclusive and negative female leadership trait. I am of the view that a "boss" is able to recognize the strengths in others and utilize those skills to motivate his or her subordinates to perform more efficiently ensuring that the task at hand is executed well and is benefitting the organization in general. Helena speaking from herown context and experience believes that:

> *"Previous research has portrayed women as better communicators than men which is one of the personality traits for transformational leadership style"*

The participants' general position regarding this issue is that to communicate, a leader needs to have a wide range of communication skills and resources, to enable him or her to effectively connect with people and to be able to resolve problems and tackle challenges. It is of great importance that a leader is an effective and skilled communicator, particularly while working in a

highly stressful and pressured environment like the corporate sector. A good leader must be ableto show that he or she is open to criticism and able to accept ideas and recommendations from peers and subordinates.

Leadership skills: Team leader. As the leader of his or her team a good leader must be open to getting feedback in form of criticism, recommendations, suggestions and ideas from their peers and subordinates, and reflect on the feedback in order to make informed decisions for the benefit of the organisation. It shows the leaders commitment to the organisation's continued progress, and sends the positive message that the leader values the contribution of her team and is open to receiving other people's input and provides the space for others to contribute. Team leaders are required to have some specific skill sets that include having the patience to listen to your subordinates and to allow them the space for error in order to learn, grow and develop. The message communicated from the leader to the team should be an open one. Hosana highlights the ability women leaders have in terms of hyper-attentiveness to team building, from valuing their input to empowerment of the teams:

> *"Like I indicated, women are very unique. They believe in consulting from peers who have same knowledge, they give their teams time to give input, and also take suggestions especially during times of crisis. They believe in team working".*

Hosana went on to add that she strongly believed in team playing and working together as a team. Teams can either break or make you as a leader, however, when you invest in your people and groom them to be the best they can be, they are also more invested in your success, as your success is perceived as being theirs as well. Thobile reiterated this noting that:

> *"The support of the leadership team is seen to be the best tool ever in navigating crisis. Without team effort results might be difficult to be achieved".*

Interviews conducted with top executives reveal that in general, women leaders are more invested in empowering their teams as well as acknowledging their team's efforts. This approach is recommended as being significantly successful and a much more effective tool for enabling the gestation of new and innovative ideas, it also supports development and growth within the team and inspires confidence and creates opportunities for individuals to excel within the team to the benefit of the organisation as a whole. During crises teamwork is desirable and highly beneficial in terms of giving each team member the opportunity to come up with suggestions and creative ways of finding solutions to the existing problem.

Transformational leadership: Non-gender differences. This code refers to the leadership style that is frequently adapted within the corporate sector - the transformational leadership style. It is directly related to the context itself and the type of leadership traits that the leader possesses that informs his/her style of leadership. In this context, gender differences in leadership do not really apply. McMahon observed that there are women who want to be treateddifferently because of their gender which she found to be problematic, she noted:

> *"Don't use gender as an excuse, I find it very irritating. Work hard, persevere, and don't take things personally. There is nothing wrong to say I don't have the answer now I will get back to you. There are good stories from a lot of women".*

All participants believed there should be no difference in a leader's performance in terms of their output at work whether you are male or female. This should have noimpact on your leadership, what is important is the leader's capabilities, knowledge, expertise and

skills. The participants also agreed that one of the key factors associated with great success and drive is passion.

Leadership skills: Passion, perseverance and hard work. Once an individual has developed the passion for a particular line of work, it becomes less of a "job" and more of a drive towards achieving a high level of success in their discipline or field of choice. Passion becomes the driver and perseverance the vehicle that drives that passion towards attaining the highest level of success - leadership. In this context work is viewed less as a burden and more as a goal that needs to be successfully achieved that will benefit the organisation greatly. The individual is then willing to invest time, effort and initiative in the tasks they are responsible for, and even go beyond their prescribed responsibilities to ensure that the broader "community", the team is also achieving its core objectives. As a leader, this is the best approach, as productivity is increased, development and achievement are also increased, which in turn positions the leader as effective and increases his/her visibility as an "expert" in the organisation and beyond it. Ultimately identifying the leader as a "guru" in his/her field. The participants went further to note that the process is not an easy one and needs the individual to be highly motivated and prepared to put in a maximum amount of effort and a lot of energy in order to succeed.

Hosana, McMahon, Katso and Thobile believe that it is important to remember that in order to be successful at that level you must love what you are doing. Women in the C-suite have acquired the skills and tools required to turn their passions into outstanding work. They are extremely passionate about their work, careers and continued professional development to ensure excellencein their

work. Having a thick skin, and persevering are key. Corporate South Africa is a tough space, and it is dominated by men especially white males. Thobile's view of women in senior roles are that they are generally outspoken, very results driven, technically savvy and are specialists in their fields.

Transformational leadership in Females. This subtheme contextualizes the qualities of transformational leadership in females, highlighting the assumptions that women are perceived to have a certain leadership style that seems to be different from the traditional or rather transactional leadership style. This assumption seems to be why companies prefer to appoint women during a crisis rather than a man as it is perceived that this leadership style is a better approach, and the company is better positioned to deal with various forms of challenges from a different perspective. The transformational leadership style favoured by female executives appears to have benefitted companies that need to achieve certain short-term goals, or that require interventions to turn this around during a crisis.

Martha believes that the style is collaborative, and inspirational. Seeking advice is crucial when experiencing a crisis. It creates options for the leader and allows him/her to make the best decision, women are also more open to admitting their mistakes and seeking advice. They also realise the importance of finding solutions to and correcting their mistakes without focusing too much on their egos. That is why they are prone to earning descriptive or derogatory nicknames like "Martha" or "Ice queen" to illustrate how "tough" and "man-like" these women are.
However, women understand the value of continuity and are more willing to make transitions as smooth as possible. Women will receive advice from their subordinates, their approach is significantly different from that of men in this context. Damase highlights this trait as being important for a leader in the statement below:

> *"In homes, I mean who runs homes? Whenever there is a divorce, who collapses? It is very rarely you find that it is a woman. So, I think organisations are beginning to realize that. So, it is no…t, let's not look only at the negative side that we are given the tough jobs. There is a positive side that some people actually go out of their way to look for women. They get out of their way to look for women, because they know women will make a difference. They will establish a lively environment and all that".*

Damase's statement above, provides a context to address the challenge around the way women's authorities are often undermined in a leadership position. Dignity and respect are key drivers in this

role. Malawe, however, believes there is no leadership style designated for women. In her view, women adapt different leadership styles to suit different situations. But because of our intuitiveness, a highly developed sixth sense so to speak, women can sense when things are not right and say no. Women at the top level are very decisive, they are honest and transparent in the way they approach things. This can also have negative consequences and their subordinates can easily confuse their leadership approach as being authoritarian. Katso's view is different from Damase's, Malawe's and Martha's views. She believes women need to define their own leadership style, a being competent in each of the different models is advisable. One cannot only adapt the transformational leadership style, as it is likely that you may drop the ball onthe way if you are not flexible in your approach. Applying a variety of elements from different leadership styles is advisable in dealing with different situations. Also, as an example you have two people reporting to you, but they have different operational styles, you as a leader will need toaddress everyone differently to get the best results. It was generally agreed by participants that female leaders have more transformational qualities.

5.4 Strategies to overcome obstacles / challenges for women in senior leadership roles

A lot of time was invested in the coding stage, with the result of a conclusively emerging theme that identified role players required in the strategies for women to succeed in senior leadership roles. Participants' view was an intersection of different role players at different levels important for successful strategies for winning in senior roles. This resulted to the identification of five main themes, namely, leadership / board support, mentoring, personal development, research /expanding knowledge, networking, Support structures. Appendix / annexure Table 4.3 shows the different categories and subcategories.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter findings based on the emerging data supported by an in-depth presentation of participants' views on selected extracts were presented. Although participants were from different backgrounds, were faced with many similar challenges and barriers to succeed at the top. Their stories reveal a deep love for their families, an inner desire to serve, an appreciation for the support they have been given, a relentless pursuit of balance, and strong self-sacrificing skills. The women in this study did not consider themselves special or special in any way, however, they said they did just what they had to do to be good mothers and wives, and to succeed in their careers. The findings

of the study confirm that there is great value in finding a support network for personal health and professionalism. Whether they are friends, family members, role models, sponsors, mentors, champions, or a presiding coach, the ultimate goal is to gain strength by having a support network of people who can enhance the learning and development process, and provide encouragement when faced with wandering concerns or obstacles. Overall, the findings agree that deliberately selected women in the glass cliff fall short of support structures, networks and opportunities for their growth at the highest level. The next chapter focuses on a discussion of the findings in terms of literature and theory. It also introduces a model that has emerged in the field of study.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the dynamics around the appointment of women to risky leadership positions in corporate South Africa. Included in this chapter is a discussion of major findings relating to the literature on women in senior leadership positions, women in the South African workplace and what emerging implications may be valuable and of use to policy makers, organisations, and women in the C-suite. A framing model is presented, which connects the dots and provides answers to the research questions, it also explains when, and why women get appointed into senior leadership positions during crises in corporate South Africa.

In order to appreciate the trajectory of the research as presented in the previous chapters, it is important to revisit the main research questions, which are centred on the dynamics around the appointment of women to precarious leadership positions in corporate South Africa.

1. When and why are women more willing to accept risky leadership positions?
2. What are the leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relation to gender?
3. What is the appropriate leadership style that women in senior leadership have at their disposal to build relationships with shareholders and influence the structure of the organisation?
4. What tools and resources are needed in corporate South Africa for women in senior leadership positions during times of crisis?

A qualitative research method was applied to fully understand the lived experiences of women in senior leadership roles in corporate South Africa. A total of 15 women participated in the current study.The participants were “purposefully selected” (Creswell, 2009). Individual interviews were conducted with each participant at their own convenience and at a location chosen by them. The interviews were transcribed by me, followed by a line-by-line analysis of the transcripts to reveal the descriptions of the phenomena. It was through the process of analysing the data collected that the essence of the participants’ lived experiences was understood. After analysing, coding, and organizing the data, the information was arranged into five major themes and was presented in

Chapter 5.

- The first section—*Acceptance of risky leadership positions* – interrogates the experiences of participants with the glass cliff in corporate South Africa.
- The second section – *Leadership experience*- examined the qualities and experiences thatcontribute to women's leadership and advancement in the workplace.
- The third section - *Leadership style* - determines if women have their own peculiar ways of leading.
- The fifth section - *Resources and tools* - gives information in relation to the tools and resources participants discovered as helping them to stay at the top of the cliff in corporate South Africa.

6.2 Findings

The concept of "think crisis, think female" and what motivates women to take risky leadership positions in corporate South Africa was critically examined and broken down into five themes: (a) Leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relation to gender, (b) Appropriate leadership style (c) Tools and resources that are needed in corporate South Africa for women in senior leadership positions during times of crisis, and (d) The reasons and times women decide to take risky leadership positions. Some of the factors related primarily to the individual, to the workplace and a combination of the successful relationship between the two and may assist and contribute to an environment where women in corporate South Africa are challenged and can continuously grow. The 4 themes presented below guided the study and were used to answer the specific aspects relating to the overarching research topic. These themes have a dynamic dimension in relation to the participants in the study in terms of importance. Themes are described in detail in the following sections.

6.2.1 Leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relation to gender

The first research theme seeks to explore participants' experiences in terms of leading an organisation in relation to gender. The participants did not identify their personal experiences as women leaders as being directly associated with gender biases. The issues shared by participants includes sacrifice, traditional norms, balance in their personal and professional lives, as well as patriarchal attitudes that generally relates to the conviction that men should play the more important

and authoritative roles in society. The difficulties women are presented with in terms of occupying high-profile roles as well as maintaining the responsibilities in the household as a spouse, mother, daughter, are all challenges faced by women in demanding careers. The expectations placed by society on domestic responsibilities and child rearing, make it difficult for women to make choices in terms of balancing career priorities (Sperandio & Devdas, 2015).

Throughout most of the interviews, participants expressed their career choices in terms of sacrifices or work-life balance. The findings in this context coincided with existing literature highlighting the difficulty and the strain attached to being a full-time employee as well as a parent. It further showed that the greatest strainand anxiety occurred when the woman in question is a mother, it was also attributed to having its root cause in the extra hours added to the employee's total workload (Christner, 2021). In a 2021 study conducted by Christner (2021) during the lockdown period due to coronavirus in Germany, the findings indicated the increase in stress levels no children and parents who are staying far from each other. Christner (2021) also found that single parenthood increased the challenge and consequences of only children being trapped in their houses alone. In terms of work-life balance policies, it was emphasised by one participantthat companies have a tendency of scheduling executive meetings after hours away from home and during weekends, which usually meant that they could not participate in their family events. However, one participant expressed her concern over the increasing trend where women leadersoutsourced their family duties to their domestic workers.

One interesting difference that became apparent from this study was the level of flexibility that each individual woman had. Some defined flexibility as being able toleave the office for a child's school function, for others it was in terms of restructuring in their weekly schedule beyond the traditional 9-5, as well as working from home.

The study also revealed that some women measured their capabilities against stereotypes of the male executive, and in the process blamed themselves for not adequately fitting into the role. The perception of not fitting this role further undermined their self-confidence and ambition, making it less likely for them to seek advancement. Hansen (2009) posits that successful female leadership is about women being able to break the glass ceiling by staying true to themselves, rather than those who strive to adopt male behavioural patterns.

6.2.2 Appropriate leadership styles that women in senior leadership have at their disposal

The second research theme focused on exploring the leadership styles of women in senior leadership positions. A common thread among participants' in response to what they perceived to be their

individual leadership style was that they were “collaborators, consensus builders, and encouraged teamwork”. Describing the personal leadership style she fitted into, Nicci was convinced that as a leader it is important to be confident and make decisions without fear. Moreover, letting people know she was “willing to step-up and work alongside others” was important, she also placed emphasis on communication with others and having the confidence that they will do their very best in fulfilling their responsibilities by putting in their best effort.

Malawe mentioned that different situations required a different leadership style. She felt her ability to resolve each situation as it arises allowed her to respond to the needs of her followers at a given time. Malawe stated “I quickly assess what is needed, how to go for it, and get it done.” Nicci was reluctant to describe the relevant leadership style during crises, however,eventually stated that she felt that “women are more empathetic leaders and more group oriented, whereas men are more direct.” Fusi noted that the primary difference between the male and female leadership style is that “women spend more time collaborating, building consensus and allowing all to contribute, as compared to men who are generally more task oriented, and less people oriented”.

The study showed that women are more disposed to, and favour the transformational leadership style, as well as more collaborative styles because that is how they have been socialised and nurtured. Additionally, most of the participants portrayed a deep sense of awareness of what their roles and responsibilities were in correlation to the key elements of the ‘authentic leadership’ style as theorised by Wong et al. (2009). This varies across industries and is subject to the situation at hand, there is nothing that is cast in stone. Significant emphasis is placed on the influence of the organisation’s corporate culture in adopting one approach over another, however, participant’s highlighted flexibility as another key element, business focus and ethics were the last two important themes discussed.

The attitude adopted by the participants are aligned with Rüzgar’s (2018) theory, which integrates three important elements of effective leadership: change-related oriented, task-oriented and relation-oriented. Based on participants’ responses, women gravitate more towards styles that provide various advantages that encourage and support traits and values such as expectations and rewards, inspiration, and participative decision-making.

6.3.3 Tools and resources that are needed in corporate South Africa for women in senior leadership positions

The third research theme focused on identifying the tools and resources that are critical for women

in senior leadership positions in times of crisis. The tools and resources revealed in thisstudy were organised into six subthemes and were discussed in detail in chapter 4. First is the importance of personal development to allow women to continue growing both personally and professionally. The study revealed that participants in the study recognise the importance of personal development as a significant survival tool for senior women leaders during crisis. Participants gave examples such as improving your self-awareness, knowing and building your own identity as well as discovering and developing your own talents, and knowing your own strengths and weaknesses as part of building personal development. The second subtheme identified the importance of having adequate support structures internally and externally. Participants admitted to getting support from family, friends, advisors, and coaches.

It was evident that this was an important part of the decision-making process for the women, as was further revealed in "support systems in action." This aligns with existing research indicating that one of the ways women bolster belief in their leadership abilities is through strong support systems (Davey, 2015;Duckett, 2006; Valerio & Sawyer, 2016). These support systems manifest in two specific ways in terms of the participants' feedback. According to Appelbaum, et al. (2002), encouragement and support are predictors of those who will become leaders for both gender, Turock (2001) highlighted the importance of support systems for women, stating that, "the advantages that social support structures can supply for mentees should not be minimized". She emphasized the role mentors can play for mentees in helping them see their potential. Internal and external structures can serve as buffers against the stress that is inherent in professional women's careers. Martha emphasised the importance of the board and executive team, in emphasising the importance of their support and the pitfalls of not having it she states in her response that: *"Also the board or your EXCO becomes extremely critical, if you don't get the support you quickly look like a lone ranger. You will not be able to handle the situation by yourself."*

This subtheme revealed the importance of proactive research so as to broadening one'sknowledge with the purpose of staying relevant and retaining your leadership position. The study showed that in the process of empowering themselves through the means of knowledge formulation, participants were able to fulfil their job requirements and flourish within their field of expertise, thus highlighting the need for C-suite executives to do more research towards improvement and being innovative. Cheverton (2001) noted that C-suite executives have little or no time for further development unless they are naturally inclined to do so and strongly committed to advancing their own personal development. The study revealed that what C-suite executives need to learn is generally so unique to their role, company, and competitive environment that the traditional means of learning and development are not feasible or practical for them.

The concluding subthemes indicated that external influences like mentoring and networking were perceived as important to participants, however, mentors are not overwhelmingly positioned as drivers of motivation in this study but were examples highlighted by participants, and viewed as necessary to their success and in preventing them from falling off the cliff. All participants identified mentors and champions from multiple perspectives of their career progression. Mentors for these female leaders included former CEOs, professional colleagues, university professors, business leaders and their parents as well. This study is consistent with the literature that highlights the impact of mentors as support systems (Hobbler et al., 2011; Hersby, et al, 2008; Rink et al., 2012; Walter, 2013).Thobile highlighted the importance of getting a mentor who can easily relate to or identify with her experiences. This speaks to Ballenger's (2010) findings that lack of mentoring programs will result to few women in leadership positions being available to mentor others.

Previous studies undertaken referred to a lack of invitations to informal networks for women in the workplace (Glass & Minnotte, 2010). The study by Picariello (2017) linking mentorship, and specifically female mentorship, as key in the progression of career appointments, was reliant on the necessity of women mentoring other women. These findings are neither unique to women, nor exclusive to business leaders (Allen et.al, 2006). The findings confirm that women leaders can miss out on global appointments and fall off the cliff because they lack mentors, sponsors and access to forums and networks.

6.2.4 The reasons and times women decide to take risky leadership positions

The final theme focused on exploring the phenomenon that women ascend to a senior leadership role in challenging times. The participants to the study revealed that women did not confirm the existence of this phenomenon, and they did not support the notion that women are more willing than men to accept a risky job. This finding is not in line with Ryan and Haslam's (2005) conclusion that women are more likely than men to end up in risky positions. Also, the study revealed that organisations in crisis looking for female candidates to take over leadership positions, are likely to end up appointing low self-efficacious women rather than women who are confident and competent. Another reason revealed in this study is that organisations facing a crisis strive to recruit the best person for the job, irrespective of gender. One of the participant's suggested that when companies are employing during a crises, they should be required to appoint the best people without taking a specific gender into consideration. Society needs to be made accountable for this as men are not taught to be nurturers or allowed to take on that role.

6.3 Framing Model

When the first woman in the history of the air force attained the status of General, and the first woman became the Commandant of the Australian Defence Force Academy, several questions emerged, such as, “How does a woman ‘properly man’ a warship in an arena of war?” “Might a woman leader not be subject to her ‘emotions’ and ‘maternal nurturance’, rather than have the necessary discipline to assume a ‘properly strong’ leader command?”. And if leadership

enactments accumulate the force of authority through repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of ritualised practices of how a female Air Commodore, Commander, Prime Minister, or CEO performs within such frameworks (Butler, 1995, p.205).

Marquet (2015) transformed an underperforming submarine crew by empowering his subordinates to be leaders and to reach their full potential to be ready fight. He named this intent-based leadership (IBL). Marquet (2015) recognized the danger of the leader-follower model that was commonly practiced in the military and elsewhere. The crew would blindly follow the commands even if they knew that these orders were not necessary. Subordinates were therefore empowered to be leaders, allowing them to feel valued, important and to reach their full potential (Marquet, 2015).

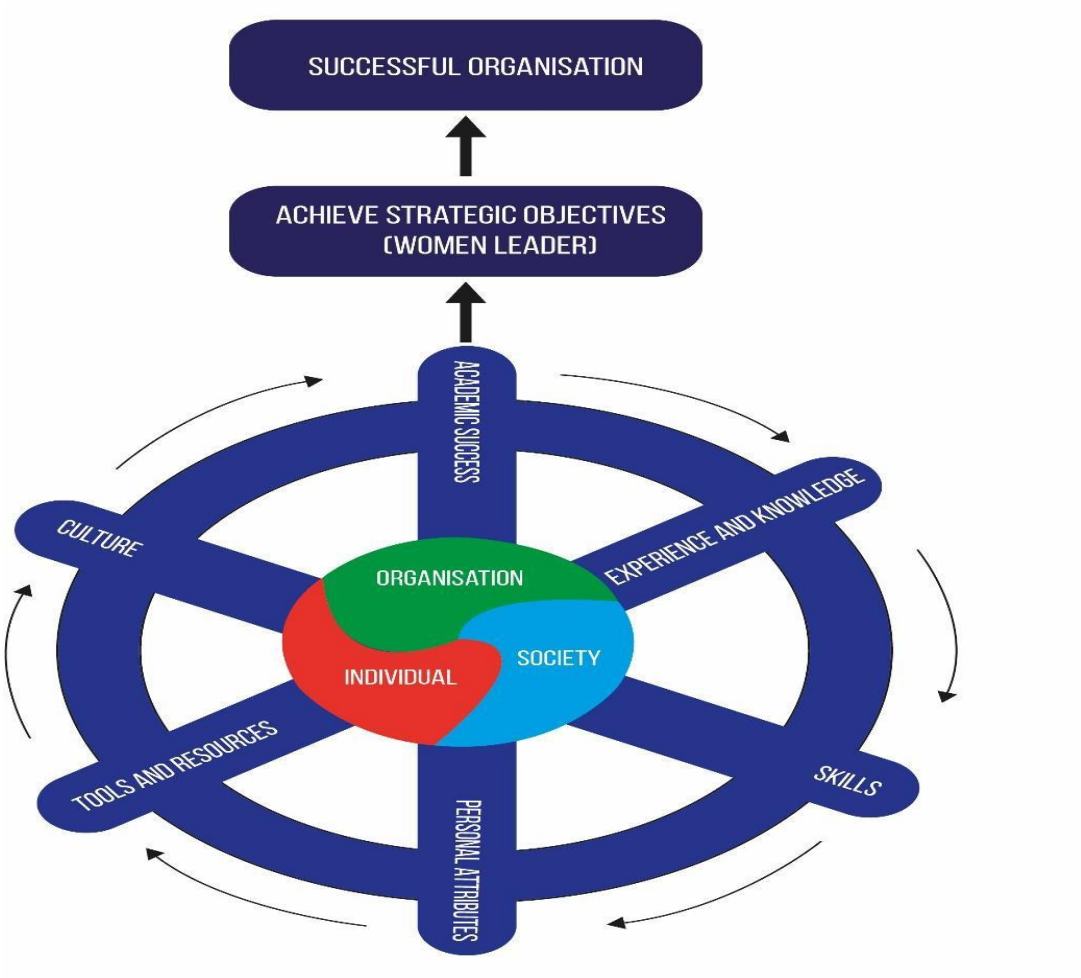
This theory assists in answering the current research question and in explaining how the group of women in this study canavoid falling off the glass cliff, by approaching the leader-follower as unified in an interdependent relationship exemplified by the idea of teamwork. The command and control styles of leadership of the past are moving more toward employee empowerment. People who are in the front lines had the information they needed to respond to changes rapidly as they were giving the authority and toolsneeded to act. The forces were explored by studying leaders and followers engaged in their day to day duties. Because various research findings reveal the importance of interpersonal skills in eliciting trust during crisis, companies are encouraged to consider hiring, training and rewarding interpersonal skills in their leaders, especially in jobs with high potential for crises.

For this study I chose to use a warship’s wheel because it simulates the idea of motion, and the wheel of a ship symbolises a modern method of changing the angle of the rudder to change the strategic direction. Its components are found at different levels at different times in the organisation, and to work with speed. The Warship’s wheel is a symbol of victory, achieving goals and superiority in everything. According to Avolio (2009) a wheel in terms of leadership reaffirms the importance of having leadership that is self-aware, developed and self-discovered and a deep inner journey that circles back through life. In addition, a ship's wheel epitomises responsibility, a clear approach and leadership. This symbol anchors the leader to the helm and sends a strong reminder not to go astray

and to strictly conform to set plans in order to navigate the glass cliff without falling off, as well as encouraging an immediate change in direction when the set plan is not bearing fruits. An acronym has been derived from the Warship's Wheel symbol,each letter and what it stands for is explained.

When **women** leaders with specific a**ttributes** that are relevant to the situation at hand receive **support** (employees, mentors, organisation, family, society) and are provided with adequate **tools and resources** (networking, personal development, skills, and external influences) they are able to navigate the C-suite role during times of crisis. **Holistically**, **intellectual** leaders who are **passionate** can lead the organisation effectively and efficiently despite their gender, in corporate South Africa. Figure 6.1 provides a graphical view of the proposed Warship Wheel model. The model suggests the necessities associated with a successful woman leader and it indicates the most important factors that help any leader in leading an organisation, more importantly during crises periods. In general, education and continuous sharpening the of requisite skills and knowledge are essential factors to assist any leader to succeed in leading. According to Balcony (2006), this type of knowledge is critical in helping the woman leader to think in a clear way and function in the organisation in order to be successful. Participants highlighted the need for support structures like family encouragement, and board support that areperceived as significant components for achieving and sustaining success for women in senior leadership roles in corporate South Africa.

Figure 6. 1 The Warship's Wheel Model



The warship model's centre depicts the critical factors contributing to the glass cliff phenomenon, and the overrepresentation in senior leadership in corporate South Africa. It comprises of individual, societal and organisational factors, as discussed in subsequent sections. In this Warship

6.3.1 Individual (Role of women)

The core of the warship wheel symbolises women from different social groups, depicting the simultaneous intersection of all these social identities. If women have a positive view of their identity within the group, they are more likely to relate well to others and feel positive emotions about themselves. At an individual level it comprises of personal and family factors. It signifies the

role women play in the organisation, society and the family at large. Though the strategies for success highlighted by participants in the study did not have the same level of importance.
Women were perceived by their male counterparts to be making apologies when given some tasks to perform because they had to deal with family chores and had less support from their husbands. Martha disagreed with this perception, and identified women's success strategies as perseverance, hard work, commitment and humility. McMahon highlighted the role played by her husband, sometimes when she had to work late due to tight schedules the husband volunteered to prepare dinner as well as organise transportation to bring her home safely. Damase appreciated the contribution made by her extended family and domestic support when she had to travel abroad for training and leave her 3 months old child. All participants recognised the role of family support as one of their success strategies, they are unable to succeed on their own, it is a value chain hence the support from the organisation is more critical.

6.3.2 Organisation (Role of Organisation)

Participants were concerned that organisational factors like values, norms, and culture were not only limiting the quality of work experience for women, but it also undermined their potential contribution. The role of a leader is also very important for developing and managing change in any organization to create a suitable atmosphere to adopt change. A leader drives policies, culture, organisational structures, systems and development programmes.

The participants in the current study noted that women valued the opportunity mentoring offered. However, these women also believe that they do not have the same access to mentoring as men. Damase reflected on the cultural practices of the community having an impact on the failure of women in leadership roles. However, the participants in the study recognised the effort exercised by organizations in implementing leadership development programs aimed solely at enhancing the success of women in leadership positions.

6.3.3 Societal level (Role of the society)

Historically, the barriers put in place to prevent the hiring of married women and to suppress women's desires to achievea fulfilling professional career is, according to Phipps and Prieto (2014), still persistent today. Several women believe that to attain success in the workforce they must give up a full personal life. Phipps and Prieto (2014) suggest that there can be no solution for this dilemma if society continues to define careers as all consuming, and women continue to be assigned

the gender role with all the responsibility for the nurturing of the family. Several participants in the study (Fusi, Thobile, Christine, McMahon, Vonani Mama) believe flexibility is crucial to the pursuit of more sustainable business practices and the retention of high-level human capital. The findings support a research study conducted in Australia (Sinclair, 2007) that found that for women, the loss of personal authenticity is too high a price to pay for participation in the professional workforce.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the research findings and explains how the findings assisted in answering each research question. The main research questions explored the reasons women willingly accept risky leadership roles, the leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relation to gender, the appropriate leadership style and the tools and resources needed during times of crisis.

I developed a model as a framework for this study, with the hope that it will assist in answering the research questions and provide explanations as to when and why women get appointed in senior leadership positions during a crisis in corporate South Africa. The justification for choosing a warship's wheel through a detailed definition of terms applied was done with explanations of the acronym derived from the word "Warship", its symbolism and meaning in terms of how it relates to the current study. Each construct was explained in detail and the link to the model justified.

The theoretical model was produced with the aim that it will be of use as a practical tool with regards to addressing the glass cliff phenomenon as one form of discrimination in the workplace, andto provide guidance to women who aspire to climb the corporate ladder on how to navigate when confronted with a crisis.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the main findings are summarised as guided by the research questions and based on these findings general conclusions are described. Furthermore, the limitations and the implications of this thesis are considered and suggestions for further research within the context of corporate South Africa are presented. This chapter concludes with recommendations to be actioned by three categories of stakeholders in corporate South Africa: policy makers, organisations, and women in the C-suite.

7.2 Overview of the study

An organizational crisis is any major threat to the survival of a system where the situation is not structured, with limited response time and not enough resources to resolve the problem. Ryan and Haslam's (2005) notion of "think crisis–think female" highlights the practice of women being specifically appointed to risky senior leadership roles with a strong likelihood of failure presents a serious issue that threatens to compromise any real progress that females can make in the leadership space. The study adopted a phenomenological approach to achieve the objectives of the study. Semi-structured, open, qualitative interviews were conducted with 15 women participants in senior leadership positions (C- suite) in corporate South Africa, who were purposively selected as participants using the snowball method. The interviews were conducted in English and tape-recorded, then transcribed and analysed using ATLAS-ti. Thematic analysis was used. All interviews were documented using pseudonyms. The study was inspired by the changes and reforms I witnessed that are taking place in corporate South Africa, and specifically related to leadership positions, indicating that more opportunities are opening up for women to participate in developing the country. Moreover, educated, professional women are now more likely to be considered for senior leadership and decision-making positions when there is a crisis. Therefore, the intention in undertaking this study was to further interrogate this subject and to provide true experiences about women leaders rather than the anecdotes, assumptions, rumours as well as speculations about their experiences. The study also seeks to address the gaps in the literature around the studies on women in leadership in corporate South Africa, which have not explored the dynamics around the appointment of women to precarious leadership positions in any depth. To

fulfil the above aim, the objectives of this research are stated below:

1. To gain a better understanding of why women choose risky leadership positions.
2. To identify the leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relation to gender.
3. To understand the suitable leadership styles that women facing the glass cliff have at their disposal to build relationships with internal shareholders and influence the structureof the organisation.
4. To understand the tools and resources that are needed in corporate South Africa for women in senior leadership positions during times of crises.

To fulfil the above-listed aims of the study and find possible solutions to the stated problems and questions, an extensive review of related literature was consulted to provide a background in determining the notion that females are more likely to be favoured as leaders when the company is in crisis. In pursuing the aim of the study, the research design had the following major features: one-on-one semi structured interview protocol and purposively selected interviewees. Initially, it was necessary to analyse and discuss the nature of leadership appointments to obtain a better understanding of the South African context. In order to have a deeper understanding of what the glass cliff phenomenon entails, before delving into the literature, an important clarification was made with regards to the glass cliff effect. In order to situate this study within existing debates on women in precarious senior leadership roles, the theoretical framework was constructed around relevant literature.

In order to make sound judgements when appointing women in precarious positions, in the unique and diverse South African context, an analysis of the identified study participants was undertaken in selected corporate entities in South Africa. The analysis was conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews as part of the research of this current study. The questions were content specific in line with the unique, diverse and ever changing South African leadership sphere, and constructed in alignment with the literature reviewed, the theoretical framework of leadership and the research aim.

In accordance with the first research objective, the results revealed that women shy away from confirming that they are targeted in leadership positions when the company is in crisis. However, the study found nothing concrete to support the theory that women lean towards accepting risky leadership positions. The finding is therefore not aligning with Ryan and Haslam's (2005) published research which concluded that women are more likely than men to end up in risky leadership

positions. The responses recorded from participants in the current study, indicates that they are of the view that the lack of career opportunities for women, especially when it comes to obtaining leadership positions, may lead to their being more willing to accept risky jobs.

However, these inconclusive findings do not indicate that the glass cliff does not exist in corporate South Africa, as the investigation focused extensively on the perceptions of the individual participants rather than on individuals who are directly engaged in the decision-making of hiring women leaders.

In relation to the second objective, the results revealed a key attribute for women in navigating C-suite positions. There was a clear indication that having postgraduate qualifications gave participants significant leverage when being considered for executive positions, and this in turn emphasised the importance of acquiring the necessary qualifications that potentially give women an advantage over their male counter parts, in spite of having to work extra hard to prove their capability to lead in executive positions. Academic success is viewed as a gateway to accessing leadership positions for women in the corporate sector, and significantly contributes to women in leadership reaching high leadership positions based on their experience, knowledge and practical skills acquired through outstanding academic success at the tertiary level. The study, however, does not make the conclusion that education is the specific means through which women leaders can achieve success in their careers, it infers that success, in the context of the study, is achieved through a combination of different skills and attributes. The study also revealed that if women are placed in the right positions with the right skills, success is potentially guaranteed. The participants to the study identified specific characteristics in their own experiences that contributed to their success as leaders, such as confidence, assertiveness, visibility and passion. As these women gained confidence in their ability to respond to mistakes and victories, they became more resilient. This was consistent with the findings of Hoyt and Simon (2017), who noted that the way women respond often correlates "to the extent to which women see themselves as having, or being able to develop, leadership abilities—including leadership self-efficacy, power, and mind-sets about whether leadership abilities can be developed or not" (p.18).

About the third objective, the answer to this question was answered by listening to the way these women made meaning of their leadership journey. Embedded in their life experiences were stories of being resilient and pursuing advancement opportunities where they could be found,all the while trying to maintain a position of visibility where their voices could be heard and acknowledged. The study further revealed that women did not identify their personal experiences as women leaders, as being directly associated with gender biases. The issues shared by participants includes sacrifice, traditional norms, balance in their personal and professional lives, as well as patriarchal attitudes

that generally relates to the conviction that men should play the more important and authoritative roles in society. The research reinforced that at least for women in corporate South Africa holding senior leadership positions, the metaphor of a ladder to describe career advancement is outdated. Providing a different metaphor,such as a career labyrinth, helped manage expectations and gave permission for these women to focus on using their strengths to determine when and where to work. Simply stated, the constant upward progression was an unrealistic expectation that, quite frankly, was no longer applicable. None of the women implied their leadership journey was easy or smooth, yet each had found a way to successfully navigate a path to the top.

With regards to the third objective, the results consistently described their preferred leadership style as working and collaborating with others. Being collaborative allowed the women to strengthen relationships and incorporate the thoughts and ideas of others, which they felt resulted in better decisions. It also allowed them to share successes and failures with the team, which served as a valuable mechanism for strengthening their resilience. A general notion exists that women are more likely than men to employ transformational leadership styles (Vinkenburg et al., 2011). Behavioural patterns associated with transformational leaders include creating a compelling organizational vision and action plan to achieve the goal and motivating employees to work together to achieve the goal (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The study revealed that though women are more disposed to, and favour the transformational leadership style, as well as more collaborative styles because that is how they have been socialised and nurtured, the results were inconclusive. The findings revealed that leaders should practice the situational leadership style, which evolves according to the situation, the time at hand and the nature of the situation. It is, therefore, difficult to label an individual with a particular leadership style. The results are in line with Mutjuta's (2009) research findings that the "mixed leadership style " is the most suitable and has been quite beneficial in the context of corporate South Africa during crises, as it is used in different situations according to what is required, as the effectiveness of a particular leadership style depends on the situation andcontext.

Lastly the results confirmed the considerable significance of having reliable support structures, reflecting on how important it was for women in their personal and professional growth to have people around them who provided encouragement and counsel. The study further confirmed that there is considerable benefit of having a support network both in one's personal life and in a professional setting. Whether it be friends, family members, role models, sponsors, mentors, champions, or an executive coach, the main goal is finding strength by having a network of support with individuals who can augment the learning and development process, and offer encouragement when having to navigate frustrations or setbacks.

7.3 Contribution of the research

In addition to the conclusions, the study highlights both the theoretical and practical implications as discussed below. This research is critical as it provides the South African context of glass cliff appointments, its existence and the ways in which it should be studied. The results from (Ryan & Haslam 2005, Adams et al., 2007) and the data gathered from this research study indicates the central theoretical and methodological issues with investigating the phenomenon of the glass cliff from both selection of measures and level of analysis.

7.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

The study makes several important theoretical contributions to the body of knowledge on women leadership at the senior level of organisations. Firstly, it fills a major gap in the glass cliff literature and knowledge on the role of South African women who hold high leadership positions,also about their lives and career journeys. It is one of the first studies that is conducted holisticallyin the South African context. Secondly, though the high number of women selected in times of crises has been the focus of most research studies around the glass cliff (Ryan & Haslam, 2007; Ryan et al., 2007), it is equally important to consider the selection of men in times of success to fully understand the phenomenon. Lastly, the Warship Model developed can be used as a theoretical tool by academics in the field of leadership in general and in addressing gender equality.

7.3.2 Practical implications

A growing number of organisations who have deemed gender diversity as an important issue, have training courses, policies and initiatives that aims to promote women's development. Some of these initiatives are aimed at increasing the number of women in leadership roles, for example providing access to women's networks and mentorship programs. Having sponsors that put their own capital and credibility on the line for women assists them in moving into several leadership roles and coping well in those roles.

The findings in the current study, has several practical implications for the organisation as well as the women. In the following section, several implications are outlined that provide some examples of potential initiatives and interventions that may be of assistance to the organisation, and to women in C-suite roles.

Implications for women: Firstly, it is argued that one's willingness in accepting a risky leadership position is influenced by them seeing these positions as a promotional opportunity. The fact that it revealed some career-damaging elements, does not mean that glass cliff positions should be avoided at all costs. Some women may see the think crisis–think female concept as an opportunity for growth. Secondly, the appointment of women to precarious positions not only has implications for women themselves but also has the potential to hurt them as a collective .

Implications for organisations: It is believed that it is important that organizations facing a crisis strive to recruit the best candidates for the job, irrespective of gender. In line with the recommendation of Powell and Butterfield (2015), it is advised that decision makers in organizations should adopt practices that encourages "debiasing" of decisions regarding promotions. For example, human capital departments can provide a variety of training regarding decision-making to raise awareness about the possibility of biased judgments related to gender and leadership. In so doing, the think crisis – think female mindset can be eliminated.

7.4 Recommendations for further studies

It was evident in Chapter One that there is a need to investigate the glass cliff phenomenon, which indicates that opportunities provided to males and females as well as the conditions under which individuals of either gender is promoted are clearly not the same.

By understanding this phenomenon, female leaders striving to move upwards into top corporate positions, should understand that opportunities are more likely to arise when a precarious position is available and organizational change is desired. In other words, female employees can utilize this finding when making career decisions. Additionally, female employees should prepare themselves in case they are offered positions specifically when there are elements of failure.

7.4.1 Recommendations in relation to the research findings

- From an organizational point of view, there is a need to create awareness around promotion strategies. It is hoped that if decision-makers understand the nature of positions given to women, it will be for them to make efforts to expand the opportunities offered. Additionally, decision-makers should strive to ensure that in cases where females are being appointed to signal change, they are also given the relevant resources needed in order to be

able to create that change.

Apart from recommendations in relation to the research findings, further recommendations for future research are highlighted in the next section.

7.4.2 Recommendations for future research

The following recommendations deserve emphasis.

- The stakeholders involved in the discussion of the glass cliff includes women, men, organizations, board, and other relevant shareholders. An array of motivations around glass cliff appointments can be suggested, perhaps company leaders have greater confidence in the ability of women to manage during crises or when the company is having trouble as they believe it is preferable to sacrifice a woman than one of the 'old boys' (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). Therefore, a more intensive study that will include all the stakeholders to put a motivating factor in place needs to be done.
- More extensive research would be beneficial since the participants of this study focused and reflected intensively on their interactions with female leaders, further research can address the stories of male leaders. Comparison between both genders' views can assist in identifying and resolving the opposing perspective that when the organisation is doing well the replacement is invariably a male, however, when it is facing a crisis a woman is consistently considered to take over the position. This will further examine the motivation from both a male and female perspective as to the reason for accepting or declining such precarious positions. Work by Rink et al. (2012) demonstrated that women are not more strongly motivated to take these precarious positions than men, suggesting that females do not actively seek to take on these roles.
- If the glass cliff exists, it is important to understand how it impacts the choices of women seeking leadership positions and explores how women feel about taking these precarious leadership positions. As mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, there are multiple directions that future research could take in terms of the ways in which the shape and direction of the organization and the precariousness of the leadership position is operationalized.
- Although the glass cliff phenomenon is well established, it is still largely unknown how the contrast between types of crises influences the power of the think crisis-think female association. It will be interesting to also investigate whether female leaders and leaders with communal gendered attributes are equally affected by this association.

7.5 Limitations

In the current study, the findings present limitations in three areas in the context of leadership: Covid-19 restrictions; participants' effect; and data collection and analysis.

7.5.1 Interview setting and Covid-19 restrictions

Due to the status of the interviewees and the demand, the setting was found to be inappropriate at some point due to interferences as the venues were chosen by the participants. However, according to Illing (2014) the venue of the interview should be chosen carefully as it may affect the data collection. It is recommended that interviews be conducted at a time and place that is convenient. One participant had to have interviews conducted in her car while driving to another engagement, due to her busy schedule, and some others were conducted in-between a teleconference, another interview took place in a coffee shop at the airport. Although it was frustrating, I had to work around these challenges, as the universal advice according to Oltmann (2016) is to make the participant comfortable by conducting the interview in a place of their choice. Another limitation related to the venues were the unexpected challenges due to Covid-19 restrictions as physical meetings were not allowed.

7.5.2 Participants' effect

It is my belief that my role in the organisation influenced the access to many participants, however, it also had the effect of making some participants to withhold some of their personal and in-depth experiences due to the professional relationship I had with them. They could not talk freely, and this had a direct impact on the data outcome, possibly skewing it, as they altered their behaviour to conform to the expectations of the study.

7.5.3 Data collection and analysis

Several limitations in the collection and analysis of data were discovered.

- The discussions with participants who were women in C-suite positions yielded ample fruit based on the thoroughness and richness of the study's qualitative data. According to Ryan et al. (2016) although the findings presented inconclusive views of gendered differences, inconsistencies in the study's results raise questions that remain unanswered (Ryan et al., 2016). Cook and Glass (2014) provided some initial insights on this

research subject, and their findings supported that of Ryan et al. (2006) regarding the glass cliff assumptions in their analysis of corporate performance data. The inconclusive findings do not indicate that the glass cliff does not exist in corporate South Africa, as perceptions of women in leadership roles were investigated not the people responsible for hiring.

- Another limitation was in relation to one-on-one interviews. Data extracted from focus groups should have been added, enabling more layers of data to be revealed.
- The final limitation of the study was that only one social identity category was investigated and that men were excluded from the study. The results of the study can therefore not be generalised.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusions for this study. The study has met its primary aim and the specific objectives, that the main research question addresses. Based on the analysis of the nature of the glass cliff, my findings have important potential implications for women who are seeking, leadership positions. I conclude that these findings are unavoidable if certain contextual factors are not dealt with. One important factor that qualifies specific crisis contexts as glass cliff is the support structures surrounding such positions. Generally, the findings indicate that the glass cliff is an observable phenomenon, but it may only appear in certain professional domains that require further investigation. Through observing high growth in women working in corporate South Africa and occupying high positions, this study is an appeal to women leaders to understand when, why, and how glass cliff appointments are likely to occur. The result of this study suggests that women leaders in corporate South Africa are motivated to be challenged and to grow continuously. It is my hope that the work environment will soon start to recognise growth through unconscious bias and hopefully in future studies on women in Corporate South Africa will not have any reason to speak about bias in their leadership journey. The time is now for women to embrace this call and take a stance, and I believe that this research will open more doors for both current and future research.

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APPENDIX 1: Interview Questions

Demographic information

1. Indicate your age group
    - 18-24 years old
    - 25-34 years old
    - 35-40 years old
    - 40 years or older
2. What is your highest qualification?
    - Primary Education
    - Secondary Education
    - Tertiary Education
    - Post-Graduate: Please specify ( )
3. Type of industry
    - Information Technology
    - Logistics
    - Retail
    - Transportation
    - Energy
    - Other:
4. How many years have you been employed by this company?
    - Less than 5 Years [ ] 6 -10 Years [ ] More than 10 years [ ]
5. Interview Questions

What is your title in the company?

- ----------

- Tell me about your experience as ….
- What is the toughest part of your job? In which ways have you been effective or less effective? In your own opinion do you think gender had any role in this, if so what role?
- Do you hold any board position? ----------

Part A:

1. What are the leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relations to gender?
2. How do women in senior leadership describe their own leadership style? What is the appropriate leadership style that women in senior leadership have at their disposal to build relationships with shareholders and influence the structure of the organisation?
3. When and why women are more willing to accept risky leadership positions?
4. What tools and resources are needed in corporate South Africa for women in senior leadership positions during times of crisis?

Part B:

1. Tell me about your strengths that you have developed in your leadership journey.
2. What kind of support you have or have not received from your company.
3. What personal investments have you made to reach your success?

Concluding question: What lessons have you learnt that you can share with other women climbing into senior leadership roles? And what kind of information do you wish companies should share or disclose before a woman accept the appointment?

APPENDIX 11: Participant Information Sheet

2 St Davids Place & St Andrews Road,
Parktown

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Winsome Mashele and I am a PhD candidate in Business Administration at the Wits Business School in Johannesburg. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project, and my research project entitled "The glass cliff: Exploring the dynamics around the appointment of women to precarious leadership positions in Corporate South African". The aim of this research project is to investigate the phenomenon of the glass cliff, whereby women are more likely than men to be placed in precarious leadership positions. As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. This activity will involve a single interview and will take around 45 - 60 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to audio record the interview using a digital device.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation, in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or resume another time. If you need some support or counselling services following the interview, these are available at Lifeline twenty-four hours a day free of charge.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summaryof this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contactthe University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone +27(0)11 717 1408,

email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Winsome Mashele

Winsome.Mashele@transnet.net

Phone: +27 (0)83 462 8801

Professor Imhotep Paul Alagidede

imhotep.alagidede@wits.ac.za

Phone: + 27 (0)11 544 9361

APPENDIX 111: Research Participant Consent form

2 St Davids Place & St Andrews Road,
Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193

The glass cliff: Exploring the dynamics around the appointment of women toprecarious leadership positions in Corporate South Africa

Winsome Mashele

I ..... agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous YES NO (please circle)

I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes

in his research report YES NO

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded YES NO

Name of participant……

Signature …… Date……

APPENDIX 1V: Ethics Committee Clearance Certificate

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Mashele

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H18/10/21**
PROJECT TITLE	The glass cliff: Exploring the dynamics around the appointment of women to precarious leadership positions in Corporate South Africa
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Miss W Mashele
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Wits Business School/
DATE CONSIDERED	19 October 2018
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved
EXPIRY DATE	01 April 2022

DATE 02 April 2019 **CHAIRPERSON** (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor P Alagidede

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

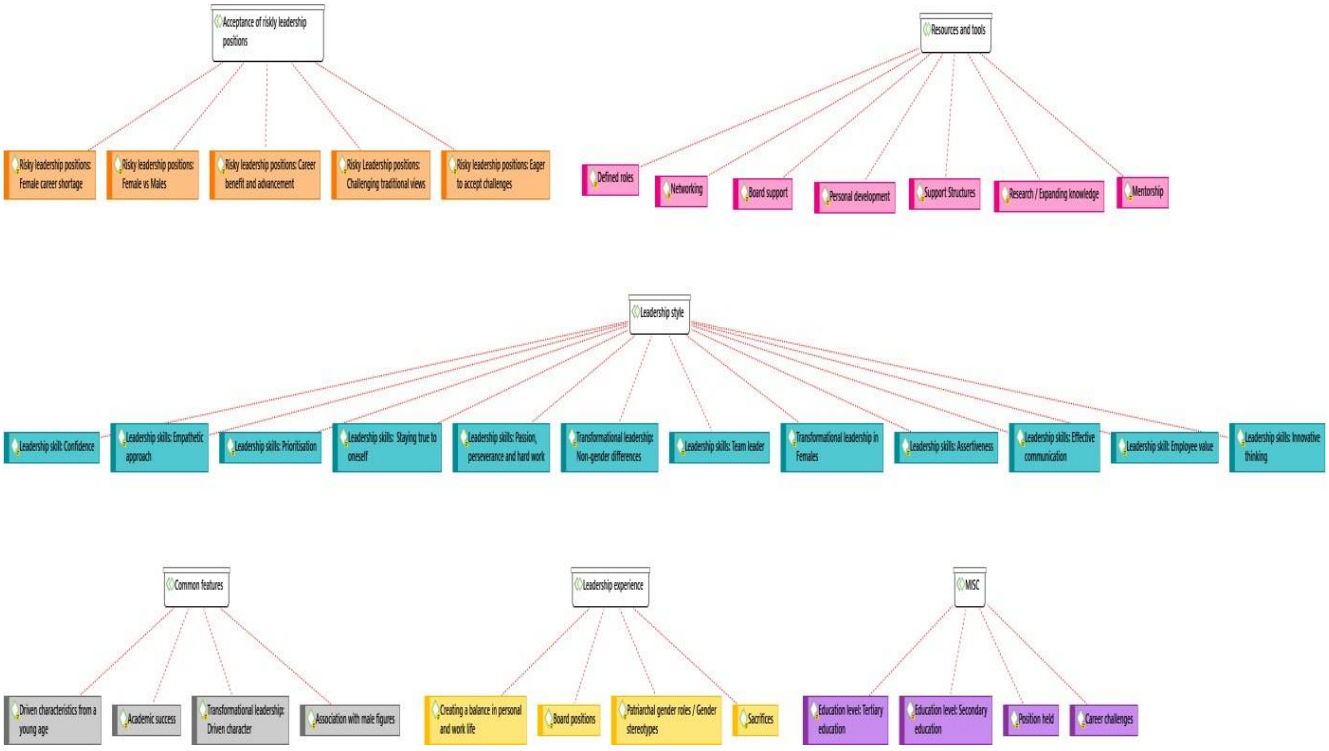
To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature Date 10.04.2019

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX V: ATLAS.ti visual example of codes in a theme



APPENDIX V1: Identifying Recurrent Themes across Participant Accounts

Identifying Recurrent Themes							
	Super-ordinate themes						
Participants	**Patriarchal gender roles / stereotypes**	**Support Structures**	**Transformational leadership: Driven character**	**Networking**	**Sacrifices**	**Driven characteristics from a young age**	**Present in over half the sample**
Martha	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Nicola	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Mpola	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Nicci	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Damase	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Malawe	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Katso	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Bonang Mama	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
McMahon	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

Hosana	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Kgari	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Chrissie	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Thobile	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Fusi	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Helena	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

APPENDIX VII: Research themes and subthemes

Theme	Subtheme	Key research question
1. Acceptance of risky leadership positions	• Challenging traditional views • Female career shortage • Career benefit and advancement • Eager to accept challenges • Female vs males	**RQ1:** When and why are womenmore willing to accept risky leadership positions?
2. Leadership experience	• Creating a balance in personal andwork life • Board positions • Sacrifices • Patriarchal gender roles / Genderstereotypes	**RQ3:** What are the leadership experiences of women in leading organisations in relation to gender?
3. Leadership style	• Leadership skills: Assertiveness • Confidence	**RQ4:** Appropriate leadership style that women in senior leadership have

	• Innovative thinking • Employee value • Prioritisation • Empathetic approach • Effective communication • Team leader • Transformational leadership: Non-gender differences • Passion, perseverance and hardwork • Staying true to oneself • Transformational leadership inFemales	at their disposal to build relationshipswith shareholders and influence the structure of the organisation
4. Resources and tools	• Board support • Personal development • Defined roles • Research/expanding knowledge • Mentorship • Networking • Support structures	**RQ5:** What tools and resources are needed in corporate South Africa forwomen in senior leadership positionsduring times of crisis?

APPENDIX V111: Personal experiences of the glass cliff

Code	Code groups	Description
Risky Leadership positions: Challenging traditional views	Acceptance of risky leadership positions	• Dismantling the stereotypes • Self-respect • Sense of autonomy • Opportunity of growth and skill • Advance into more lucrative positions
Leadership skills: Assertiveness	Leadershipstyle	• firm hand • being "worthy" of a male dominant position • Give your opinion concisely and effectively • use subjective communication
Risky leadership positions: Female career shortage	Acceptance of risky leadership positions	• Shortage of women • Associated with non-stem related jobs • Traditional viewpoints

Leadership skill: Employee value	Leadershipstyle	• Respecting ideas • Allow space of creativity • Have a sense of emotional intelligence • Encourage growth of others • More understanding, encouraging, motivational and sympathetic in asense which allows for a more sophisticated synergy • Aware of the value in relating and communicating with their subordinates
Creating a balance in personal and work life	Leadership experience	• Strike a balance between their personal and work life • Taking care of their families, spending time with their partners anddirect family members • Take time for spiritual well-being as well through means of meditation,reflection and the practice of religious perspectives
Leadership skills: Empatheti c approach	Leadershipstyle	• Express a sense of empathy towards their peers and subordinates • More effective for the development, growth and sustainability of theorganisation • Sense of trust and respect
Leadership skills:	Leadershipstyle	• Help build better awareness and beliefs in an organisation.

Effective communication		• Requires a wide range of communication skills and resources, toeffectively connect with people • Factor of effective communication should also incorporate effectivelistening skills • Create opportunity to allow subordinates, employees and peers to voice their concerns and to contribute to the communication
Leadership skills: Innovative thinking	Leadership style	• Woman in leadership being quite innovative in the leadership role • Develop newly formed ideas and approaches in order to sustain thecompany in their endeavours • "Fix the mess" when their later gender are not able to do so
Leadership skills: Prioritisation	Leadership style	• Prioritise their workload • Time management • Process the decisions that have been made and learn through theseprocesses and apply them
Board support	Leadership experience	• Part of the bigger decisions • Serving on a board seems to also be short lived • Allows them to adhere to the transformational leadershipcharacteristics
Research / Expanding knowledge	Resourcesand tools	• The ability to broaden their knowledge through means of conductingresearch for the purpose of remaining relevant • Stay on top of things • Understands her context and the type of business that she finds herselfin

		• Be able to adhere to fulfilling her job descriptions and flourish within her field
Mentorship	Resourcesand tools	• Identifying a mentor in your professional life • Finding someone to assist and guide through the working environmentallows for a space to develop through means of allowing for error to occur • Effective mentoring builds knowledge and productivity dependent onthe mentor and the mentorship style • Maintain and sustain certain knowledge ecologies within an organisation for the sustainability of the organisation itself
Networking	Resourcesand tools	• Allows the leader to accumulate the necessary resources in order toflourish • Have certain network in order for the company to acquire the necessaryskills and contracts to remain relevant • Fulfil the goals set out • Utilises its own human capital in order to attain resources for their owndevelopment and operation procedures
Leadership skills: Passion, perseverance and hard work	Leadershipstyle	• Developed a sense of passion for a particular line of work • becomes a natural drive for the success of the organisation • Contribute a mass amount of time in the work that they are doing • Ultimately becoming the "guru" in what they do • Be highly motivated and prepared to put a lot of energy and time in tosucceed

Transformational leadership in Females	Leadership style	• Relate to qualities of transformational leadership in females to benefit both their own agenda as well as the agenda of the organisation • Be able to get a different input in how it would be able to deal with various forms of challenges from a different perspective Helps to broaden their skillset in accepting various types of contracting opportunities • Allowing for a more reliant and sophisticated environment internally to the company
Support Structures	Resources and tools	• Effective support structures in order to ensure that leadership position is upheld to its fullest potential • Support structures can take them in many lengths • Would be more effective in the work that they do
Patriarchal gender roles / Gender stereotypes	Leadership experience	• Prominent in traditional cultural roles that tend to creep up in the working context • Men should be placed in high leadership roles as opposed to women • The typical "female role" tend to be visible within the corporate sector in that some male employers or leaders might still be in a traditional set of minds.

		• Women must push harder in order to achieve the status of their male counterparts within the corporate sector

APPENDIX IX: Participants work profiles and positions on the board

Participant	Profiles
Participant 1(Martha)	Is black female and a lawyer by profession from Kwazulu-Natal but grew up in Gauteng. Shewent to a girls' only school and she was a prefect at school. • Master's degree graduate in economics • Martha is a non-executive director • She was a COO of a state-owned enterprise. She has extensive knowledge of and experience in marine operations. In another division a CEO was suspended and thereafter resigned, and she was asked to step in and act as the CEO of that division that was struggling due to non-performance. She had to move from Johannesburg toDurban to take over the position. Few weeks after the interview she was suspended pending investigation.

Participant 2(Nicola)	A white female working in a corporate environment for the past 15 years. After matric shelooked for part-time jobs to get money to travel abroad for exposure • Chartered Financial Analyst with an honors degree in Investment Management • Head of Strategy in an investment company. Previously she was Head of equities. She asked for a less challenging role as she was pregnant. After maternity leave, shewas asked to assist in another subsidiary as an MD after the previous MD was dismissed and the board took a decision to sell it. She was placed there to turn the situation around and deal with the problem that was affecting the business. Finally, the business improved, and a decision was made by the board not to sell.
Participant 3(Mpola)	A black female who was an A-student during her high school years. She comes from a verypoor background with both parents not educated. Her father was a taxi driver and mother unemployed. • CFO in the aviation sector in South Africa • Chartered Accountant • Non-executive director of an NGO –established with her friend as part of their CSIinitiative. • She was appointed after the CFO resigned. She believed that the business required transformation as its leadership structure is still white dominated and blacks, black women find it very difficult to survive.
Participant 4(Nicci)	White female in a JSE listed company in South Africa. • Been in one company for 23 years • Been a CEO in the same company for nearly a decade • Lawyer by profession

	• A chairperson of the board of an NGO in Cape Town and an independent director • She was the first woman CEO in the history of the company. She led Africa's biggest stock exchange during a tumultuous time in SA's history. Nicci announcedher retirement from the company 2 months after the interview. She was a deputy CEO for eight years and CEO of the company for eight years.
Participant 5(Damase)	Damase studied Psychology, and her second degree was in the Accounting field with 28 yearsin the corporate space. • After tertiary education she was appointed in a position that was never occupied bywomen in the maritime industry in the whole of Africa • Then moved to France as an executive and being the first black woman to occupy theposition. • She was in the process of serving her notice and moving back to SA to replace the then retiring CEO of a consortium as the newly appointed CEO. She was the first South African CEO to be appointed to the position. • She was appointed Chairperson of the board in the company where she startedworking in 2018 she launched her book titled "Finding a woman within - How to Thrive in a Male-Dominated Society".
Participant 6(Malawe)	She grew up around boys and that led her to choose an engineering degree. She holds amaster's degree in business administration and in the process of completing her PhD. • Started as a Port Manager in Durban

	• Worked as an Executive Director in Railway Safety Regulation in Malawi. SecretaryGeneral of the Port Management Association for Eastern and Southern Africa (PMAESA) in Kenya. • Acting CEO in the marine sector • She was appointed as a COO in the marine sector – State-owned enterprises. After ayear she was appointed acting CEO in the same company based on her skills in leadership, general management operations, organisational development, productionand project management. The male CEO was moved to another role due to non-performance and she was positioned to wind up things in the division.
Participant 7(Katso)	After matric it was easy to choose a career in engineering as she was exposed to technicalskills by her parents. Her father was a carpenter and mother seamstress. • An engineer by profession who is running her own consulting firm • MBA graduate • An independent director in an SOE • Serving in two committees and chairing one committee. • Katso was appointed as a board member in an SOE when the organisation was facingcrisis due to corruption.
Participant 8 (Vonani Mama)	A human capital strategist who worked at both national and international companies. • Executive Vice President of human resources and corporate affairs • Previously a CEO of a telecommunications company • Board chairperson in a JSE listed company • Businesswoman • An independent director in a state-owned entity

	• Her area of expertise is around human resources. Her role grew to cover the entire continent as the Organisational Capability Manager for Africa supporting leadership teams throughout the continent.
Participant 9 (McMahon)	48- year-old woman who grew up in Cape Town and moved to Johannesburg when she was23 years old. Only one who managed to go to university in the family. • Graduated with BCom degree • Started working as receptionist, Call Centre agent, HR specialist. • Was an articled clerk for an auditing firm • Her current role is Managing Director (MD) of the biggest division of a financial company listed in JSE
Participant 10(Hosana)	Fell in love with the chartered accounting field and was inspired by her mother who was anaccounting officer in a financial services company. • Graduated with B. Com sponsored by an insurance company • She later did an honors degree in Actuarial science and passed with a cum laude • She is now a CFO in a logistics company. • She was an executive manager in the company when the business was experiencing governance challenges that led to a financial crisis. The then CFO was male. He wassuspended pending an investigation. The business operated for 3 years without a permanent CFO; it has resulted in an unstable finance department that has not delivered clean audits. She was appointed acting CFO for 8 months and permanently appointed after she delivered with sterling results and stabilised the finance department.

Participant 11(Kgari)	She wanted to study medicine, but her matric results were not good, then registered to get acommercial degree • Chief Marketing and Sales Officer in a state-owned enterprise • MBL graduate • Beneficiary of Vodacom's SAICA TOPP training programme to produce blackfemale accountants. • Almost 2 decades of being in commercial environments in the public sector. • She has a track record in the development of long-term customer partnerships and leading B2B strategic commercial transactions. First woman in the company to be appointed in a leadership position in the company. Kgari was appointed at a time when the company was in a financial crisis. The previous executive resigned withoutgiving any notice. She recorded a sterling performance through providing the vision, strategies and leadership required to grow a purely commercially focused revenue stream of R12 million in SAWS. .
Participant 12(Chrissie)	Chrissie is 52 years old and grew up in Transkei and completed matric in Umtata. She completed a B. Com degree and honours part time while working in an accounting firm.Married with two children, husband is the MD of the family construction business. • CFO and non-executive director in a mining firm • Acting CEO in an accounting firm • Practiced as an auditor in Italy for a large multinational company

Participant 13(Thobile)	Grew up in a family of boys in Kwazulu-Natal, attended high school in a boarding school.Both parents were academics. • B. Com in Human Resources with cum laude • MBA graduate • Group Executive: Human Resources within the aviation sector
Participant 14(Fusi)	From an average family, both parents were teachers with teachers' diplomas. She went to astandard local school. • Bachelor of Science graduate • Did a Master's degree in Operations Management in the UK • Worked as a Group Chief Operating Officer • She worked up the ranks to a high-profile position.
Participant 15(Helena)	From Johannesburg born into a poor background, mother was a farm worker. Life improvedafter the elder sister completed a teacher's diploma and started working. • B. Com in marketing degree • Been an executive director and shareholder of a BEE investment company that sheco-founded with her friends. • Acting Chief Procurement Officer in an energy company • Worked in a financial institution for three years, energy sector for two years before joining the transport sector. The two companies that she led are state-owned enterprises. She was CEO of the one for seven years and CEO of the other for two years. Currently she is a non-executive director of a few companies while decidingon her next project.

APPENDIX X: Overcoming obstacles or challenges as presented by participants in corporate South Africa

Themes	Sub-themes	Reasons	Participants	Description
Leadership / Board support	- support from the executive committee and board - Secretariat office and shareholders is powerful for influencing matters	Presence of support and encouragement	15/15 2/15	Participants were satisfied with their qualifications Not all participants were board members due to company policy
Mentoring	- Formal mentorship programme - Seek male and female mentors across race and peers - Coach, adviser on speed dial - Mentoring of boys and girls	To boost the transfer of knowledge Good mentorship programmes Help youth realize their potential / Committed to Giving back to the community	15/15 3/15	Participants highlighted the need and benefits for the programme. Acknowledge the availability of mentors Only few participants mentioned the importance and appreciate the support Only one participant saw the importance of mentoring young people

Personal development	- Know all parts of your company's business - Work in different industries - Executive group networks and online development courses - Public speaking at seminars and conferences - Develop your technical, personal and people skills	Manage your own learning and growth throughout your career Learn and develop to keep your skills and knowledge	15/15	All participants in the study recognise the importance of personal development Support is available internally
Research / Expanding knowledge	- getting education - Get prepared when attending meetings to give input and be participative - Learning different cultures and also visits friends in	Very satisfied as they are more qualified Prepare to interact in a global society and avoid culture shock	15/15 6/15	Participants were satisfied with their qualifications Other participants appreciate available opportunities to learn different cultures

	other countries in C-suite positions			
Networking	- Informal networking/Global networks with people of influence - Get a sponsor with influence	Need for network of champions / advocates for sponsor's advancement; champions potential	15/15	There are leadership benefits like exposure and networking
Support Structures	- - Supportive husband is key - Domestic worker and support of family - Secretariat office and shareholders is a powerful tool - Support structure for coaching and mentoring	Pressure of culture, norms, official and other contextual demands	15/15	Females get support and encouragement Women leaders relied on family for support / Female leaders face the challenge of balancing multiple roles Not all participants were board members externally Participants have mentors and coaching internally and externally

APPENDIX X1: Sample Matrix

Gender	Age	Level	Target Population	Sample
Female	30 - 55	Executives (C-suite)	15	10
		Senior Leadership (Directors & General Managers)	10	3
		Board and non-board members	3	2
		Total	**28**	**15**